



Researching Drinking 'with' Young People: A Palette of Methods

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33 **Researching Drinking ‘with’ Young People: A Palette of Methods**

34 **Introduction**

35 This paper critically reflects on the experiences of conducting mixed-methods qualitative
36 research *with* young people (aged 15-24), with the aim of exploring their alcohol
37 consumption practices and experiences. We purposefully emphasise researching ‘with’ to
38 demonstrate that research is a shared process of knowledge creation between all those
39 participating in the research (Leyshon, 2002). **It is worth noting from the off-set that this**
40 **study was not an entirely co-produced one: the aims and objectives were set by the**
41 **researcher; the analysis occurred in isolation from participants; and the writing up has not**
42 **involved participants (see names removed for anonymity). What we are stating though, is that**
43 **the project involved “pockets” of co-production (Franks, 2011:15).** For instance, the first
44 author offered a suite of methods for young people to ‘opt into’ (Leyshon, 2002), including
45 interviews, peer interviews, diaries, mobile phone interviews, text messaging, and participant
46 observation. Such methods enabled participants with a variety of different skills to participate
47 in the research ‘on their own terms’ (Leyshon *et al.*, 2013:180). We also contend that it is
48 important that such methods are not deployed in a ‘one size fits all’ manner; instances are
49 highlighted where the research design was refined and developed through listening to the
50 experiences of young people in the study. **The above methodological approach works with**
51 **Bennett and Roberts’ (2004) notion of participatory research as a methodological philosophy**
52 **that reflects the desire of researchers to give more control to participants; it is a philosophy**
53 **that aims to be interactive, as opposed to extractive.**

54 **Research about substance use and its place in the lives of young people has employed flexible**
55 **approaches. For instance, MacLean (2015) offered both individual and friendship group**
56 **interviews in a study of young adults’ (18-24) drinking in Australia. Further, Jarvinen and**
57 **Ravn (2011) offered participants the chance to take part in a focus group, either with a group**

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3 58 of friends, or with other drug-experienced clubbers. If uncomfortable participating, they were
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5 59 invited to participate in an interview either alone or with a friend. Moreover, Seaman and
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7 60 Ikegwuonu (2011) investigated the role of alcohol within the transitions to adulthood of 18-
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9 61 25 year olds living in Glasgow, UK using both interviews and a drink diary. Nonetheless,
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11 62 such studies often rely on a narrow range of long-standing methods; they do not offer a
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13 63 diverse palette of long-standing and innovative methods which reflect the varying skills and
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15 64 abilities of young people. Moreover, such publications on substance use typically present the
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17 65 research process as a seamless act of formulating aims, collecting and analysing data, and
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19 66 presenting findings. This makes it difficult for early career researchers to gain a true insight
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21 67 into the challenges of deploying specific methods. In this paper, we go some way towards
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23 68 filling this void by foregrounding the successes and complexities of using a variety of
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25 69 qualitative methods as a means of researching young people's drinking practices.
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70 **Participatory Research with Young People**

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33 71 Since the 1990s, research with children and young people has witnessed significant changes
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35 72 in methods and epistemologies that have challenged long-standing research methods (Weller
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37 73 2006), and have endeavoured to dismantle conceptions of children as mindless and deviant
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39 74 (see Pain 2003). The literature has witnessed a surge in children-centred and, less so, young
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41 75 people-centred research methods. Such methods endeavour to remedy power inequities by
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43 76 supporting young people to choose their own methods of communication (Weller 2006). This
44
45 77 is in line with the emphasis within social sciences upon young people's agency (e.g.
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47 78 Holloway and Valentine 2000). Alongside this movement, participatory research has gained
48
49 79 increasing popularity (Wright *et al.* 2006) and can be seen as an effective, and more
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51 80 inclusive, way of engaging hard-to-research populations in the research process.
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3 82 Whereas children and young people were previously considered passive, or at best marginal,
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5 83 in research encounters, participatory research positions them as co-creators of knowledge.
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7 84 Often methods are employed to draw on skills possessed by the age group. For instance, older
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9 85 children may be involved in methods such as completing diaries and story-writing, whilst
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11 86 younger children may be invited to participate in drawing activities. Accommodating
12
13 87 different skill sets is important as young people are a highly differentiated group, and
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15 88 approaches that are appropriate for children may be unsuitable or unacceptable for teenagers,
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17 89 and vice versa.

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20 90 As Pinter and Zandian (2015) point out, creative participatory methods can provide
21
22 91 heightened opportunities for enjoyment, education and a sense of empowerment. Importantly,
23
24 92 however, though potentially enjoyable, adopting creative participatory methods does not
25
26 93 guarantee that young people have genuine opportunities to develop and perform agency
27
28 94 throughout a research project (Waller and Bitou 2011). To explain, the success of the
29
30 95 implementation of these methods is, in part, related to the positionality of the adult
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32 96 researcher. There are arguments that researchers should adopt the ‘least adult’ role (see
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34 97 Randall 2012), and debunk children’s impressions of the powerful and “potentially
35
36 98 dangerous” researcher (see Phelan and Kinsella 2013:85).
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42 100 However, Ansell (2001) cautions that equal research relationships are impossible. The joint
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44 101 production/co-construction of research is complex as young people often do not possess the
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46 102 same level of data collection and analysis skills as researchers, who may have spent several
47
48 103 years at university honing their skills. Enabling young people to develop the knowledge,
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50 104 skills and responsibility to co-construct research signals the “conscious exchange of power”
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52 105 (McCartan *et al.* 2012:10) between adult researchers and young people. Participatory
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54 106 research, then, increases young people’s capacity to identify and solve problems affecting
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3 107 them. However, this is not without critique, and some authors have condemned such
4
5 108 ‘teaching’ as implying that participants would benefit from “superior” knowledge (see
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7 109 Ansell, 2001:103). Others instead argue that participatory research is a process of mutual
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9 110 learning (Ho 2013); whilst young people may be trained as peer researchers, developing skills
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11 111 in interviewing and facilitating focus groups (see e.g. Cahill 2007), researchers become co-
12
13 112 learners in their everyday lifeworlds (Minkler *et al.* 2002).

113 **Methodology**

114 The research was conducted in the suburban case study locations of Chorlton and
115 Wythenshawe, Manchester, UK. Suburban locations were selected due to a pre-occupation in
116 the substance use literature with cities, typified by a large body of work on the night-time
117 economy (Holloway *et al.*, 2008). Chorlton and Wythenshawe were chosen, in particular, due
118 to the differences in ethnic diversity, socio-economic status, educational attainments, and
119 drinking micro-geographies between the areas; this makes for a useful comparative analysis.
120 The first author recruited 40 young people, aged 15-24, for multi-stage qualitative research
121 over the course of 12 months (September 2013-September 2014). The first author aimed for a
122 relatively equal distribution of participants between both suburban case study locations,
123 resulting in 19 young people taking part from Wythenshawe, and 21 young people taking
124 part from Chorlton. Further, slightly more young women ended up taking part in the study
125 (eight young men, and 11 young women in Wythenshawe, and eight young men and 13
126 young women from Chorlton).

127 In order to recruit participants, the first author contacted gatekeepers at local universities,
128 secondary schools, sixth forms, colleges, community organisations, libraries, leisure centres,
129 and youth clubs, in, and in close proximity to, the case study locations. She also distributed
130 flyers and business cards to houses and businesses in both case study locations; posted on

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3 131 online discussion forums concerning Chorlton and Wythenshawe; used Twitter recruit; and
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5 132 posted on Facebook groups about the two areas. Further, the first author arranged to be
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7 133 interviewed by the morning host of a local community radio station, Wythenshawe FM 97.2,
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9 134 in order to broaden her recruitment strategies. As this paper now turns to explore, the
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11 135 research was conducted utilising a “palette of interdisciplinary methods” (Mason, 2006:13).

136 **Towards A ‘Palette’ of Methods**

137 The palette of methods (Mason, 2006) that the first author presented for participants to ‘opt
138 into’ consisted of: interviews, peer interviews, diaries, mobile phone interviews, text
139 messaging, and participant observation. Each of these methods was not dependent on a
140 minimum sample size, nor an equal sample size across the case study locations (Leyshon *et*
141 *al.*, 2013). Participants opted into the methods they perceived to be the most enjoyable and
142 felt the most comfortable with - they were by no means obliged to participate in all of the
143 methods, although they were more than welcome to do so. This was a research strategy
144 successfully deployed by Leyshon (2002) in his research with young people in the
145 countryside. As Holland *et al.* (2008:19, emphasis in original) argue, “by enabling young
146 people to choose *how* they wish to communicate with us we recognise them as social actors
147 and begin to move our practice away from adult-centric procedures”. As the below
148 demonstrates, we are committed to an attitude of “methodological immaturity” (Gallacher
149 and Gallagher, 2008), which privileges an open-ended process over a predefined technique.
150 This is reflected in the first author’s commitment to modifying methods in light of the
151 preferences and characteristics of different young people (Ansell *et al.*, 2012). We now
152 demonstrate this by discussing individual and friendship group interviews. **It is worth**
153 **highlighting though, that there are difficulties in adopting a truly open-ended approach, given**
154 **the structure and nature of many university ethics committees (Skelton, 2008).**

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156

Individual and Friendship Group Interviews

157 Thirty-five young people opted in to the interview method. Individual interviews enabled the
158 first author to gain insight into the participants' perceptions, which are subjective in nature
159 (e.g. of their motivations for drinking, how they feel when they drink, where they like to
160 drink), (Kaar, 2007). Whilst the individual interview has its benefits, there are also
161 drawbacks. Some young people did not feel comfortable participating in a one-to-one
162 interview with an adult researcher, and asked to be interviewed with their friends. To address
163 this, the first author implemented a friendship group style of interviewing. The first author
164 had not intended to use this method; this illustrates the agency of participants to shape the
165 research design, and the need for researchers to be flexible.

166 There are advantages of conducting interviews in friendship groups for substance use
167 research. Friendship group interviews create a non-threatening and comfortable atmosphere
168 for participants to share drinking experiences (Renold, 2005). Moreover, friendship group
169 interviews provide access to interaction between participants (Miller *et al.*, 2010) - this
170 helped tease out the importance of friendship and care to young people's drinking practices
171 (see name removed for anonymity). Overall, friendship group interviews allowed the
172 researcher to collect data that otherwise may not be accessible (Miller *et al.*, 2010). Although
173 occasionally suppressed by more dominant friends, less confident participants may not have
174 participated in the research otherwise. When researching young people's alcohol
175 consumption practices, the presence of adults may restrict young people from speaking about
176 their experiences and thoughts surrounding drinking (Katainen and Rolando, 2015).
177 Recognising the 'otherness' (see Jones, 2008) of participants younger than herself, the first
178 author also employed peer interviews.

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6 180*Peer Interviews*

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9 181 Thirteen young people opted into the ‘peer interview’ method. Peer interviews acknowledge
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11 182 that young people’s experiences of spaces and places differ from those of adults (Schäfer and
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13 183 Yarwood, 2008). Young people are suitable for conducting peer interviews because they
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15 184 speak the same language as other young people (Kilpatrick *et al.*, 2007). Further, they often
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17 185 have first-hand insights into matters affecting peers, as they are often affected by these issues
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19 186 themselves (McCartan *et al.*, 2012). As Alderson (2008:278) rhetorically questions, if young
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21 187 people’s “social relations and culture are worthy of study in their own right, then who is
22
23 188 better qualified to research some aspects of their lives than [young people] themselves?”

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26 189 Despite contentions that peer interviews can offer a “genuine perspective” into young
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28 190 people’s lives (Schäfer and Yarwood, 2008:4), we found that peer interviews provided a
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30 191 space for some young people to playfully fabricate their drinking stories. Take the following
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33 192 exchange:

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35 193 Rik: Can you tell me what you get up to on a night out?

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37 194 Oscar: Get a taxi to town [said in an ironic tone].

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39 195 Rik: And get wankered in the Union [laughs].

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41 196 Oscar: And meet some ladies.

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43 197 Rik: Meet some ladies and take them back to my house.

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45 198 Oscar: [Laughs].

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47 199 Rik: And you know where to go from there don’t ya.

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49 200 Oscar: [Laughs].

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51 201 Rik: No, I’m only joking, only joking

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53 202 (Rik and Oscar, 15, Wythenshawe, peer interview)

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57 204 Oscar and Rik, aged 15, quoted above, playfully fabricated accounts of their drunkenness
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59 205 through hyperbolic descriptions, in order to perform and produce particular kinds of ‘cool’
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3 206 masculinities through their alcohol consumption. The notion that this story is an embellished
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5 207 one can be gleamed through: the ironic tone in which the young people spoke; the laughing
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7 208 which permeated this section of the peer interview; and Rik's frank admission at the end, in
8
9 209 which he states "no, I'm only joking, only joking". As von Benzon (2015) says, silencing
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11 210 playful contributions can risk losing valuable data, and ignoring one form of young people's
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13 211 voices. We argue that the young people's fantasies are interesting in illuminating their
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15 212 ingrained assumptions about alcohol consumption. For instance, Rik and Oscar appear to
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17 213 assume that alcohol is associated with enabling men to meet women, and to have sexual
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19 214 relationships.
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23 215 A drawback of standalone interviews (whether individual, friendship group or peer-led) is
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25 216 that participants often do not feel as if they have much time to think through their answers -
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27 217 an immediate response is expected (Literat, 2013). Recognising this, the first author also
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29 218 offered young people the choice of participating in drawing elicitation interviews.
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32 219 *Drawing Elicitation Interviews*

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35 220 Seventeen young people in the study opted into the drawing elicitation interview method.
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37 221 Each drawing elicitation interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, and took place in spaces
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39 222 participants felt safe and comfortable in, including: schools, homes, and cafes. Through the
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41 223 drawing-elicitation interview, "the visual representation becomes a process of 'working
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43 224 through', rather than spontaneously responding" (Literat, 2013:210). After providing the
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45 225 young people with a blank sheet of A3 paper and a pack of colouring felt tip pens and some
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47 226 pencils, the first author asked the participants to draw free-hand sketch-maps of their drinking
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49 227 spaces and places. Discussing their maps enabled participants to look back on their products
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51 228 reflexively, along with giving them an additional medium through which to express their
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53 229 thoughts (Lehman-Frisch *et al.*, 2012). Inviting participants to interpret their own maps
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3 230 further facilitated a sense of empowerment, as the researcher became a respectful listener of
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5 231 the young participants who were in charge of the discussion (Literat, 2013).
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8 232 Through its combination of visual and oral methods, the drawing elicitation interview
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10 233 enabled an understanding of the complexity of young people's relationships with drinking
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12 234 spaces (Lehman-Frisch *et al.*, 2012). While the first author anticipated that the maps would
13
14 235 offer a static snapshot of drinking spaces, she was surprised that young people's mobilities
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16 236 came through in their drawings. Many young people drew arrows to signal their movements
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18 237 in, through, and beyond, drinking spaces. This method had its weaknesses as, despite the first
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20 238 author's reassurances, some young people lacked confidence in their drawing abilities (Rose,
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22 239 2012). It was therefore important to offer alternative methods that do not rely on drawing, or
23
24 240 oral communication.
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28 241 *Diaries*
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31 242 Diaries are a method through which young people can express themselves, perhaps with less
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33 243 embarrassment, or fewer feelings of being judged, than in interview scenarios. This can be
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35 244 captured through Kelly's (17, Wythenshawe, drawing elicitation interview) comment: "ah I'll
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37 245 have to write about it, I can't, I'm not saying that, I'll write about it". Eleven young people in
38
39 246 the study completed the diary method, five young men and six young women. The first
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41 247 author asked the young people to complete unstructured solicited written diaries, regarding
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43 248 their alcohol consumption experiences, over a minimum of three weeks. Leyshon (2002)
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45 249 contends that utilising a written diary method with young people is challenging, as they
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47 250 perceive it to be time-consuming and it may feel like a form of homework. However, some
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49 251 young people in the study were enthusiastic about keeping a written diary; some participants
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51 252 claimed to have "never had a diary before" (Jemima, 15, Wythenshawe, interview). Far from
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253 a tedious homework-like task, for some young people, keeping a diary was novel and
254 exciting.

255

256 Diaries yield considerable benefits for substance use research. First, as the diary method was
257 not undertaken face-to-face, it made it easier for young people to be more candid about their
258 drinking practices and experiences than in face-to-face methods (Milligan, 2005). Second, by
259 enabling participants to document their own drinking practices, in their own space and time, a
260 more empowering research relationship emerged between young people and the researcher.
261 The first author found that one of the drawbacks of using diaries is that several young people
262 opted to participate in this method, yet never returned their diaries. An additional downfall
263 with using diaries for research is that they depend on the participant's writing skills
264 (Buchwald *et al.*, 2009). Relatedly, the first author was often disappointed by the limited
265 detail some of the completed diaries contained. In addition to oral, written, and artistic
266 mediums, it is important to offer alternative methods, which enable young people who are
267 technologically skilled to communicate their thoughts on alcohol, drinking and drunkenness.
268 This is now illustrated through a discussion of mobile phone interviews and text messaging
269 (see reference removed for anonymity).

270

271 *Mobile Phone Interviews*

272 The first author had planned to ask young people to send her photographs and videos on their
273 nights out, via their mobile phones. Despite gaining ethical approval to do so, this approach
274 was not suitable 'in practice' because of the costs involved with sending photograph and
275 video messages. Whilst many young people held a mobile phone contract, which often allows
276 unlimited text messages to be sent, often this does not include photograph or video messages,
277 which, in the UK, are typically charged at 30-40 pence per message. The first author

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3 278 developed and refined the research design through listening to the experiences of a young
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5 279 person in her study; Heather (15, Wythenshawe, interview) stated: “there’s a party on Friday.
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7 280 I’ll video some of it through the night on my mobile, like video bits and I’ll come in and
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9 281 show you”. Mobile phone interviews involved asking young people to use their phones to
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11 282 take photographs and videos on their nights out. The first author then met the young people
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13 283 individually, a few days after the event, and asked them to navigate through relevant
14
15 284 photographs and videos on their phones. The visual data then served as prompts to elicit
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17 285 discussion in an informal interview.

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19
20 286 Some of the benefits of mobile phone interviews for substance use research are as follows:
21
22 287 asking participants to take photographs and videos enabled “ethnography by proxy”
23
24 288 (Bloustein and Baker 2003:72), for spaces that may be difficult for a researcher to gain access
25
26 289 to, such as homes of participants’ friends and relatives. Further, the mobile phone offered
27
28 290 participants an opportunity to ‘show’, rather than solely ‘tell’, aspects of their drinking
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30 291 identities that may have otherwise remained hidden (as Croghan *et al.*, 2008 note of photo-
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32 292 elicitation methods). In line with this, the interview element of this method acted as a means
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34 293 of triangulating what young people *said* they did, with what the photographs and videos
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36 294 *showed* they did. Further, mobile phones changed the materiality of interviewing participants;
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38 295 the young people were, to some extent, ‘in charge’, whilst the researcher largely watched the
39
40 296 scenes unfold.

41 42 43 44 45 297 *Text Messaging*

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48 298 Ten young people in the study opted into the text messaging method (eight of which were
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50 299 young women, and two young men). Text messages were used as data in two predominant
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52 300 ways. Firstly, conversations the first author had with the young people, via text messages,
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54 301 regarding nights in/out that they had invited her to, were a valuable form of data. The first
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3 302 author asked the young people about their plans regarding: where they were going; what they
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5 303 would wear; what they would drink; whom they were meeting, and so forth. Secondly, the
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7 304 first author asked participants to update her, via text messages, of their experiences and
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9 305 practices during their nights in/out involving alcohol, when she was not present.
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13 307 Researchers have typically undervalued text messages as a source of data. Whilst diary
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15 308 entries are often perceived to require literacy skills, texting requires a different type of
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17 309 literacy skill, enabling the inclusion of young people with a range of abilities (Walker *et al.*,
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19 310 2009). Further, social anxiety may cause some young people to prefer technological
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21 311 communication, rather than face-to-face communication (Pierce, 2009). Text messaging is a
22
23 312 particularly important method when researching substance use because most other methods,
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25 313 such as diaries and interviews, require participants to remember and recall events, which can
26
27 314 be problematic with memory impairment associated with alcohol consumption. The date-and
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29 315 time-stamped text messages provide an “experience snapshot” (Plowman and Stevenson,
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31 316 2012:539) of young people’s alcohol-related, present-tense, actions. Overall, text messaging
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33 317 offered an informal, undemanding, and unobtrusive, means of understanding young people’s
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35 318 drinking practices and experiences, as they unfolded. Text messaging is a research technique
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37 319 in line with many young people’s everyday/everynight practices. For young people in the first
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39 320 author’s study, and as Leyshon *et al.* (2013) make clear, text messaging is a culturally legible
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41 321 means of communication.
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48 323 Those researching drinking practices, whether through interviews, diaries, drawings, or
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50 324 mobile phone methods, must contend with the issue that people do not always do as they say
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52 325 they do (Holloway *et al.*, 2008). This may be due to worries about being judged by the
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3 326 researcher or peer-researchers, for instance. It is for this reason that the first author also
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5 327 deployed participant observation as a method for young people to ‘opt into’.

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9 329 *Participant Observation*

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11 330 The first author undertook participant observation over a period of 12 months. She observed
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13 331 the drinking practices of seven different young people and their friends participating in the
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15 332 research. She went on 21 nights out/in in total, lasting a minimum of three hours, and up to a
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17 333 maximum of twelve hours. She undertook approximately 96 hours of participant observation
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19 334 in total, in a diverse range of spaces, including: pubs, bars, clubs, casinos, streets, parks, and
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21 335 homes, and for a variety of occasions, including routine nights out, to more celebratory
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23 336 occasions, such as an 18th birthday party. By “hanging out” with participants (Kusenbach,
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25 337 2003:463), the first author was able to explore young people’s drinking experiences as they
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27 338 moved through, and interacted with, their surroundings. The first author considers that her
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29 339 age, appearance, personality and drinking biography were key factors that enticed young
30
31 340 people to invite her on their nights out. We cannot help but think that an older, less
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33 341 fashionable researcher, who abstained from alcohol consumption, for instance, would not
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35 342 have been so openly invited to selectively invited ‘special occasions’, such as 18th birthday
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37 343 parties. It is worth noting that the first author was going to offer the method of participant
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39 344 observation later in the study, when she had built up a level of trust and confidence with the
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41 345 participants. However, upon explaining the study to participants at a first meeting, one
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43 346 participant stated: “why don’t you just come on a night out with us?”. Participant observation,
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45 347 to participants, seemed like a logical way of gleaming insight into their drinking experiences.

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48 348 By joining young people as they moved in and between different spaces, the first author
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51 349 acquired an understanding of young people’s embodied drinking practices, and the multi-
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53 350 sensory nature of drinking experiences (Langevang, 2007). This included the role of music,
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3 351 the impact of darkness and lightness (reference removed for anonymity), the taste of
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5 352 particular alcoholic drinks, the smell of vomit, and the importance of touch, for instance,
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7 353 when caring for drunken friends. To provide an example, when the first author went out with
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9 354 participants to a club for an 18th birthday party, participant observation provided support for
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11 355 the notion that drunkenness is not about alcohol alone (see Jayne *et al.*, 2010). The music,
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13 356 lighting, (non) alcoholic drinks, and bodies were all materials acting on the researcher,
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15 357 influencing her corporeal experiences of space, and making a difference to the social
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17 358 experiences of alcohol consumption (Duff, 2012). The can be illustrated through the
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19 359 following passage from the first author's field diary:

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23 360 It is interesting that, despite only having one vodka and coke, I felt drunk. Normally, I
24 361 require a certain number of drinks in order to have the confidence to dance. However,
25 362 tonight, being surrounded by other mobile drunken bodies, the darkness of the club,
26 363 and the thump of the upbeat music, increased my ability to dance uninhibited...I even
27 364 found myself participating in the Gangnam Style dance¹ without feeling self-
28 365 conscious! (Field diary, night out with Maisy, 18, and friends,
29 366 Wythenshawe)

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31 367 From the above extract, one can see that the first author experienced a transformation, her
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33 368 body 'became' drunk, through its practices and encounters in assemblages with other drunken
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35 369 bodies, the sonic environment, and lighting in the affectively charged space (Waitt and
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37 370 Stanes, 2015). Such visceral insights are not easily obtained through other methods. Having
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39 371 provided an overview of the strengths and weaknesses, and the complimentary nature of the
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41 372 interdisciplinary methods underpinning this study, this paper now concludes.

373 **Concluding Remarks**

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47 374 This paper has outlined a substance use study characterised by "pockets" of co-production
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49 375 (Franks, 2011:15). In this paper, we have argued that when conducting substance use research
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51 376 'with' young people, researchers should offer palette of diverse, yet complementary, methods
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56 ¹ A pop single by the South Korean musician Psy, released in 2012, renowned for the choreography and moves
57 in its music video, including gallop, lasso, leg sweep, flick, shuffle, pop and pose.

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3 377 for participants to 'opt into'. Such methods could include, but are by no means limited to:
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5 378 interviews, peer interviews, drawing elicitation interviews, diaries, mobile phone interviews,
6
7 379 text messaging, and participant observation. Combining mixed qualitative methods provided
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9 380 young people in this study with the space and time they needed to communicate the
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11 381 complexities of their lives (Langevang, 2007). This paper has also argued for the need to
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13 382 privilege an open-ended process to conducting substance use research (Gallacher and
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15 383 Gallagher, 2008); for instance, by modifying methods in light of the preferences and
16
17 384 characteristics of specific young people (Ansell *et al.*, 2012).

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21 385 Each method deployed in this study was argued to have its own strengths for researching into
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23 386 young people's drinking. Interviews offered in-depth insight into alcohol consumption
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25 387 practices and experiences, and friendship group interviews provided a comfortable setting for
26
27 388 young people to discuss their drinking stories and have their voices heard. Whilst young
28
29 389 people may feel uncomfortable articulating drinking stories to an adult researcher, peer
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31 390 interviews addressed this. Peer interviews provided interesting data as, whilst young people
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33 391 sometimes fabricated drinking stories, such embellishments illuminated their ingrained
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35 392 assumptions about alcohol consumption. Whilst interviews (individual, friendship or peer-
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37 393 led) often require an immediate response, drawing elicitation interviews gave participants a
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39 394 chance to 'think through' drinking practices and experiences. Drawing elicitation interviews
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41 395 also enabled insight into young people's alcohol-related im/mobilities.

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45 396 Additionally, diaries were argued to provide a space for more candid drinking accounts.
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47 397 Whilst diaries rely on participants' writing ability, mobile phone methods enabled those more
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49 398 technologically skilled and minded to participate in the research. Mobile phone interviews
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51 399 enabled young people to 'show and tell' the researcher about their alcohol consumption
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53 400 practices and experiences - through a culturally credible medium, whilst text messaging
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55 401 provided real-time updates of drinking practices as they unfolded. Finally, although many

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3 402 methods relied on participants' versions of drinking events, participant observation enabled
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5 403 the researcher to both see and *feel* multi-sensory and embodied drinking experiences. As this
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7 404 paper has demonstrated, by being equipped with a palette of methods, the strengths of one
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9 405 method can offset the weaknesses of another (Cresswell and Clark, 2011).

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12 406 The palette of interdisciplinary methods deployed in this study enabled the researcher to
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14 407 triangulate the research findings. Importantly, it also gave participants the opportunity to
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16 408 communicate with the researcher in ways they were comfortable with, and found meaningful.
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18 409 By being honest about the successes and failures of deploying specific methods when
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20 410 exploring young people's alcohol consumption practices and experiences, this paper is
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22 411 valuable for researchers in, and beyond, the field of substance use, seeking to both broaden
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24 412 their methodological toolkit, and research 'with' participants in culturally legible ways. We
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26 413 are not suggesting that the methods outlined in this paper should be extracted by researchers
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28 414 for substance use research. Rather, we contend that researchers must be attentive at listening
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30 415 to, and becoming attuned to, the methodological preferences of the specific group of
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32 416 participants in their study, and consequently adapt their methodological offerings to enable
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34 417 participants to communicate with researchers "on their own terms" (Leyshon *et al.*,
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36 418 2013:180).

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53 425 The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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