

Est.
1841

YORK
ST JOHN
UNIVERSITY

Haines Lyon, Charlotte ORCID

logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8341-744X>, Clare, Isobel, Holmes, Amy and Dobson, Tom ORCID logoORCID:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5354-9150> (2025) Navigating Co-creation in Participatory Ethnographic Youth Research: Flexibility, Intensity, and an Ethical Path Towards Meaningful Collaboration. In: Sage Methods. SAGE (In Press)

Downloaded from: <https://ray.yorks.ac.uk/id/eprint/11131/>

The version presented here may differ from the published version or version of record. If you intend to cite from the work you are advised to consult the publisher's version:

Research at York St John (RaY) is an institutional repository. It supports the principles of open access by making the research outputs of the University available in digital form. Copyright of the items stored in RaY reside with the authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full text items free of charge, and may download a copy for private study or non-commercial research. For further reuse terms, see licence terms governing individual outputs. [Institutional Repository Policy Statement](#)

RaY

Research at the University of York St John

For more information please contact RaY at ray@yorks.ac.uk

Sage Research Methods Data and Research Literacy: Case Study

Authors: Please complete the white fields below. Direct any questions to your editorial contact.

Case Study Title <i>Maximum of 20 words.</i> <i>All principal words capitalized</i>		Navigating Co-Creation in Participatory Ethnographic Youth Research: Flexibility, Intensity, and an Ethical Path Towards Meaningful Collaboration.
1	Name	Charlotte Haines Lyon
	Author email	c.haineslyon@yorks.ac.uk
	Affiliation, country	York St John University, UK
	SAGE Author ID	[office use only]
Author bio. <i>Bios will not be copy-edited; please ensure they are correct.</i>		Charlotte Haines Lyon is an Associate Professor in Education at York St John University, with a background in Youth and Community Work. Democracy runs through her research, with an emphasis on different voices impacting research, policy, and practice. Charlotte's PhD explored democratic parent engagement in a primary school, and in recent years she has carried out various young people as researchers' projects including Toilet Talk in which school pupils design and conduct research projects about their school toilets, which they use as a basis to negotiate improved policy and practice. <i>I have published with Sage and want to use my existing bio</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I have published with Sage and want to update my bio</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>I have not published with Sage before</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
2	Name	Isobel Clare
	Author email	i.clare1@yorks.ac.uk
	Affiliation, country	York St John University, UK
	SAGE Author ID	[office use only]
Author bio.		Isobel Clare recently completed a PhD in Social Sciences at York St John University, which focused on women's experiences of county lines in North Yorkshire. In her current role as a Postdoctoral Research Assistant with the

<p><i>Bios will not be copy-edited; please ensure they are correct.</i></p>		<p>Institute for Social Justice at York St John University, Isobel contributes to a project that explores co-creation with young people and addresses issues of disadvantage in education. Isobel's research interests include ethics in community research, social justice, gender, and political criminology, with a particular focus on disadvantage and vulnerability.</p> <p><i>I have published with Sage and want to use my existing bio</i> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>I have published with Sage and want to update my bio</i> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>I have not published with Sage before</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
3	Name	Amy Holmes
	Author email	a.holmes@yorks.ac.uk
	Affiliation, country	York St John University, UK
	SAGE Author ID	[office use only]
<p>Author bio.</p> <p><i>Bios will not be copy-edited; please ensure they are correct.</i></p>		<p>Amy Holmes is a lecturer in Social Sciences at York St John University. Her research focuses on community relationships in cities and on the role of alternative social provision in promoting community wellbeing. Her doctoral research explored the role of craft practices and industries in engaging with socioeconomic justice issues. As a researcher on the Door 84 project, she was interested in the community pantry and cafe as spaces for the promotion of belonging and wellbeing. She has previously worked on a project exploring the role of informal support networks in promoting paternal mental health, and considering occupational cultures in promoting positive relationships between new parents and employers.</p> <p><i>I have published with Sage and want to use my existing bio</i> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>I have published with Sage and want to update my bio</i> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>I have not published with Sage before</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
4	Name	Tom Dobson
	Author email	t.dobson@yorks.ac.uk
	Affiliation, country	York St John University, UK
	SAGE Author ID	[office use only]
<p>Author bio</p>		<p>A former secondary school English teacher, Tom Dobson is Professor of Education at York St John University. Tom seeks to promote young people's agency and voices through his research. He has published widely on: creative writing pedagogies; creative writing with children and families; the use of participatory methodologies in different settings; and the affordances of art-based research by practitioner-researchers.</p>

<i>I have published with Sage and want to use my existing bio</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>I have published with Sage and want to update my bio</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>I have not published with Sage before</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	
[office use only]	
For which student level is this case study most suitable?	Advanced Undergraduate
Method Categorisation	Qualitative
Discipline of Original Research	<i>Education [D2]</i>
Published articles based on the research project this case study reflects on.	TBC

Your case study must not exceed 5000 words. Discussion Questions, MCQs, and References do not count towards this limit.

Please ensure you have read through this template and the manuscript guidelines before you begin writing your case study and direct any questions to your editorial contact.

Abstract

*The abstract should be a concise summary of this case study. What original research is this case study based on? What aspect of the **research process**, or **specific methodological and practical challenges**, will your case study address? Who will this case study be useful for?*

*Emphasize what the reader will **learn** from reading this case study, and how they might **apply** it in their own research practice.*

*Please do **not** cite references within the abstract.*

Abstract

This case study describes the "Re-imagining Door 84" project, a participatory ethnographic research initiative conducted in collaboration with Door 84, a local youth and community centre in York.

Researchers from York St John University collaborated with young people, empowering them to design and implement their own research projects. Using methods such as surveys, interviews, and mapping exercises, the young researchers explored community relations and envisioned future possibilities for Door 84. Central to this project was the emphasis on ethical co-creation and genuine collaboration, fostering an inclusive environment where youth autonomy and agency were prioritised.

The case highlights the dynamic nature of informed consent, illustrating how trust-building through 'deep hanging out' allowed participants to engage and disengage on their own terms. This fluid participation not only respected the young researchers' autonomy but also enriched the research process, leading to more authentic and meaningful contributions. Insights from this project extend beyond Door 84, offering a broader understanding of effective participatory ethnographic research with young people.

Reflecting on the project's challenges and successes, readers will learn about the importance of flexibility, ethical engagement, and responsiveness in research. The case demonstrates the potential of participatory ethnographic research to engage positively with communities, guided by social justice and ethical principles, empowering young voices and ensuring their perspectives are represented in community narratives.

Learning Outcomes

*Learning outcomes must explain what the reader will learn from reading your case study. Readers should be learning about research **methodology, methods, and practicalities**. How will the reader be able to apply what they have learned to their own research practice?*

*Please refer to these learning outcomes when writing your case study. Your case study must satisfy each proposed outcome. It is vital that you provide **achievable and measurable** learning outcomes. Please start each learning outcome with an **action verb**.*

See the links below for guidance on writing effective learning outcomes:

- [Writing learning outcomes](#)

- [Blooms Taxonomy Action Verbs](#)

Insert **3–5** learning outcomes, **beginning with an action verb**, completing this statement:

Having read this case study, readers should be able to . . .

1. Identify key components of ethical practice in participatory ethnography with young people.
2. Explain the benefits of researcher flexibility in creating meaningful and ethical collaboration with young people.

3. Discuss different strategies for harnessing enthusiasm during high-intensity moments and ensuring data is effectively captured.

Case Study

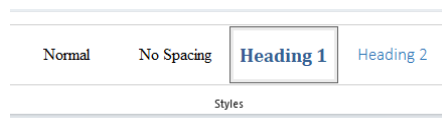
The main body of the text should be between **2,000 and 5,000 words**.

We encourage the use of headings and sub-headings to add structure to the body of your case, enhance online discoverability and make your case easier to read on screen.

Suggested top-level headings (H1s) are included below, **starting at "Project Overview and Context"**.

Note: The wording of these headings is up to your discretion, but please adhere to the guidance written in italics below each heading.

For section headings please use Word Style 'Heading 1'. For any sub-headings within sections use Word Style 'Heading 2'. To use Word styles in Microsoft Word, select the text you want to format, click the "Home" tab and then use the "Styles" pane.



Every section with a heading must be followed by a Section Summary.

Each Section Summary should consist of **3-5** bullet points, written out as **full sentences**, which summarize the key information in the section.

Project Overview and Context

Here you can include information about the focus of your research project. Why were you interested in studying this topic? In what context was this research undertaken? You may wish to begin with a brief positionality statement, succinctly articulating key aspects of your identity, life experiences, and political/theoretical beliefs.

This section should not read as a literature review but should explain the **rationale** behind your research project. In the following sections you will be concentrating on your research methodology, which is the primary focus of your case study.

Project Overview and Context

This case study discusses experiences of working with young researchers on one pathway of a multi-stream collaborative research project. Researchers from York St John University (YSJU) worked with Door 84, a local youth and community centre, to understand its relationship with the community and re-imagine its future. The 'Re-imagining Door 84' project was funded by the YSJU Institute for Social Justice. Researchers, Charlotte and Isobel, collaborated with nearly a dozen young people to design and deliver their own research projects. Charlotte used to be a youth worker, and Isobel has worked with young women in community settings. These professional experiences enabled them to develop a clear understanding of the dynamics of the youth sessions, and to foster productive relationships with the young people. therefore this was a comfortable space for them. The young researchers used methods such as surveys, interviews, and mapping exercises to explore community relations and future possibilities for Door 84. They also critically engaged with ethical issues in research practice. This case focuses on our co-creative approach to research design and data collection, with young people in the 8-17 youth group, exemplifying how principles of ethical, collaborative engagement with young people can guide effective research.

Door 84 is a community-focused charity in York, England. Unusually for English community centres, Door 84 hosts several evening clubs for young people aged 8 to 25, offering activities, like cooking, crafts, sports and games, along with trips and residential. It also provides specialised drama and play therapy sessions. Additionally, Door 84 hosts inclusive community projects like "Community Sparks," a creative café for adults with disabilities, and a community pantry and café, offering affordable food and services like debt advice. Door 84 is situated in the Groves, which is a low-income area in the Guildhall ward of York. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation show that Guildhall is amongst the three most deprived wards in York (City of York Council York Open Data, 2019). However, the Groves is surrounded by the wealthier areas of Heworth Without, and the City Centre, leading to assumptions it needs less support. Recent policy interest in 'left behind neighbourhoods' shows that economically deprived areas also face social deprivation and poorer education, health and wellbeing outcomes (APPG for Left Behind Neighbourhoods, 2023). Therefore, economic challenges in the Groves are compounded by social deprivation, but these issues receive insufficient attention because the wider city is perceived to be relatively wealthy.

We used a Participatory Ethnographic (PE) approach because the principles of PE usefully attune research practices to the unique challenges and sensitivities of marginalised groups (Cahill, 2007, p. 299). Using this methodology, we embedded social justice principles in the research process, with the aim of not only empowering young people, but also illustrating the complex community relations and often overlooked needs of the residents of the Groves.

Section summary:

1. Young researchers from Door 84's 8-17 youth group co-created research projects, demonstrating ethical co-creation and youth engagement, exemplifying engagement with ethical issues and empowering communities through participatory research. Young researchers from Door 84's 8-17 youth group co-created research projects, exemplifying engagement with ethical issues whilst empowering communities through participatory research.
2. York St John University took a collaborative approach in partnership with Door 84 to explore community relationships and envision future directions through a collaborative research approach.

Commented [A1]: More on our background.

Deleted: ,

Deleted: space

Deleted:

Deleted: .

Commented [A2]: Please remove all references to chapters and replace with case study

Commented [A3R2]: Done.

Commented [A4]: Could this be slightly truncated to avoid the repetition of 'ethical' and 'engagement'

3. The project examined complex community relations in the economically challenged Groves area, embedding social justice principles in the research process.

Research Design

Describe **how** you designed your study, and **why** you designed it that way. Explain the rationale behind any fundamental decisions you made.

- Why was the chosen research method the right choice for answering your research question?
- What type of data would your methods produce, and how did you plan to analyse the data?
- How did you ensure your research findings would be reliable and/or trustworthy?
- Etc.

In later sections you can describe any changes that were made to your original design.

Ensure that you define and explain any key terms for the reader.

Research design

Aims

The aim of this research stream was to work with young people as co-researchers to re-envision, Door 84; we recognised that young people are experts in their own lives (Kellett, 2011), and there were opportunities to further develop their skills and capacities (Dobson, 2023). This was part of a wider Community Needs Analysis project that was commissioned by Door 84. The aim of the overall project was to understand the community's engagement with Door 84 and its facilities, and to explore possible future directions for Door 84's service provision. As the Steering Group, we agreed that it was essential to centre the agency and expertise of the young people in our approach. The young people often experience marginalisation due to the socioeconomic characteristics of the area they live in, so we wanted to empower them to shape the research design and methods, as well as to conduct the project.

Participatory Ethnography

We used participatory ethnography (PE), a qualitative approach that blends well-established ethnographic methods with participatory research principles (Ntelioglou, 2015). PE prioritises collaboration between the researcher and the community being researched, emphasising co-creation of knowledge (Jull et al., 2017). This methodology resonates with Participatory Action Research, as it critically explores structural issues, visible and hidden, impacting the lives of those involved. However, participatory ethnography focuses on the collaborative, relational nature of working together (Plummer et al., 2024), rather than on action as the primary research outcome.

Some argue that ethnography is inherently participatory (Mullick et al., 2013, p. 894), as researchers must attend to relationships within the community they are based in. However, PE positions

Deleted:

participants as experts in their own lives and problematises conventional power dynamics. Participatory ethnography values "researcher transparency and reimagining participant–researcher relationships through a focus on deep hanging out" (Ntelioglou, 2015, p. 535). The goal is not only to understand the participants' experiences, but to actively involve them in the research process and recognise them as knowledge creators.

This participatory stream was one of several in the wider research project, some of which were non-participatory for various reasons. Whilst we intended to centre participatory principles from the beginning, a tension existed in that the project had already been arranged by the adult Steering Group before involving the young people. Participatory research can be criticised for lacking immediate participation and for not allowing young people to shape the project from inception (Franks, 2011, p. 23). However, Franks (2011, p. 22) acknowledges that such "pure participation" remains a "chimera, unfeasible due to academic research pressures and procedures, such as having to apply for grants and outline ethics before recruiting participants. Therefore, Franks (2011, p. 18) argues for creating "pockets of participation" in such situations, and aspects of our project can be understood as different pockets of participation. While the Steering Group developed the overall plan, the youth stream became a "pocket of participation", allowing young people to co-create within the established broader aims. This gave the young people autonomy over their projects, while being guided by the pre-established goal of understanding and re-imagining Door 84. Although we worked with two other groups, this case study focuses on the "pocket", involving the 8-17 youth group, whose attendees participated in different ways, and with different levels of participation.

PE enabled us to collaboratively devise different approaches to understanding issues that impacted both those working at and accessing Door 84, and the wider community. In turn, this helped us to understand Door 84, and to consider the community in our reimagining process. Importantly, this methodology foregrounded the community dynamics, experiences and knowledge of young people at Door 84, as well as our relationships with them. This emphasis on relationships is essential throughout the [case study](#).

Deleted: research, and throughout this chapter

Recruitment

Relationship building is central to participatory ethnography (Jupp, 2007), and it was important to invest time in building trust. We attended the youth group weekly for three months as part of "deep hanging out" (Geertz, 1998), joining in activities and getting to know the young people. Often, they would ask us who we were, why we were there, or invite us to play a game with them. We briefly explained the project and introduced the possibility of them researching with us. Several young people expressed interest, but only if they had lanyards matching ours. We liked this idea, ordered matching lanyards and stickers, and set up a table with them as we prepared to start the research. Young people would come and go, asking about what we were doing. We explained in more detail, introduced participant information and consent forms, and invited them to decorate a lanyard. The only rule was that lanyards could only be worn while researching and must be left with us when not in use, but they could keep them at the end of the project. We made clear that the young people could come and go and be involved as little or as much as they wanted, and some chose not to participate at all. We allowed young people to come to us and only asked them about participating once, if they were interested. We did not repeatedly ask them to be involved.

We did this for a few weeks and talked about ideas for research projects. Different young people came up with suggestions individually and in groups, including interpretive dance based on their experiences at Door 84, suggestion boxes, surveys in schools, and interviews with a range of people.

Some young people wanted to do different types of interviews with different questions, and it is the interviews we focus on throughout this case.

Section summary:

1. The project aim was to work with young people as researchers in order to collaboratively envision the future of Door 84.
2. We used Participatory Ethnography as a methodology to co-create knowledge, whilst focusing on collaboration and relational dynamics.
3. Although we aimed for participatory research, the overall plan was adult-led with “pockets” of youth participation.
4. Young people were recognised as experts, supporting them to drive the research with ideas like interpretive dance, suggestion boxes, surveys, and interviews.

Research Practicalities

Includes a discussion of **practical** and **ethical considerations** you had to navigate when conducting your research. Were there challenges that had to be overcome to access participants or data? Were your personal skills compatible with the research you were intending to carry out? What of time constraints, costs, and resources? What ethical considerations were essential?

Research practicalities ↓

The research process was shaped by a range of practical and ethical considerations that we approached by considering the ethical implications, and prioritising youth researcher well-being. In time-limited projects, there is sometimes a tension between collecting sufficient data for the project aims and conducting the most ethical, participant-first, research (Loveridge et al., 2024, pp. 404–405). However, being led by our ethical principles enabled us to build more genuine relationships with youth participants, which facilitated their sincere engagement in the process, allowed more young people to take part than would have otherwise, and thus produced more authentic, relevant, and trustworthy data.

Deep hanging out

Crucially, aligned with the principles of PE, we emphasised that the young people should never be forced to engage, and that their participation should stem from genuine interest rather than coercion (Cahill, 2007). This can be challenging because the line between encouragement and pressure can blur. With this in mind, we initially spent three months building rapport through “deep hanging out” (Geertz, 1998). This extended familiarisation period fostered trust with the young people, and we felt confident that they were engaging out of interest rather than coercion. The young people would sometimes decide not to participate and would engage in another activity in the youth group instead, such as building rockets. As Wogan (2004) explores, spending time to

Deleted: (832)

develop relationships and rapport with participants in participatory ethnographic work is crucial as it facilitates trust and understanding between researchers and community members. This can enrich the ethnographic insights gained from the research process by creating more informal relationships.

Despite the external timescale for our project, we prioritised trust building as an important ethical step in the research. This was a significant portion of the project considering we had less than one year to undertake the research and produce the final report. However, it was invaluable in ensuring the young people were genuinely engaged in the project, and in prioritising their voices and experiences. Although it can be challenging as researchers to work on timescales that are outside of our control, and with specific data collection goals in mind, it is crucial to enable young people to comfortably say no to engaging in research on a given day, or altogether. As ethical best practice, participatory ethnography requires researchers to give weight to their participants' voices, including when this limits, or appears to impede, data collection. Indeed, we feel that it is a positive that the young people felt comfortable engaging and disengaging with the research process on their terms, including when deciding to play football or bake brownies. This reassured us that the young people were choosing to genuinely engage, based on the rapport that was established during our period of deep hanging out. By building this trust over time, researchers enabled participants to feel more comfortable and freer to choose their level of involvement in the research, ultimately leading to more authentic interactions (Aberese-Ako, 2017).

Informed Consent

Importantly, in PE, informed consent is not a one-time event marked by signing a consent form, but a fluid, ongoing process (Miller and Boulton, 2007). Instead, consent is negotiated through continuous dialogue between the researcher and participants. This dynamic relationship means that consent can shift over time as participants' understanding and comfort with the research evolves, and their personal circumstances and interests change and develop. Thus, researchers must remain attuned to moments when participants may disengage or express hesitations, often signifying a temporary withdrawal or renegotiation of consent. In this project, the strong relationships of trust both helped the young people in feeling at ease in disengaging and the researchers in supporting young people to disengage and engage on their own terms. Therefore, it was important for us to be attentive to the needs of the young people and to respond to their behaviours throughout the sessions. Our previous experiences of working with young people in formal and informal education settings have allowed us to develop our observational and relational skills. As we got to know the young people, we got to know their personalities and ways of communicating, and we were able to identify signs of discomfort or disinterest. For example, one young person would enthusiastically engage in activities in the youth group but only for a few minutes. When this young person became disinterested, they would fidget more, sometimes swinging on their chair, and comment that they weren't sure of their opinion. During discussion of the research projects and whilst conducting research activities, we were mindful of these signs and supported the young person to feel comfortable in disengaging when they wanted to.

In participatory ethnographic research with young people, the fluid nature of informed consent requires researchers to be flexible and responsive, ensuring that participants' autonomy and agency are respected throughout the research process. The young person in the above example engaged throughout the duration of this project, but never for more than ten minutes at a time. Our flexible approach respected the rhythms of young people's engagement and disengagement and thus facilitated more genuine participation.

Deleted: ¶

Deleted: s

Deleted: ed

Deleted: In this project, the strong relationships of trust both helped the young people in feeling at ease in disengaging and the researchers in supporting young people to disengage and engage on their own terms. As we got to know the young people, we got to know their personalities and ways of communicating, including one young person who would enthusiastically engage in activities in the youth group for a few minutes. Our previous experience of working with young people in formal and informal education settings has allowed us to develop our relational and observation skills. This enabled us to respond to the young peoples' behaviour cues and to When this young person became disinterested, they would fidget more, sometimes swinging on their chair, and comment that they weren't sure of their opinion. When we began discussing the research projects, and whilst conducting research activities, we were mindful of these signs and supported the young person to feel comfortable in disengaging when they wanted to.

Commented [A7]: I think there is also something about your positionality and experience of working with young people here as well. You recognised the signs and had ideas of ways to engage this participant, perhaps drawing on your research team's background as teachers and educators?

Commented [A8R7]: I've had a go at rewriting this section:

Section summary

1. Researchers spent three months developing rapport and trust through informal interactions, ensuring genuine engagement.
2. Dynamic informed consent allowing participants to disengage or renegotiate consent formed the ethical basis of the project.
3. Flexible engagement was vital, as researchers prioritised participants' autonomy, fostering authentic and voluntary involvement.

Method in Action

How did your research project play out in reality? Did it go according to plan, or did you need to adapt parts of the process? This should be a **“warts and all”** description and evaluation of how your chosen research method/approach actually worked **in practice**.

What went well? What did not go to plan? What challenges did you face? How did you respond? Remember that cases should explore both the successes of your methodology and the challenges and problems. Both can provide rich learning opportunities.

Method in action

Flexible Research Process

At the start of the project, we envisaged most, if not all, youth co-researchers would actively engage throughout the research. We anticipated that they would design their own projects, with us supporting them to collect and analyse their data. However, the actual engagement of the youth researchers proved to be sporadic and varied significantly across the cohort. Some contributed only briefly, often for as little as five minutes at a time. This necessitated intensive efforts to ensure that we met our research objectives whilst working ethically, in the moment, with the young people and respecting their autonomous decisions to disengage. We learnt to work with certain rhythms of engagement, often knowing that when food activities appeared, all young people transferred their attention away from us. It was important for the wellbeing of participants that they felt comfortable with prioritising their food over completing the research activity in a set period.

Some young people remained engaged throughout their projects, while others preferred to only participate during the design phase. They subsequently either did not return to the youth group within the allotted timeframe or chose to engage in other activities at the group instead. Others wanted to be involved in data collection without taking part in the research design stages or later stages of data analysis. This variability in engagement highlights the complexities of participatory research, and the need for researchers to be flexible and responsive as the project evolves. In youth participatory research of any type, it is always important to prioritise the choices and well-being of young people rather than a preconceived, orderly plan.

Interviews example

Several youth researchers decided to conduct interviews with other young people at the group, staff members and volunteers at Door 84, and community stakeholders. To support them, we engaged in informal discussions that focused on research ethics and methodology. These conversations enabled the youth researchers to co-design information sheets and consent forms and formulate relevant interview questions. Some young people helped design the interview information sheets, based on examples from a different project. They altered these to focus on video recording and to suit the potential interviewees by creating different information sheets for adults and young people.

Additionally, we facilitated their identification of relevant community stakeholders to invite for interviews at the Door 84 youth session. These included the mayor, city councillors, senior university leaders, a probation officer and members of the Residents Association as well as staff and volunteers at Door 84. The young people also interviewed other young people on a different night.

On the night, more community stakeholders arrived than expected. Although some youth researchers successfully conducted these interviews, others either did not attend the session, or chose not to perform interviews, preferring to engage in other activities. Other youth researchers, who were eager to take part in this aspect of the project, stepped in to conduct the interviews using the information sheets and consent forms, and interview questions that had been co-developed with their peers, illustrating the fluid dynamics of participation within the group. One young person wanted some involvement but not to interview, so she took on the role of guide and usher, and ensured the community stakeholders understood the nature of the building and youth provision and were in the right place at the right time.

Another night, two young people who had not attended the club for weeks arrived and wanted to carry out an interview, but only for 15 minutes. We were able to arrange for them to interview the youth worker, using an interview schedule that was written by another youth researcher. Traditionally, this pair were often excluded from a range of activities, but they were pleased that they had been part of the project, even if fleetingly.

Pockets of participation

Whilst participatory research typically aims for individual researchers to be involved at each stage of the project (Anyon et al., 2018), we found that this was not feasible whilst maintaining our commitment to genuine youth researcher engagement. By supporting the young people to engage on their terms, more young people participated in this project than if we had required committed engagement throughout every stage of the process. Young people vocalised this to us at different points. For example, one young person said, "I am happy to do an interview, but not the analysis, no offence Charlotte". This response underscored the necessity for a flexible approach and emphasised the importance of accommodating the diverse interests and availability of our youth researchers throughout the process. This approach enabled more young people to gain research-related skills and to have their voices heard through this project. Indeed, as highlighted by Franks (2011), developing participative ownership of specific parts of the research process can enhance youth engagement, allowing young people to become stakeholders in the research and thus improving the quality of the research through more meaningful participation.

Section summary:

1. Researchers adapted to fluctuating involvement, respecting young people's autonomy to disengage and prioritise their well-being over a fixed plan.
2. Researchers provided informal discussions on ethics and methods, helped co-design materials, and allowed youth researchers to choose stakeholders for interviews.
3. Flexibility in research allowed young people to engage on their terms, increasing participation and ensuring meaningful collaboration.

Practical Lessons Learned

Looking back, reflect on which aspects of your methodology went well, and which aspects did not go well. What would you do differently? What did you learn from the experience, and what advice do you have for readers planning their own research projects? Please note that this section is **not** referring to research findings, but instead the lessons learned from the methodology in practice.

Practical lessons learned

Ethics first

Recognising and validating young people's various ways of engaging – and, at times, disengaging – is essential for conducting ethical research and developing an inclusive environment. When undertaking youth participatory research, the co-creation process must be grounded in a fundamental commitment to ethical research practices that respect the expertise and autonomy of the young people. It is essential to always understand and follow safeguarding procedures, and to recognise the sensitivities that underpin the research environment. Not all these ethically attuned practices may be covered in the application for ethical approval but nonetheless, the researcher is required to be reflexive and able to make decisions in the moment

Researchers should prioritise ethical considerations by ensuring that young people's time and space are respected, thereby creating an environment in which young people feel valued and can be empowered through the research process. Relational working is central to youth participatory ethnography. Therefore, it is vital to build time into research plans for 'deep hanging out' (Geertz, 1998), and for developing rapport and trust with young people. This also means that time is required to understand what is needed for young people to feel comfortable with engaging in research.

The time we spent at the start of the project enabled young people to trust us and engage and disengage as they wished. In addition, deep hanging out enables a richer understanding of the community that the researcher is working with. For example, Door 84 offers a safe environment for neurodiverse young people. Through deep hanging out, we found the craft area offered respite from some of the louder sports activities and games. Setting up our table in the craft area encouraged neurodiverse young researchers to join us and take a break from the busier areas of the building. Using deep hanging out as an ethical foundation not only promotes trust and helps protect young

people during the research process, but also enhances the quality of the research through meaningful engagement by youth co-researchers. This might include withdrawing at times. During one session, we felt there were too many adults intruding in the young people's space, so we withdrew from the space for that evening.

The importance of flexibility

Flexibility is also essential for managing effective collaboration in youth participatory ethnography. Researchers must be prepared to adapt methods according to the ideas, needs, and availabilities of the youth co-researchers. Whilst an overall plan can be useful, the ability to break down different activities into flexible options is crucial. Embracing the interests and skills of different young people, rather than taking a uniform approach, is imperative to maintain flexibility. Such flexibility can involve different people taking on different roles and different amounts of research.

By centring the young people's agency and energy, researchers not only build genuine rapport with young people, but cultivate their sense of ownership and investment in the research process. This is vital for ensuring that interest guides the young people's engagement and enhances the collaborative nature of the project. The adaptability of the researcher also contributes to the authenticity and relevance of the findings, as they are more likely to reflect the true voices and experiences of the young people involved.

Engaging with young people in research contexts often involves fluctuating participation levels, marked by periods of high intensity and various forms of disengagement. It is important for researchers to develop strategies that effectively harness enthusiasm during high-intensity moments to ensure that data is captured thoroughly and meaningfully. To facilitate this, during the early 'deep hanging out' phase, we had discussions with the young people about various methods they may be interested in using for their projects. We then developed one-page method guides including surveys, interviews, and mapping activities, to help the young people quickly learn about each method and plan their projects. Together, with the youth researchers, we were able to draw and write on the methods guides they selected to create their research plans. These guides were useful tools for quickly capturing youth researcher ideas and plans during high-intensity moments. For example, one youth researcher participated for just a few minutes before they left to engage in outdoor sports activities. We used a copy of the guide to surveys to plan their research project, including targeted audience, question design, survey format, and colour scheme. This guide could then be revisited and reflected on in future sessions. The guides also gave us flexibility to work with other methods of conducting research. When three girls said they wanted to create a dance based on their experience at Door 84, we worked with them on developing their ideas, and researched dance as part of ethnography (Leavy, 2017), although they left before the end of the project. This approach allowed us to build on previous discussions of ethics and methodologies with the young people whilst capturing their interests and choices for research design in a short timeframe.

Disengagement as positive

Conversely, during periods of low engagement or delays, researchers should implement strategies that encourage participation whilst respecting the young people's time and space. In our case study this included joining the young people in other activities at the youth centre, such as crafting, to continue to build and maintain rapport with the young people and provide opportunities for informal discussions about the research. Whilst this was not traditionally productive research

activity, time during these periods of disengagement was not 'lost'. Instead, by being reliably present at the group and supportive of young people choosing when to engage, we built stronger collaborative relationships that facilitated genuine youth researcher engagement. By recognising and working flexibly with these patterns of engagement, researchers can create a responsive research environment that effectively balances the respect for young people's autonomy in engagement, and their time and space, with undertaking effective youth participatory research.

Section Summary

1. Researchers were committed to respecting young people's autonomy and expertise, whilst following safeguarding procedures.
2. Researchers adapted research methods to fit young people's interests, needs, and availability, enhancing their ownership of the project.
3. Researchers recognised, and managed high, and low engagement periods, using flexible tools to capture ideas and maintain rapport.
4. Researchers created a responsive environment, respecting young people's space, supporting their choices, and cultivating a collaborative atmosphere.

Conclusion

Includes a round-up of the issues discussed in your case study. This should **not** be a discussion of conclusions drawn from the research findings, but should focus reflectively on the **research methodology and methods**. Include just enough detail of your findings to enable the reader to understand how the method/approach you used could be utilized by others. Would you recommend using this method/approach or, on reflection, would you make difference choices in the future? **What can readers learn from your experience and apply to their own research?**

Conclusion

Youth participatory ethnographic research can feel very messy especially during times of high or low engagement, but it is worth it. Young people have tremendous insights and great ability to enhance our understanding and research. We found their understanding of ethics was astute and rigorous and they helped to us think about a much more fluid notion of consent in terms of taking part and then disengaging.

The project, 'Re-imagining Door 84', exemplifies the positive potential of participatory ethnographic research when grounded in ethical principles and genuine collaboration with young people. We prioritised the autonomy and agency of youth researchers and we fostered an environment where genuine engagement was encouraged because disengagement was a viable choice. This fluid participation allowed for a diverse range of contributions, reflecting the varied interests and comfort levels of the young people involved. The project demonstrated that when young researchers are given the freedom to engage on their own terms, the quality and depth of their involvement can significantly enhance the research outcomes.

The emphasis on building trust through “deep hanging out” was pivotal in establishing rapport with the youth participants. This approach facilitated open communication and a sense of ownership, enabling young people to feel comfortable in both engaging and disengaging as they navigated their involvement in the research process. The dynamic nature of informed consent, as highlighted throughout this case, underscores the necessity for researchers to remain attuned to the evolving needs and preferences of participants. By allowing young people to dictate their levels of engagement, we not only respected their autonomy but also cultivated a more authentic and meaningful research experience.

Deleted: chapter

The collaborative efforts in designing participant information and consent forms illustrate the innovative ways in which ethical considerations can be integrated into research practices. This co-creative approach not only empowered the young researchers but also enriched the overall research process, making it more relevant to the community.

Ultimately, the insights gained from this project extend beyond the immediate context of Door 84. They contribute to a broader understanding of how participatory ethnographic research can be effectively conducted with young people, emphasising the importance of flexibility, ethical engagement, and genuine collaboration. As we reflect on our experiences, it is clear that fostering an inclusive and responsive research environment is essential for empowering young voices and ensuring that their perspectives are meaningfully represented in community narratives. This case serves as a testament to the potential of participatory research to enact positive change within communities, guided by the principles of social justice and ethical engagement.

Discussion Questions

[Insert **three to five** discussion questions related to the methodology and practical considerations described in your case study]

Discussion questions should be suitable for eliciting debate and critical thinking. The questions should encourage the reader to **apply what they have learned beyond the context of the research project discussed**. They should **not** test the reader’s memory of specifics about the discussed project. Avoid questions which require only a single-word answer such as “yes” or “no.” Please also avoid combining multiple questions into one.

Please make sure that each discussion question is a **single question**, i.e., avoiding multiple questions combined under one point.

1. What are the challenges of ensuring ethical principles are upheld when working with marginalised communities?
2. In what ways can the principles of youth agency and empowerment enhance the outcomes of other research projects?
3. How might participatory ethnographic approaches be adopted for research using different demographic groups, such as elderly populations or culturally marginalised communities?

4. How can researchers effectively balance the need for data collection with the ethical obligation to respect participants' autonomy and well-being?

Multiple Choice Quiz Questions

Multiple Choice Quiz Questions should:

- Test understanding of the case study and the methodology in question, as opposed to comprehension-based questions which test the reader's memory
- Relate to research methodology, not the substantive research topic
- Cause the reader to identify the rationale behind the answer.

Multiple Choice Quiz Questions should not:

- Require any information that is not included in this case study
- Include 'all of the above', 'none of the above' or implausible distractors

Example:

What was the method used to increase the reliability of this field observation study?

A - Inter-coder reliability was calculated to ensure an acceptable Krippendorff's alpha.

B - Constant comparison was used, whereby two coders visiting the same site simultaneously would conduct independent coding and reconvene to resolve any discrepant codes to produce a single set of codes for the observation. - CORRECT

C - Researchers were asked to write about how their personal idiosyncrasies might have shaped the coding process, so these reflexive accounts can be used by the reader in assessing the study's reliability

Guidance for writing MCQs can be accessed using these links:

- [Tips for writing effective multiple-choice questions](#)
- [The process of writing a multiple-choice question](#)

[Insert **three to five** multiple choice quiz questions below. Each question should have **three possible answers** (A, B, or C), with **only one correct answer**. Please indicate the correct answer by writing CORRECT after the relevant answer.]

Multiple Choice Quiz Questions

5. Why is flexibility emphasised in the participatory research process described in the case study?

- A. To ensure that all participants are present at every session.
- B. To allow young researchers to engage on their own terms and comfort levels. [CORRECT]
- C. To adhere strictly to a predetermined research plan.

Formatted: Numbered + Level: 1 + Numbering Style: A, B, C, ... + Start at: 1 + Alignment: Left + Aligned at: 0.63 cm + Indent at: 1.27 cm

Commented [A9]: Sorry not sure why one set is more left justified than others.

6. In participatory ethnography, what is the significance of recognising young people as experts in their own lives?

- A. It enhances the authenticity and relevance of the research findings. [CORRECT]
- B. It allows researchers to collect data more quickly.
- C. It ensures that the research aligns with adult perspectives.

Formatted: Numbered + Level: 1 + Numbering Style: A, B, C, ... + Start at: 1 + Alignment: Left + Aligned at: 1.27 cm + Indent at: 1.9 cm

7. How does the concept of "deep hanging out" contribute to the research methodology?

- A. It allows researchers to gather data quickly.
- B. It minimizes the need for participant involvement.
- C. It fosters trust and rapport between researchers and participants. [CORRECT]

Formatted: Numbered + Level: 1 + Numbering Style: A, B, C, ... + Start at: 1 + Alignment: Left + Aligned at: 1.27 cm + Indent at: 1.9 cm

8. What is a key benefit of allowing young researchers to choose their own methods?

- A. It reduces the workload for adult researchers.
- B. It increases the likelihood of obtaining data that is relevant and useful to the community. [CORRECT]
- C. It simplifies the ethical approval process.

Formatted: Numbered + Level: 1 + Numbering Style: A, B, C, ... + Start at: 1 + Alignment: Left + Aligned at: 1.27 cm + Indent at: 1.9 cm

Further Reading

Please ensure the recommended readings, web resources, and cited references are inclusive and represent a diversity of people. Given our global readership, we aim to publish content that allows individuals with a broad range of perspectives to be reflected in our pedagogical resources.

[Insert list of up to six further readings here. They can include web resources.]

References

[Insert bibliography of references cited in text here]

References should conform to American Psychological Association (APA) style, 7th edition, and should contain the digital object identifier (DOI) where available. Sage will not accept cases that are incorrectly referenced. Please ensure accuracy before submission. For help on reference styling see <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines>.

Further Readings

Bagnoli, A., and Clark, A. (2010). Focus groups with young people: A participatory approach to research planning. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 13(1), 101-119. DOI: 10.1080/13676260903173504

Franks, M. (2011). Pockets of Participation: Revisiting Child-Centred Participation Research. *Children & Society*, 25(1), 15–25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2009.00258.x>

Little, Alice, Josh, Oscar, Elliot, Charlotte Haines Lyon, and Nathalie Noret. 2022. 'Toilet Talk: Empowering Young People in Schools to Research and Talk about Toilet Issues – Gender and Education Association GEA'. Gender and Education Association GEA. <http://www.genderandeducation.com/featured/haines-lyon/>.

Kellett, M., Forrest (Aged Ten), R., Dent (Aged Ten), N., & Ward (Aged Ten), S. (2004). 'Just teach us the skills please, we'll do the rest': Empowering ten-year-olds as active researchers. *Children & Society*, 18(5), 329–343. <https://doi.org/10.1002/chi.807>

Plummer, E. C., Stornaiuolo, A., So-Qui-Li I, G.-G.-S., Lott, J., Marrero, C. L., McLaine, D. Z., Murray-Scott, D., Summers, K., Thompson, S., Torres, K., Williams, N., & Monea, B. (2024). Participatory Ethnography: Developing a High School Writing Center in Partnership | Penn GSE Perspectives on Urban Education. *Perspectives on Urban Education*. <https://urbanedjournal.gse.upenn.edu/archive/volume-16-issue-1-spring-2019/participatory-ethnography-developing-high-school-writing-center>

References

Aberese-Ako, M. (2017). 'I won't take part!': Exploring the multiple identities of the ethnographer in two Ghanaian hospitals. *Ethnography*, 18(3), 300–321. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138116673380>

Anyon, Y., Bender, K., Kennedy, H., & Dechants, J. (2018). A Systematic Review of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) in the United States: Methodologies, Youth Outcomes, and Future Directions. *Health Education & Behavior*, 45(6), 865–878. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198118769357>

APPG for Left Behind Neighbourhoods. (2023). A neighbourhood strategy for national renewal. APPG for Left Behind Neighbourhoods. <https://www.appg-leftbehindneighbourhoods.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/A-Neighbourhood-Strategy-for-National-Renewal.pdf>

Cahill, C. (2007). Doing Research with Young People: Participatory Research and the Rituals of Collective Work. *Children's Geographies*, 5(3), 297–312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733280701445895>

- City of York Council York Open Data. (2019). Indices of Multiple Deprivation in York [Dataset]. <https://data.yorkopendata.org/dataset/indices-of-multiple-deprivation>
- Dobson, T. (2023). Competency and affective skill outcomes for 11–19-year-olds through progressive and reconstructionist pedagogies: A systematic review. *Educational Review*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2023.2222236>
- Franks, M. (2011). Pockets of Participation: Revisiting Child-Centred Participation Research. *Children & Society*, 25(1), 15–25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2009.00258.x>
- Geertz, C. (1998, October 22). [Review of Deep Hanging Out, by P. Clastres & C. James]. *The New York Review of Books*, 45(16). <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1998/10/22/deep-hanging-out/>
- Jull, J., Giles, A., & Graham, I. D. (2017). Community-based participatory research and integrated knowledge translation: Advancing the co-creation of knowledge. *Implementation Science*, 12(1), 150. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-017-0696-3>
- Jupp, E. (2007). Participation, Local Knowledge and Empowerment: Researching Public Space with Young People. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 39(12), 2832–2844. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a38204>
- Kellett, M. (2011). Empowering Children and Young People as Researchers: Overcoming Barriers and Building Capacity. *Child Indicators Research*, 4(2), 205–219. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-010-9103-1>
- Leavy, P. (2017). *Handbook of Arts-Based Research*. Guilford Publications. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/yorks/j/detail.action?docID=4979052>
- Loveridge, J., Wood, B. E., Davis-Rae, E., & McRae, H. (2024). Ethical challenges in participatory research with children and youth. *Qualitative Research*, 24(2), 391–411. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941221149594>
- Mullick, Pinaki. D., Sen, P., Das, K., & Mukherjee, K. (2013). The Basics of Ethnography: An Overview of Designing an Ethnographic Research in Anthropology and Beyond. *Journal of the Anthropological Survey of India*, 62(2), 893–902.
- Ntelioglou, B. Y. (2015). English Language Learners, Participatory Ethnography and Embodied Knowing within Literacy Studies. In *The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies* (1st ed., pp. 532–547). Routledge.
- Plummer, E. C., Stornaiuolo, A., So-Qui-Li I, G.-G.-S., Lott, J., Marrero, C. L., McLaine, D. Z., Murray-Scott, D., Summers, K., Thompson, S., Torres, K., Williams, N., & Monea, B. (2024). Participatory Ethnography: Developing a High School Writing Center in Partnership | Penn GSE Perspectives on Urban Education. *Perspectives on Urban Education*. <https://urbanedjournal.gse.upenn.edu/archive/volume-16-issue-1-spring-2019/participatory-ethnography-developing-high-school-writing-center>
- Wogan, P. (2004). Deep Hanging Out: Reflections on Fieldwork and Multisited Andean Ethnography. *Identities*, 11(1), 129–139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/725289021>