

Approaches to Ethnography

26 April 2022 • 1:19:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

ethnography, at-home ethnography, meta ethnography, narrative interviews

SPEAKERS

Ros Edwards, Katie Brailsford, Jesse Shipp, John Boswell

Ros Edwards 00:05

In this session, what we're focusing on is different approaches to ethnography. So we're going to be looking at outsider ethnography focused on case studies of a topic, insider ethnography that's geographically area-based and meta ethnography, which is a form of secondary ethnography that sort of synthesises outcomes from primary work on a particular topic. And we're going to have three speakers. They'll each be talking about 20-25 minutes before we open up to everyone to raise any topics or questions. And I'll, sort of, give our speakers a sort of verbal, just quick alert, five minutes to go alert, when that comes up.

Ros Edwards 00:51

So I'm going to introduce our speakers. I'm going to introduce them all in one go. And then they can sort of reintroduce themselves as they come in. And we're going to start off with Katie Brailsford and Katie has submitted her doctoral thesis to University of Portsmouth, and she's got her viva in a couple of weeks, so we wish her success. Katie is now working as a policy officer with the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning team at Surrey County Council. I've got that right. So that brings an additional perspective into her discussion. And Katie's going to be reflecting on her use of ethnographic case studies, involving various ethnographic techniques and narrative interviews that she used in her doctoral research on grandparents and kinship care. And then next up, we have Jesse Shipp who is currently finishing, writing up his doctoral research. He's part of the South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership at the University of Southampton. And Jesse is also about to embark on a new job as a youth research officer at Clarion Housing. So he's gonna be talking about ethnography at home. So that's the process of an ethnography of young adults, intergenerational relationships in mixed-race families in Portsmouth. In large part, that's his own situation as well. And then finally, we have John Boswell. John is associate professor of politics at Southampton. And his broad field is democratic governments and public policy. And he's published really widely on the substantive topic, but I thought also of note, for the purpose of this seminar is his co-authored methodology book, which is the Art and Craft of Comparison. And John's going to reflect on the process of using meta ethnography to explore public encounters with Social Security. So now you can instantly forget all that and listen to speakers. So I'm going to hand over to Katie to start.

Katie Brailsford 03:07

Hello, everyone. I will just get my screen up, just bear with me. So as Ros very kindly introduced me, yes, I am Katie Brailsford and I did my doctoral research at the University of Portsmouth. I'm not part of the DTP. I was funded by the Department of Geography. But you may know, and I had close links to Donald Houston, who I believe put me in touch with Ros. So we do have links that way. And so yes, like I said, I was funded by the Department of Geography and a geographical focus, sort of, is my academic home and where this study is from. So what am I going to do today?

Katie Brailsford 03:48

So my PhD study took part from October 2017 until I submitted last December. And this presentation will focus on my methodological learning objective, which was to employ in-depth qualitative research methods to investigate stories of grandparent kinship carers. So this presentation will provide a little introduction to kinship care. It's a vast topic, but I hope you'll just get a flavour of what it is. I will look at the research design and the research philosophy that I used. And then I will go into talk in more depth about the ethnographic techniques and the narrative interviews, and then some reflections I have from this process.

Katie Brailsford 04:38

So what is kinship care? Now, the first thing that I need to make very clear for this understanding of kinship care is this is from a UK-based focus. So this is a UK definition of kinship care, and it does have different meanings in different cultures and geographic locations. But for a UK setting, kinship care is the full-time care provided by relatives or friends to a child when their parents can no longer care for them or support them. So it's when a parent decides they can no longer care for a child and somebody else cares for them.

Katie Brailsford 05:10

And so why I chose to focus on kinship care, and you might be surprised to learn that there are more children being cared for in kinship care arrangements than there are in traditional what we understand as foster care arrangements, and also those in residential care, so in children's homes, and those that are adopted. Yet, me being one of them, had never heard of kinship care, before I started this study. In terms of kinship care, to try and keep this in layman terms, because it's a very complicated system, there are two distinct types. So there is formal kinship care. This is when a looked after child is placed with relatives or friends, or approved as foster carers. So this means that there has been legal proceedings. The court has decided that that child can no longer live with their parents. Is it okay, if we just go on mute? Sorry, I'm picking up some feedback. Thank you. And then the other type of kinship care is informal. So this is when, again, parents decide they're unable to look after their child, but they make a private arrangement to place their child into care of a relative. Now, a relative in this sense, is defined by the Children Act. Grandparents are classed as a relative. And if a parent decides that they can no longer care for their child, and they ask the grandparent to do so, they are perfectly entitled to do that. They don't have to let Children's Services know. And as such Children's Services have no remit to assess that arrangement. So I had kinship carers in my study that went across the broad range of both formal and informal kinship care types. And why I chose to focus specifically on grandparents. My own academic research has been focused on grandparents through my masters and into my PhD, but

also the predominant group of kinship carers in England are grandparents. They make up, we estimate, about 51 per cent. And I will move on to why it's hard to know numbers in a second.

Katie Brailsford 07:25

So my research design. So the research took place, the fieldwork element, took place between February 2018 and December 2019 in an anonymous research city. Why I chose the city was I had a high prevalence of estimated kinship care arrangements. As you can see from this graph, the 2001 and 2011 figures relate to Census data. And it's estimated that the research city had a high prevalence rate of 1.5 per cent, which is more than south east England and England as a whole. A little caveat to this, though, it's very hard to have any estimates of kinship care figures, because as I said, informal kinship care arrangements, they're not tallied by any local authorities. And as such, they are happening in private. So the only way that we estimate this is from using census data, and looking at the household reference person, and if that's a grandparent, with a grandchild present, and it's assumed that that's a kinship care arrangement. But yeah, there are some inaccuracies in our recording of data for kinship care. So this study, there was 10 participants involved across a range of kinship care arrangements. And I use ethnographic techniques and narrative interviews.

Katie Brailsford 08:45

But before I go on to describe my use of those, I just want to talk a little bit about my research philosophy. So where did I come from for this research? So, what I was trying to do was I was trying to address this sort of identified dominant trend in social research to focus on the extraordinary and the spectacular. For this study, I wanted to focus on the routine, the everyday and unremarkable elements of human life, to get this broader appreciation of lived experience. We know very little about grandparent kinship care, and their lived experiences. We have sort of questionnaire responses, but in terms of those detailed everyday investigations of what life is like, there was a gap. So there was two important elements of this research philosophy that I brought together. So one of those was this idea of listening etiquette. And this was influenced by the work of Les Back, which was to pay attention to the fragments, the voices and stories that are otherwise passed over and ignored, which I felt had really happened for grandparent kinship carers. They are a silent... They're in a silent position. They're isolated. We don't know it's happening. And I also tried to bring in this idea of co-creation. So, the participants' stories were not formed, packaged and ready for me to go in and collect. It took time to build up relationships with participants, and those relationships were negotiated and fluid. But these last two points of listening etiquette and co-creation I'll pop back to later in the presentation.

Katie Brailsford 10:20

So, the first group of methods that I used were ethnographic techniques. Now, I'm quite deliberate here in using the term ethnographic techniques rather than ethnography, because I incorporated a geographic rather than anthropological understanding. So how my research may have differed from a traditional or maybe a standard ethnography... But again, what is a standard ethnography? But that's, that's a whole other presentation. And so what did I do? I used short-term research encounters. So I met participants for one to two hours, once every two weeks, I should say here of the 10 participants, only two of them I used ethnographic techniques with. I also treated participants as knowledgeable and situated agents, in the sense that I wanted that element of co-creation that I had spoken about in the stories. The stories I was hearing belong to the participants. And that was something I wanted to keep

at the forefront. I also championed the practice of researchers accounting for their presence in the research encounters. The participants' stories were there, and they were theirs. But I cannot ignore how my own presence in that encounter shapes the story I was hearing. And also I had a role in the interpretation of that story, as we move from the data through to the final thesis. I also embrace the fluidity and multiplicity of methods. So as part of my ethnographic techniques, the predominant techniques I used were participant observation and informal conversations, and also a couple of research activities.

Katie Brailsford 12:02

So my research design. So as I said, I recruited across the kinship care spectrums. And I used networks and poster campaigns and got two participants involved at the first stage of my research. I then moved to this initial meeting. Now for me, this was a chance for participants to get to know me, and for me to get to know them before I went into their homes. So we also took this opportunity to talk through some of the participant information sheet and the consent form as part of the ethical review process. After the initial meeting was then when the research encounters start. So I met with the participants once every two weeks. And this is very dependent on their schedules, I sometimes meet them 11 o'clock in the morning, other times, 4 o'clock in the afternoon, whatever worked for them. And this was a chance for me to meet with them and just have a general chat, just really get to know them. And as time develops, there was maybe some questions that I brought in. But it was a case of, I was trying to understand their lived experiences. So what's best way to do that? It's just to talk to them. And then I used to research activities, which I'll talk about on the next slide. And also, after leaving the encounters, I would also write up my field notes.

Katie Brailsford 13:21

So these are an example of the two research activities that are used in the field. So for the first activity, the one on the left, where you can see the granddad and family titles. So I gave my participants these prompt words. And I just sat back and gave them time to respond. And what the aim of this activity was, was to look behind some of maybe the stereotypical understandings of such words like grandparent and family, and what it meant to them, and to sort of understand what they thought of when they heard those words. And also, this prompted further discussion, as we talked through their words, and they expanded on what they'd said. And the second activity, because again, I was just trying to understand their lived experience what life was like for them. I got them to describe a typical day in their lives. I didn't say it had to be in a timeline style like this gentleman did. But this is what he chose to do. And again, it allowed us to go into further conversations, and maybe bits that he didn't see as important, but for me actually revealed something about his life. So for instance, doing the laundry. This was an actual grandfather that I spoke to, and this was his role. And again, that might go against sort of this stereotypical gender normative ideas we have of different family tasks. So it was really interesting to talk through this with him.

Katie Brailsford 14:52

So I just wanted to talk through some of my decisions that I made during using ethnographic techniques. So, the recruitment. Even though this says informal kinship care, I did keep my study open to all kinship carers. I wrongly assumed at the beginning of this study that if you're a formal kinship carer, it meant you had support. And the participants that I got on board definitely told me that that was

a complete myth. And that they also struggle to access support due to their position as kinship carers. I also the second point here was about note taking. So I had originally just scratch notes in the encounters, so just like jot down ideas, as I'm talking to them. I tried this for the first couple of sessions but what I noticed was the participants were looking at me with suspicion. They didn't really understand what I was writing down or what I was doing. And I decided that it detracted from what I was trying to do. So what I did, I adapted my practices. And after I left each research encounter, I sat in my car, I must look like a complete crazy for outsiders for about half an hour and just record everything that had happened. And at this stage, it was a focus on recall, not fluidity. So it was like jotted words that would prompt me, to remind me of what happened. And then I wouldn't talk to anybody, because I didn't want to lose any of that psychological richness. And then I would go to either a cafe or a university building, and just sit and write field notes, record everything that happened for two to three hours, just to get everything out on the page, because this ties into the second decision that I made. It was not to record the sessions. Again, for me, this was about I wanted to build a trust with participants. They were already very wary of my presence in the home, which I'll go on to in a minute. So these were a couple of decisions I made.

Katie Brailsford 16:57

I did face some obstacles along the way, which partly explains why I moved to narrative interviews. Firstly was recruitment. I was unable to snowball for this study. The participants did not know that anybody of else that was in their situation. So they couldn't point me in the direction of anybody else who was a kinship carer. So that was a real struggle for this study. The second obstacle, which sort of ties into my decisions about the field notes in the recording, was the weariness about my presence, because to be in a kinship care arrangement, something has gone wrong in your family, the fact that you're performing that care role. And there was also great suspicion that I was a mole for social services. Even though I explained my positionality and who I was, there was still this wariness that I was going to tell their secrets. Because if you're in an informal arrangement, some of those grandparents who are living those, are in that situation, are very wary that if somebody assessed their situation, they may not be judged as a fit carer, maybe things going on in their own life, like health difficulties, etc. So there was this wariness about who I was and what I was doing. And also, I was facing an obstacle of time. The project was slowing down, and I needed to keep things moving. As I'm sure you're all knowledgeable with PhDs, you do have to keep things going. So what did I do? I decided to supplement my ethnographic techniques by turning to narrative interviews. So this is a technique that sort of championed by Clandinin and Rosiek and Riessman. And so what the design of narrative interviews are, there's two interviews. So in the first interview, I asked... So they're designed to be open and fluid and prompts this like open conversation, which I felt went really nicely with the ethnographic techniques. So in the first interview, I would ask them a prompt question of, please, can you tell me the story of how your grandchildren came to live with you? And then I would sit back, and then it would be the participants opportunity to tell their story. The only sort of real input that I had was to maybe encourage them to carry on or, "That sounds really interesting, can you tell me more?". Those sorts of questions. It wasn't a case of I had a list of questions before I went in. It was, what can we get from this open conversation? And what was really surprising was, for these grandparents, they'd never had an opportunity to tell their story. It was always their child's story. It was always what had happened to their grandchildren. Nobody had actually ever thought to maybe ask them what life was like for them. And so I did record these interviews and they lasted between one to two hours. I chose to record this partly

because it was a very new method for me. And I wanted to focus on my presence in the interview. And because it was set up as an interview, participants were more receptive to that.

Katie Brailsford 20:04

Then in between the interviews, I created three bespoke documents. So the first one was a timeline. And this used temporal cues from the interview. So I transcribed the interview and then would pick up elements of their story throughout. The second was a list of key themes. So I went through what we'd spoken about and picked up some of those. For some grandparents there was a lot about health issues, for others it was a lot about their grandchildren's difficulties at school. So we'd pick out sort of key themes. And then from both of these, I was... what Holloway and Jefferson had proposed of tailor-made questions. So it was using the stuff from the first interview to make the questions. And what this really helped me do was prove to the participants that A, I was listening to their story and B I was interested, because in the second interview, I returned to them and it was more of a structured process as we went through the three bespoke documents. And the idea of second interviews is not to create a new story. It's to enrich and expand on the co-created stories of the first interview. So it's to expand and enrich on the material that you got from the first one.

Katie Brailsford 21:19

So they were the two methods that I used. And here's just some reflections on this complete research process. So as we spoke about earlier on, this idea of listening etiquette, had these two sorts of, well like four things that go into two categories. So the first one was trust and time. The use of both methods, so ethnographic techniques, and narrative interviews, required my participants to be open. And this required management at times, because there was times in the field where participants would suddenly become conscious of what they told me. And I had to reassure them that it was okay. A lot of this was around, participants would get maybe get upset, as they're talking about really traumatic things that had happened to them. And it was reassuring them that those motions were okay, they were valid. And they are okay. And I also agree with Mitchell and Irvine in 2008 with their statement that participants need as much reassurance at the end of research encounters, as they do at the start, as they suddenly realise everything they've told you and they feel slightly open and vulnerable. And it takes management to sort of close that back off for them, not to leave them open and vulnerable, but to manage the leaving the field. The second sort of key theme here was openness and interest. This was hard. So I need to remain open and interested in their stories. When I first started using ethnographic techniques, I was a bit concerned because we seemed to be having conversations that were very off topic, that I thought were very off topic, but actually on reflection looking back now, there was no such thing as an off-topic conversation, because it was amazing what they revealed to me about their character, or about their role as a grandparent. And the second sort of reflection is this idea of using both methods. I had to create this safe research space. This idea that Josselson sort of states that being heard and accepted is all too rare in human life. And I needed to make sure my participants felt that this was a safe space where they were accepted and that their stories were valid. So I used active listening techniques, so defined as sort of involved listening with a purpose. And I also listened for inaudible elements of people's stories. I paid as much attention to how they said things as to what they said. And the third reflection that I feel is important to highlight, especially with sort of qualitative research, in-depth research, is managing your own emotions as a researcher. Bowlby and Day quite nicely talk about you have to tread this narrow line between over- and under-sensitivity to the emotions

of those you are studying, so the emotions of my participants. They were telling me quite traumatic things about their grandchildren's lives and their own lives. And it was a case of I couldn't be there as a robot but having to manage those emotions. So one thing I would advocate for all sorts of researchers doing this sort of work is the use of a research diary, this space where you could just write what your feeling and your thoughts are about what you've heard in the field, a space that's separate from your field notes, just for you just to work through some of those thoughts, and those complex moments in the research.

Katie Brailsford 21:22

So I may have rattled through this, I have a tendency to speak quite quickly when I get going. And so I'm already at my conclusions. I hope that doesn't matter. I hope you've enjoyed it. So, in conclusion, approaches to ethnography, as this seminar is so nicely titled. For me ethnographic approaches allowed me to build that close working relationship with the participants, which is what I needed to explore their lived experiences. And the joy to me of an ethnographic approach is that a range of methods can be utilised. I don't really get too hung up on labels, yes, I use ethnographic techniques and narrative interviews, but to me, they both really complement each other. And I think they can both be sort of branched under a broader understanding of an ethnographic approach. And finally, a sense that for using both techniques, so that those that were either ethnographic or influenced by ethnography, I got to explore and understand the lived experiences of grandparent kinship carers, who are an important and an under-acknowledged care provider. And this was the heart of everything that I did.

Katie Brailsford 26:00

So I've now come to the end. And just to say, yes I've slightly stepped away from my research for the moment and work at Surrey County Council as a policy officer. But it's great because I instigate change that way. There's a new kinship care campaign about how we define kinship care in the children's social care, like framework, so I'm hoping that Surrey, will sign up to that, but watch this space, I'm working on it. But to find out more about me, please feel free to reach out to me on Twitter or through my LinkedIn. But for, like, direct questions, I'm always happy to talk at length about this, so feel free to email me. But yeah, I've come to the end. So thank you.

Ros Edwards 26:43

Thank you so much, Katie. That's brilliant and such excellent timekeeping. Absolutely bang on. So Jesse, over to you.

Jesse Shipp 26:53

Hi, everyone. My name is Jesse Shipp. I'm a PhD researcher based at the University of Southampton. I'm currently on a short break but returning soon to submit my thesis. It's really nice to be invited along today to share my research and thank you Ros for the opportunity. It's also really great that now that I've come to the end of writing my thesis, discussing things that haven't made it into the final edition. And some of these aspects I have discussed with my supervisors as I was working through influences and identities of young people in my research, but these were a distance from the intergenerational connections that are central to my thesis.

Jesse Shipp 27:28

Today, I'm discussing how I went about recruiting participants from my study before presenting aspects of the mixed-heritage lived experience, looking at how the young people involved in my study understood and experienced racism. First, a quick summary of my project and my background.

Jesse Shipp 27:46

My project has deep ties to who I am as a person, as I know many colleagues may have also connections during their desire to pursue their studies through qualitative research. My research aim is primarily focused on how young adults with mixed heritages understand their grandparents, to be influential to who they are and what they do, their identities and their practices. For disclosure, I have a mixed heritage. I identify as mixed and I'm currently living with my grandmother, as I have been on and off since I was a child. We have very close connections, which prior to taking out the research, I did not expect to see within my cases. But aspects of my own relationship I did see when investigating the young adults' perceptions of the grandparents in their lives. The presentation today is on undertaking research in my home city and how this form of ethnographic research is probably different to the other presentations today. My long-suffering supervisors have heard some parts of today's presentation as I was working through the data. But perhaps unless I write a paper on some of these findings, you may be the only ones to hear them. That being said, if anything is interesting to anyone, my email is on the final slide. If you want to discuss writing up papers I'm really interested in hearing anything that could be contributed. Next slide, please.

Jesse Shipp 29:03

So, today's presentation. I'm gonna be focused on, in the first part, sampling recruitment at home, where I talk about how my project is likely to differ from the others presented, how at first I wanted to try and access people with no connections to myself, but ended up using local links. In the end, this surprised me as I'll discuss later. I'm also going to talk about some kind of shared experience but different perceptions through these. I focus on racism in this presentation, but another would be how the young adults understood society to be meritocratic. Understanding of inequalities, whether they are racial class based, within my sample, there were correlations there. I have a very small sample so correlations is probably the wrong term, but similarities have begun appearing, which again, I'll talk you through when we get there. I end the presentation today by showing some reflections and thoughts on the project. And yeah, maybe some thoughts on the future. Next slide please Ros.

Jesse Shipp 30:04

So, I'm going to you about sampling and recruitment at home. So my study uses mixed methods. I combined survey data with my ethnographic work to look at people with mixed heritages. This term I use for people with parents or grandparents who don't come from the same places or may not share ethnic group. Two thirds of people in Britain with this form of mixed heritage do not identify as mixed in the predetermined mix categories such as kind of mixed white, British and Caribbean or mixed white British and Asian. Indeed, they pick mono-racial group which Nandi and Platt suggest is overwhelmingly British or a formed to devolve identity, so English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish. This was important when it came to the mixes that I wanted to look out within my research. So the prospective participants did not necessarily have to identify as mixed, but I wanted a broad range of people with grandparents from various places.

Jesse Shipp 31:02

So I started my recruitment for my research by trying to draw on people not in my immediate circle. I wanted people from a range of backgrounds and mixes to try and explore how people in different social locations might conceptualise self, and how intergenerational connections might implement everyday practices in various family makeups. So I'm a Pompey local. I've worked in lots of people-facing jobs, and my first thoughts were to speak to some of these agencies. I spoke to equality, diversity and inclusion people at Portsmouth City Council. I spoke to people involved in charities that focused on mixed-race families. I spoke with people within religious communities, because originally mixed religious families were something I was interested in. But that's a different story in our presentation. And I also spoke to various educational establishments, such the local colleges in Portsmouth. This all led to some really interesting conversations, but no firm leads on people wanting to take part in my research. The people I was hoping that would act as gatekeepers indicated that I was asking from people, for me to follow them around for several months to understand how their grandparents were involved in their lives and how they were potentially influencing was somewhat intrusive, and people were worried about not having time. So I personally approached some people who had been mentioned during this process to find out where people were open about why they didn't want to take part. We they focusing on it being time consuming, or particularly so because they spent too much of their time working. So perhaps it's a symptom of neo-liberal Britain that perhaps is understudied that there are difficulties in undertaking intensive qualitative research. Again, possibly another presentation to do.

Jesse Shipp 32:40

I sat down with my supervisors at this stage feeling about the struggles I was encountering, that people were either unresponsive or were telling me that they felt I was asking too much. I was advised to consider some of the ethnographies I enjoyed reading, ones where researchers were immersed in their own communities, and to think about using local links to get my participants. And this is where my research likely differs from my colleagues presenting today. I used my links from the communities to find my participants, who all have varying connections to myself. Next slide please Ros.

Jesse Shipp 33:15

So the first person I'll speak about is Rosie. So I met Rosie many years ago at drum and bass nights we used attend to. At the stage of the research, she was actually dating a friend of mine as well. And when I started to talk about the project, I spoke to her getting her cousins involved, because I was aware of her big family and also I'd met them on the parties that we'd all gone to. I also knew that her family was huge. Her family had over 100 descendants from her maternal grandparents, including great grandchildren. I've met many of them over the years, doing all sorts of things. I've worked with some before. Some have been roughly my age, some at social events, things like the Bandstand were lots of people in Portsmouth go to. So I was aware of the family. So obviously I approached Rosie to kind of be my gatekeeper. That didn't work, unfortunately. But I got speaking to Rosie a bit more. And I think through a little bit of guilt, she volunteered to be my first participant. And it was actually very serendipitous that this happened because Rosie was more mixed than the rest of her family. Getting to speak to her, she was mixed on both her paternal and maternal sides. So I was aware of Maltese background on her maternal side, but from her paternal background, she always had Spanish ancestry, English ancestry and Irish ancestry. And I'm interested in what mixes I'm going to kind of talk about a little bit later, so this was really a perfect person to get involved in my research.

Jesse Shipp 34:41

The next person I approached to join my project was a young man called Kevin. So when I started my PhD research, many people who I knew were very interested, as they were part of mixed heritage families. As I've been talking to academics, they normally take a great interest in my project because they are in mixed heritage families themselves. So I used to go and meet a friend who actually was his mother for coffee after I left my job before I started at Southampton and talking through kind of research and she volunteered to her family. It was very kind of her, but I kind of wanted obviously to go and meet the boys myself to kind of figure that if they wanted to be involved, or you know, kind of these anxieties that have been put at me from other people, I wanted to just make sure it's okay with them. When I arrived, yeah, they were really happy. They found out that they actually lived in Portsmouth for most of their lives but had moved just outside of the city to attend school that the parents both thought would be a bit nicer for the young people. This is partly related to racism that the parents had faced. So Kevin, he strongly identified as British or English. His dad was an East African Indian, and his mum was white, but she received quite a lot of racial abuse as a child, even though she was white and didn't have too much diversity in her backgrounds. This was just her perceptions of being offered by people in the community, which I think was a big draw in the moving out of the kind of city centre moving to kind of a suburbs area so that it might be slightly less, I don't know, detrimental to their children's well being going to school in the city. So interestingly, out of all my cases, Kevin was the standout participant whose perceptions to society were what I'd call colorblind and he thought that society is very meritocratic. Another participant Parvati, who I'm going to discuss soon, had leanings this way. But these two guys really did stand out as different in my sample.

Jesse Shipp 36:46

The next young person who wanted to be part of my research was Craig, and his son I actually know at school for full disclosure. We've reignited our friendship, we're in touch quite a lot now. So he's kind of asked me when am I gonna be submitting my PhD, he's got kind of a vested interest in that. We're not necessary a vested interest, if he's got firm interest in it. So Craig was really interested in being involved in my research for similar reasons to why I'm interested in my project. His primary identity, or if you ask him, kind of, how do you identify, he says that I'm mixed white English and black Caribbean. And he also has very strong relationships with maternal grandparents. Identity was very important to him, as he has a young daughter who he was raising in and it was important for him that she was proud in her mixed identity but also aspects of our blackness, something he lacked as a young man we discussed often during the ethnographic fieldwork. He differs from Kevin so much in how they conceptualise Britishness, Englishness and also their mixed-ness. And although they were both racialised as non-white, which they talked about themselves, he felt about this and responded so differently. And I'm going to talk about this kind of thing in the final part of my presentation, a little teaser for some of my future slides.

Jesse Shipp 38:04

The next participant I approach was a young man called Eoin. Eoin was someone I knew from local activism from the centre of the city where we both lived. Our fieldwork was often structured around us spending time together after work hours where I would accompany a room around the neighbourhood kind of doing door visits to people, investigating problems they might be facing. I even went to some places I've never visited before, which was quite a shock because I'd lived in Portsmouth for around 30

years. His background, he liked to define his Celtic because this incorporated his Irish ancestry and also some of his Welsh ancestry. Again, the reason I picked Eoin was my interest in these kind of white mixes, and perhaps how they were developed in Portsmouth specifically, and the surrounding areas. Eoin was my most political politicised participant, I've got too much alliteration in this presentation. Although we had divergent views on what consists of politics, perhaps as I come from an academic perspective, and his own was tightly bound on what you do for the people in this community, I think he may have felt that I was perhaps a little too academic and probably a not enough activist.

Jesse Shipp 39:09

My final participant was a young woman called Parvati. Parvati I was connected to through actually my ex-partner. I'd asked her if she had any friends or associates that may be interested in taking part. She suggested someone that she knew who was actually heavily pregnant at the time. I started speaking to her, and other people didn't have enough the time, someone who was heavily pregnant really didn't have enough time. But I actually bumped into her mum at a wedding. I got speaking to her mum because there were four daughters and she recommended that I speak to the youngest daughter. I approached her a very informal way. She said add her on Facebook, so I did and sent her a Facebook message. She was keen to take part but was actually working three jobs at the time. And this is another element that I talk about, the living conditions have young people. Obviously from my perspective, them wanting to take part in my research is quite a small aspect but their lives are so challenging and their everyday they can't spend a few hours a week. Big questions that, again, aren't related to my thesis that might potentially make it into a paper one day.

Jesse Shipp 40:18

Next slide, please Ros. The next slide I'm going to talk specifically about Portsmouth. And so Portsmouth, as you drive into on the motorway, you'll see it's the home of the Royal Navy, and something that connected majority of the research participants was having family in the Royal Navy. Portsmouth has a large military presence since the 1600s when it was attacked by France multiple times in consecutive years, and since then it has become heavily fortified and has remained so since. And then it's been one of Britain's leading shipbuilding cities and you cannot walk around the city without seeing tributes to its military history. Many pubs and streets are named with imperial colonial links, from yhe Admiral Drake pub. The Churchillian, right down to more subtle ones like the Lawrence Arms on Lawrence Road named after a commander in Britain's war in India. The participants' parents, excluding Eoin, had all spent their formative years in Portsmouth alongside with majority of their parents, the grandparents, which I'm looking at having influenced their grandchildren. Some of this was related to working in the Navy. Parvati's father and paternal grandfather were both in the Navy, as was Craig's maternal grandfather, and Rosie had an uncle who served in the military.

Jesse Shipp 41:34

Portsmouth had changed much since the parental generation has grown up in the city. This is something that pops up in conversations with parents when I was in and around the home as part of my fieldwork. Pompey was now a lot more diverse than it had been in the 70s and 80s. In discussion with Kevin and his dad, Kevin's father was telling me how the city had changed and he spoke about the racism he'd encountered. Something my own father had mentioned, was that in the 1980s, the National Front had a huge presence in the city. Kevin was disinterested in this. I found the conversation

fascinating, and I found his disinterest fascinating. And this leads nicely into the next topic area, which looked at shared experiences and different perceptions of living in the ports of region.

Jesse Shipp 42:18

Next slide please, Ros. Thank you. So shared experiences and different perceptions. One of the key features in my research was understanding how each case conceptualised their identities and how grandparents were a part of this. I expected there to be some uniform characteristics, that people would have some form of relationship with both sets of grandparents. And depending on the family closeness to a set or individual grandparent, that'd be more meaningful to the young adults, thus more influential to both who they are and the things that they do. This was something my thesis centres around. Today, I'm going to focus on another assumption, led in part by my own background, but also reading I've done: intermixed identities. My assumption was that the young adults I was working with would be racially conscious, anti-racist and have understandings of societal racial inequalities. Living in Portsmouth even with my great proximity to whiteness, I'd witnessed countless episodes of racism. For people in my local Tesco telling young children to speak English, to people in the pub making horrible comments about Black and Asian people. I intervene as anti-racism as part of my identity. For others mixed identities living in Portsmouth, things are very different. So I'm going to talk through some of this now.

Jesse Shipp 43:39

Kevin talked about experiences of racism at school, but wanted to minimise these despite clearly something he had encountered. He wanted to avoid talking about them, so ethically, I avoided doing so. But he recognised both he and his brother had at first faced racism at the school they attended, which their mother had informed was not very diverse. She explained every time a photo was taken, she was sent the consent form as her sons' would always include invitation in promotional material for the school. I think part of Kevin's position was that he did not consider the racism he faced the something that bothered him, but also because it went against his views that society which Germany colourblind, which he had developed from living in a very middle-class neighbourhood, and having friends with similar backgrounds. He strongly identified as British and English and he thought that being a victim of racism was partly inconceivable to him.

Jesse Shipp 44:44

Another case with a middle-class background, conceptualise racism with similar perspectives, Parvati highlighted racist attitudes held by white people important old docker attitudes and sought to minimise them. The starkest were when we discussed the behaviour of people within Parvati's family. She was able to minimise antisocial behaviour of her white British family, all now passed, but highlighted on several occasions her Caribbean family, which she referred to as her Milton Keynes family, met her disapproval. Class played a huge part in this with her nuclear family were middle class and she developed a sense of identity, which incorporated that parts of her background she approved of by providing distance from other aspects. From conversations in the research, I was expecting her to have lots of anti-racist perspectives she would discuss when highlighting her family. But instead she, like Kevin, embraced a post-racial approach to inequalities.

Jesse Shipp 45:38

Rosie had some very complex thoughts on race and ethnicity. She was someone who had experienced racism as a child, and it really stuck with her. Although she said that in recent years, no-one had been racist or even identified her as non-white. Part of this was moving in and out of Portsmouth. Of all the participants. Despite having a mixed background from both her mother and father, Rosie felt that she was racialised as white or in her words, I am white. She did not feel authentic in her mixed heritage enough to always identify such. So her self-identification differed depending on who and where she was. In terms of conceptualising race and racism, this was an important part as she acknowledges her proximity to the whiteness and also her privilege. Also understanding that racialisation of people can be problematic, like Portsmouth inner city, which is very white.

Jesse Shipp 46:28

Craig, who wanted to talk about the racism he had encountered, was very different to my other participants. He was also living a much more working class life than Kevin or Parvati. He battles both physical and verbal attacks from racists as a teenager, and it was much harder for him to minimise and yet because it has a profound effect on him and perhaps his worldview. The contrast with both Kevin and Parvati was palpable. The racism he had faced, he made no efforts to minimise and instead he spoke at length of it, how it formed how he felt about his identity. Yet, he was still proud of his Englishness, acknowledging his mixed identity more so than Kevin, but separating aspects of this, which he felt exclusive and ethno-national version, he understood the racists who attacked him, both physically and mentally to possess. My thoughts on this are much nearer Craig's than Kevin's or Parvati's, despite my proximity to whiteness, and being closer than all free of theirs, which moves me to my kind of final slide on my thoughts inside ethnographer.

Jesse Shipp 47:34

So a spectrum of opinions were presented. And this was really interesting to work through. How the participants conceptualised the world around them is very dependent on their social locations and their lived experiences. I was expecting views slightly more in line with my own, kind of left-wing perhaps, but with also connections within the city, which I did see in some cases, but the levels of individualism, was very surprising to me and I talked this through with my supervisors much at the start and middle of kind of processing the fieldwork, which is kind of my next point. I spent an awful long time working with the data. Much of what I've discussed today caught me by surprise, as did the core findings from my thesis, which backs research on grandparents well, but I've opened up a little niche when considering specifically how grandparents may influence these mixed identities. My point that I brought up at the beginning, looking back to the two thirds of people with mixed heritages identify mono-categorically, most primary British, English one of these forms of identities, perhaps is influenced heavily by living in places such as Portsmouth, which in a way reflects England, and this is a big contributor to identity, perhaps more so than backgrounds. And this kind of connects to my final point about identifying gaps with my research, which I did not come across and also possibly things to look for in future studies. What I'm interested in is that the findings from my study would be similar in a location like Portsmouth, perhaps Plymouth, or whether focus on intergenerational connections in a more diverse place will produce different results. Something for the future may be.

Jesse Shipp 49:16

Final slide. Thank you, everyone, for listening to me today. I'm aware I kind of sped up and slowed down at times. And also thank you for my research funding from the ESRC and south coast doctoral partnership. And thank you, University of Southampton, my fantastic supervisors, who are both here today Ros and Bindi.

Ros Edwards 49:38

Well, thank you very much for that Jesse and another excellent timekeeping. And it was great to hear that. I really enjoyed it. So unless anyone's got a burning little point. No, then move on to John.

John Boswell 49:59

Can you all hear me in and see the slides? OK, very good, thank you very much. Those are two very hard acts to follow, I thought they were both fantastic talks, really interesting lots to talk about. Thank you, Katie and Jesse. So yeah, tough act to follow but I will do my best, a very different kind of speed here in the sense of a very different kind of undertaking.

John Boswell 50:24

So just as a bit of context, this comes from a project I'm working on this year, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, a fellowship for the year to look at what I've called the weapons of the meek, the citizen agency at the frontlines of encounters with the state. So that's what the projects on. And the technique I'm using for that project, that wider project, is this technique of what I'm going to introduce today is called meta ethnography. And the kind of motivation for that, I suppose. And I'm going to talk about it, reflect on what it's been like trying to do it, so it's new to me this year. The motivation for it really is.... You'll see that I work in politics in political science. And so in political science, public policy, public administration, my kind of home field, ethnography is a really weird thing. Like it's seen as weird and marginal, and you're a bit fruity if you're into that. And increasingly it doesn't get funded. And this is a minor miracle, but it has been funded by somebody. So it's sort of motivated by a desire to show, you know... I find what I've just heard from Katie from Jesse is so interesting to me. And this is the kind of work that gets me most excited. And so it's really motivated by trying to make the case that the small facts can speak to larger issues, that we don't have to be scientists with a capital S, into data visualisation and all the things that all of my whiz-bang colleagues are into. So that is the kind of underlying motivation behind it, I guess methodologically. And Ros spoke earlier, it kind of comes on the back of some work I've been doing with my colleagues at the Centre for Political Ethnography. So I think Rod's somewhere on the call. He is kind of leading the charge, and I'm kind of following in his wake there. So what has that involved? Well. Hang on. I need Ros. I like the way Jesse was doing it because he had the kind of Chris Whitty thing happening. Okay, sorry, I'm out of practice. I've been a research fellowship, I haven't been giving presentations.

John Boswell 53:03

Okay, so what is meta ethnography? So a kind of a brief definition there, the creative and generative process of identifying, reading, relating and translating studies of similar phenomenon to one another. And what it is really, it's a very interpretive form of meta analysis or systematic review. So it's a kind of alternative approach that is informed by an ethnographic sensibility. But an attempt to synthesise commonalities, discrepancies look for patterns across ethnographic work that looks at something kind

of similar. So this is an approach that is somewhat mainstream or common. So it originates from Noblit and Hare, who kind of first came up with the idea, or gave it a label at least, from education, but it's actually had a lot more traction in health sciences. So that is the main kind of... If you look at meta ethnography or Google Scholar, the top picks are all going to be in health sciences. And that's I think, partly because of a similar motivation to what I have here, which is there is research funded on ethnography in practice quite a lot in health. And again, it's about trying to maximise the value of that and see, you know, will these tell us actually really interesting things, and a kind of strategy for really pushing that has been to kind of synthesise them and bring them together. So, yeah, so that's where a lot of the work has come out. But it's not used a lot elsewhere, and certainly not at all, to my knowledge and public administration, political science. It's a totally new thing. So we, I say we, so that's me and Stuart Smedley who is a postdoctoral researcher in the department who is helping me on it. I think it's safe to say this is my baby. And Stuart is sort of lending good-natured support and help. But he probably doesn't have quite the same emotional drive behind what's going on, but he's been invaluable in doing it, actually sort of helping to feel our way through how to do it. And so what, as I say, we're interested in the weapons of the meek, the kind of how citizens practice agency at the frontlines of their encounters with the state, which is something that kind of mainstream methods and politics and public administration have not really been able to give us much information on. And so we use, kind of synthesising a lot of ethnographic work to kind of look at it. And the area that appealed as the most attractive place to kind of pilot this idea, because there was the most work available, and it's the one I was already most familiar with, is around encounters with social security, so accessing welfare entitlements, basically.

John Boswell 56:04

So what did we do? Well, mainly, it's been lots and lots of reading. But it's actually been proper reading. So this is I've heard from two people who've been doing a PhD. And I did my PhD about 10 years ago, and 10 years ago, I used to read properly. And now I've become like, almost everyone I know. Maybe we're all bad academics. But you develop a habit of reading strategically or reading through with a purpose, right? So everything's about assembling a jigsaw puzzle. Where does this fit? Where does that fit? What are they trying to tell me? And there's not a lot of kind of actually sitting back and reading things to cover to cover. And this has been a kind of opportunity to reconnect with that. My office, now it's filled, I can show you now I've got loads of books on my desk now, for the first time ever. I've always got a rotating load of books. It has been fantastic, because it's the opportunity to read through work, like what Katie and Jesse have just talked to us about right, to actually read it properly. And it's been so refreshing, and then respect. So read a lot, we ended up identifying... So we've kind of got in our in our sample as it were, we've got 51 pieces in the end. So there's 18 books and 33 articles that is now under review. And it's continued to grow that number, just a little bit with advice we've got from people and new things that have come up, but 51 is where we're at with the paper now officially under review. And these papers come from social policy and public administration, where you might expect. political science where it's sort of a slightly weird, you know, fruity thing to be doing, sociology, again, we might expect, but also criminology, philosophy, anthropology, other places too. So it's involved, really going across disciplines. Across the bottom, these are my favourites. So I highly recommend all of these books. I'm happy to give anyone a list. But these are just all, when I say favourites, I'm going to say, I'm tempted to say they're a pleasure to read. The reality is they're not a pleasure, because it's quite harrowing. But they were just, you know, magnificent pieces of work that I would highly recommend.

John Boswell 58:19

So I'm now going to talk you through... I kind of toyed with how should I do this. I'm going to talk you through how we did it to the best of my ability in the time available. And the way I'm going to do that is to go through the kind of seven steps that no Noblit and Hare talk about. Now because it's a very interpretive exercise, they're not steps that are kind of hermetically, you know, you do one and then you do the other. We're not an automaton, you know, engineers assembling something, this is all a bit blurry, right? In reality, you go backwards and forwards. But it's just easier to talk about in steps. So that's the way we're going to do it. And the way we've done it in the paper is just an easier heuristic device for kind of conveying what's going on. But don't, you know, don't worry. I'm fully aware it's a very iterative process.

John Boswell 59:11

So the steps they have are these things on the left of this table, so getting started deciding what's relevant, etc. So that's the step. And then what I'm going to talk through is what's appealing about the idea. Then the kind of challenge that you face in practice from doing it. And then lastly, the kind of practical strategies we came up with for managing yeah, getting the best data but also managing that challenge. So the first one is about getting started, which is always a bit of a mystery for any research project, if we're 100 per cent honest. And the appeal of meta ethnography is that it's got that creative, generative, exploring, discovery sort of orientation that's common to ethnographic work and interpretive work. And the real challenge here, so that's usually not much of a challenge if you're out in the field. It's exciting. It's normally about pinning it down to what is the real thing you're going to do. But there's lots of ideas there. The issue we have here, I guess, is that there's this lack of immediacy and inspiration. You're not out there talking to people in the way that Katie and Jesse were, so you need to kind of somehow recreate that. And it comes back to a pretty well-known ethnographer in political science called James Scott, who talks about this process of a dynamic updating. Rod I have elsewhere been called it yo-yoing, which is the idea that you kind of go in and out of the field and going in and out of the field is what helps you to kind of clarify what it is you're interested in, and what's really exciting. So we tried to kind of recreate this idea of dynamic updating, or yo-yoing. By reading quite a lot at the same time, basically, by flooding across fields, flooding across disciplines, and trying to get a sense of what was leaping out at us what was being interesting, and talking a lot at the outset of the project, having a lot more meetings than to kind of discuss what was interesting. So that's what we tried to do to kind of recreate that. It was a bit lame, if I'm being honest, relative to the excitement of field research, but it was the best we could manage.

John Boswell 1:01:34

Second step is deciding then what's relevant, so kind of narrowing your sample essentially, down. And what's a real strength of the meta ethnographic approach is that you're not limited in the way you would be with a systematic review. So it's not kind of rigid search terms and particular journals and particular fields and that kind of thing. There's a lot more of genre blurring so that you're able to go across settings and disciplines and be a bit more creative. And I found that really exciting. But the challenge, the kind of pragmatic challenge is that it's really time consuming, but more to the point potentially never ending, because you can always find new things that might be slightly related. So in practice, we needed something, you know, at some point, you just got to stop reading and decide what you're doing. So we needed to set these lines. So how do we do it? Well, sometimes it was just practical, like neither

of us really read anything other than things in English. So we decided that English was the way to go. Things that were in the English language or translation. We both didn't feel very comfortable. Neither of us are development scholars. So we didn't feel very comfortable talking about places that where we really didn't know anything, basically, and would not be you know, where we might make wrong associations of assumptions about what's going on. And then lastly, is a bit more of a strategic thing, which is, you know, what, what literature out there are we trying to engage with? And what do they know what, you know, what, what's the kind of focus that they normally have? And so, we look at some of this, the kind of target, I suppose, are the interlocutors are focused on ideas about administrative burden, which is an idea that mostly comes from America, but it's also applied increasingly in Western Europe. So those are, those were the kind of reasons that we then narrow, we're able to narrow it down to those kinds of temporal and geographical... I should say, sorry, so that that talks about recent developments that are about austerity and conditionality and welfare, which are sort of neoliberal ideas of the last 25 years. So it's a sort of those things helped us to set temporal and geographical boundaries around what we're doing. They didn't, you could set other boundaries, other people would have set the boundaries. That's just what we happen to do. There might be really good reasons to go beyond those boundaries that we said. It's a justification each individual researcher will have to make, these are choices that you make along the way.

John Boswell 1:04:23

So having set our sample, the next thing is to really read the studies. And as I say, by reading, I mean, actually reading, cover to cover sort of stuff. To understand complex specificity in context, I found this really hard to begin with, because I was so used to skimming. So one of the things I found quite useful for us to do as a kind of accountability mechanism as much as anything, was a commitment that we would both read everything because I happen to have, we have to have two of us on the project. But that also, then you would write notes that the other person could then look at and refer to. I found that a useful way of making sure that I really did read properly, because Stuart was going to know if I hadn't been to probably because my notes wouldn't make any sense and vice versa. And this was really useful because it helped us to kind of decide what was really interesting for what we were looking at. So some of the things we looked at were, you know, they sort of gave some insight but not, and others were really, really... The ones I listed at the front at the start in particular, the books along the bottom, gave us really, really useful insights. Some of the books in particular, gave us this real rich insight into the thing we were interested in, which was this citizen agency.

John Boswell 1:05:46

The next step is determining how those studies are related. So we've read them, made notes, but then what, what do we do with that? So the thing that is appealing about meta ethnography is that it emboldens a kind of unorthodox approach to comparison. So this is something Rod and I have written about elsewhere a lot. We like the idea of a kind of unshackling. Normally, in political science and public administration, there's this very rigid idea about what you can compare and what you can't. And that's drawn from kind of positivist categories. And we were promoting a kind of more interpretive way of doing that. And meta ethnography is, obviously one way, one sort of technique for that. So it's exciting. The problem is, you know, what are you comparing? So there's no kind of stable or ready-made unit of analysis to compare, because often the studies are subtly different in lots of ways that you're, you're starting with.

John Boswell 1:06:47

So because concept that we use, which stems from some of his earlier work, is the concept of dilemma. So dilemma we find useful because it speaks to the agency that people have in different contexts. That dilemma is, you know, should I do this? Or should I do that? And that's a good way of getting at the agency of actors. The dilemmas in practice here were dilemmas around, essentially, how do you access entitlements, avoid sanctions and maintain dignity, all at the same time? And when those imperatives are in conflict, that's when it presents people with a dilemma, how they're going to react to the set of conditions or to this new protocol they have to do. And so we found in practice that that focus on dilemmas was a useful way of kind of categorising. In broad terms, the different situations that the people in these studies were confronted with, patterns that worked across in spite of the subtle or major differences in welfare regimes, and so on. So we use the dilemma as a way of kind of a first sift for organising, and other forms of media photography they use other concepts. So the one used a lot in health sciences is the idea of a first order and second order concept, in this case, first order concept, moving to a second order concept, as you get more abstract. Noblit and Hare talk about using metaphors as a kind of organising principle. There are other organising principles that you might use. I'm wondering for a different chapter, I'm working on maybe the idea of a social practice, which is used a lot and actually an international relations work that I've come across, whether that might be useful. There, you know, you can choose your own tool, as it were. But it's about finding something that is a kind of meaningful, common thread.

John Boswell 1:08:57

So once we've done that, the next task is about translating the studies into one another, you know, how, what are the patterns of similarity and difference? The problem. Well, I don't think it's a problem, but it's sort of presented as a problem is that this is super subjective. There's no clear guidelines on how to do it. And I'll talk a bit more about bit more about this in a minute, but it's about being kind of reflexive about that.

John Boswell 1:09:28

In practice, what did we do? Well, to do that, we then started kind of organising, you know, we use the dilemmas to kind of organise, well, how are people responding to this? So that's, so we found these different what we call repertoires of response based on different, essentially, which of those imperatives they tended to highlight the most or see as most important. So that helped us to come gonna break it down. So we had three dilemmas. And then we had nine sorts of responses broken down into three different repertoires. And then, it, it's like any kind of interpretive analysis, you're sort of toying with different ideas, and it didn't come initially, and it took a while. But you can sort of tell where it fits well enough, right? Because it starts to make new sense of things. And it's, it's a kind of, it works for your understanding of what you've been dealing with and thinking about. And for us this kind of work.

John Boswell 1:10:34

The next task is about synthesising that translation, and a concern we have here. So it's, it's about, you know, what's the theoretical relevance, which is the big kind of thing we're trying to prove, you know. How do our small facts speak to larger issues? And doing that, the concern is almost the opposite to the one above about being subjective, the concern is more about the line that you're getting rid of the

good things about ethnography and doing this new context stripping, making things really abstract and take them out of the context. So in practice, to do this kind of theoretical conjecture, what we found really useful was to go back and put the categories we'd come up with back into context. So read them again, and think, well, what is the consequence of this, you know, this action? So an example is we talk about personalisation as one of the repertoires of response and one of the things people do is make you submit works, so where to kind of share information or maybe to rely on mutual aid outside of state provision. They'll make use of their personal networks of kin or community in the face of restrictive entitlements or potential sanction, right. So the networks and community are a really important reservoir of, kind of, action. But when we went back and read some of the studies, the key studies, we got this idea from the realisation was well actually, this is, in context, this is a kind of interesting development, because what it does in practice is often intangible all those other people within the network in even more complicated relationships of vulnerability and preparing with the state. So basically, by relying on other people, you then make them at risk of potential sanction as well often, and draw the entire networking community into this wider entanglement. So looking at it back in context helped us to kind of work through the consequences of some of these actions and for some of this agency at the frontline. So that's an example and I could give you many more. But that's what we said about trying to do, just to try and give it that added kind of contextual layer.

John Boswell 1:13:09

Then the last task is about presenting the synthesis. In the practice in this paper that we've done here, perhaps haven't done what we really liked to do. And I will be a larger book, and I get a bit more freedom there. But in principle, meta ethnography provides the kind of freedom and creativity associated with doing this kind of work. You can present the results however you like, it's not a kind of formula. In practice, I think it's good. I like that kind of idea that you have some creativity. For others, it's a bit of a problem, because you don't have an obvious kind of format to follow. In practice, what we did actually is sort of follow the established format that they have in health sciences, which is a slightly kind of perfunctory tabular form of, you know, here's what we found, and here's the commonalities and differences. And the reason we did that was that we didn't have much space, basically, and the main thing we were trying to get across is to a kind of mainstream audience that this has theoretical payoff. So for a mainstream audience who maybe don't like storytelling as much as we do, that seemed like a good strategy, well important to be reflexive about that too, and think about what you're trying to do.

John Boswell 1:14:24

So, on the basis of that, and it's hard to kind of get across what I can do if anyone's interested, I can just share the paper with anyone who wants the paper. So you're welcome to contact me afterwards, if that would help. But what I want to finish on is kind of three reflections which are partly based on feedback that Ros and Rod gave us earlier, in an earlier airing of the paper. And one is a kind of practical strategic question. So Ros asked, well you know, does it offer pay off? Is it less work and more bang for your buck, basically? And the answer is, we think it's much less energy and effort than immersive fieldwork. But it's actually much more energy and effort than a standard analysis or systematic review. So I've just been applied for some European money. And they make you account for everything in person months. So apparently, that's now how I think. But I would estimate, probably about nine person months have gone into the production of this paper to get to a first draft, which is probably six months of my time and three months of Stuart's time reading, and writing stuff. And, I

mean, in terms of like solid months, not as an over the course of nine months while we did that things. I mean, over the course of 18 months, while we did other things. We spent a lot of our time on this. So you know, I don't think a standard literature review would take two experienced researchers anywhere near that much time. But I think immersive fieldwork would take considerably more. So it's somewhere in between, a kind of ontological or scientific question.

John Boswell 1:16:11

So in our earlier draft, we had boldly claimed that this was a way of having our cake and eating it, too, as interpretivists, who wanted to do both rich context and broader conjecture or understanding, or close to something like generalisability. It's been pointed out that that was a bit brash, shall we say? And the fact is, like, the fact of the matter is, we don't know any of these contexts the way Jessie and Katie know their contexts. We don't, right, we've read about them. But reading about the second hand is not like knowing about them firsthand. So we're probably guilty of overclaiming initially. But by the same token, I think we know much more about these studies than someone who would do a broad systematic review, and, you know, scan the introduction for what's the main point and put that in their spreadsheet and move on. So it's somewhere in between, and there are trade offs involved.

John Boswell 1:17:14

The last reflection is an ethical one. So there's no paperwork. We didn't have to ask the committee if we could go and read some books. But in practice, we found it's quite, and this is even more so probably for the next chapter or idea I'm working through, which is about encounters with the police, in prisons and punitive arms of the state. There are some ethical kinds of thoughts on how you go about and how you present the work in particular. So you don't entirely wash your hands of responsibility. This is quite important because a lot of the work that's coming out, you know, there's this sort of increasing - what's the word I'm looking for? - sensitivity, around ethnography with vulnerable and marginalised populations. So studies like, so in our in our next paper, one of the books that gives us really fascinating account is Alice Goffman's *On the Run*. And *On the Run* has been subjected to probably more controversy and criticism than any ethnographic work ever. So it's, sort of, the fact you're doing a second hand gives you some distance from some of the concerns but actually still centres others particularly on how you represent particular people and their stories and whether that's appropriate with this sort of method. So still working that through but I will leave it at that.