



University of Dundee

Whose voice is heard? The complexities of power when conducting research with children using visual and arts-informed methods

Robb, Anna

DOI:
[10.1108/QRJ-09-2022-0120](https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-09-2022-0120)

Publication date:
2023

Licence:
CC BY-NC

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Robb, A. (2023). Whose voice is heard? The complexities of power when conducting research with children using visual and arts-informed methods. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 23(5), 557-568.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-09-2022-0120>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in Discovery Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Whose voice is heard? The complexities of power when conducting research with children using visual and arts-informed methods

Journal:	<i>Qualitative Research Journal</i>
Manuscript ID	QRJ-09-2022-0120
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	children's voices, power, participatory research, visual and arts-informed methods, reflexion

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

1
2
3 **Whose voice is heard? The complexities of power when conducting research with children using visual**
4 **and arts-informed methods**
5
6

7 **Abstract**

8 **Purpose:** This article examines the power relationships between researcher and participants, children and
9 adults, drawing on the theories of transgressions and resistance in power, during a research project
10 concerning children's experiences of the visual arts.
11
12

13
14 **Design/Methodology/Approach:** Data were gathered conducted in two Scottish primary schools by
15 employing visual and arts-based methods and the article discusses the role they played in revealing acts
16 of power between participants as well as providing insight of a child's world.
17
18

19
20 **Findings:** The article concludes by emphasising how these methods revealed a network of power acts
21 which supported children to transgress, resist and reveal their world to the adult.
22
23

24 **Originality:** The article contributes to the ongoing discussions concerning visual methods research and
25 their use in participatory research, and illustrates the complexities of power in this field.
26
27

28 **Research implications:** The role of reflexion on the part of the researcher is key when undertaking
29 research adopting participatory methods such as visual methods.
30
31

32 **Key Words**

33 children's voice, power, participatory research, visual and arts-informed methods, reflexion
34
35

36 **Introduction**

37
38 *Researcher: What did you think of [a European capital city]? Did you like [it]?*

39 *Melissa: It was quite good but there wasn't really anything exciting.*

40
41 *Researcher: Was there not?*

42 *Melissa: All the museums were boring.*

43
44 *Researcher: Were they? What was boring about them?*

45 *Melissa: Like the XXXX Museum it was just boring. There wasn't really anything exciting about it.*

46
47 *Researcher: What did it look like? Was there lots of things on the walls or...?*

48 *Melissa: There was some things on the wall but I forgot to take my camera...*

49
50 *Researcher: Ah so you couldn't take a picture of it, ok. But you didn't really enjoy them?*

51 *Melissa: Mm-mm. That's like the only museum we went to though.*

52
53 *Researcher: Which one was that again?*
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 *Melissa: The XXXX Museum.*

4 *Researcher: The XXXX Museum. I've been...I think...have I been there? There's probably lots of*
5 *things to read there, is there?*

6
7
8 *Melissa: Yeah, I don't like reading.*
9

10
11 This transcript excerpt was taken from a discussion between Melissa, a 10-year-old Scottish girl, who had
12 taken part in a photo-elicitation activity, and I, the researcher; for the purpose of the research all names
13 of participants were pseudonymised. The activity was part of a year-long data gathering exercise which
14 took place between 2016 and 2017 in two Scottish primary schools, exploring young children's
15 experiences of visual art and their self-identity. In this activity, Melissa had been given a camera to take
16 home for a month: she was asked to take photos of anything that she considered to be art, or any places
17 that were important to her. Once the cameras had been returned, the participants were asked to select
18 seven photos that they wished to share and discuss with me the researcher. Melissa had been away on a
19 trip to a European capital city during this time so her photos consisted of a mixture of home and of
20 holidays. Melissa seemed resistant to demonstrating enthusiasm for the topic of museums on the trip
21 with opinions generally expressed in the negative and the use of the word *boring* being used as the
22 equivalent of a full-stop in the discussion. As the conversation progressed, I resorted to further questions
23 to try and expand the discussion but Melissa skilfully blocked each attempt, and at one point admitted
24 that she forgot to take the camera, which could be viewed as a way of demonstrating her lack of interest
25 in the research activity also. From a researcher's perspective I was hoping to get some fascinating, positive
26 insight into visual art and the museums that Melissa had visited, probably because I enjoy visiting these
27 places myself, however instead I was faced with resistance and what could be considered a lack of interest
28 in the topic. This led me to question the power relationship between the participants and myself and the
29 role of the visual methods employed in revealing these power dynamics, which is the focus of this paper.
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43

44 Photo-elicitation is a visual-based research method (Clark and Moss, 2011, Rose, 2016) which provides
45 the participant with the opportunity to participate in the research through the independent creation of
46 data. Although some guidance can be given in terms of a focus for the images, the participant can interpret
47 this in any way they wish. A discussion of the selected images between the researcher and the participant
48 is necessary to record the participant's interpretation of their own images and their reasoning for taking
49 and selecting them (Einarsdottir, 2005). The discussion is therefore led by the participant rather than the
50 researcher. This method is a common one used by researchers adopting a participatory approach to their
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 research (Carawen and Nalavany, 2010) and researchers who are advocates of including children's voice
4 in their work (Lomax, 2012, McLure Sweeney, 2019, Clark and Moss, 2011). They tend to be adopted by
5 researchers intent upon challenging the power dichotomy that can exist between researcher and
6 participant, particularly child participant, with a goal of *giving* children a voice (Gallagher, 2008b). This
7 excerpt has been selected however in order to demonstrate that the issue of power when undertaking
8 participatory research is significantly more complex and nuanced than simply shifting power from one
9 person to another.
10
11
12
13
14
15

16 The complexities of power in participatory research and visual-based methods with children will be
17 explored in this paper based on the reflections of the researcher while working on a project that Melissa
18 was a participant of. The aim is to demonstrate that visual-based research methods not only create
19 opportunities for child participants to participate in research but confront and challenge the adult
20 perspective of today's world by contrasting this with a child's sense of knowledge and the world around
21 them, providing opportunities for children to transgress and resist should they so wish. It will also highlight
22 the key role that reflexions plays on the part of the qualitative researcher when navigating issues of power
23 within research.
24
25
26
27
28
29
30

31 **Context**

32
33
34 The aim of the study was to explore the visual art experiences of young children and the relationship
35 between this and their self-identity. Key to this were the voices of the participants, particularly the
36 children. The *bricolage* (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004, Kincheloe et al., 2011) was adopted. This approach
37 supports multiple theoretical and methodological lenses to be employed through the various stages of
38 the research design (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004, Kincheloe et al., 2011). The aim is to present multiple
39 interpretations and understandings through a cyclical process rather than to arrive at an absolute truth
40 (Gordon, 2013) and reflection on the part of the researcher is an important element (Kincheloe and Berry,
41 2004). Bricolage does not sit comfortably within one particular methodology or paradigm however due to
42 its cyclical nature and emphasis on multiple understandings, some believe it aligns most comfortably with
43 action research and critical theory (Lincoln et al., 2011).
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51

52 Data were gathered from nine pupils in two primary schools in a Scottish city over the course of the
53 academic session 2016-2017; there were four children aged between 7-8, and five children aged between
54 10-11. Additionally the class teachers, and the parents of the children were invited to take part in
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 interviews. The majority of the activities took place within the schools that the pupils attended, however
4 all the participants, except one, also attended an art workshop at a local creative organisation in the centre
5 of the city. The children created visual responses to activities in the form of collages, clay and sculpture,
6 activities which were inclusive for all abilities and not requiring particular artistic skill (Bragg and
7 Buckingham, 2008, Leitch, 2008). Discussion was also drawn from visual methods which focused on
8 photographs and images of art (Wall et al., 2012, Wall et al., 2013). Finally photo-elicitation was employed
9 with each participant taking and selecting their own photographs to discuss in a final interview (Carawen
10 and Nalavany, 2010, Clark and Moss, 2011, Rose, 2016). Individual case studies were formed through the
11 creation of narrative field texts drawn from the activities (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, Clandinin et al.,
12 2006, de Mello, 2007, Rolling, 2010). In total, data was gathered at seven time points across the academic
13 session.
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22

23 In principle, gathering data at time points over a year seemed to be a relatively simple task however in
24 reality it was challenging. I was conscious of the constant push and pull of various powerful acts between
25 all the participants including myself; a seeming rotation of powerful actions rather than a simple
26 dichotomous act of one person exerting power over another, enabled by the visual and arts-based
27 methods that were employed, and it is this that is the focus of the paper.
28
29
30
31
32

33 **Foucault's Theory of Power**

34
35 There can be a tendency to view the concept of *power* in binary terms of positive and negative, with
36 attempts made to remove power from some in order to liberate others (Usher and Edwards, 1994). Rather
37 than think in these discrete terms, Foucault preferred to consider 'relationships of power' in order to
38 reflect how power pervades everyday life (Foucault, 1987). By doing this he moved away from the
39 negative notions of power and moved towards its discrete nature, expressed through the language that
40 we use and the knowledge that is created and exerted (Foucault, 1980). He therefore removed the
41 emotion from the concept and drew attention to the idea that *power* was ever-present in people's lives;
42 ultimately it is not possible to remove it and when this is attempted, it is transferred (Usher and Edwards,
43 1994). This means that power "...is never localised here or there...individuals are the vehicles of power,
44 not its point of application" (Foucault, 1980) and *power* is therefore an integral aspect of modern living.
45 While Foucault acknowledged the negative possibilities of power, he also believed that power could
46 produce knowledge and therefore could also be a positive force on society (Hall et al., 2013, Usher and
47 Edwards, 1994). Once knowledge is created and espoused it becomes *truth* and this is done through
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 *discourse*. Discourse provides the rules that enable the knowledge to be discussed in a meaningful manner
4 and regulates the way people conduct themselves (Foucault, 1987, Hall et al., 2013); discourse is therefore
5 productive as well as restrictive (Usher and Edwards, 1994). Discourse also creates significance for
6 particular actions or events and so becomes constitutive components of people's lives, informing their
7 personal narrative of life but also of the world in which they are part (Fadyl and Nicholls, 2013): they are
8 their lives and the person effectively becomes a product of the discourse. Regulation by others occurs
9 through forms of surveillance such as observation, judgement and examination (Allan et al., 2008, Barker,
10 2003) while self-regulation occurs through reflection, which Foucault defines as a form of *confession*
11 (Foucault, 1988, Foucault, 1994). There is a sense of futility when exploring Foucault's theories as the
12 individual is bound into a world of power and knowledge which can only be mediated and navigated rather
13 than circumvented or changed, however he asks us to consider power from a different angle so that rather
14 than it being an abstract concept it becomes an action with an outcome (Gallagher, 2008a). Action
15 therefore becomes powerful and while we can assume that each action will have an outcome, we cannot
16 control what that outcome will be, and therefore it can have unintended results. We chose to determine
17 whether these are positive or negative. Gallagher (2008a) therefore believes that when undertaking
18 participatory research, it is necessary to examine the effect of power and the way the subject reacts rather
19 than the actual act itself. For example, one possible consequence is that there is inaction on the part of
20 the subject; if this is a conscious decision on the part of the subject then perhaps it becomes a powerful
21 act in itself. Foucault began to explore this by outlining the concepts of *resistance* (Foucault, 1980) and
22 *transgression* (Foucault, 1977). Although a specific theory in relation to *resistance* was never developed
23 (Usher and Edwards, 1994) he believed that particular discourses adopted by individuals could provide
24 resistance by presenting alternative viewpoints. The concept of *transgression* was viewed as moments of
25 freedom, where the individual or a group attempt to subvert or remove themselves from the powerful
26 act that they are subject to.
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44

45 Working with children in a school environment, the concepts of resistance and transgression, would most
46 commonly be attached to negative behaviours in a classroom where the teacher seeks to control and
47 measure the output of their teaching. These concepts therefore potentially have negative connotations.
48 From a researcher's perspective, rather than view them in the negative, they could be viewed as
49 productive. In this paper through a number of examples from my own research, the constant rotation of
50 powerful acts among participants will be examined within this Foucauldian lens, as well as the role that
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 visual methods played in becoming a vehicle for these acts, or in-acts, to occur, supporting participants to
4 express what is meaningful to them.
5
6
7

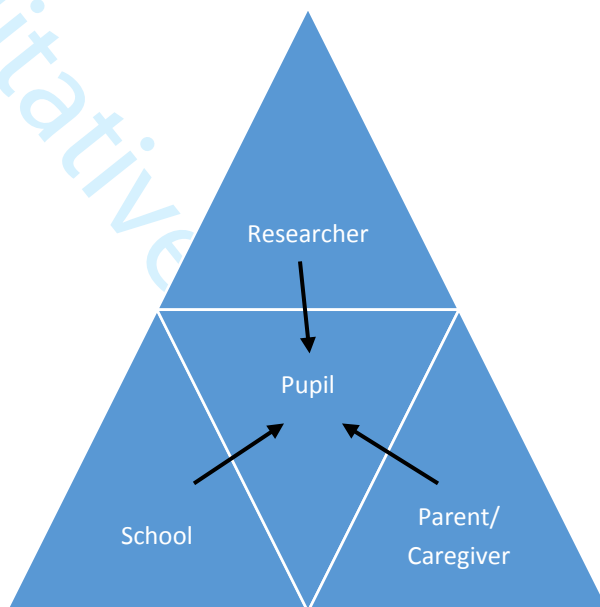
8 9 **Theory in Practice**

10
11
12 Returning to Melissa, during the first data gathering session the children were asked to create collages
13 about themselves; these were then discussed individually. Melissa cut out images of fashion logos, make-
14 up and perfume bottles and described herself as a “sassy girl” drawing on these images to support this. A
15 strong sense of her own identity emerged during each discussion during the year. Towards the end of the
16 year, as she was looking at photos of art galleries, she began to state that she did not really like visiting
17 galleries and found them boring; she preferred shopping. And yet she could talk knowledgeably about the
18 range of cultural activities in her city and she was the only one who could describe visits to the local
19 contemporary arts centre. Her parents took her on a range of holidays, hence the trip abroad, and her
20 parent stated that they would take her to the key sites including galleries while they travelled.
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

29 Although only one of nine participants, Melissa seems to encapsulate and embody the issues of power
30 outlined in the previous section, that emerged during the research. Under traditional notions of power
31 (Figure 1), she was subject to acts of power throughout the research project. The research was initiated
32 by the researcher and as researcher I had decided the data-gathering activities that the children would
33 complete, linked to a topic that was dictated by me due to the PhD context. Another factor to consider
34 was the location of the data gathering activities which was determined by me the researcher. The
35 environments of the school and the local creative organisation were spaces that I was comfortable in,
36 having spent both professional and personal time in both most of my life. These environments reinforced
37 established discourses (Foucault, 1987, Hall et al., 2013). For the children in the school environment, their
38 identity was one of pupil subject to the relevant power relationships that exist and so this space may not
39 have put them at ease. If the research had been conducted in places and spaces belonging to them, such
40 as a park or their home, then the responses could have been quite different as I would have had to
41 negotiate the discourses pertaining to the children in those settings.
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51

52 It could be stated therefore that the balance of power between the researcher and the participants was
53 in favour of the researcher. I created the research design, drove the implementation of it and analysed
54 and presented the findings. In addition to this, I worked at a University, an institution which displays a
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 particular persona to the outside world, of which there will be multiple perceptions, both positive and
4 negative. I have worked in an academic institution long enough for the discourses created within its
5 environment to have exerted control over the way I act and present myself to others (Foucault, 1987, Hall
6 et al., 2013). This presentation of self is composed of conscious and unconscious acts and will change
7 depending on who I am with at any moment of time (Giddens, 1991, Goffman, 1959). The use of a
8 reflective diary acted as a tool of regulation through its confessional nature (Foucault, 1994) however it
9 could not eliminate the power dynamic between the researcher and participants.
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35



36
37 *Figure 1: Traditional Power Dynamics*
38
39

40 Another explicit form of power to emerge, was that in relation to access to children and gatekeeping (Hill,
41 2005). This had an impact both in terms of finding children to work with and then ensuring that it was
42 possible to work with the children. Primarily consent had to be gained from adults, at school and at home,
43 regardless of whether the children consented to participate or not; this was a requirement of both the
44 local authority and the university through which the research was conducted.
45
46
47
48
49

50 The opportunity to take part in the research was determined by both the school and Melissa's parents.
51 From a school perspective, the issues of access to pupils illustrates Foucault's concept of power-
52 knowledge where adults make decisions in the best interest of the children in their care and use this to
53 construct truth regimes concerning the child as subject and their resulting capabilities (Foucault, 1980,
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Usher and Edwards, 1994, Barker, 2003, Allan, 2013). The senior management in both schools determined
4 the classes that could be approached and those that would be excluded; coincidentally, the two classes
5 selected in each school were at the same stages. Although the schools did not give an indication of how
6 the classes were selected it is possible that the same criteria for selection was employed by both, resulting
7 in the same classes being chosen; as both schools deliver the same national curriculum within the same
8 authority it could be that the criteria was driven by similar discourses with adults determining what was
9 best for the children in their care and thereby becoming “subject to power” (Usher and Edwards, 1994).
10 From Melissa’s perspective this meant that she may never have had the opportunity to take part if the
11 school had made different decisions regarding which classes would take part.
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19

20 Finally, parents acted as gate-keepers through the requirement that the child could only take part if
21 consent had been gained from the parents (Greig et al., 2007). Participants, like Melissa, had had parents
22 who gave consent to take part in the research. Some children who wished to take part however were
23 excluded if the relevant parental consent forms had not been completed or returned to the school. The
24 pupils were also dependent on the adults in their lives in terms of completing some of the data gathering
25 activities, particularly attending the art workshop in the city centre, and for the photo-elicitation activity.
26 Edward, aged 8, believed that the reason he did not attend the art workshop was because his parents
27 forgot. In the photo-elicitation activity, the dependence on adults was also revealed in the location of
28 where the photos were taken. For some of the participants, the photos they chose to discuss were all
29 located in their home, with some taken in their garden, suggesting that it had not been possible to visit
30 places or take the camera with them.
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39

40 Seemingly then the children were subject to power acts throughout the research project, but this is too
41 simplistic a summary of what actually occurred. Instead of one group exerting dominance over another,
42 through various powerful acts, all involved, children and adults including myself, were subject to acts of
43 power but also exerted acts of power on others. What occurred then was a constant rotation of power
44 between each group of people (Figure 2).
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

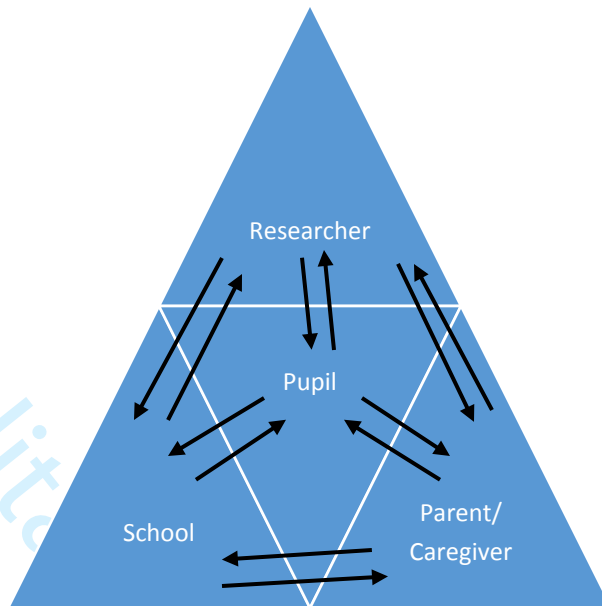


Figure 2: Rotation of power acts

As researcher, I led the research, however like the pupils and the staff within the school I too was subject to acts of power which at times felt constraining. For example, in the school setting discreet forms of power emerged highlighting a conflict between the value of children's voices and the practicalities of living in a world driven by dominant adult discourse. In school, this was determined by the regimes of truth that guided the curriculum and its delivery in the classroom; the implementation of a curriculum is guided by the government in power which means that a school will prioritise certain issues if they are highlighted by the government. This means that there can be minimal space and flexibility for additional activities, such as participating in a research project, if those activities do not fit with the current priorities of the government and therefore the school. This discourse also emerged in relation to the timing of data-gathering activities which were determined by what could be fitted in to the school day, week and term. This sometimes resulted in last-minute cancellations which were made without the consultation of the pupil participants (Lundy, 2012).

A problem also arose in terms of encouraging parents/caregivers to take an interest in the research. Of the nine pupil participants, only three sets of parents/caregivers made themselves available to be interviewed. The apparent lack of interest in the research could be down to a number of reasons which could only be clarified by the adults themselves. However, there are some possibilities worthy of

1
2
3 consideration in this paper. Firstly, it could be the fact that the research had been instigated by a
4 researcher from a university created a barrier, through the resulting discourses (Foucault, 1987, Usher
5 and Edwards, 1994). The adults reacted to this by not consenting to take part, which could be viewed as
6 a form of resistance (Foucault, 1980), however it is impossible to determine whether this was a conscious
7 act of resistance or not, without speaking directly to the adults concerned. Secondly past and current
8 associations with school itself may have also influenced the responses of parents, perhaps restricting or
9 constraining them or alternatively turning the non-consent into an act of transgression by ignoring the
10 information and the invites to meet with me the researcher. Thirdly, it could be said that the various levels
11 of parental support that a pupil participant received not only had an effect on the child but also on the
12 outcome of the research. For example, during the photo-elicitation activity, discreet power emerged in
13 relation to a child's ability to access places and spaces outside of the home environment, being reliant on
14 parents to facilitate this: Melissa for example had the opportunity to take photos during a city break
15 abroad and it was evident through discussion with her parent that they had taken an interest in the
16 activity, while other pupil participants, of whom it was not possible to meet with the parents, presented
17 photos only of their home environment which suggested that there had not been opportunities to take
18 photos further afield.
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30

31 Of most interest though to this paper was the way that the pupil participants meted acts of power and
32 the role that the research design, and in particular the use of visual methods, in supporting this. If we
33 refer back to the example of Melissa we can see in the excerpt that although Melissa had selected photos
34 of her holiday to discuss, she used the opportunity of the discussion to outline a negative viewpoint of the
35 trip. It would seem that although she had selected the images as discussion points, she seemed resistant
36 to actually engaging in discussion; perhaps she was aware of my enthusiasm for the topic and decided to
37 act against this instead. Her parent had indicated their own frustration with the way she had responded
38 to the cultural activities on the trip too, so perhaps the conversation with me was confirming the
39 differences in the child and adult worlds that she inhabited and she firmly wanted to be identified with
40 her own child world rather than the adult one. As outlined earlier, she described herself as a "sassy" girl
41 and so my enthusiasm for the topic of the trip and museums perhaps did not fit with this image of herself
42 so she began to resist the discussion instead, making it difficult to engage with her over the topic. Her
43 strong sense of self-identity emerged too in the collage activity at the start of the data-gathering period
44 where she stated that she enjoyed completing the activity because "...it's like more fun to talk about it
45 because like if you're just telling someone they're not getting the picture of, like you could like a specific
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 kind of something, like they could think 'So do you like that' ...say you liked a specific type of Coco Chanel
4 they might have thought you liked the Paris one but then you might have liked the Noir one or Noir Black
5 or whatever". For her the combination of the visual aspect with the oral aspect of the activity supported
6 her in communicating exactly who she was, and the world she lived in to someone else. Her scope of
7 resistance and transgression also emerged as she discussed making art in school; she enjoyed this because
8 it was different from the other lessons, you were allowed to talk and you could express yourself. Under
9 her breath she said "no-one likes rules...". It seemed that art provided an opportunity for this child to
10 transgress and resist through the making and was thus a positive experience for the child, however the
11 viewing of art, in galleries and museums, was a passive experience which again allowed the opportunity
12 to resist, but this time by presenting behaviours contrary to the expected rules of the gallery or institution,
13 or by the adults in her life.

21
22
23 The other participants, perhaps less explicitly than Melissa, also revealed moments of transgression and
24 resistance through the data-gathering process. For example, Clara, an 8-year-old, decided to focus part of
25 the photo-elicitation discussion on her pet guinea pigs because "they are really special to me and they're
26 quite new...". From the perspective of the research, other than revealing what was important to Clara,
27 these images seemingly did not support the focus of exploring visual art experiences outside of the school
28 environment. Clara, through the activity however, was able to direct the conversation to the things that
29 mattered most to her thereby subverting the focus which could be viewed as a moment of transgression.
30 At an art workshop, Dan, 11 years old, also used the art activity to demonstrate something that was
31 important to him at that moment in time. The children were given large sheets of corrugated card with
32 which to create a structure linked to the notion of 'home'. Dan said "My house is going to have a spray-
33 tan room. My house is going to have a spray-tan room because [*an American President's*] going to live in
34 it and he's going to have a spray-tan to make him look orange". After completing the activity he stated
35 that he had thought it was fun because " ... I could make a cell for [*an American President*]". Again, in
36 relation to the research, there was little in this that could illuminate the focus on a young child's visual art
37 experiences, however it did highlight how aware a child could be of the external, macro forces of power
38 that influence the adult world that we all live. It was also a useful reminder to me the researcher not to
39 underestimate a child's awareness of the world that surrounds them.

40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53 Whereas for some children during the photo-elicitation activity they were restricted by the adults in their
54 lives in terms of where they could take photos, the activity for others supported them in organising what
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 they wanted to do with their parents. Andrew's parents revealed during a discussion about the street art
4 in the city that "Andrew wanted us to go down there [to a particular street art site] for Andrew to take
5 photos...". Andrew's images therefore consisted of a breadth of street art and graffiti that he wanted to
6 talk about, which provided a stark contrast to the art that he encountered in school. Peter, an 11-year-old
7 in the other school from Andrew, also presented images of local street art, and laughed when I asked if
8 they got the opportunity to explore street art in school.
9
10
11
12

13
14
15 Gathering data during the course of an academic session using visual and arts-based methods also allowed
16 for a relationship between researcher and participants to be established and to develop, which seem to
17 result in a growing confidence amongst the children to express and to change opinions as the year
18 progressed. For example, in the first data gathering sessions in November, all the children were expressing
19 positive opinions towards the visual arts, but by April and May, Melissa and Clara began to express
20 alternative viewpoints with Clara saying "I don't really like paintings and stuff" and Melissa expressing her
21 boredom towards museums, which had not occurred in our initial meetings. Opinions change over time
22 and so it could be that what was once an interest was no longer one. However, it also caused me to reflect
23 on the balance of power that I, the researcher had over the participants, particularly in the initial stages
24 of the research; the children knew I was focused on visual art experiences and therefore perhaps initially
25 responded favourably because they thought that was what was expected through the discourse that I
26 established (Foucault, 1987). As the year progressed though these children seemed more comfortable
27 with expressing alternative opinions to my own, visually and through the way they directed the
28 discussions. If I had relied on the data gathered initially, I would therefore only have presented one version
29 of the child's world, rather than a more nuanced version that developed over a period of time.
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41

42 The visual activities also seemed to support the children in expressing their thoughts regarding their art
43 experiences in the classroom, mainly by providing a contrast. The perception of art in school was generally
44 expressed in positive terms by the children as they described the freedom of working with materials. A
45 sense of adults in control did also emerge however as children acknowledged that the inputs in school
46 were different from the research workshops in that the sessions in school tended to consist of following
47 a set of instructions to create a particular output. They also felt that they did not get art lessons often in
48 school. In fact, two children, Maia (aged 8) and Amy (aged 11, and at a different school) both identified as
49 artists, but when they talked about making art, they described activities that took place in the home,
50 making no mention of school experiences unless specifically asked to discuss them. This leads to the
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 second way in which the children demonstrated resistance and transgression towards power. They drew
4 on particular memories when talking about their art experiences, but these memories and the reasons
5 they were memorable did not necessarily correspond with the adult intention of an activity. Completing
6 a public art trail was memorable more for the fact that a child had made a new friend rather than for the
7 art that was displayed. The same issue was present when discussing their art experiences with their
8 parents. Edward stated that he had never visited the local contemporary arts centre; their parent was
9 adamant that he had, and tried to prompt Edward into remembering with an increasing amount of
10 frustration becoming apparent as the child claimed they could not remember. As adults, teachers,
11 parents, caregivers, we introduce the children in our care to a range of experiences, many with the
12 purpose of creating benefit to their lives, however the children selected the experiences that were most
13 relevant to them, and these were not necessarily for the intended reasons created by adults. In school,
14 the children received art lessons each year but only particular experiences were drawn upon by the
15 children, and some did not even mention them. Teachers plan, deliver and assess curricula and then
16 measure what the children have learned as a result based on predefined outcomes. The children were
17 unable to talk about art using relevant associated terms and they also were unable to remember why they
18 did certain activities. This would suggest that the control and power exerted by a curriculum, through a
19 teacher, may not produce the desired intended results, which provides an illustration of Foucault's
20 thoughts regarding how it is not possible to control an act of power (Gallagher, 2008a) therefore the focus
21 should be to explore the outcome rather than the act itself; perhaps rather than assessing pre-defined
22 outcomes, teachers should be open to the exploring the way children apply learning and the variety of
23 outcomes that occur as a result.
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39

40 The data methods employed, visual and arts-based, encouraged and supported the children to make acts
41 of power in the form of transgression and resistance by directing the research towards windows on their
42 lives and their views of the world. Some of the children felt comfortable enough to obstruct the flow of
43 the discussion or to divert it away from the focus that I had set as an agenda. They were able to make
44 comments on a curricular subject that perhaps they would not have been able to if asked directly by an
45 adult. And for some, the activities allowed them to direct the way they spent time with their own parents.
46 Finally, the activities, over time, seemed to give children the opportunity to change their minds or perhaps
47 provide a more meaningful insight into their world than perhaps was portrayed in our first meeting.
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Conclusion

Any qualitative study where children are at the heart of it, will present a multitude of issues linked to power; this research study has been examined from this perspective drawing on the notions of *transgression* and *resistance*. Traditionally, the adoption of visual and arts-based methods by researchers adopting a participatory approach have been dominated by a power discourse whereby the researcher gives children an opportunity to express their voices, a dichotomous act between the researcher and the child (Gallagher, 2008b). However, as has been demonstrated, power manifests in multiple ways when these methods are employed so that rather than a dichotomous relationship with the emphasis on one group exerting power over another, a fluid rotation of acts of power between all the participants, including the researcher emerged. Power flowed through each group of participants, with each participant a subject to power, as well as delivery powerful acts. This was done explicitly and implicitly, consciously and unconsciously, and the children were able to do this, as with the adults, within the parameters of the boundaries set by the cultural conventions of living in today's world (Punch and Tisdall, 2012).

The outcome, from a researcher's perspective, is a far more complex world to navigate but perhaps more representative of the world we all live in, reflecting Foucault's theories of productive power and illuminating a person, or child's capacity, to transgress and resist, than is reflected when more traditional data methods are employed. The researcher needs to be able to reflect and act reflexively as the outcomes from each activity emerge, and this requires flexibility and an openness to respond to the unexpected. It also requires a great depth of thought and analysis, considering not just what is presented in front of them, but why it has been presented and also what is not presented. Visual and arts-based methods provide opportunities for the researcher to view into a child's world and it requires a child to interpret it for them.

References

- ALLAN, A., ATKINSON, E., BRACE, E., DEPALMA, R. & HEMINGWAY, J. 2008. Speaking the Unspeakable in Forbidden Places: Addressing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equality in the Primary School. *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning*, 8, 315-328.
- ALLAN, J. 2013. Foucault and his acolytes: discourse, power and ethics. In: MURPHY, M. (ed.) *Social Theory and Education Research*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- BARKER, C. 2003. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, London, Sage Publications.
- BRAGG, S. & BUCKINGHAM, D. 2008. 'Scrapbooks' as a resource in media research with young people. In: THOMSON, P. (ed.) *Doing Visual Research with Children and Young People*. London: Routledge.

- 1
2
3 CARAWEN, L. W. & NALAVANY, B. 2010. Using photography and art in concept mapping research with
4 adults with dyslexia. *Disability and Society*, 25, 317-329.
- 5 CLANDININ, D. J. & CONNELLY, F. M. 2000. *Narrative inquiry: experience and story in qualitative*
6 *research*, San Francisco, John Wiley and Sons.
- 7 CLANDININ, D. J., HUBER, J., HUBER, M., MURPHY, M. S., ORR, A., PEARCE, M. & STEEVES, P. 2006.
8 *Composing Diverse Identities: Narrative Inquiries into the Interwoven Lives of Children and*
9 *Teachers*, London, Routledge.
- 10 CLARK, A. & MOSS, P. 2011. *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach*, London, NCB.
- 11 DE MELLO, D. M. 2007. The Language of Arts in a Narrative Inquiry Landscape. In: CLANDININ, D. J. (ed.)
12 *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.
- 13 EINARSDOTTIR, J. 2005. Playschool in pictures: children's photographs as a research method. *Early Child*
14 *Development and Care*, 175, 523-541.
- 15 FADYL, J. K. & NICHOLLS, D. A. 2013. Foucault, the subject and the research interview: a critique of
16 methods. *Nursing Inquiry*, 20, 23-29.
- 17 FOUCAULT, M. 1977. Preface to Transgression. In: BOUCHARD, D. (ed.) *Language, countermemory,*
18 *practice: Selected essays and interviews by Michel Foucault*. Oxford: Basil Blackwall.
- 19 FOUCAULT, M. 1980. *Power-knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Brighton,
20 Harvester Press.
- 21 FOUCAULT, M. 1987. The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom: an interview with Michel
22 Foucault. In: FORNET-BATANCOURT, R., BECKER, H., GOMEZMÜLLER, A. & GAUTHIER, J. D.
23 (eds.). *Philosophy & Social Criticism*.
- 24 FOUCAULT, M. 1988. Technologies of the Self. In: MARTIN, L. H., GUTMAN, H. & HUTTON, P. H. (eds.)
25 *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. USA: University of Massachusetts
26 Press.
- 27 FOUCAULT, M. 1994. Self Writing. In: RABINOW, P. (ed.) *Ethics: Subjectivity and the Truth*.
- 28 GALLAGHER, M. 2008a. Foucault, Power and Participation. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 16,
29 395-406.
- 30 GALLAGHER, M. 2008b. 'Power is not an evil': rethinking power in participatory methods. *Children's*
31 *Geographies*, 6, 137-150.
- 32 GIDDENS, A. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge,
33 Polity Press.
- 34 GOFFMAN, E. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, London, Penguin Books.
- 35 GORDON, A. L. 2013. Metaphors for Engaging with Bricolage. *R.Ed - Research in Education*, 5, 8-10.
- 36 GREIG, A., TAYLOR, J. & MACKAY, T. 2007. *Doing Research with Children: A Practical Guide*, London, Sage
37 Publications Ltd.
- 38 HALL, S., EVANS, J. & NIXON, S. 2013. *Representation*, London, Sage Publications Ltd.
- 39 HILL, M. 2005. Ethical Considerations in Research Children's Experiences. In: GREEN, S. & HOGAN, D.
40 (eds.) *Researching Children's Experience*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- 41 KINCHELOE, J. L. & BERRY, K. S. 2004. *Rigour and Complexity in Educational Research: Conceptualising*
42 *the Bricolage*, Maidenhead, Open University Press.
- 43 KINCHELOE, J. L., MCLAREN, P. & STEINBERG, S. R. 2011. Critical Pedagogy, and Qualitative Research:
44 Moving to Bricolage. In: DENZIN, N. & LINCOLN, Y. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative*
45 *Research*. 4th edn. ed. London: Sage.
- 46 LEITCH, R. 2008. Creatively researching children's narratives through images and drawings. In:
47 THOMSON, P. (ed.) *Doing Visual Research with Children and Young People*. London: Routledge.
- 48 LINCOLN, Y., LYNHAM, S. A. & GUBA, E. G. 2011. Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions and
49 Emerging Confluences, Revisited. In: DENZIN, N. & LINCOLN, Y. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of*
50 *Qualitative Research*. 4 ed. Lonfon: Sage.
- 51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 LOMAX, H. 2012. Contested voices? Methodological tensions in creative visual research with children.
4 *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15, 105-117.
5 LUNDY, L. 2012. Children's rights and educational policy in Europe: the implementation of the United
6 Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38, 393-411.
7 MCLURE SWEENEY, M. 2019. Ch.12 Then and Now: Reflections on Art-Based Participatory Research with
8 Young Children. In: ECKHOFF, A. (ed.) *Participatory Research with Young Children*. Switzerland:
9 Springer.
10 PUNCH, S. & TISDALL, E. K. M. 2012. Exploring children and young people's relationships across Majority
11 and Minority Worlds. *Children's Geographies*, 10, 241-248.
12 ROLLING, J. H. 2010. Art Education at the Turn of the Tide: The Utility of Narrative in Curriculum-Making
13 and Education Research. *Art Education*, 63, 6-12.
14 ROSE, G. 2016. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, London,
15 Sage Publications Ltd.
16 USHER, R. & EDWARDS, R. 1994. *Postmodernism and Education*, London, Routledge.
17 WALL, K., HALL, E. & WOOLNER, P. 2012. Visual Methodology: Previously, Now and in the Future.
18 *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 35, 223-226.
19 WALL, K., HIGGINS, S., HALL, E. & WOOLNER, P. 2013. "That's not quite the way we see it": the
20 Epistemological Challenge of Visual Data. *International Journal of Research and Method in*
21 *Education*, 36, 3-22.
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

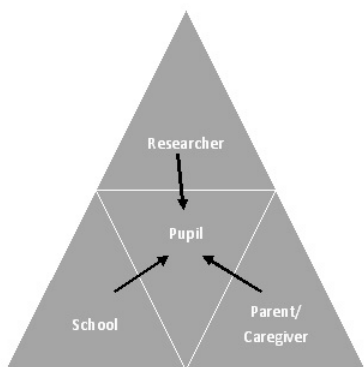


Figure 1: Traditional Power Dynamics

Figure 1: Traditional Power Dynamics

198x264mm (96 x 96 DPI)

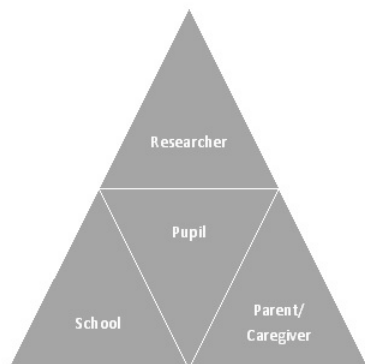


Figure 2: Rotation of power acts

Figure 2: Rotation of power acts

198x264mm (96 x 96 DPI)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60