

Re-presenting identities: The use of composite and performance pieces in community critical psychology and disability studies

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aims

01

Explore three projects

Introduce the use of composite narratives and visual methodologies

Examine the contribution of such a methodology to non-linear conceptualizations of self and other

Explore contribution to understandings of the 'subject'

projects
02

Projects

<http://www.rihsc.mmu.ac.uk/postblairproject/>

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/disabledbabies/>

<http://www.rihsc.mmu.ac.uk/photoproject/>

References

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Story 03

Disruptive rather than well behaved stories

Stories as evolving rather than a snapshot of life

Becomings rather than beings

In-betweenness rather than either/or

Post/structuralist tales: beyond structuralism

life history
04

Parents of disabled babies: Allied angel makers

Jen. When our boy was born, he was labelled with Down Syndrome. It wasn't a major disaster for us.

John: It just puts a different slant on things doesn't it?

Jen: I was on morphine at the time so wasn't taking much in anyway?

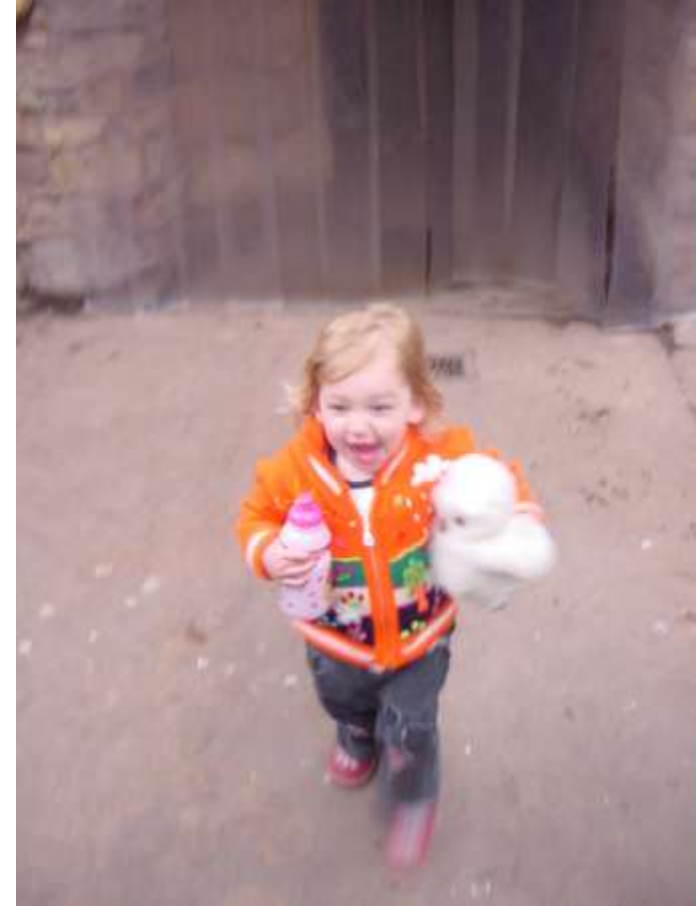
Jon: there were so many flowers that day, weren't there.

(from an interview with the new parents of a baby boy).

Parents as rhizomes

Forget tress, think weeds

Rhizomes are not models but maps with multiple entryways. They are creative in terms of the ways in which they are always making multiplicities; doing away with a reliance on transcendental beliefs (the '1' such as god, science and psychoanalysis) and making use of the number of dimensions one already has (which we might call 'n'). Hence, the formula of the rhizome: $n - 1$ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p7).



Parents as lines of flight

Rebecca Greenwood: You see, I can't keep chasing the normal. I mean I've done so much to try and make my son normal but I can't keep that up. It really does detach you from life. I need to accept him in the ways that he is and just enjoy them and him. I must stop pressurising myself (Rebecca Greenwood)



Parents as lines of flight

Hunts out fascicular root-like
practices ..

Movement

Flux

*Empiricism and experimentation
of resistance*

Pedagogy of the concept



Parents as lines of flight

My Danny is ... how do you put it? Wild. I used to go along to this nursery with him when he was little boy. It was held in my local library. There was a woman taking the register, a sort of committee and a list of rules as long as your arm. It was very cliquey. During coffee break, I was told by one of the other mothers that during coffee break 'we like the children to sit quietly at the table over there'. Then during sing-song time, all the kids were expected to sit cross-legged on the floor. Totally not Danny's place! You know that you and your child are not up to doing that sort of thing. But, if choose to give up at the first hurdle – thinking he just won't fit in – then you've given up. So we persevered. And when he was ... well, 'being Danny', I didn't get involved, I just let it fly over me and I'm thinking, 'no, I'm not letting that do us'. And so he went on. And they watched. And they watched.

(Cheryl Smith, mother of Danny who has been labelled as having autism).

Parents as lines of flight

Write to the n th power, $N-1$, write with slogans:
Form rhizomes and not roots, never plant! Don't
sow, forage! Be neither a One nor a Many, but
multiplicities! Form a line, never a point! Speed
transforms the point into a line. Be fast, even
while standing still! Line of chance, line of hips,
line of flight. Don't arouse the General in yourself!
Not an exact idea, but just as idea (Deleuze and
Guattari, 1987, p 27)

Parents as lines of flight: BwOs

Because Thomas is like he is, sometimes, it makes me feel like a freak or there is something wrong with me. The other day in the supermarket, it felt difficult, he was looking a bit more drugged up than normal. I'm so used to having everything just right – I've always done well. At the end of the day, though, my view is that there is no such thing as normality. This idea of normal is what you set out; it's very oppressive how it works (Rebecca Greenwood).



Parents as lines of flight: BwOs

The will to be against really needs a body that is completely incapable of submitting to command. It needs a body that is incapable of adapting to family life, to factory discipline, to the regulations of a traditional sex life, and so forth. (If you find your body refusing these 'normal' modes of life, don't despair – realize your gift!) (Hardt and Negri 2000: 216, cited in Shildrick and Price, 2005/2006)



Becoming-parents

I'm not saying I'm embarrassed because I'm not ... perhaps its because I've not accepted it myself yet, I don't know, I don't quite know what it is but ... some people aren't bothered about disability but I am, sometimes. (Rebecca Greenwood).



Becoming-parents

I am coping. I do one thing at a time, one day at a time. I do not make huge plans, I don't expect certain things. If we overcome a hurdle then great but they'll be something else around the corner (Cheryl Smith, mother of Alex who has been labelled as having autism).

Becoming-parents

I have this booklet written by the mother of a special needs child. It's called Welcome to Holland. She talks about the wonderful dreams we attach to pregnancy, birth and having the child and likens it to going on a journey to Italy. It's what you've always dreamt of, you get on the plane and you're all excited. And then you get on this plane after a couple of hours later or whatever, you've now landed in Holland. And you were expecting this fantastic place, Italy, and you're just so disappointed. But if you look carefully and don't let go of Italy you'll see the beauty that's in Holland, the beautiful tulips, the canals. It will have certain things Italy may never have. You'll meet people that you wouldn't meet if you were going to Italy. And you might not get Italian wine but, hey, they've got some really beer in Holland (Rebecca Greenwood).

An epistemology of becoming

- Work with uncertainty
- Give up on Subjects embrace subjects
- Do not impose ready made Subjects
- Think of becoming rather than being
- Remember those feelings when we don't belong? So why not become...



photo
07

Methodology as central to a values based action research approach

- Notion of working participatively with marginalised lends itself to innovative methodologies.
- Photo- elicitation, photo voice and other visual methods used in pursuit of 'giving voice'.
- But we do need to have a rigorous approach to methods we use in CP

The growth of the visual method

- Much interest in visual culture, visual anthropology and ways of utilising the visual in research
- However, much critical gaze upon this growth: ‘the privileging of the linguistic model in the study of the representation has led to the assumption that visual artefacts are fundamentally the same-----as any other cultural text’ (Evans and Hall, 1999, p.2)
- ‘We need a consideration of what is not being said’ (Stronach et al, 2007)

ESM METHOD

- A week in the life of
- Mobile phone technology
- Placing in context
- Series of alarms
- Photography
- Voice recordings
- Questions
- Participants





A WAY FORWARD...

- The development of ESM... Combination of the visual and words
- Emotions, motivations, cognitive processes and visual experiences captured. (Delle Fave, 2007)
- Photography revealing 'real, flesh and blood life' (Rose, 2007)
- Audience bear witness to life, participants given an opportunity to reflect. (Rose, 2007)
- Ethics as particularly important. (Rose, 2007)
- Haworth (2007) developed ESM into a project

The photo-ethnographic project for members of Social Change and Well Being

- Based on the work of Haworth (2007) a group of us utilised an experience sampling method (ESM) extending digital images (from mobile phones) with reflections on the method.
- 1 week project: 8 signals throughout the day and photographs were taken along with questions around enjoyment, activity, interest, challenge, skills, visual interest and happiness.
- ESM capture things as occur so no memory distortion (Della Fave, 2007)
- Audio recordings at times of bleep could also be recorded
- Group of researchers included professors, project managers, administrators, researchers, PhD students and lecturers.



THE DATA

- Made into posters
- Data collection book
- Exhibition

*Exhibition: Tapping into Visual Worlds at
Research Institute for Health and Social Change
Conference, Manchester Metropolitan University 4-
5 July 2007*

Visual alongside other forms of data?

- Participants reactions and reflections varied
- ‘ the output others will see is a simple form of voyeuristic art that will only act in a limited way as catalyst for ideas about environment and well-being but won’t relate to the subject’
- ‘I did not enjoy taking part in the project- for practical, personal and epistemological reasons..... I would have preferred to have been in control of when/where to record my states of well being’.

IMMEDIATE REFLECTIONS:



I'll take more photographs now to capture my life.
the phone watching me made me do more work!

I should spend less time watching TV!
not at all rewarding for me
got on my nerves explaining it to people
surprise at my use of time
stressful
could be used to appreciate different things in life
disempowering
really enjoyed it
voyeurism
Reflections
tedious
intrusive
disruptive irritating inconvenient exposed life
interesting questioning your own life
paranoid about missing beeps didn't feel comfortable
stronger memory of experiences that week
lack of control questions too restrictive
new way of looking at my time
I only truly relaxed after 9.30 pm
when I knew there would be no more alarms.
most people intrigued
questions a bit vague and irrelevant
started off enthusiastic
a great way to see what I'm doing in my life!
missed it at the end
catalyst for ideas
good time span
it showed me that I operate on several levels and that deeper feelings affect my surface mood

Reflections

- 'I really enjoyed it and it made me question what I do with my life.....would be good for breaking down racial barriers --- breaking down the 'them and us' mentality.
- 'showed me that I operate on several levels and that deeper levels affect my surface mood. I think this has given me some information about how to monitor and manage my wellbeing for myself. I also realise that much of my emotional life is outside my control'.
- I think that using photography as a research tool is very useful as it provides a rich evidence base of what activities are done over time but I am not convinced that the context in which we use it as a stand alone form of data collection is as effective as when it is used in conjunction with other forms of data collection'.
- 'Questions seemed irrelevant – open questions would have been more useful. Two layers of feeling – enduring ones like happiness really did not change with task or time and superficial ones induced by the activity – the questions did not pick up.

More reflections

- It has made me think more about the interpersonal aspects of my work the questions did not always record the social aspects of the activity’.
- ‘I did cheat but by not doing something I didn’t play a computer game all week.... So the phone was watching me!
- This project felt more like work and felt invasive- to have my life exposed and discussed upon/

REFLECTIONS: 6 MONTHS LATER...

Raising awareness of the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life:

focus on life, daily patterns etc.

Bearing Witness: what our own lives actually are rather than what we think they are. Choices of what to do and what not to do. Justifications.

Understanding Reliance: on technology, relationships, particular life-styles.

The 'Not me-ness': Life not accurately portrayed. Time missed. Out of character activity. Use of narrative to build more complete picture.

Recognising your place in space

and time: connectedness to environment, context, situations, events, people. Micro-actions. Constitutional of identity. Visual acted as pertinent reminder of the week.

Different Faces: visibility of different roles. Individually and collectively. Home / work balance.

Intrusiveness: Breaking flow of activity, work intruding into weekend, revealing a private life.

A disappearing life: documenting life.

Value of reflexivity

- Pink (2001) advocates a reflexive approach towards the collation and analysis of visual data – not to ‘translate visual evidence into verbal knowledge’ but to explore the relationship between the visual and other.
- Bernstein (2004) points out that ‘all who set about interpreting any work of art are carrying what might be termed ‘iconoclastic baggage’
- Ruby (2005) calls for attention to social processes surrounding visual objects – a need to ask the same critical question of the eye as the voice

Power of the image

- Rose (2001) talks about three stages of image – the production, the image and the audience
- Which are being attended to in visual research?
- Photos can only be ‘compressed performances’ (Pinney, 2004)
- The mimetic quality of photographs can pose a trap (Piper and Frankham, 2007) posing as singular truths whereas other forms of data move subject positions around

A benign method ?

- Most researchers in this project had prior experience of participatory methodologies
- Some dropped out before the end of the project
- Exposure and record of work or home life seemed too visible
- Useful developmental and/or therapeutic value for some
- Notions of voice being facilitated by the visual problematized here

Issues for consideration

- ‘Confidentiality and anonymity
- Inclusion of power as a highly relevant issue in this work
- Internal narratives (the content) needs also an external narrative (a consideration of the social context that produced it) Banks (2001)
- Using images without commentary can be a ‘false trap’- no more authentic than oral voice.
- Myers (2001) notes images should be seen as unrelentingly and unquestionably social, located in specific, historically constituted worlds’ (p.54)

Inconclusions ?

Appuradurai (1986) calls for a recognition of the
'intercalibration of the biographies of biographies
of persons and things' as things have a social life

Innovative methodologies have a place but we
need to acknowledge that all views are from
somewhere (Nagel)

LEGACY:

- more photographs of personal life
- crossover personal to work life documentation
- change in way visual methodology used in current work
- looking for the missing bits of life and seeking them elsewhere
- inspired new projects using visual methods
- curiosity of others in what we were doing, research came into lives of friends and family
- inspiring others to take more photographs of every day life
- generated critique conceptually, ethically, practically
- generated joint working sessions, paper writing, decision making
- changed perceptions of each other