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Title: Emotions in participatory research: fun and pride in research with children and young people

Abstract

The article focuses on emotions in participatory research with children and young people. We approach emotions as a generative site for exposing assumptions about participation, as well as participation rights more widely. Our reflections emerged out of revisiting two participatory research projects involving young people (aged 14 to 25) and identifying the significant, but under-articulated importance of emotions in this work. Research is often planned and described in emotionally 'neutral' terms, although participatory research necessarily relies on building relationships and engaging emotionally in a research process with others. In our own projects we retrospectively identify and trace the circulation of two salient emotions of fun and pride. We identified fun as an explicit emotion often invoked in the research process, but often under-theorised, and treated almost instrumentally, as something necessary to make the research process flow. The project with young queer women drew our attention to questions of pride, and the role of pride as a transformative emotion which draws our attention to what matters in young people's lives, particularly when it is not anticipated. We argue for the analytical value of emotions, not only as a key component of participatory research design, but also as a site for analysis and knowledge production, if we are to explore seriously research that is intended to respect and support children and young people's participation rights.

Key words: participatory research; children's rights; emotions; fun; pride; children's participation; queer politics

Introduction

The article focuses on emotions in participatory research with children and young people. We suggest that emotions offer a generative site for exposing assumptions about participation in the context of research, as well as participation rights more widely. Children's rights to participate in all matters that affect them, with associated rights to freedom of expression, and to give and receive information, are part of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (see review in editorial, this issue) and thus need to be considered in research, as well as other domains that affect children and young people. Significantly, participatory research has also been widely adopted as an approach that can support children and young people's participation rights (Tisdall 2015), making such research a doubly important site for understanding and enacting their rights.

While a wide array of research methods and methodologies exist for conducting research with children and young people, participatory research explicitly relies on building relationships between those involved in developing, and carrying out the research together.¹ Yet as Reich and colleagues (2017) suggest, developing meaningful relationships in research, like in any space, is both messy and challenging. Emotions are central to this work of building research relationships, which makes the absence of sustained attention to emotions appear a curious puzzle. Although there is wide recognition of the need to develop trust between research participants, requiring the time to have 'fun' and build relationships (Collins et al. 2020; Cuevas-Parra and Tisdall 2019), nonetheless emotional relations are often treated instrumentally, taken as necessary to facilitate participatory research with people, but not important enough to be included in accounts of research once written up, or to be used as insight for analysis.

¹ We also note that there are less visible connections that may also shape research relationships, including: relationships with funders; relationships with other stakeholders, including policy-makers and other intended research audiences; relationships of academics with the wider research communities; and relationships with ethical review committees.

We suggest that this lack of attention to emotions is bound up with the need for research to appear rational, managed, and planned, which stands in tension with the subjective nature of relationships, particularly in participatory research. As Anderson and Smith (2001) have argued, the logics of rationality and efficiency can depend on the silencing of emotions, with emotional relations seen as something private and apart from the world of public policy – and we also suggest the world of research. Yet the process of research, particularly participatory research, is profoundly shaped by, and shapes, emotional relations. Emotions are a key aspect of how we know, yet are rarely foregrounded in research: ‘thinking emotionally is implicitly cast as a source of subjectivity which clouds vision and impairs judgement, while good scholarship depends on keeping one's own emotions under control and others' under wraps’ (Anderson and Smith, 2001, p.7). The role of the researcher can be to mediate and transcend the emotional relations of the field through translating research experience into the abstracted language of publication – yet this conventional approach is fatally undermined in participatory research, particularly with children and young people, where research relies on challenging hierarchies, when the researchers are children *and* adults.

In this paper we are approaching emotions as ‘public feelings’ (Cvetkovich 2012), understanding emotions as social and cultural phenomena, intensely relational, rather than private, individualised possessions emerging internally and expressed outwardly. Emotions offer both a subject for analysis as well as a methodological tool for exploring what is going on in the world. We ask what tracing the workings and movements of emotions in our projects can bring to our attention as researchers. If we take account of the role of emotions in constructing subjectivities, relationalities, knowledges and worlds, emotions emerge as an important focus for research, and for children and young people’s participation rights in the research process.

In this article, we reflect on two participatory research projects with children and young people, aged between 14 and 25²: the Young Women's Health Project is an ongoing participatory youth group that has engaged in collaborative academic research, including researching 'growing communities' through their vegetable plot at a local allotment site; and YouCreate was a youth-led arts-based participatory action research project. Neither research project was explicitly focused on emotions, but this special journal issue prompted us to revisit them and pay attention to some of the emotions that manifested and how these circulated through the projects. Our collective reflections led us to focus specifically on fun and pride. We identified fun, as a desire for the research process to feel good, as one place where emotions did appear as an often taken-for-granted, and under-theorised, expectation in participatory research, especially with children and young people. Both projects implicitly paid attention to fun in the research design and planning, but here we particularly focus on the unplanned and spontaneous emergence of fun in the research process and its effects. We turned to pride as an emotion that first emerged in our conversations about the queer politics of the Young Women's Health Project, and then led us to trace the circulation of pride in the YouCreate project, which opened up intriguing reflections on the experience of participatory research. We conclude the article by arguing for the analytical value of emotions such as pride and fun as topics in their own right -- not just as instrumental or accidental to the research. Emotions then need to be a key aspect of research design and knowledge production, while recognising that specific emotions cannot be fully planned or controlled -- indeed the analytic potential of emotions is precisely that they are generative and not fully in any researchers' (adult or child) hand.

² We refer to 'young people' when referring to the participants involved in the two projects. This seeks to recognise that older children typically prefer not to be called 'children' and to recognise that the young people engaged in the projects go beyond the age of 18 (which is the maximum age in the UNCRC (Article 1)).

Having fun in research

While the childhood research literature commonly notes the need for ‘fun’ methods to engage children and young people, fun is usually taken for granted, rather than explored or used analytically. To give one example, in an article about using drawings in focus groups with children, the author (Yuen 2004) brings attention to the importance of fun, using a child’s quotation in the title – ‘It was fun ... I liked drawing my thoughts’. The author even uses terms of ‘enjoyable’ and ‘enjoyed’ in her own account of the research process (Yuen 2004, p. 465). While on the one hand including ‘fun’ in the title serves to highlight the importance of enjoyment to the research process, at the same time, why the method was fun, why fun mattered and how this impacted the research process or the research findings are not explored. This resonated with our own projects, where talk of fun and enjoying research regularly cropped up in our research descriptions, but with a lack of more extended explanation of what this really meant for the research. Such shared and taken-for-granted assumptions suggest fertile ground for further attention.

At the same time some common research conventions provide an explanation for this. This taken-for-granted need to invoke fun suggests a disparity with more commonly anticipated experiences of research. Cook and Hess (2007) explicitly contrast fun with ‘boring’ methods, suggesting that fun methods are needed in order to engage children with the research; again, what fun entails is not explicitly articulated. Fun emerges as necessary for facilitating children and young people’s participation in research. Implicitly research (with adults) is figured as something not fun, as potentially boring or tedious, and research methods need to be modified in order to appeal to children and facilitate their engagement. Arguably research is also figured as hard and demanding, too hard for children, meaning that research needs to be adapted to enable the participation of young people. Fun also appears as an apparent surprise – perhaps also for the researcher as well as participants, compounding the

assumption that research is boring. Is fun necessary because children and young people are not adults – not rational, not engaged in the world of serious work – and need to be cajoled into research? This might suggest an instrumental approach to fun, where fun is operationalised to facilitate the easy extraction of data. Thus not drawing too much attention to fun may mitigate the ‘risks’ of trivialising the research process and undermining the research outcomes. This might particularly be the case in participatory research that seeks to engage with children and young people. Fun can be downplayed by researchers because of a fear that it ‘waters [research] down or makes it appear less rigorous’ (Leavy 2015, p.31), and reduces the credibility of participatory research. This might explain some reluctance to draw sustained attention to fun. Yet, it is not only in childhood research that fun remains under-theorised. The small sociological literature on fun notes how rare it is that fun is defined or theorised (e.g. Fincham 2016; Reis et al. 2017). Socio-historical scholarship traces how fun has been central to separating leisure and work since the industrial revolution, with fun being a way for industrial workers to live with the routinisation and boredom of work (Blythe and Hassenzahl 2018). Having fun in the workplace was perceived as disruptive, trivial and lacking sophistication: it was the working classes who had fun, not the more ‘serious’ middle or upper classes. Wolfenstein identified the emergence of a ‘fun morality’ following World War II in the United States of America, where mothers were encouraged not just to look after their children, but that this care also need to be ‘fun’, as play shifted from an undesirable overexcitement, to neutral and harmless, to become a moral obligation (Wolfenstein 1951).³ Fincham (2016) notes that as leisure became commodified it was also associated with youth culture, with those who did not yet have to work in paid employment. This historical view highlights how fun has been invoked to enact boundaries between leisure and work, play and

³ An important reminder, that while we are retrospectively paying attention to fun here, and arguing the importance of attending to emotions such as fun in research, clearly not all research is experienced as, or needs to be, fun.

labour, youth and adult. These boundaries also define who is allowed to have fun and when, also suggestive of the potential of fun to transgress and disrupt power relationships.

The literature generally is reluctant to provide a definition of fun: rather often there is attention to what it is not (i.e. happiness or pleasure) or its elements (like temporality, disruption, engagement). Fun, argues Fincham (2016), is social and contextual. Fun fosters social relations, which arguably is a central appeal for participatory research.

At the same time, we note that the childhood research literature includes a range of researchers' reflections that methods that were intended to be fun were not necessarily experienced as such by children and young people, nor did they free children and young people from power relations (e.g. Barker and Weller 2003; Cook and Hess 2007). Indeed, this makes clear that an activity in itself is not fun but rather can only become fun when experienced relationally (Fincham 2016; Lipponen et al. 2016). This is evident in the case of 'manufactured fun', which can reassert power relationships and have negative rather than positive effects; it can potentially encourage transgressive and disruptive reactions (Fincham 2016). Thus, an activity in itself -- particularly if imposed by those with more power -- is not necessarily experienced as fun. Rather than promoting closer relationships, it can have the effect of solidifying distance and hierarchies.

Fun, as a 'form of emotional energy', can encourage people to take risks, questioning social order and 'imagining and enacting new repertoires' (Fine and Corte 2017, p.79) for participatory research. Opening the research process up to the possibility of 'fun', and identifying and taking seriously fun moments, can disrupt normative ways of understanding research as objective, neutral, and lacking emotion, and counter the perception that participatory research with young people is something lacking sophistication. Rather than using fun instrumentally, or hiding fun in case it undermines research, we argue that fun is valuable and deserves further attention. It is not only a way of making research accessible and

engaging for children and young people; we suggest that the emergence of fun in research is in fact evidence of relationships in the making, and the strengthening of groups' social cohesion (Fine and Corte 2017).

Feeling proud: Taking pride in research

While fun is a commonplace intention in participatory research with children and young people, pride is rarely explicitly articulated. While projects often have the ambition that children and young people will develop self-esteem, grow in self-confidence, and develop new skills and competencies (e.g. Martin et al. 2015; Macdonald et al. 2018), these are often individualised developments, requiring children and young people to be responsible for their own linear progressive narratives. Many projects end with some kind of public performance or output, where growth and transformation might be displayed and performed, and sometimes rewarded with certificates or other markers of success (e.g. McMellon and Mitchell 2017). In these ways, projects often gesture to the collective, collaborative and relational aspects of achievements and implicitly hope that children and young people, and their families and communities, will be proud of their achievements. Pride, however, is rarely named as such.

Our initial focus on pride came from reflecting on research with young lesbian and bisexual women, which drew us to literature on pride as articulated in queer theory and activism. Nixon's (2017) work on the role pride plays in social change dovetails well with participatory research, which is often focused on addressing inequality and achieving social justice (McMellon and Mitchell 2017). Following much literature on emotions, Nixon argues that 'pride is not something a subject either has or does not have' (2017, p. 7). Instead, pride 'is contingent, deeply relational, and emerges from within established sociohistorical and political contexts' (2017, p.7). Nixon develops his account of pride *politics*, which he sees less as a 'straightforward expression of pride, and more a claim to the right to pride' (2017,

p.7). This could be understood as the right to participate in feeling pride, which opens up the possibility of exploring participatory rights of young queer people in a research process. Pride emerges, swells, grows and withers in relationships and encounters between bodies; it circulates unevenly and is a more accessible emotion to some bodies than others. Emotions such as pride constitute one site where children and young people might have a right to access and where this right is unevenly distributed, leading to the question: can (participatory) research provide a way for children and young people to claim pride?

Emotions are commonly approached through the work of theorists such as Ahmed (2004) who conceptualise emotions as an ‘affective economy’. This approach resists treating pride as an individual feeling. While it seems hard to talk about pride without considering shame, for Ahmed these are bound together in an affective economy, undermining binary logics, and the hyper-separation of polar opposites, by focusing on how shame and pride are bound together – in this sense, emotions are understood to move, circulate and do things, specifically to bodies. Turning away from pride as an individual feeling allows us to understand pride as ‘bodily intensities and political attachments’ as a way of opening up ‘analytic possibilities to create new forms of political engagement and community’ (p.4). Nixon draws attention to pride as strategy, which he explores in the overtly political context of Gay Pride and Black Pride. At the same time, attention to accidental, unanticipated, surprising and perhaps fleeting moments of pride also offer opportunities for exploring the disruptive force of the affective explosion of pride. What can we learn from directly our attention to emergent moments of pride in our research?

Exploring Fun and Pride in Research

In the next two sections, we present case studies from our research, which brought us to these considerations of fun and pride. The first case is from the Young Women’s Health Project

Allotment, considering manifestations of pride expressed in the young lesbian and bisexual women's group and how fun wove in and out of the project. The second case follows, drawing on queer theory's challenge to dominant norms, to consider how pride and fun emerged through and with the YouCreate project with diverse marginalised young migrants in Iraq and Egypt.

Case Study: Young Women's Health Project Allotment

The Young Women's Health Project (YWHP) in Manchester, in the North West of England, is a 'young women's peer health project, run by and for young lesbian, bisexual and pansexual women, or related sexualities or those questioning their sexuality, aged 14-25'⁴. The group organises and runs activities that support 'six areas of wellness: physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, occupational and social/community'. One of its previous projects was an intergenerational allotment, growing organic vegetables, in which one of the authors (XXX), was involved, initially as a volunteer and then, with funding from the RCUK Connected Communities programme, as a researcher in a series of follow-on research projects⁵.

The allotment was not always fun. It was often cold and wet. It was full of weeds and brambles. Committed to growing organically and not using chemicals, it was a long road to clearing any ground and creating space for vegetables to grow. It was hard work. Often it felt like work that was going nowhere – we would dig and weed and a few weeks later the weeds would all be back again, crowding out our fledgling veg. Arguably turning the allotment into a research project enabled us to have more fun. The research plan was to document the allotment using some creative means, left open for the group to decide for themselves. The

⁴ See <https://www.youngwomensgroup.co.uk/>.

⁵ For further information about the projects see XXX et al 2014.

implicit assumption was that being involved in deciding the process and any outputs might lead to increased participation and engagement with the project and, relatedly, to better or more successful research. There was also a sense that this openness might lead to a more fun method – and here that fun was not opposed to, or in the way of, the work of research, but rather was the research itself. In a meeting in the youth centre an agreement emerged from discussions to make a short YouTube film⁶. We assumed that as making a film might be fun, would be similar to the kind of activities the group might have been engaged in anyway, and that funding the activity itself and making it happen was sufficient recompense for the young women's involvement. In hindsight it is clear we made rather different decisions later in the project when the university-based research team asked for some of the young women involved to participate in a focus group, a more conventional research method (Moore et al 2014). We did not necessarily think this would be fun, and we were not sure that young women would be bothered to come along early before another (more fun) event and so, based on the suggestion of one of the youth workers, we offered a five-pound gift voucher as an incentive to come along and take part. It did not feel fun but neither was the group boring, the tone of the conversation was serious and engaged, perhaps as young women felt listened to and heard by the researchers.

It was a later event that really drew attention to the significance of pride. A chance encounter led to unexpected participation in an allotment show. A woman was teaching bike skills and helping young people access low-cost bikes that would make travel to the allotment easier; this woman also had an allotment. This connection led to a visit to her plot and a suggestion emerged that we submit some of the vegetables to the Levenshulme and District Allotments Society Annual Show.

⁶ See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78OJvb_xr4s

Who knew that learning how to ‘dress’ vegetables for the annual allotment show could be such fun? Who knew that vegetables needed to be dressed up even? Such compelling fun that a bunch of us turned up outside a small shed, down some side streets in east Manchester on a Saturday morning, to enter our produce in the annual vegetable show. There was that fizz and crackle in the air. Pride and shame bound together. Pleasure to see how many of us turned up following a loose arrangement, and perhaps shame that we *had* all turned up, that our unnatural, queer desires and hopes for recognition for our beloved vegetables were now exposed to the air for all to see; shame perhaps that maybe we were not proper queers and that the proper queers were elsewhere. Conscious that elsewhere in Manchester, on this Saturday morning, others were gathering on the aptly named Market Street for a rather different collective experience of pride and shame shopping for fast fashion. And that just recently there had been a colourful Pride parade weaving its way through the streets to the gay village in Manchester but, here we were, throwing on any old clothes as we left our homes early on a Saturday, but dressing up our vegetables, primping and priming them, bringing them along to be judged, submitting them to the gaze of experts, hoping that our preciously cared for and well-dressed vegetables would be recognised – would even win! We paced back and forth, up and down, outside the shed as the judging went on inside: a long half hour or forty-five minutes while we giggled with nerves and then giggled more in embarrassment about our nerves. The idea of competition seemed somehow antithetical to the inclusive ethos of informal education of youth work and our low-key approach to gardening. But here we were, seeking recognition and acceptance into this queer world of such care and tenderness over vegetables, as young people eased their way out of closets, and into back street allotment sheds, testing what spaces were in the world, what connections could be made, and sharing brief community amongst these other vegetable lovers, so that when our, yes our, garlic and onions won prizes, we could feel pride indeed that, we – or at least our

vegetables – were the best – and were recognised to be the best. Our celebration of a more-than-human pride, expanded through the queer practice of dressing onions and garlic, and our guilty pleasure of hanging out with other vegetable lovers, in a shed, in the backstreets of Manchester, provided an alternative to a commercialised and consumerist, public, expensive (and for Nixon, neoliberal) Pride, a temporary collective which appeared more queer than the excessive floats of the parade.

Paying attention to emotions can draw our attention to when something significant is happening or when there is a moment of change. At the same time, as Burman notes, participatory research, precisely through its attention to emotions, reflexivity and process, can be ‘vulnerable to the charge of furthering structures of individualisation’ (2006, p. 316).

Burman draws attention to the ways confessional stories, particularly of change and transformation, can quickly be absorbed into neoliberal commitments. Drawing on Nixon’s reminder of the excess of emotions and their unwillingness to be contained, for Nixon (2017) it is the collective experience of pride that can transform an individualised feeling into something that challenges and exceeds neoliberal pride. It is important then to say what the allotment project was not. It was not a project of shame – not intended to turn shame into pride, nor was it intended to *create* shame by bringing into view inappropriate bodies. It was not designed to improve young people’s eating habits or to increase their consumption of vegetables or to reduce obesity. It was not designed on a deficit model of young people and their presumed lack of relationship with vegetables, or the outdoors, or exercise. Rather it was designed in documentary mode to record a queer flourishing in the almost invisible cracks of south Manchester. Following Cvetkovich’s argument that ‘emotion is central to becoming open to what we don’t know and to that which exceeds our current thinking’ (Cvetkovich 2012, p. 200), taking emotions seriously as a site of research might enable us to become open to the unknown and unexpected. So it may be that *more* rather than less

attention to emotions is needed to account for the promise of participatory research – an attention which takes emotions as public feelings that circulate and connect, rather than as individualised feelings where one works on the self in order to transform shame to pride. Thinking through participation’s promise to support children and young people’s rights, reflecting on this project drew our attention to pride as a collective emotion which has been central to the project of social transformation for LGBT+ and queer communities, and the importance of public feelings and claims to the right to participate in public cultures. For the LGBT+ community pride is not what comes after liberation, pride *is* (an element of) the process of transformation and thus is a key element of a queer prefigurative politics – arguably pride has been a queer method for queer movements. This queer pride provides a counter to the idea that ‘pride comes before a fall’ which suggests that pride is an undesirable emotion which cannot be sustained and which will fail to bring about change. Here the unanticipated fun of the allotment show, and the pride in collectively-grown vegetables being recognised and rewarded, underscores how attention to emotions can draw our attention to unlikely sites of connection, participation and political transformation which change popular conceptions of young queer people, and allotments, and what might matter and make a difference.⁷ Exploring how pride circulated in this project, we reflect on what it might mean to draw this commitment to feeling pride into participatory research with young people more widely, and ask how attention to the collective and relational politics of pride might inform children’s participation rights in research and beyond.

⁷ See also Browne 2007 on the conjoining of fun, pride and politics in her work on queer pride as a ‘party with politics’.

Case Study: YouCreate

YouCreate was a youth-led arts-based Participatory Action Research (PAR) pilot project designed by the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) and Terre des Hommes (Tdh) in partnership with young people who have experienced migration and adversity in Egypt and Iraq. Nearly 150 youth leaders (66 in Iraq and 88 in Egypt) were trained, with the support of adult allies and a PAR art-kit (training manual), to involve their peers in PAR art projects. Nearly 1000 young people were subsequently engaged in these PAR art projects focused on strengthening young people's wellbeing. Here, one of the academic researchers (xxxx) reflects on the project, drawing on the participatory research activities, focus group discussions, and observations⁸.

In YouCreate, fun was both intentionally embedded in and organically arose during the research training with youth leaders, through their research facilitation, and the art-actions that were led by youth researchers. For the research project, adult researchers positioned fun as important, meaningful, and disruptive (in a generative way) to foster creativity and innovation. Fun was something that came into playful and artistic interactions during structured play-based activities. For example, the art action spaces -- where young people were painting murals, building community gardens, leading social justice plays -- fostered opportunities for fun, playful interactions. Fun also emerged in the 'between' unstructured spaces as young people began to develop and deepen relationships. For example, during the training week in Iraq, in the second lunch hour, a few youth leaders picked up instruments in the lunchroom (that were on hooks on the wall as ornaments/art) and began to play. Within a

⁸ To note that the ethical agreements allow for XXX to report on the data collected in this article, with due account of anonymity for the youth leaders and young people involved in the projects. Further information about the methodology, data management and analysis, and ethics can be found in Lee and colleagues (2020). Further detail on the youth-led arts based participatory research approach can be located in the arkit [here](#).

few minutes several other youth leaders started to turn their heads and then chairs around towards the music, at first surprised, and then showing interest and excitement. Youth leaders began to tap and sway to the music, making requests and singing along. The young people who sang and played that day brought in a range of different music, from their cultures, and personal experiences, as well as new music they had generated themselves. Each lunch hour onwards music began after the meal was done (and sometimes before) with more youth leaders joining in the singing and playing. What emerged as a spontaneous and unplanned happening was felt and recognised as something that drew participants into stronger relations with each other. Youth leaders revealed skills and passions that might otherwise not have come to the fore and then were able to draw on these and bring them directly into the training. Youth leaders began to share more with one another and the facilitators during the week and brought music into daily aspects of the training itself, deepening their relationships. Here, the ‘fun’ of music that filled the more unstructured project spaces helped develop relationships of trust, engaging more young people in the research – and seemingly more ‘fun’ in the more structured activities.

While adult researchers were responsible for designing participatory research activities based on literature reviews of best practice tools and their own expertise and experiences in designing research with young people, the contextual realities and person-centred conceptualisation and understandings of fun varied greatly. In YouCreate, the adult researchers considered clay a fun and creative medium for reflecting on experiences, yet the young leaders felt this was ‘child-like’ play and not fun from their perspectives. Play risks being infantilised for being not serious, inferior and not embodying adult-like qualities (Wright 2018). The theatre and painting the adult researchers thought was fun was at first intimidating and competitive, with many of the youth leaders feeling a need to perform and believing they were not good at painting. Thus, certain methods were identified as ‘fun’

within the broader literature, and by the adult researchers based on experiences from other projects, but were not experienced as ‘fun’ by the youth leaders. As such, some of the planned ‘normative’ ideas of fun that were intended to evoke emotions of joy and connection, instead evoked uncertainty, competition, and disengagement. The conceptualisation of fun by adults differed from the youth leaders. The orchestrated fun of clay never realised and the theatre and painting took time for young leaders to enjoy -- showing the contextual nature of what creates fun, and the role of trust and quality relations for young people to experience fun.

In YouCreate, pride was more frequently expressed by youth leaders as progressive relationships: first with their own selves, then in relationship between themselves and others, and their selves and the world. Youth leaders spoke of discovering creative skills and passions. For example, a youth leader in Iraq shared how she discovered new things in herself in relation to her interactions with the group:

I was very negative in my life and my ideas but now things are changed and I have become more positive because I discover[ed] more things in myself after this experience....like my ability to interact with people and my creative skills in drawing.

The young people had space to express themselves through artistic forms and in some cases through plays and theatres performed directly for their communities. Developing their own skills together, and recognising the ways in which they were changing, led to young people engaging more widely, which itself created pride. For example, a youth leader in Egypt highlighted the relational and collective dimensions of emotions, noting how they ‘felt a sense of responsibility and pride’ as they were ‘helping youth to participate in something positive and big’. In Iraq, a youth leader stated feeling ‘very proud because we feel like that we have created something creative in [our] community’. Some of the young people felt a new sense of social respect that they had not had previously, which in turn carved out

opportunities for them to express themselves in different fora to address challenges in their lives. Pride fostered young people's confidence to implement future projects with a creative style and see themselves as 'leaders from now on' (youth leader, Egypt). Their pride interconnected with their own self-perception and relationship with self.

Fun and pride were interlinked. Where space was created that allowed fun, young people were able to play, to try things and to make mistakes, and had a greater sense of confidence and collective pride in the activities they were leading. When young people were sharing something, they felt pride from the start, such as the above-mentioned musical lunch time sharing, and a greater sense of fun arose. In contrast, activities that were 'supposed to be' fun, but unfortunately were not fun for all, evoked a sense of embarrassment initially in relation to others. As trust within the group grew and relationships deepened, expressions of embarrassment became less common and fun and pride was collectively formed and expressed. Thus planned, and 'failed', fun can identify parts of projects where coproduction of fun has and has not happened, and where 'managed' fun has not been generative. At the same time, fun's spontaneous emergence is suggestive of emotional relationships that are open to the emergence of fun. Being attentive to these moments offers opportunities to follow the fun, to grow fun, and to create new openings for participation and research. Thus leaving fun as either planned based on researchers' conceptualisations or an implicit assumption, rather than a shared and collectively generated evoking emotion, is a gap in research design.

'Bad' feelings: children and young people in institutional research ethics

While we have argued that fun is hiding in plain sight, whereas pride has been relegated to both children's and researchers' closets, we want to draw attention to one place where emotions do explicitly appear in research with children and young people. Researchers working with children and young people have long challenged the version of children as inherently vulnerable that often appears in institutional ethics processes (e.g. Graham and

Powell, 2015; McLaughlin, 2020; Tisdall, 2017). Demands for parental /guardian consent sit in uneasy tension with the rights of children to participate⁹. Ethics forms make explicit the risk that researchers might do some harm, that the researcher, or the research process, might give rise to bad feelings (another motivation for the relentless need for research to be fun – as evidence they will not be harmed) – or perhaps worse, expose the pre-existence of bad feelings in supposedly innocent, happy children. In fact, as many childhood researchers have noted, arguably traditional ethical review processes are rarely suited to the complexities of participatory research. These processes often institutionalise a paternalistic ethic of protection (Graham and Powell, 2015), and struggle to understand children as researchers (Nind, p.30). As Nind notes ‘the discourses around what is risky and safe are being challenged, and rather than understanding people to be either powerful or vulnerable, various competing interests need to be understood in a more fluid and nuanced way’ (Nind 2012, p.30). Ethics is fundamental for participatory researchers, but this is an approach to ethics which centres accountability, responsibility, respect, mutuality, social justice and a commitment to care – a version of ethics which centres a very different form of relationality between researchers, some of whom might be children and young people (Banks et al, 2013; McLaughlin, 2020). We are arguing that fun methods and feeling good in research might usefully be understood as part of an ethic of care in participatory research (see Houghton 2015), and a commitment to building inclusive and accessible research processes, through reciprocal relationships. When fun is treated dismissively or instrumentalised or disguised, we lose the opportunity to explore some of the relational aspects of participatory research, and children and young people’s participation in the world.

The shame of enjoying research

⁹ This is especially the case for the queer child, whose parents or carers may not know they are queer, or may be homophobic, and may refuse the child or young person consent to participate in queer research.

We suggest that as long as emotions such as fun and pride are ignored they remain at risk of undermining the potential of participatory research and children's participatory rights, constraining our ability to enjoy or take pride in our research, and our research relationships. Keeping emotions hidden in the writing up process suggests a need to hold on to the seriousness of research, and foregrounds the importance of academic researchers' relationships with colleagues and employers, suggesting a shame in our research that others might not see it as good enough, as serious enough, that such fun cannot be work, engendering a version of imposter syndrome.

If we take fun and pride out of hiding, and treat them seriously, we can counter the risk that our research appears to lack quality or rigour because it might appear silly or trivial; we can move beyond instrumental accounts, we can attend with more care to how it is we want research to make us feel, and to how research relationships might feel. We can use emotions to trace important and perhaps surprising moments in the research, when something is happening, relationships are being made or undone, participation is enabled or undermined. Adult researchers too might be able to own up to fun feelings in research, whether this is pleasure of music, laughter, or a prize onion. And fun and pride might be approached not as something to be hidden, but as a practice of care, as an inclusive relational ethic for research.

Conclusions

The invitation to this special journal issue inspired us to collaborate by returning to participatory research projects to pay attention to emotions. We explored how researchers mobilise emotions such as fun in planning research, as well as identifying how the surprising emergence of particular emotions in participatory research can reveal significant moments of connection which might otherwise evade researchers' analysis. We realised that 'fun' is often hoped for by ourselves as adult researchers, considered as core to the participatory research,

but conceptually then not further interrogated. 'Pride' in contrast went largely unnoticed, perhaps hidden within other terms and considerations, yet it emerged as a concept that helped us understand some of the research projects' significance. Drawing on the literature of queer pride, we see the potential to understand pride as an emotion, a strategy, and as central to social and political transformation, allowing us to follow what mattered, like vegetables and allotment shows, in ways that we would not have anticipated.

Emotions such as fun and pride can promulgate hierarchical power relations as well as transgress and transform them. Paying attention, then, to who is articulating and challenging what is 'fun' in participatory research and their accompanying methods, is necessary to respect children and young people's participation rights, as well as learning from the seemingly spontaneous 'fun' of the between spaces of participatory research where fun can be recast. The processes of participatory research can extend participants' pride in their own skills and confidence in the differences they are making and are able to make in engaging with and/or transforming their communities on issues that matter to them on a collective level. Recognising both fun and pride as relational and collective emotions suggests the potential of paying more attention to them as researchers.

Part of this attention is to recognise the often-hidden research work undertaken to create opportunities for fun and other emotions to emerge. Particular times and spaces can foster fun and pride, as exemplified in the lunchroom concerts in YouCreate and the allotment show. Groups shape these spaces for interaction, as 'fun requires a stage' (Fine and Corte 2017, p. 72). Researchers in both projects paid great attention to the practicalities of providing quality time and spaces, as well as needing to have the flexibility to change plans (from clay to another activity) when plans went awry. Because fun and pride can be seen as individualised and as fleeting, the underlying 'work' of the researchers (children, young people, and adults) both practically and emotionally may not always be recognised or valued. But time, spaces,

trust and people's associated willingness to engage in participatory research are required for either or both fun and pride to be experienced, to emerge, and to flourish.

Emotions are often opposed to reason and rationality; thus, a focus on emotions risks devaluing work and research, particularly with children and young people. We argue that fun is not just something to disguise the challenging work of research, not just an instrumental approach for recruitment, engagement for data, and getting the job done, not just something that emerges accidentally in the breaks alongside the 'rigorous' research activities. Paying attention to fun in participatory research can be valuable in and of itself, as well as ethical, productive and generative. It can be a site for analysis and it can be a serious process and outcome of the research. Fun can be an achievement. Fun is not necessarily opposed to seriousness but rather can expose when something serious and important is happening, such as in a shed in Manchester (see also Browne 2007).

Being 'open to what we don't know and to that which exceeds our current thinking' (Cvetkovich 2012, p. 200) is an important agenda for research, perhaps especially participatory research. Paying attention to emotions can bring our attention to the often elusive transformations happening in participatory research. The surprising emergence of relational feelings, like pride and those evoked through fun, draw our attention to what the participatory research process is comprised of and generates, including and perhaps especially what was not planned – we would never have planned an entry to an allotment show or to start musical lunch hours. Attention to fun and pride can enhance children and young people's participation in research. Such attention recognises the importance of engaging children and young people with research significant to them, to the relational processes important for them to do so, and the outcomes for their lives. We argue that emotions evoked through fun are pertinent for relational development, strengthening of processes, and quality participatory research to take place, and that disruption of normative

research is valuable for children and young people as well as the research itself. Similar to feminist geographers, such as Bondi (2006), we challenge the notion of research's emotional neutrality and highlight emotions' importance in producing knowledge. Emotions cannot be left to chance in participatory research, even while we identify here that they also cannot be fully planned. While the article here focuses on children and young people, we propose that there is value research with adult participants in also considering the often 'hidden work' of emotions such as fun and pride. Just as emotions challenge the supposed neutrality and rationality of research, so does learning from participatory research with children and young people.

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