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Accessing the Child’s Voice in research
Dr Sally Elton-Chalcraft
Institute of Education
University of Cumbria
Child in Cumbria
Dr Barnardos conference
University of Cumbria, Carlisle
2nd May 2018
Generating and analysing child voice data: underpinning principles

- Accessing children’s voices
- Ethics - power and informed consent
- Collaborative data gathering / generation
- Systematic analysis - ‘view of child’ and bigger picture issues
- Implications for practice – Child in Cumbria
If you could make one wish for your family what would it be?

- 31% No ill health or worries and everyone lives happy ever after
- 28% Live forever, enough money and bring loved ones back to life
- 11% Bigger houses, farms & cars and more money
- 11% Parents work less, more family time and bigger family
- 3% A better future
- 3% Holiday & travel
- 2% Nothing
- Other categories mentioned in the research

TEN years 2007-2017
Challenges of Accessing child voice

- Gaining consent – parental and child
- Being ethical throughout the project
- Analysing data – leaving out the ‘negative bits’
- Reporting findings honestly
- Implications for practice – authentic listening and implementing changes to practice
Powerpoint slides to obtain consent from children to participate in her study about a Nurture Group

(Elizabeth Dawson - MA dissertation research: permission gained to use for educational purposes Supervisor SEC)
Hello, it's me, Mrs Dawson. I would like to know what children in The Den think. What do you think about your learning?

Will you help me to find out?
On one day, you can draw pictures.
I want to record what we talk about.

I would like to take pictures.

I want to write about what I find out.
I will keep your pictures and photos safe and private.
I will change your name if I write about you.
I will delete recordings and photos if you don't want me to keep them.
You can stop any time you want to.

And you can join in again later if you want to.
Do you want to join in?

You can choose.
Just let me know.
Ethical research wheel (Macpherson & Tyson 2008: 62)

- Conclusion and recommendations
- Formulate the question
- Literature review
- Methodology
- Data collection and analysis
- Interpretation and discussion

(cumbria)
Findings from Cumbria child

“Teachers, friends and people you can trust.”

“For adults to have the decency to talk to children like they would their friends!”
Our view of children influences how we gather, interpret and use data

James’s 4 fold typology
i) developing child
ii) tribal child
iii) adult child
iv) Social child

(James 1995)
Other Views of Children

1) Children as *possessions*: vulnerable for a long time.
2) Children as *subjects requiring protection*
3) Children as *participants* - voices heard not in a tokenistic way.
4) Children as *citizens*.


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Sally’s example:
Aims, research questions, methodology, findings

**Aim:** An appraisal of children’s cultural awareness

**Research question:** What is children’s knowledge about cultures represented in the UK

**Methodology:** observation, focus groups, semi structured interviews

**Findings:** A, B, C and D categories
Research methodology ‘least adult role’

- Research was **child-centred** (Mayell 2000, Warren 2000)
- Adopted ‘**Least adult role**’ (Mandell 1991)
- Used **Bean sheet** to give children prompts (O’Kane 2000)
‘Least adult role’ (Mandell 1991, Corsaro 1981, 2000), on the playground, in the classroom etc

Mandell climbed on roof of playhouse!

I just lined up with children and sat with them in class and assemblies!
Child Centred (methodology)

Feminist research: acknowledgement of my integration within the research, NOT a neutral, objective researcher (Webb 2000; Woodhead & Falkner 2000)

Ontological perspective: I worked collaboratively with children – they had a degree of ownership

Traveller not Miner (Kvale 1996)
Charting children’s attitude / knowledge

- Anti racist/ Positive
- Racist/ Negative

- More Knowledgeable
- Less Knowledgeable
- More Culturally aware
- Less Culturally aware

D
C
B
A

Less Knowledgeable
Less Culturally aware

More Knowledgeable
More Culturally aware

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Conclusions- was this methodology successful?

1. Getting to know the children during the first phase - they were more ‘at ease’ during the taped interview- accuracy

2. Working collaboratively with the children - they had ownership of the research- valid

3. Explaining I wanted to investigate their opinions - they could not be wrong integrity

4. Assuming a ‘least adult role’ - the children were probably more honest because I was not an authority figure- reliable
How can we interpret and use the data from the Cumbria Child project?

1. How does our view of children affect our data analysis, interpretations and recommendations for practice?
2. How closely are we listening to child voice and not assuming we have solutions?
3. How do our concepts of deprivation, poverty, safety… impact on our analysis, interpretation and recommendations? (the Bigger picture)
On this page you can see how Allerdale compares to the overall Cumbrian responses for the same question.

The first pie chart illustrates the 7 most popular responses in relation to question 3. Listed to the side are the least common responses stated from the children living in Cumbria.

The second pie chart enables the reader to compare and contrast the children’s responses from the area of Allerdale for the same question, in the same way as listed above.
Multidimensional Poverty

Various indicators

Three Dimensions of Poverty
- Health
- Education
- Living Standard

Ten Indicators
- Nutrition
- Child Mortality
- Years of Schooling
- School Attendance
- Cooking Fuel
- Sanitation
- Water
- Electricity
- Floor
- Assets
1. Identify an issue
2. What do the children say – how does this relate to our practice?
3. Example Poverty / deprivation…

Example: Poverty / deprivation- Bigger picture

- Relative/absolute poverty
- Health; Education; Living standards
- Cumbria standards: health/education/living standards
- Child voice-our response

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Accessing the Child’s Voice in Research

1. Confidence and competence in how to collect data in an ethical way? (power)
2. Confidence and competence in interpreting data (bigger picture, child voice)
3. Confidence and competence in agreeing implications for practice (integrity)


Elton-Chalcraft, S. (2011) "We are like dictionaries Miss, you can look things up in us": evaluating child-centred research methods. *Education 3-13*. vol 39 no 2 pg 187-202

Gaine, C. (2005) *We’re all white thanks: the persisting myth about white schools* Stoke-on Trent Trentham


