Imagining Resistance?

Reflecting on the Role of Creative Practice in Facilitating Young People's Capacity to Represent and Document Their Own Experiences of Resistance

Becky Warnock, Kristine Langhoff, and Camille Warrington

Imagining Resistance?

Reflecting on the Role of Creative Practice in Facilitating Young People's Capacity to Represent and Document Their Own Experiences of Resistance

Becky Warnock
Kristine Langhoff
Camille Warrington

"By beginning with a method that centred on photography and ending with a project that includes visual imagery in myriad forms, we are perhaps embracing the nature of an art form that is continuously re-inventing itself."

While "resistance" is often used to describe "fighting back" against oppression and subjugation, for young people the word resistance is often used by safeguarding professionals to refer to negative, disruptive behaviours rather than evidence of their creativity, agency and strength in the face of oppression. In this paper, we share findings and reflections from *Imagining Resistance*, a three-year multi-disciplinary project that explored how young people in England (n=20, aged 13–25) who have experienced sexual abuse, violence and exploitation engage in processes and acts of resistance. *Imagining Resistance* set out to utilise photovoice (Wang and Burris 1997), a qualitative research method centred on photography, in a series of creative workshops with young people. However, our approach changed over the course of the project, influenced by O'Neill's (2012) concept of "ethno-mimesis", which involves collecting ethnographic data alongside the creation of visual and poetic responses to prompts offered within flexibly structured creative workshop settings. This shift occurred as the young people pushed back, resisting the intended methodology while remaining open to other creative arts methods. This enabled us to think more critically about how the use of participatory and creative arts methods can facilitate emancipatory research practices that are responsive to young people's developing understanding of resistance and their experiences of reimagining resistance as a fluid, generative and hopeful collective endeavour.

Keywords: participation, agency, resistance, co-production, photovoice

Introduction

Imagining Resistance was a project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council that explored resistance with young people affected by sexual abuse and exploitation. The project was led by an interdisciplinary team comprising Professor Kristine Langhoff and Dr. Camille Warrington, both social scientists with experience of youth work practice, and Becky Warnock, a visual artist with experience of engaging young people in socially engaged artworks. Over the course of three years, the project team worked with (n=20) young people across the UK who had experienced sexual violence and exploitation to understand what the word resistance meant to them. We also aimed to explore the possibility that the term offered something different from the current available discourses used to frame young people's experiences of exploitation and their responses to interventions by professionals within safeguarding systems.

The word "resistance" has multifarious meanings; it is often used to describe the strength and hope inherent in the collective actions taken by people fighting back against oppression and subjugation (Caygill 2013). Whilst much of the focus within resistance studies is on collective action, there is also a substantial body of research that links individual resistance to larger scale social processes of resisting oppression (Vinthagen and Johansson 2013). However, when used to describe both the individual and collective actions of young people deemed at risk of harm, it often has negative connotations when they "resist" help, resist engagement or reject participating in activities that are considered positive by professionals and adults in their lives who believe they know best how to keep young people safe.

The *Imagining Resistance* research project sought to address some of the gaps that remain in relation to making connections between what is understood about the power and political importance of resistance movements throughout history and the lived experiences (Scott, 1985; Seymour 2006) of young people whose simultaneous resistance to interpersonal violence and the interventions designed to help them continue to confound us (Munford and Sanders 2017). We planned to use image-making as a tool for working with young people to understand and collectively make sense of the many ways in which they engaged in acts of resistance. This included acts that were intentional and overt, as well as more subtle or covert efforts to push back against feeling powerless and controlled by others. To do this, we initially intended to

utilise photovoice, a creative visual and participatory research methodology, culminating in a project exhibition and a series of short films to showcase the project findings. However, the young participants made it clear very early on that this was not how they wanted to work and that they were not interested. In response, we leaned into a more fluid process, drawing on ideas from photovoice, broader artist practices, and engaged in a reflexive learning process together. Together we made a series of zines, a protest quilt and a film.

In this paper, we explore how a careful attunement to the embodied, felt sense of resistance (Johnson 2022) informed our understanding of how young people can make sense of their own acts of resistance (i.e. the substantive focus of the project). We connect this learning to the methodological insights gleaned from the project in relation to the challenges of (and resistance to) photovoice, its relationship to broader socially engaged arts practice, and our intention to capture the "feeling" (Lloyd 2022) of a participatory project.

Background

In the last decade, child sexual exploitation (CSE) has become highly topical, with a number of high-profile cases positioning the issue at the forefront of political and public interest. The public discourse around these cases routinely reveals a widespread lack of public understanding of both the nature and scale of the problem (Lefevre et al. 2018). Despite public interest, political anxiety and professional focus on CSE and other forms of extra-familial harm faced by young people (Firmin et al. 2022), social workers, youth workers and other professionals still struggle to identify effective approaches to working with young people. Specifically, it has been challenging for professionals working with young people to develop both creative and supportive approaches that simultaneously focus on young people's safety and connection to the community, and affirm the idea that they matter (Billingham and Irwin-Rogers 2022). In part, this is a result of policy and practice landscapes that continually privilege behavioural interventions targeted at individual young people, obscuring the social conditions of abuse they experience (Spicer 2020; Owens and Lloyd 2023). The focus on individual behaviour can not only result in extremely punitive approaches, such as arresting victims of exploitation or requiring them to move away from familiar environments, rather than making those environments safer spaces for them (Owens and Lloyd 2023). These methods leave little conceptual space for making sense of when and how young people resist by pushing back or avoiding engagement in these behavioural

interventions. In the field of child safeguarding, the term "resistance" is most often used as a means of framing the behaviours of young people who are "resistant" to services designed to help them (Warrington 2013). Munford and Sanders (2017) have argued that safeguarding professionals continue to struggle in working with resistance in young people because they do not adequately understand it.

The Imagining Resistance Project

Imagining Resistance was a three-year project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council exploring the concept of resistance. The project worked in partnership with three English charities providing support to young people (aged 13–25) who have experienced sexual violence and/or exploitation. The first workshop involved five young women aged 16–25; the second, five young women aged 13–19; and the third, four young people aged 16–18. Our research questions were:

1. What does resistance look like and mean to young people affected by sexual abuse and exploitation?

2. How might participatory visual methods help young people represent and understand their own experience of resistance and how might they help change professional practice and shape the discourses surrounding sexual exploitation and violence?

The latter question informed our methodology, which underwent several significant changes as the project progressed. We began with the intent of using photovoice (Wang and Burris 1997), but eventually arrived at an approach that best aligns with Maggie O'Neil's (2002) concept of "ethno-mimesis", involving both ethnographic data collection by researchers and the creation of visual and poetic responses to prompts offered within flexibly structured creative workshop settings. The focus on participatory practice presented opportunities and challenges as we sought to hold on to the participatory and liberatory ethos of photovoice while increasingly moving away from its clearly defined and more rigid structure. We will now discuss this transformative journey in relation to both the participatory and creative elements of the project.

Participatory Practice with Young People

Participatory practices are essential to engaging young people labelled "resistant" to interventions designed to keep them safe (Warrington 2013). Involving young people in decision-making when those decisions directly impact them is their right (as stated in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), but also ensures that they are more likely to "buy in" to decisions that affect their lives and less likely to push back against decisions they do not feel part of or understand. The issue of participation is one that also comes up in arts and cultural organisations interested in eliciting the participation of targeted groups, often those identified as "underrepresented" or "cultural non-participants" (Jancovich and Stevenson 2021, 3). Within socially engaged arts practice, writers such as Bishop (2012), Belfiore (2018) and Matarasso (2019) have wrestled with the importance and challenges of participatory methodologies, and the issues of artists' positionality and power imbalance, some of which we will draw upon later in this paper.

As with efforts to elicit participation in social work and youth work practice, the burden of taking risks, sitting with discomfort and exerting the most effort often falls on participants who are seen through a discourse of deficit; that is, they are drawn in to engage in creative practices that we might assume they do not already have knowledge of, skill in, or exposure to. Jancovich and Stevenson (2021, 4) explain that the research and funding landscape can exacerbate this deficit discourse, as cultural participation projects are measured by the degree to which they succeed in meeting "measurable short-term outcomes" and "technical learning". This can make it difficult for researchers and arts practitioners alike to allow for failure (Rimmer 2020), to make space for participants' resistance to the creative practices planned by researchers or practitioners, and perhaps to foster new and more transformative approaches to creative and participatory practices to emerge as part of an authentic collaborative process. Lloyd summarises this challenge faced by arts engagement projects saying:

> [H]ow can the visible outcomes of projects that stem from the collaboration and participation of disadvantaged or marginalised groups steer clear of… self-congratulatory cultural and social superiority? Because when it comes to representation, the power shifts between who is being represented (passive) and who is representing (active) are key. (Lloyd 2022, 9)

This challenge resonated with our project team particularly, given the substantive focus of our project on resistance. We were aware from the outset that while we found resistance fascinating, conceptually, young people may not be interested in the idea at all; they might not find it a useful framework for their experiences, and we might not be able to distil a largely theoretical body of academic literature into a concept that would inspire their participation in the workshop process and/or the creative outputs we hoped would result from working creatively together. Mindful of our commitment to the funding body to produce project outputs, we wanted to create space within the workshops for young people to resist both the topic (resistance) and our plans to use photovoice as a guiding methodology to structure the workshops. We drew upon Johnson's (2022) notion of an embodied, "felt" sense of resistance and sought to remain carefully sensitised to the experience of being resisted, even as we sought to engage them in creative representations of their experiences of resistance in contexts of oppression and subjugation. We wanted to keep open questions regarding what we asked them to participate in, and the value of that participation for each of them. We also wanted to avoid idealising the process of collaborative working; rather, we used our central concept of "resistance" as an anchor throughout the project, allowing us to feel sensitised to the pressure and discomfort of experiencing resistance from young people.

For a project originally structured around photo-elicitation and taking images, we ended up with surprisingly few images, and even fewer that obviously or directly represented resistance. by moving slowly and intentionally away from the framework provided by photovoice as a methodology (Wang and Burris 1997), we were able to explore the possibilities within the broad range of participatory practices available to us through the use of creative methods. In doing so, we exchanged a "deficit approach" described above (Jancovich and Stevenson 2021) for an "asset-based approach", starting from the assumption that young people already have inherent creative skills, interests, and practices of their own. Below we describe the dilemmas and turning points that enabled us – collectively, as researchers, practitioners, youth work organisations and young people – to incrementally and modestly develop new skills and a shared conceptualisation of what acknowledging and celebrating young people's resistance has to offer.

The Photovoice Methodology

The community-based participatory research method referred to as photovoice, developed in the mid-1990s by Caroline Wang and colleagues (Wang and Burris 1994; 1997), is rooted in social constructivism, feminist theory and the theoretical literature on education for critical consciousness. This includes the work of Freire (1970), who believed that visual images were useful in helping people to think critically about the political and social influences in their lives (Wang and Burris 1997). The approach has received growing attention in recent decades for its adaptability and its capacity to provide participants with a sense of ownership of the ways in which their communities and lived experiences are represented (Wang and Burris 1997). It is a term that intentionally emphasises the role of participants as "subject-collaborators" (Harper 2012), first in creating images and then in interpreting them. The focus on participation at both stages is what sets it apart from other photo-elicitation methods, which may only draw in research participants at the point of interpretation (Mannay 2016). Photovoice often involves structured photo-elicitation interviews as a means of surfacing participants' ability to tell stories about their experiences to influence how an issue with which they have first-hand experience is understood more widely. As such, photovoice seeks to empower participants beyond the research process itself by engaging them to consider their experiences in – and relationship with – wider society (Rose 2016).

This was particularly salient for the *Imagining Resistance* project, as young people who have experienced CSE and abuse often have ideas regarding safety, risk and victimisation that differ significantly from the professionals who design and deliver interventions to keep them safe (Jago et al. 2011; Hickle and Hallett 2016). Research on resistance in other fields has been criticised for focusing primarily on power and romanticizing resistance. We felt that photovoice, as a participatory creative method, would allow us to better facilitate young peoples' own creative expressions and interpretations of resistance. This would thus reduce the potential for the oversimplification and romanticisation of outsider perspective and analysis. We also identified photovoice, in part, because photography as a medium could help us avoid binaries and surface the ambivalent and contradictory emotions that may characterise young people's lived experiences (Rose 2016). We wanted to allow young people to consider the full range of safety strategies they had developed to resist – both healthy and unhealthy, destructive and regenerative.

We began with the intention of first using photo-elicitation to gain an understanding of the "issue": to build camera skills with participants through workshop activities, to use photo dialogues to delve deeper into their specific understanding of some of the discourses surrounding CSE (that participants may be aware of or exposed to), as well as to engage in mapping activities to understand the services they interacted with. We planned to then support each participant to create a photo story that represents what they wanted to say. However, as we introduced ourselves to participants in the first workshop, it became apparent that this was not going to work as planned when one of the young women loudly announced that she did not like photography. This challenged us from the outset to critically examine the role of our chosen methodology in relation to participatory practice and the tensions inherent in trying to meet the competing needs of researchers, funders, youth workers, artists, and young people.

Though widely used and praised by social science researchers, we are not the first to question the inherent role of photovoice in facilitating genuine participatory practice. Sandlin, Szkupinski Quiroga, and Hammerand (2018) describe first-hand the experience of a project "failure" to meet its intended goal. In their project, competing pressures of funders and disciplinary priorities (i.e. the value of social science research versus aesthetics), and the failure to address the multitude of ethical dilemmas related to power dynamics, ultimately prevented them from achieving their goals of working in a truly emancipatory and participatory way with young participants in their research. They reflected that "participatory processes such as photovoice may assist in producing new knowledges rather than revealing local 'reality'" (2018, 64) and challenged researchers using this method to recognise when projects intended to "empower" youth instead end up seeking to "domesticate and train them instead" (2018, 65). The challenges they experienced are echoed in the wider literature. In a review of photovoice in public health research, Catalani and Minkler (2010) noted that the early work of Wang and colleagues remained influential, with projects largely characterised as initiated and facilitated by researchers, and participatory practices beginning at the point when a project was planned and ready for implementation (i.e. it was time to start taking photographs with a predetermined purpose or focus). Only 27% (n=10) of the studies they reviewed sought to engage participants beyond taking and interpreting images (Catalani and Minkler 2010). *Imagining Resistance* began on a similar trajectory. We began the project with research council funding to answer a set of predetermined research questions and methodological approach, and thus entered into an

unequal relationship with the participants who were being asked to help us answer our questions using our methods. In addition to the power imbalance inherent in the research relationship, these young participants were also simultaneously subject to unequal power relationships with many other adults in their lives, including parents, social workers and youth workers who facilitated their engagement. This was evident several weeks into the second workshop when one young participant spoke about her enjoyment of organised sports. When asked about her involvement, she shrugged, explaining that she had to come to our workshops now, so couldn't play on her sports team anyway.

In a project exploring resistance, we were attuned to observing and identifying possible sites or moments of resistance that might become evident in young people's lives as they engaged with us during the workshops. However, it was not until reflecting on the first series of workshops that we were able to conceptualise or reframe some of the young people's reactions and behaviours to the workshop activities as strategies of resistance. Through the conceptual framing of the project as one primarily about resistance, we perhaps felt more compelled to give young people space when they pushed back against our plans and ideas during the project. Rather than seeing their rejection of the process as evidence of the challenges of working with young people, we began to consider the limitations of the methodology as we understood it, and drew upon a wider body of research that critically examines the use of creative participatory methods to better understand how our project might require further innovation and change.

Photovoice – The Crack Up?

> *One should for example be able to see that things are hopeless, and yet be determined to make them over.* F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up

Wang and Burris (1997) coined the term "photovoice" for their participatory photo elicitation methodology in the early 1990s, before smartphones and access to photography required materials that were not universally accessible (one had to own or have access to a camera, film and professional printers). Fifteen years later, a UK survey found that 90% of children had their own smartphone by the age of 11 (PA Media 2020). While access to technology remains unequal and dependent on socio-economic status (Childmind 2020), camera phones are now a part of daily life for most young people,

particularly in the UK, regardless of socio-economic background. The cost of compact cameras[1] is also rising rapidly, as their market is increasingly taken over by camera phones. Why would people need to carry to cameras when the best camera is the one that they have with them all the time? Many young people communicate regularly via images, either made by themselves as a way of documenting and sharing their lives, or through GIFs, emojis or other externally created visual content. Jurgenson (2019, 13) refers to this phenomenon as "social photography, where millions of people were suddenly taking, sharing, and viewing each other's photos as part of everyday communication". As a result, the concept of creating imagery to tell a story or articulate ideas is no longer new and novel to young people, including our project participants. They are developing a visual language that narrates their lives (Jurgenson 2019), but one that is perhaps an uncritical curation or an idealised version and fails to represent the complexity and nuance of their experiences. We were thus challenged to find new ways of supporting the development of critical thinking skills that would enable new ways of seeing the social, political, and economic issues in their environment (Freire 1970); only then could we ascertain the utility of resistance as a dynamic and effective concept in facilitating individual and collective agency, power and resilience.

In many of the workshop sessions, young people resisted each of the more traditional photovoice activities either directly, by clearly stating that they didn't want to take part in that prompt, or indirectly – by simply not doing it. They described how they struggled to make imagery that they found interesting without including themselves or others in the work (we had agreed to participant anonymity for safeguarding purposes). This is interesting on two levels; first, that participants struggled to depict their lives without creating traditional or formal portraiture, even though they often used informal imagery to represent their lives via their phones. Being asked to do so in a capacity that perhaps felt more formal (e.g. as part of an organised photography workshop) proved challenging for them, which shows the cultural influence of social photography upon them (Jurgenson 2019). Secondly, young people were uninterested in our offers to "teach" or share tips on how to develop these skills. According to Jurgenson, "social photos are a means of communication, and the
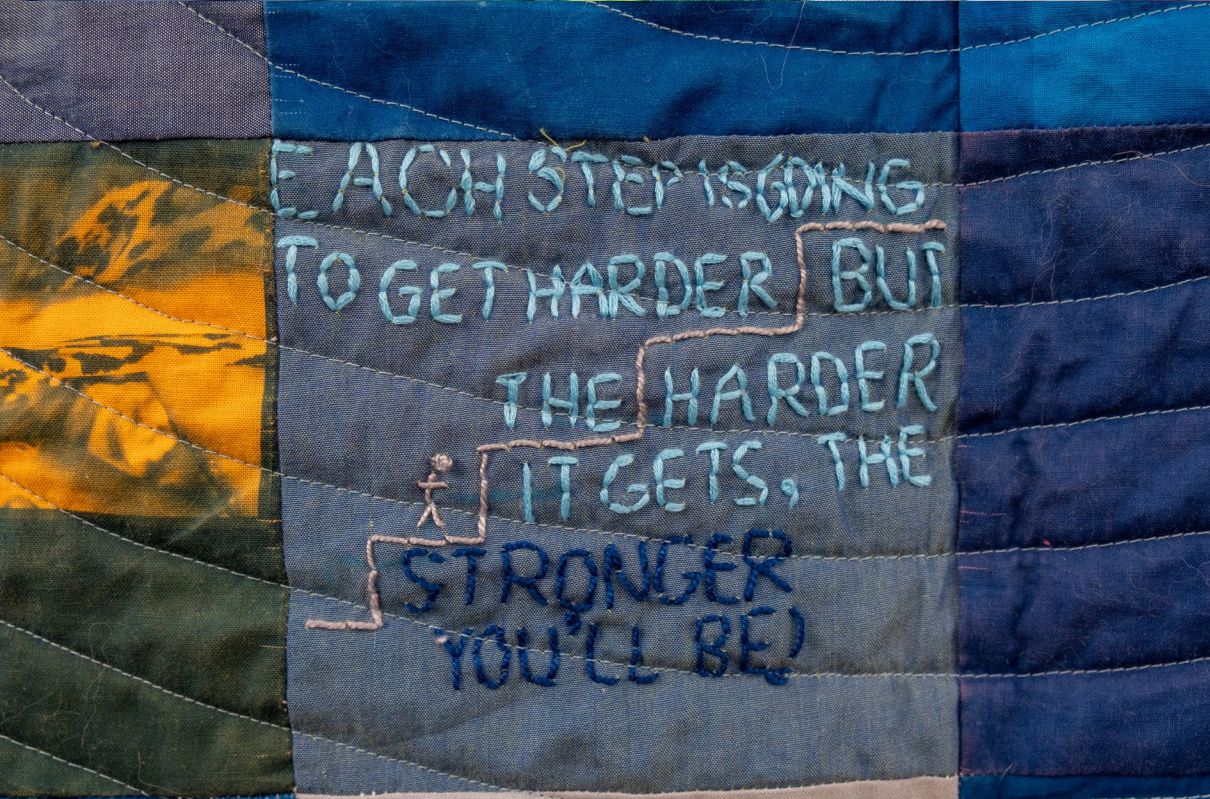
---

1 Compact cameras are often recommended for use in photovoice projects, as they allow participants to create imagery removed from the sharing functions of their mobile phones. This allows more space for the informed consent processes that are key to the ethical approval of the work. It is also an important equalling action, which does not emphasise any disparities in socio-economic privilege. Before the rise of camera phones, compact cameras were often chosen due to limited budgets and difficulties in accessing analogue film processing.

dichotomies of amateur versus professional and digital versus analog matter less for the social photo that the relations between power, identity, and reality" (Jurgenson 2019, 12). Indeed, these dichotomies did not matter to the young people who pushed back against our prompts; in doing so, they were asserting their own understanding of what imagery might be for and how they wanted to represent their lives. They were also indicating their capacity for self-curation, and how they could influence the way their experiences were captured and shared with others. By allowing space for their creativity and agency, we were able to continue working together beyond the original project end dates for the purpose of creating several unplanned creative outputs including a project film and a quilt inspired by the long history of collectively stitched protest banners.

Artist Reflections

We then began to draw upon skills and techniques from other creative practices. Though not something I [first author, Becky Warnock] had taught or used with groups before, I had been experimenting with printmaking in my studio, using a variety of approaches that required minimal specialist equipment. One simple and accessible approach to mono-printing uses oil pastels and other mark-making tools to "imprint" a relief of an image onto paper – a technique I invited the young people to try out, using existing images from their mobile phones that they felt represented their ideas of resistance. This approach to image making has the additional benefit of concealing faces and identities by obscuring the details of the images, an act entirely controlled by the young people. Participants easily selected images from their archives that said what they wanted to say – photobooth-style imagery of one young person with a boyfriend her friends disapproved of, one young woman's portrait of herself pregnant, another posing with friends. Young people were quick to identify ways in which they used their bodies to resist in their photos and seemed keen to use this more playful approach to image making. These "social photos" – both unprofessional and informal in their appearance allowed us to communicate and express ideas in ways that a more formal approach to photography, or at the least the structured activities devised earlier in the process, could not. Stepping out of my comfort zone as a "professional" and leaning into techniques that I was experimenting with also had the benefit of further levelling out the power dynamics between adult facilitators and young people; we were learning together, collectively taking on the creative risk of trying something new, with no certainty about how it might work out.

Images by Ali Mohammed.

mood

EACH STEP IS GOING TO GET HARDER, BUT THE HARDER IT GETS, THE STRONGER YOU'LL BE

Risk is an inherent part of participatory arts projects, which, according to Huybrechts (2014), are often characterised by "risk" confrontations between differences in disciplines and perspectives. In this project, leaning into the risk confrontation between facilitators and young people created space to further explore the substantive focus of the project (resistance), particularly with younger workshop participants for whom the abstract concept remained hardest to grasp. For example, the use of mono-printing afforded the best opportunity to experiment with ascribing symbolic meaning to images as they were using images they were already familiar with. It also aligns with working practices taken up by many visual artists who now function as creative polymaths, applying new modes of working that change and remain flexible to responding in different contexts.

Embracing The Polymath: Participation and Messy Aesthetics

Research on photovoice demonstrates the myriad benefits to researchers as a methodology that is both participatory and able to create the conditions for developing rich, nuanced and insightful responses from participants. The methodology itself is designed to be responsive and adaptive, but can become stymied if we hold tightly to the structure it provides, even when the camera is not interesting to young people. In this instance, where the value of a project lies in meeting research objectives (set by funders and/ or researchers), projects can become at risk of primarily benefiting those (i.e. the researchers, funders or institutional partners) who already hold epistemic power (Fricker 1999) and may lead to projects that are unable to fully reflect the nuance and creativity of the participants (Sandlin et. al. 2018), or perhaps even extractive and exploitative of the participants. As the workshops progressed, we continued to reflect on and wrestle with the degree to which a project such as this, with the complex and competing expectations of funders, youth work organisations, researchers, artists, and young people, could maintain the participatory ethos embedded in photovoice while also veering away from using the method altogether. These reflections highlighted the tensions inherent in socially engaged arts practice more generally; in my [first author] wider socially engaged art practice I develop projects based on the idea of creating an "exchange" (Warnock 2023) between the participants and myself, which explicitly acknowledges the goal of being mutually beneficial to both artist and participants, ideally from the early stages of the project planning. However, in this project, participants were not involved in the initial

development of the project; they were recruited into an already formed project. While we intentionally held back from planning any project outputs, as these would always be decided together, it was not until we understood young people's reluctance to engage in photovoice activities as a form of embodying and enacting resistance that we saw the need to remain open for the project to change as it went along (Fletcher et al. 2008).

One key change we considered throughout the project was how to balance participation with the aesthetics and technical skills of image-making. It is rare in photovoice research to teach "participants to think like photographers and artists" (Sandlin et. al. 2018, 60), perhaps because the researchers who draw on this method are often not artists and the focus of their work is not artistic. In her critique of socially engaged art, Bishop (2012) reminds us that the greatest motivation for social practice is to facilitate the telling, but also the hearing, of stories told through socially engaged art. While the primary focus (both ethically and practically) was to ensure that the project was useful to the young people participating, we wanted to facilitate both the telling *and* the hearing of their stories by a wider audience. Rejecting the idea that socially engaged or relational projects can be judged purely on ethical rather than aesthetic standards, Bishop encourages us us to embrace questions of artistic value that enable community arts to engage with the wider public audience they seek to reach and influence.

Most practicing visual artists are no longer restricted to one form of making; photographers who develop audio works, filmmakers who make prints or painters who write are commonplace. By mirroring these practices in the workshops, we encouraged participants to think of themselves as artists and creatives with ideas and expertise. It also built a sense of identity and pride, which is particularly important when working with marginalised community groups, many of whom will have struggled with identity politics and how they are represented and seen in wider society. We were careful not to think of the project as "giving a voice" to young people who already have a voice, but as providing new ways for others to access and listen to them. Couldry said

> listening is not attending to sound, it's paying attention to registering people's use of their voice in the act of giving an account of themselves. This is clear in art because giving an account can take any form – it can be pasting a photograph on a wall, a graffiti, a walk through a space… It cannot be reduced to sound. (Couldry in Farinati and Firth 2017, 59)

Leaning into the possibilities of utilising wider mixed media practices and seeking to create projects that develop the participants as creative multi-faceted polymaths (via photography or any approach that feels most appropriate to the development of young people's identities as artists and creatives) can support our shared undertaking in draw common endeavour to draw attention to the ways that young people use their voices to give an account of themselves.

In the end, there are very few images from the project that represent young people's understanding and experience of resistance. However, we took a collective journey in which being sensitised to resistance facilitated the evolution of creative methodologies while still allowing us to answer our original research questions. Together we developed a coherent conceptualisation of resistance as weightlessness, freedom, agency, fun, mischief, power, playfulness, and self-preservation as the capacity to push back against overwhelming expectations and the responsibility that adults place on young people at risk of harm to keep themselves safe. Importantly, in two of the three workshops we also arrived at a place where the young people demonstrated their power and agency by shaping the final project outputs, including a film, with each individual deciding upon their contribution to the film. This process offered opportunities for self-curation, where young people who had not shaped the original framing of the project (i.e. research questions, substantive focus on resistance) were encouraged to lean into contemporary modes of capturing images through the use of social photos, while also being offered new ways of expressing creativity, agency and control over how they were represented in the project.

Conclusion

Theorist Rosa Luxemburg has described resistance movements as both fluid and spontaneous, involving dynamic responses to environmental conditions by a collection of individuals who sometimes act unconsciously and inconsistently, but with the energy and transformative power to change both present and future political landscapes (Luxemburg and Buhle 2006). In these instances, resistance builds slowly (Caygill 2013) and collectively to facilitate change (Butler 2015). In this project, as with organised activist groups and political resistance movements, the process of re-imagining resistance was a fluid, continuously changing collective endeavour. *Imagining Resistance* set out to explore young people's experiences of resistance, both in terms of the "felt

sense" (what they felt when they were engaging in acts of resistance) and the value of framing young people's efforts to self-preserve and assert their agency while feeling constrained, oppressed, or abused. We planned to use photovoice with the aim of bringing arts and humanities perspectives to a field generally dominated by social science and professional discourses of evidence-based practice, child protection, safeguarding, and risk. We wanted to experiment with the utility of the concept for the young people participating in the project, but we also wanted to understand how creative arts methodologies might (or might not) facilitate that conceptualisation. Photovoice, as a specific, structured methodology, might have provided some containment of the anxiety and messiness of participatory research and/or arts engagement, but had we stuck more rigidly to the approach, we would have risked also stripping away the all-important feelings of connection, unexpected joy and resistance. To reduce the arts purely to a form of documentation or a research tool that provides access to the "real" work is both reductive and risks instrumentalising the work of everyone involved.

When talking about communicating the value of community arts practices, Lloyd (2022) described the importance of conveying both the content and the feeling of being involved in the project. It was with this in mind that we decided not to use the images created via traditional photo-elicitation activities in the workshops for a public exhibition as we had originally planned. Instead, as a means of capturing the unexpected learning within the project and the sense of doing it together, the emerging project film intends to showcase our work together as creative polymaths; combining documented moments from the workshops, interviews, and creative writings by both young people and artists, staged narrative scenes, the stitching of a protest banner, and abstract movement elements. It was in moving beyond photovoice that we felt most able to apply the participatory ethos and liberating values of the method. Photography – the art form at the heart of both photovoice and many other approaches to photo elicitation in social science research – has been described as a "technology of instability" (Jurgenson 2019), ever-changing by its very nature. By beginning with a method that centred on photography and ending with a project that includes visual imagery in myriad forms, we are perhaps embracing the nature of an art form that is continuously re-inventing itself.

References

Belfiore, Eleonora. 2018. "Whose cultural value? Representation, power and creative industries." *International journal of cultural policy* 26 (3): 383–397. https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2018.1495713.

Billingham, Luke, and Keir Irwin-Rogers. 2022. *Against Youth Violence: A Social Harm Perspective*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Bishop, Claire. 2012. *Artificial hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. New York: Verso Books.

Butler, Judith. 2015. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Catalani, Caricia, and Meredith Minkler. 2010. "Photovoice: A review of the literature in health and public health." *Health education & behavior* 37 (3): 424–451.

Caygill, Howard. 2013. *On resistance: A philosophy of defiance*. London: A&C Black.

Farinati, Lucia, and Claudia Firth. 2017. *The force of listening* (Vol. 6). Berlin: Errant Bodies Press.

Firmin, Carlene, Michelle Lefevre, Nathalie Huegler, and Delphine Peace. 2022. *Safeguarding Young People Beyond the Family Home: Responding to extra-familial risks and harms*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Fletcher, Harrell, Sandy Sampson, Eric Steen, Amy Steel, Cyrus Smith, Avalon Kalin, Laurel Kurtz, Katy Asher & Varinthorn Christopher. 2008. "'It can change as we go along': Social Practice in the Academy and the Community." *Art Journal* 67 (4): 92–112. https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2008.10791329.

Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin Modern Classics. London: Penguin Classics.

Fricker, Miranda. 1999. "Epistemic oppression and epistemic privilege." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy Supplementary* 25: 191–210.

Harper, Douglas. 2012. *Visual sociology*. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis.

Huybrechts, Liesbeth. 2014. *Participation is Risky. Approaches to Joint Creative Processes*. Amsterdam: Valiz.

Hickle, Kristine, and Sophie Hallett. 2016. "Mitigating harm: Considering harm reduction principles in work with sexually exploited young people." *Children & Society* 30 (4): 302–313.

Jago, Sue, Lorena Arocha, Isabelle Brodie, Margaret Melrose, Jenny J. Pearce, and Camille Warrington. 2011. *What's going on to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation? How local partnerships respond to child sexual exploitation*. Bedford: University of Bedfordshire.

Jancovich, Leila, and David Stevenson. 2021. «Cultural participation.» *Conjunctions* 7 (2): 1–8.

Johnson, Rae. 2022. *Embodied social justice*. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis.

Jurgenson, Nathan. 2019. *The social photo: On photography and social media*. London: Verso Books.

Lefevre, Michelle, Kristine Hickle, Barry Luckock, and Gillian Ruch. 2017. "Building trust with children and young people at risk of child sexual exploitation: The professional challenge." *British Journal of Social Work* 47 (8): 2456–2473.

Lloyd, Lizzie. 2022. "Art engagement." *Art Monthly* 459: 6–9.

Luxemburg, Rosa, and Paul Buhle. 2006. *Reform or revolution and other writings*. North Chelmsford: Courier Corporation.

Mannay, Dawn. 2016. *Visual, narrative and creative research methods: Application, reflection and ethics*. Milton Park: Routledge.

Matarasso, François. 2019. *A Restless Art. How Participation Won, and Why It Matters Digital Edition*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. *Viitattu* 15: 2020.

Munford, Robyn, and Jackie Sanders. 2017. "Harnessing resistance in interventions with young people." *Journal of Social Work Practice* 31 (1): 79–93.

Owens, Rachael, and Jenny Lloyd. 2023. "From behaviour-based to ecological: Multi-agency partnership responses to extra-familial harm." *Journal of Social Work* 23 (2). https://doi.org/10.1177/146801732311625

O'Neill, Maggie. 2012. "Ethno-mimesis and participatory arts." In *Advances in visual methodology*, edited by Maggie O'Neill, 153–172. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

PA Media. 2020. "Most children own mobile phone by age of seven, study finds." *The Guardian*, January 30, 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jan/30/most-children-own-mobile-phone-by-age-of-seven-study-finds.

Rimmer, Mark. 2020, 'Too big to fail? The framing and interpretation of 'success'/'failure' in cultural participation policy: a case study', *Conjunctions* 7(2). https://doi.org/10.7146/tjcp.v7i2.119747.

Rose, Gillian. 2016. *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials* (4th Edition). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Sandlin, Jennifer A., Seline Szkupinski Quiroga, and Andrew Hammerand. 2018. "Struggling to see through the eyes of youth: On failure and (un) certainty in a photovoice project." In *Creating social change through creativity: Anti-oppressive arts-based research methodologies*, edited by Moshoula Capous-Desyllas and Karen Morgaine, 57–76. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Seymour, Susan. "Resistance." *Anthropological theory* 6.3 (2006): 303–321.

Spicer, Jack. 2020. *Policing county lines: Responses to evolving provincial drug markets*. Springer Nature.

Vinthagen, Stellan, and Anna Johansson. 2013. "Everyday resistance: Exploration of a concept and its theories." *Resistance studies magazine* 1 (1): 1–46.

Wang, Caroline, and Mary Ann Burris. 1994. "Empowerment through photo novella: Portraits of participation." *Health education quarterly* 21 (2): 171–186.

Wang, Caroline, and Mary Ann Burris. 1997. "Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment." *Health education & behavior* 24 (3): 369–387.

Warrington, Camille. 2013. "'Helping me find my own way': sexually exploited young people's involvement in decision-making about their care." PhD diss., University of Bedfordshire.

Short Biographies

Becky Warnock is a Senior Lecturer on MA Photojournalism and Documentary Photography and MA Photojournalism and Documentary Photography (Online) at the London College of Communication (LCC). Becky is an artist and organiser whose work engages with the politics of representation and questions of identity. Interested in authorship, her practice is rooted in participation and community engagement. Initially trained in Drama, Applied Theatre and Education at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, Becky later reoriented her practice by studying on the online MA Photojournalism and Documentary Photography at LCC. She has developed collaborative programmes in the UK and internationally, with organisations such as Photofusion, Tate, Open Eye Gallery and PhotoVoice. Most recently, she has been exploring the language of mental health, with community groups in Hounslow and young people living in Tower Hamlets. Her work has been published in the British Journal of Photography, Photoworks Annual and various other online publications. She is currently running Terms of Engagement, a research programme of artist-led workshops with photography students and practitioners, which critically explores the language of participation.

Kristine Langhoff is a Professor of Social Work at the School of Education and Social Work, University of Sussex. Her research and practice interests include understanding young people's experiences of extra-familial harm and collaborative, interdisciplinary service responses to keep young people safe from harm. Her current research projects focus on 1) creative, participatory approaches to working with young people experiencing extra-familial harm and trauma, including sexual and interpersonal violence, and 2) trauma-informed practices and system responses for working with survivors of abuse and violence. She has trained and published extensively on exploitation and trauma.

Camille Warrington is Associate Professor at the Safer Young Lives Research Centre, University of Bedfordshire. Her work focuses on the rights of children and young people in the field of interpersonal violence and related vulnerabilities. She predominantly uses creative and participatory approaches to explore children's experiences of formal and informal support – including in the spheres of welfare, justice, family and community. Her research seeks to model and promote ethical and participatory approaches that span research, policy and service responses, and to challenge oppressive practice. She has a particular interest in understanding the interdependency between children's rights to protection and participation, and brings 20 years' experience of working directly with children and young people in academic and social care settings.