

Research Design and the 'Keeping Connected' Project

Lyn Yates



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

AARE Conference, Brisbane, December 2008

The Project:

**A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION OF HOW TRAUMA AND
CHRONIC ILLNESS IMPACT ON SCHOOLING, IDENTITY AND
SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY**

aka

**“Keeping Connected:
young people, identity and schooling”**

***Australia Research Council funded Linkage Project with Royal
Children’s Hospital Education Institute 2006-2009***

The research team

from University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Dr Peter Ferguson
Dr Trevor Hay
Dr Julianne Moss
Dr Pam St Leger
Prof Lyn Yates

from Centre for Adolescent Health

Dr Sarah Drew

from Royal Children's Hospital (Melbourne) Education Institute

Tony Potas
Dr Julie Green

Working in other universities

Dr Lyndal Bond, *Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, Glasgow*

Dr Mary Dixon, *National Institute of Education, Singapore*

Dr Julie White, *Faculty of Education, La Trobe University*

Initiating research partner and previous Director of RCH Education Institute

Margaret Robertson

Project Research Officers – located at the Education Institute

Dr Ria Hanewald
Amy Basile

The study

Case studies of around 30 young people over a two year period using visual and narrative methods

supported by

- Review of existing data and its adequacy
 - Surveys of the entire cohort and follow up a year later
 - Focus groups and interviews with other groups who have interactions with young people in this situation: parents, professionals
 - Retrospective interviews with earlier RCHEI clients now in their 20s
 - Inter-disciplinary dialogue within research team.
-

Background:

- a 'Linkage' project
- meeting multiple agendas
- commonalities and differences among the research team

Framing effects of the grant process and academic legitimacy issues:

- Language ('trauma' 'evidence-base')
- High promises of impact
(tendency to speak to professional interests rather than voice of the young?)
- 'findings' cf 'ways of seeing'
- Time-frames and reporting expectations
(agendas for meetings/conferences)

Ethics disciplining effects:

- a non user-friendly Plain Language Statement requirement
- Weighted to preventing harm rather than allowing in the voice of the children

The intention in giving cameras to young people in education and health contexts is

- To see and hear *their* story
- To give their voice greater presence and authority and power in those institutional settings

but

- Whose voice?
- How constructed?
- How used and interpreted?

Why visual methods? some different purposes

- Participants can tell their own story in a way that they choose
 - they are given time and space to make choices about how to represent something that gives new insight about it.
- Assists retrospective reflection
- Can re-visit and compare evidence at different times
- For a different kind of objective evidence than a survey
- For insights about subjective issues
- As evidence of emotions and tacit connections
- Acknowledging different generational preferences, skills

Different emphases and kinds of visual projects:

Camera as window to the world

**Camera as window to the
photographer's identity**

Camera as window to the world:

social context

what is

what happens

Camera as window to identity:

who they are

what matters to them

- *project emphasis in terms of the identity/world spectrum is relevant to software and methodology choices*
- *also relevance of whether representation is intended to be of a present state or situation or a more self-conscious representation/selection of identity or issues extending backwards and forwards in time*

- A collaborative agenda: but to what extent?
- What power/role does the researcher(s) assume?
- Who interprets the stories?
- To what extent is a Linkage project implicitly conceived as a form of action research?