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**Tickle, SJ**

**Engaging young people through photovoice in coastal resorts.**

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### Article

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## Structured Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper examines and reflects upon the value of using a camera with young people in the research process. In particular, the paper discusses the opportunities that a camera can bring when researching young people’s lives. Subsequently, encouraging the use of photovoice with young people in ethnographic research.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper examines how photovoice can be a beneficial method of data collection when researching young people’s lives. By adopting a qualitative participatory approach, and employing photovoice as one of the main methods, rich and meaningful data was gathered that traditional qualitative methods alone would not have captured.

**Findings** – Photovoice was used alongside traditional methods to explore how young people experienced and perceived policing, safety and security in a coastal resort. Using a camera, captured rich images which alongside the narratives given by the young people, provided profound and detailed accounts.

**Originality/value** – Using innovative participatory qualitative research methods with young people and adapting to the research setting allowed for deep and meaningful explorations of young people’s lives to be gathered. Carefully considering the use of appropriate methods of data collection and selecting methods that are ‘fun’ and ‘interesting’ empowered young people and provided the researcher with an insight into their social worlds.

## Photovoice: Background and context

Originating from Paulo Freire’s participatory photography research in Peru in the 1970s, photovoice developed as a concept and a methodology by Wang et al, (1995) in the 1990s in the field of health focusing on researching women’s lives in China. Subsequently, Wang and Burris (1997:369) adapted the process they termed photo novella, ‘a process using photographs or pictures to tell a story’ to photovoice, a methodology whereby ‘people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique’ concerning three main goals; reflection, critical discussion and knowledge exchange, and to reach policy makers. As Wang and Burris (1997:369) elaborate photovoice ‘entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders, and potential catalysts for change, in their own

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3 communities'. The embedded goals, defined by Wang and Burris above, therefore empower  
4 members of a community, acknowledging them as experts in their own world through taking  
5 photographs, appropriate for participatory research. In doing so, the process promotes  
6 reflection and critical dialogue that might not have been captured using other means. In  
7 particular, this participatory notion has been widely used in community settings to elicit  
8 understanding at a local level focusing on change and action as a method of participatory action  
9 research (Wang and Burris 1997; Wang 2006).

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16 Photovoice has since then developed and has been adapted by researchers in different fields as  
17 a participatory visual tool since the 1990s. Using photographs in the research process to elicit  
18 views and conversations, also known as photo-elicitation interviews, have commonly been  
19 employed in the field of sociology, anthropology, education and youth studies. However, it is  
20 important to note the difference between photovoice and photo-elicitation interviews, where  
21 the later 'refers to the use of a single or set of photographs as stimulus during a research  
22 interview' (Meo, 2010:149). When employing photovoice in the research process the  
23 importance lies in the production of photographs by the participants themselves in order for  
24 critical reflection as part of the key principles of participatory action research, emphasising  
25 change and action.

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34 In the context of the research discussed in this paper, photovoice was used as a participatory  
35 method, incorporating Wang and Burris (1997) three goals of reflection, critical discussion and  
36 knowledge exchange, and to reach policy makers. The later goal was achieved via  
37 dissemination of young people's voices in a report given to each youth organisation to discuss  
38 with local agencies their experiences and perceptions on local matters promoting their inclusion  
39 on matters that concerned them. As Delgado (2015:18) acknowledges, marginalised groups  
40 such as young people, can 'benefit from having their stories or narratives told to increase  
41 positive attention and resources to their communities'. In particular, using photovoice enabled  
42 me as a researcher to gain a deeper understanding of what place meant to the young people in  
43 each coastal resort. Young people construct and create identities in public spaces (Beynon et  
44 al., 1994) and continue to identify with their local community/neighbourhood (see Andersen et  
45 al., 1999; Kintrea et al., 2008: 2011; Watt and Stenson, 1998; Crawshaw, 2001). Photovoice  
46 captured this with each photograph that was taken and the narratives that accompanied them.  
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3 Employing photovoice as a method of data collection has many advantages; it is flexible and  
4 adaptable to many settings; taking photographs is easy to do and can be used by a wide range  
5 of people; and can be utilised alongside other methods, which this paper strongly advocates.  
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7 Employing photovoice in the research process with young people emphasised both the  
8 participatory imperative and allowed the research 'to incorporate knowledge that is not  
9 accessible verbally' (Pink, 2004: 361). In doing so, photovoice has become a popular tool when  
10 conducting research with young people, and researchers in the field of education, health, and  
11 youth studies advocate its use as a valuable insight into the everyday lives of young people,  
12 encouraging rapport, inclusion, participation and empowerment (Epstein et al., 2006;  
13 Thomson, 2008; Meo, 2010).

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15 Photovoice has been employed with young people in the research process across different fields  
16 and in different countries. For example, with street children (Baker et al., 1996; Vakaoti, 2009;  
17 Young and Barrett, 2001); homeless young people in Australia, (Dixon and Morgan, 2005),  
18 Latino adolescents in North Carolina (Streng et al., 2009); urban youth in schools in America  
19 (ZenKov and Harmon, 2009), exploring students' habitus in Argentina (Meo, 2010); and with  
20 school children in New Zealand (Wood, 2016). In particular, in the field of health, research  
21 with young people utilising photovoice has been conducted by (Wang and Redwood-Jones,  
22 2001; Wilson et al., 2007; Warne et al., 2013; Bayer and Alburquerque, 2014; and Drew et al.,  
23 2010) to name but a few. More recently in the social sciences, in particular in the field of  
24 criminology, photovoice has been employed by Fitzgibbon and Healy (2017) whom researched  
25 the lives and experiences of those on probation supervision. However, in the field of  
26 criminology, this has been limited with young people, particularly when eliciting young  
27 people's experiences on policing, security and safety in coastal resorts.

## 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 **The Research context**

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50 The research employed a triangulation of qualitative methods to enhance the quality and  
51 validity of the research whilst emphasising the necessity of young people's participation in  
52 matters that affect them (UNCRC, Article 12 Right to Participation, ratified in 1991 by UK  
53 government). Acknowledging the importance of young people's narratives and interactions  
54 (James et al., 1998) emphasised that the triangulation of methods were fundamental in  
55 exploring and understanding young people's lives in each locality (Vakaoti, 2009). The  
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3 research set out to explore the ways in which young people conceptualised crime, policing,  
4 safety and security in two coastal resorts. The methods employed intended to give voice to  
5 young people and aimed to provide a greater understanding of their everyday lives. An  
6 ethnographic study was conducted in two coastal resorts, one in England and one in Wales, and  
7 access to young people was facilitated through center-based youth organisations and outreach  
8 work in the communities over a period of twelve months (six months in each locality).  
9 Particular care has been taken not to include data that would be recognisable to avoid the  
10 identification of the study sites and pseudonyms have therefore been used for each locality.  
11 ‘Sandton’ refers to the coastal resort in England and ‘Rockford’ to the Welsh resort. The  
12 research participants were aged between 10 and 17 years old. In total, 100 qualitative  
13 interviews were conducted: 23 semi-structured interviews with young people in the youth  
14 organisations and 77 unstructured qualitative interviews with young people ‘on the street’.  
15 Additional qualitative data was also generated with young people in the youth organisations  
16 through a range of methods including: participant observation; various group work exercises;  
17 photovoice; group discussions and other visual techniques. Additional data of 12 semi-  
18 structured interviews were generated with professionals in the field of crime prevention and  
19 youth work.  
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### 34 **The process of utilising a camera in the research process**

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37 Delgado (2015:7) summarises that ‘photovoice, at its most basic level, is the use of  
38 photographic equipment, usually digital, to capture a visual image, and then to transform this  
39 image into a vehicle for generating information and discussion’. This was employed in each of  
40 the fieldwork sites to generate discussions around crime, policing, safety and security.  
41 Employing photovoice enabled the young people to reflect on their perceptions and experiences  
42 of these concepts and their everyday lives in their local community through visually capturing  
43 an image to represent their voice.  
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50 When fieldwork started the most important part of the process was building a rapport with the  
51 young people in the fieldwork sites, the importance of which is documented elsewhere (See  
52 xxx, 2017). After 3 months I discussed the idea of using a camera with the young people in  
53 Sandton and after 1 month in Rockford, explained in more detail below. The young people  
54 were fully informed about the prospect of using a camera through letters, consent forms,  
55 participation information sheets and my own detailed discussions with them throughout the  
56 fieldwork. Disposable cameras were given to those who opted to participate in the activity.  
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3 Once the young people had decided to take part they were given the opportunity to take  
4 photographs of places of particular significance to them; for example a place where they liked  
5 to go, or where they felt safe. The young people were given a list of ten prompts and were  
6 invited to take photographs of what the words meant to them. The prompts are detailed below  
7 in Table One. The method provided another way to acquire young people's perceptions and  
8 experiences of community life and public space and allowed for minimum control and  
9 interference from the researcher and maximum self-determination for the young people.  
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### 18 **Table 1 List of prompts for photovoice**

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21 Once the disposable cameras had been returned and the films had been developed, sessions  
22 were arranged to discuss the photographs with the young people. This happened differently in  
23 each site. In Sandton, one group session was arranged for the four participating young people  
24 to discuss their photographs, and in Rockford this was conducted on an individual basis with  
25 each of the five participating young people. (The difference in the number of participants  
26 accounted for the varying interest showed by the young people in each locality). Reflecting  
27 upon this activity in Sandton, I decided to pursue the photographic activity at an earlier stage  
28 of my fieldwork in Rockford. This was to allow for the return of signed consent forms, and  
29 also for getting the photographs developed and arranging sessions. As and when cameras were  
30 returned in Rockford, the films were developed and individual sessions were arranged with  
31 each young person on a first-come-first-served basis. In a separate private room each young  
32 person was given their photographs and asked to place them under the title (prompt) that the  
33 photograph represented. When doing so they were asked to explain why they had taken the  
34 photograph and conversations were audio-recorded. In Sandton the group discussion with the  
35 young people and their photographs proved to be insightful and informative, similar to the work  
36 of other researchers (see Morrow, 2001; Thomson and Gunter, 2007; Elsley, 2004). Likewise,  
37 engaging in one-to-one meetings in Rockford proved to be beneficial because I was able to  
38 learn from each young person their reasons for taking the photographs and what each  
39 photograph represented. This approach emphasised 'young people's positions as active social  
40 agents who play an important role in shaping the world around them' (Heath et al., 2009: 116).  
41 The photographs served to map the locality and informed my understanding of how the young  
42 people conceptualised their community and how they engaged and navigated in public space  
43 revealing 'the continuing sociological relevance of class and place in understanding the lived  
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3 experience' (MacDonald et al., 2005: 885). Through this method, areas of public space that  
4 were 'controlled' by others such as other young people, adults or the police were also  
5 highlighted. The method produced rich data that allowed 'young people to take control of the  
6 research process and the representations that they consider significant' (Vakaoti, 2009: 447).  
7 This participatory technique proved to be an effective complementary method of data  
8 collection when conducting research with and about young people (see Pain et al., 2000). The  
9 way in which methods were employed in Sandton would not have worked in the same way as  
10 in Rockford and vice versa. The methods varied because the young people in each site varied,  
11 and by being sensitive to the research setting and adapting to this accordingly was beneficial.

### 19 **A picture is worth a thousand words**

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23 On average participants took 36 photographs each, the maximum capacity allowed for each  
24 disposable camera. The majority of participants took one or two images per prompt with the  
25 remainder of photographs taken for personal use. The process of discussing the photographs for  
26 each prompt allowed the opportunity and space to discuss issues and concerns that were not  
27 talked about in the traditional interviews and other qualitative methods conducted. I found that  
28 additional feelings, emotions and issues were discussed through the photographs that had not  
29 already been captured with the traditional methods. Interestingly, I found that the images  
30 surprised me and I was taken aback by how much insight I gained into their social worlds with  
31 each photograph taken.

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40 This was illustrated each time I got the photographs developed. Before each session I would  
41 look at the photographs to try and guess which photograph had been taken for each prompt. It  
42 became a learning experience and illustrated the importance of the young people's narratives  
43 accompanying each image. One photograph taken below, Figure 1, was taken of a person  
44 walking the down street with a suitcase. I was unable to guess which prompt this photograph  
45 represented. When the young person explained her reasons for the photograph she explained  
46 that this photograph represented a sad place because it represented somebody going home for  
47 example, a friend or family member leaving them in Rockford. When discussing this  
48 photograph further with the participant she spoke about what it was like to live in a coastal  
49 resort where visitors would visit in peak times of the year, mainly in the summer, and how very  
50 different this was when living in Rockford in the winter months which became a sad place. The  
51 seasonal culture of Rockford, with its varied and transient population, impacted upon the young  
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3 people living there who often felt that where they lived was tailored to the needs of tourists and  
4 not the people that lived there:  
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7 *“In the winter there’s just nothing to do. We just have to wander about” (Male 15*  
8 *Sandton Outreach-based).*  
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11 *“The [swimming] centre is just never open either, that’s why all there is arcades and*  
12 *they’re for tourists really” (Female 15 Rockford youth-centre interview).*  
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15 The impact that living in a coastal resort had on shaping young people’s lived experiences  
16 revealed the exclusionary nature of local amenities and resources focused on the ‘visiting  
17 tourist’. Such consumption spaces, as Raco (2003: 1871) argues, ‘tend to be geared up to the  
18 needs of wealthy visitors, not to local groups or communities, who are often culturally and even  
19 physically excluded’.  
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### 30 **Figure 1**

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37 In Rockford, there was evidence that young people’s experiences were shaped not only by the  
38 macro issues of social inequality associated with structural location, but also on a micro level  
39 in relation to their individual experiences of growing up in Rockford. Place and identity were  
40 powerfully connected (Green and White, 2007) where embedded identities were shaped by  
41 place (McLaughlin, 1993) and locality was central to this (Hall et al., 1999). The  
42 neighbourhood, therefore, was a significant place of self-identity for young people, outside of  
43 the home and school (Cahill, 2000). The young people had a strong attachment to where they  
44 lived, identified closely with the area and articulated what Watt and Stenson (1998: 257) have  
45 termed ‘localism’, in the way in which they talked about their neighbourhood.  
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53 My understanding of place furthered about what it was like for young people living in a coastal  
54 resort when a photograph was taken of the train station in Figure 2 below. The prompt that this  
55 photograph represented was also a sad place. The young person who had taken this photograph  
56 wrote underneath that this represented ‘going away’. The young participant explained that the  
57 train station represented the times when her mum would leave after a visit and this was always  
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3 a sad time in her life. I then discovered that the young person did not live with her biological  
4 mother and was in foster care, revealing more insights into her experience of living in  
5 Rockford. This was something that added to my understanding of place, and in particular  
6 Rockford as a coastal resort, in which some of the young people I later found out, were  
7 currently living in foster care and did not live with their biological parents. Therefore using  
8 photovoice allowed for the meaning of place to come through, in particular, what local  
9 buildings and amenities represented to them and the seasonal nature of where they lived.  
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## 22 **Figure 2**

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27 Below, in Figure 3 are the photographs taken by some participants for the prompt ‘a young  
28 person’s place’. Underneath the photograph of a local park one of the participants had written  
29 ‘this is a children’s place but it is not very safe’. When discussing this photograph further she  
30 explained why it was not very safe:  
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34 *“I wouldn’t really go to that park because that’s where the old people hang around and*  
35 *that’s where druggies go to get drunk and stuff...it’s not a place for kids” (Female 12*  
36 *Rockford youth-centre Interview).*  
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40 This promoted further discussions about the local parks and spaces for young people to go to  
41 in Rockford revealing that adults would also spend time there and therefore these spaces  
42 became cut off to them due to the presence of adults who threatened their personal safety as  
43 discussed below:  
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48 *“It’s supposed to be for young kids but you never see them in there it’s too dangerous”*  
49 *(Male 12 Rockford youth-centre Interview).*  
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52 *“This is not for kids it is well known around here it’s where adult druggies go. I have*  
53 *walked through it once and there were needles on the floor” (Female 14 Rockford*  
54 *youth-centre Interview).*  
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57 *“Yeah I know how the hell can that be a young person’s place cos there’s needles and*  
58 *everything on there” (Female 13 Rockford youth-centre Interview).*  
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### Figure 3

In this way, young people's perceptions about risk and fear can derive from their relationship with their local environment (Matthews and Limb, 1999; McKendrick, 1997; Holloway and Valentine, 2001). In other words, the 'physical, economic, social and civic fabric of neighbourhoods create particular sets of interactions between children and their neighbourhoods, which in turn are shaped by class, gender, age and race' (Pain 2006: 225). Therefore, for young people in Rockford, it was certain adults in public spaces that framed their perceptions and experiences about safety and security.

The data, collected through utilising photovoice in the research process, provided important insights into how young people perceived their community and the resources in it. Place and class were central to young people's experiences (Kintrea et al., 2008; MacDonald et al., 2005) and influenced and impacted upon their everyday lives. Utilising photovoice added valuable meaning to the concept of place, and allowed me as a researcher to comprehend young people's feelings about the coastal resort they were living in gaining important insights into the social worlds of the young people. It gave vital background and context to the overall research in terms of how young people navigated through public space, and how the young people conceptualised crime, policing, safety and security. Information that may have not been discovered from other traditional methods alone, as the above insights might not have been discovered in the context of an interview.

### Ethical considerations

#### *The processes of seeking consent*

Seeking consent from research participants included processes that were implemented over a period of time. Building up a rapport with the participants was an important part of the research. This occurred before consent for the participation in the actual research was sought. It permitted the young people 'to exercise control in deciding whether they wish to participate in a research study' (Freeman and Mathison, 2009: 43) which remains an important principle of participatory methods. All participants were informed about consent and about the reasons, methods and

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3 purpose of the research (Alderson and Morrow, 2004; Morrow and Richards, 1996). Participant  
4 information sheets were provided to the young people to make sure that they were properly  
5 informed about all of the methods and letters were handed out. All documents were written in  
6 a manner appropriate to the age range of the participants, in a manner that avoided giving too  
7 much or too little information, which can be either 'misleading or off putting' (Heath et al.,  
8 2009: 26). Documentation such as consent forms, participant information sheets, and letters to  
9 parents, carers and guardians had to be worded differently in each site. In Sandton, forms were  
10 used but these had to be changed in Rockford due to different literacy levels of the young  
11 people and adults.  
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19 After the young people were fully informed about the nature of the research, and oral consent  
20 had been gained, informed consent was sought from their parents, carers or guardians. The UN  
21 Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) Article 1 defines a child 'as a person below the  
22 age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger'. Due  
23 to the research involving participants aged between 10 and 17 years old, and in following the  
24 guidance above, informed consent was obtained from both the young person and the relevant  
25 adult.  
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32 An information sheet, parental consent form and letter were sent, or taken by the potential  
33 participants, to the relevant adult. Participants also signed an additional consent form prior to  
34 the start of each interview. This adhered to the policy and procedures of the youth  
35 organisations, where parental consent forms are sent out to relevant adults prior to activities  
36 and events taking place. However, seeking consent from parents in Rockford proved difficult.  
37 When consent forms were handed out to the young people, many came back with apparently  
38 forged parental signatures. When I enquired about this the young people informed me that their  
39 parents did not sign forms and many were unable to read and write, therefore, the young people  
40 signed them instead. My gatekeeper informed me that this often happened and that the youth  
41 organisation had in the past telephoned parents for consent and I elected to follow this practice.  
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### 52 *Ethical issues arising from the photographic method*

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56 When preparing and planning for the photographic activity, I was aware of the points made by  
57 Sime (2008) and Vakaoti (2009) regarding the possibility of participants taking photographs  
58 of other human beings. To overcome this, the young people were asked not to do so when being  
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3 informed about the method and this was also stipulated on the information sheets. All  
4 photographs were taken of places except for one in Sandton where a participant took a  
5 photograph of another participant in the study to portray a safe place with friends, which was  
6 deemed acceptable as both had given consent. The photograph of the friend was concealed  
7 however, to ensure anonymity.  
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## 12 **Data Analysis**

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16 The research employed a triangulation of qualitative methods (Denzin, 1970) of which  
17 photovoice was one of them. Field notes, interview and focus group transcripts, flip chart poster  
18 and brainstorming exercises and visual materials (mapping and photovoice) were all analysed  
19 using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The process  
20 allowed for themes to emerge from the data, and all data was appropriately coded according to  
21 the themes, concepts or patterns that emerged.  
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27 This manual process was initially applied to all of the textual data collected before a qualitative  
28 data analysis (CAQDAS) software package was used. NVivo was used to manage and further  
29 analyse the collected data by looking across and within it to allow for further coding of themes,  
30 patterns and relationships. Nvivo was specifically chosen given that it is particularly beneficial  
31 in allowing for the analysis of visual and textual data. Coffey et al., (1996) claims that computer  
32 packages, such as NVivo, are useful tools for ethnographers that serve as an analytical as well  
33 as a representational device. It allowed for all the data to be stored in one place where  
34 photographs and visual materials could be linked and coded with textual documents.  
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41 In the same way that analysing textual data poses problems concerned with interpretation,  
42 analysing visual data such as photographs raises additional concerns. Thomson (2008: 9)  
43 highlights that 'just like a word, an image is a human construction and culturally specific'.  
44 Concerns over the reliability of images and 'mediating between lived experiences and  
45 representing the meaning of that experience' (Freeman and Mathison, 2009: 159) were relevant  
46 to the research. To overcome this, photographs were analysed with reference to the additional  
47 commentary provided by the young people. When the young people were asked to discuss what  
48 each photograph represented they were audio-recorded talking about what they had  
49 photographed and discussions followed. Therefore the interpretation of the photograph was  
50 shaped and informed by language and its accompanying description (Price, 1994). The addition  
51 of qualitative commentary helped to stabilise the meanings of the image and provided a 'road  
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3 map' into understanding the feeling and experience depicted (Gauntlett, 2005 cited in Freeman  
4 and Mathison, 2009: 160). The importance of the content of an image (internal narrative) and  
5 the social context in which they were created (external narrative) produced by the photographs  
6 were of equal importance (Banks, 2001). Paying attention to both strengthens the analytical  
7 process (Freeman and Mathison, 2009:148) and without the narratives from the young people  
8 the actual meaning behind the photograph would be lost.  
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### 14 **Reflections from the field**

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18 Photovoice was employed, as a means of giving young people control over the research  
19 process, to be fun, and also to capture data that might not have been captured otherwise. But  
20 it also raised some interesting points. Indeed, the significance of the camera in the research  
21 process has been discussed by Pink (2004: 367) who asked 'how does the type of camera one  
22 uses and the way it is used contribute to the way informants see and judge the researcher?'  
23 When reflecting back on photovoice, it became apparent that the camera, a disposable one, was  
24 received differently by the young people in each fieldwork site. In Sandton, disposable cameras  
25 were looked upon as not very exciting. This was reflective of the material resources that the  
26 young people in Sandton were accustomed to. Most young people had mobile phones and found  
27 the idea of using a disposable camera alien to their culture it was 'outdated'. In order to  
28 overcome this, getting to know your fieldwork site and understanding the cultural and  
29 demographic characteristics of place can help to shape which tool is best suited in each context.  
30 In contrast, not all young people in Rockford owned mobile phones and being given the  
31 opportunity of owning a disposable camera was well received. Some young people would voice  
32 their interest, sign up to participate and take a camera, but then later on claim they had been  
33 lost and would ask if they could have another one. The camera, therefore, was popular and an  
34 exciting method to use in Rockford. Similar to Morrow's (2001) research, disposable cameras  
35 were used because they were relatively cheap to buy and to have the negatives processed. Also  
36 if they were lost or not returned, as in Rockford, then this was not a great loss. Using disposable  
37 cameras therefore, highlighted the importance of the role of the camera (Pink, 2004) and the  
38 material values that young people placed on them. Owning a camera and then getting the  
39 negatives developed was an exciting part of the research process for the young people in  
40 Rockford. They took pride in the photographs that they had taken and enjoyed discussing them,  
41 revealing insights into their everyday lives that would not have been captured otherwise.  
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## Giving something back

Using a camera can be seen as fun and creative, which brings with it an immediate reward, the photograph (Rabinwitz and Holt, 2013). In recognising the importance of giving something back, when I got the photographs developed I got two sets. One copy was for the young people to use in the activity session with myself and the other copy of the photographs I put into a photo album and gave to each young person who participated. This was a token of appreciation for the time that the young people had spent participating in the activity and also was in recognition of the value of what the photographs meant to them. This was influenced by the work of Vakaoti (2009) whom I read before the fieldwork began, and the way in which Vakaoti (2009:447) described the genuine elation of his participant to be the 'proud owner of the album, about something he could possess and call his own. He found his adventure with the camera an exciting experience and was grateful for the opportunity to be trusted with a camera and the chance to capture images for himself' (Vakaoti, 2009:447), which was something that I could relate to and witnessed in Rockford.

Resonating with Wang and Burris (1997) that one of the main aims of photovoice is for the potential to influence local policy makers, the way in which this was achieved was through producing a report for the young people and also the youth organisation. Young people read through what I had produced to seek their approval and once this was completed the report was finalised and given back to the youth organisation and copies given to all young people. In doing so this reflected the act of giving something back to the youth organisation who had allowed me access to the young people and who had supported me throughout the fieldwork. During a time of austerity and cuts to local services the report was published in order to help the youth organisation seek further funding and to be used in consultations with local policy makers when needed.

## Conclusion

When engaging with young people in the research process the most appropriate tools to engage with young people is vital. If the tools are not appropriate, and rapport not established, then this can impact on the successfulness of the overall research. Thinking about the age of the participants is paramount and also the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of 'place' in which the research takes place. With regards to photovoice such questions need to be asked beforehand such as; Are disposable cameras appropriate? Could prompts be texted to mobile

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3 phones instead? Would borrowing a professional camera be more beneficial? For this research,  
4 assumptions could not be made that all young people would have mobile phones, nor that using  
5 a professional camera would be beneficial. Giving each young person a disposable camera  
6 added a significant element of ownership for the young people and gave them possession of  
7 something that they might not have otherwise had access to.  
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12 Empowering young people, being innovative and creative, and adapting methods which are  
13 age appropriate were fundamental. Allowing young people to be in control and giving them  
14 time to comprehend what the prompts meant, and then which photographs would best represent  
15 this, were all part of the process. Using photovoice allowed the opportunity for young people  
16 to reflect and discuss what each photograph represented. Meanings that a researcher could not  
17 have gained otherwise.  
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24 The account given in this paper has focussed on using a disposable camera when researching  
25 young people's lives but photovoice can be a valuable tool of data collection in all fields with  
26 all people in all contexts, when giving voice to participants is paramount. The photographs taken  
27 by participants, and the accompanying narratives, provided an understanding about the social worlds  
28 of young people that cannot be imagined or assumed by a researcher. The photographs and narratives  
29 provided an insight into an otherwise under researched field (Pain, 2006). The photographs exposed  
30 young people's feelings and concerns and revealed how 'place', 'class' and 'youth' functioned as key  
31 determinants in shaping their perceptions.  
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38 The paper surmises that photovoice gives 'voice to the voiceless' (Visweswaren, 1994 cited in  
39 Thomson, 2008: 3) which is particularly suitable when conducting research with young people  
40 who are often overlooked or unheard on issues that concern them. When thinking about  
41 whether to employ photovoice in the research process this paper strongly advocates that this  
42 method helps to further explore the phenomenon under study. Photovoice allows for in depth  
43 and meaningful insights into participants worlds that might not be captured otherwise. In this  
44 study it gave voice to the young people and enhanced their participation and empowerment in  
45 the overall research process.  
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Table 1 List of prompts for photovoice

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2	A safe place with friends
3	Something that is anti-social
4	A fun place
5	A sad place
6	A young person's place
7	An old person's place
8	An adult place
9	A happy place
10	A place that the police control

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Figure 1

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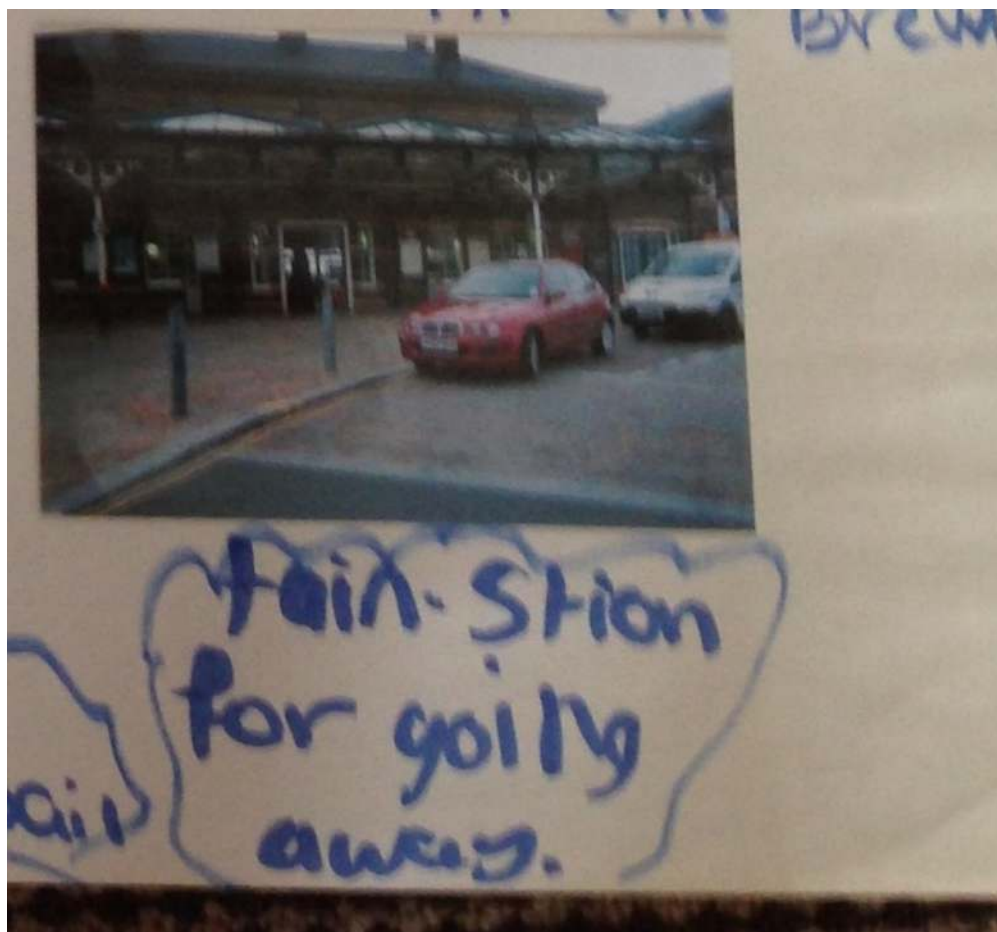


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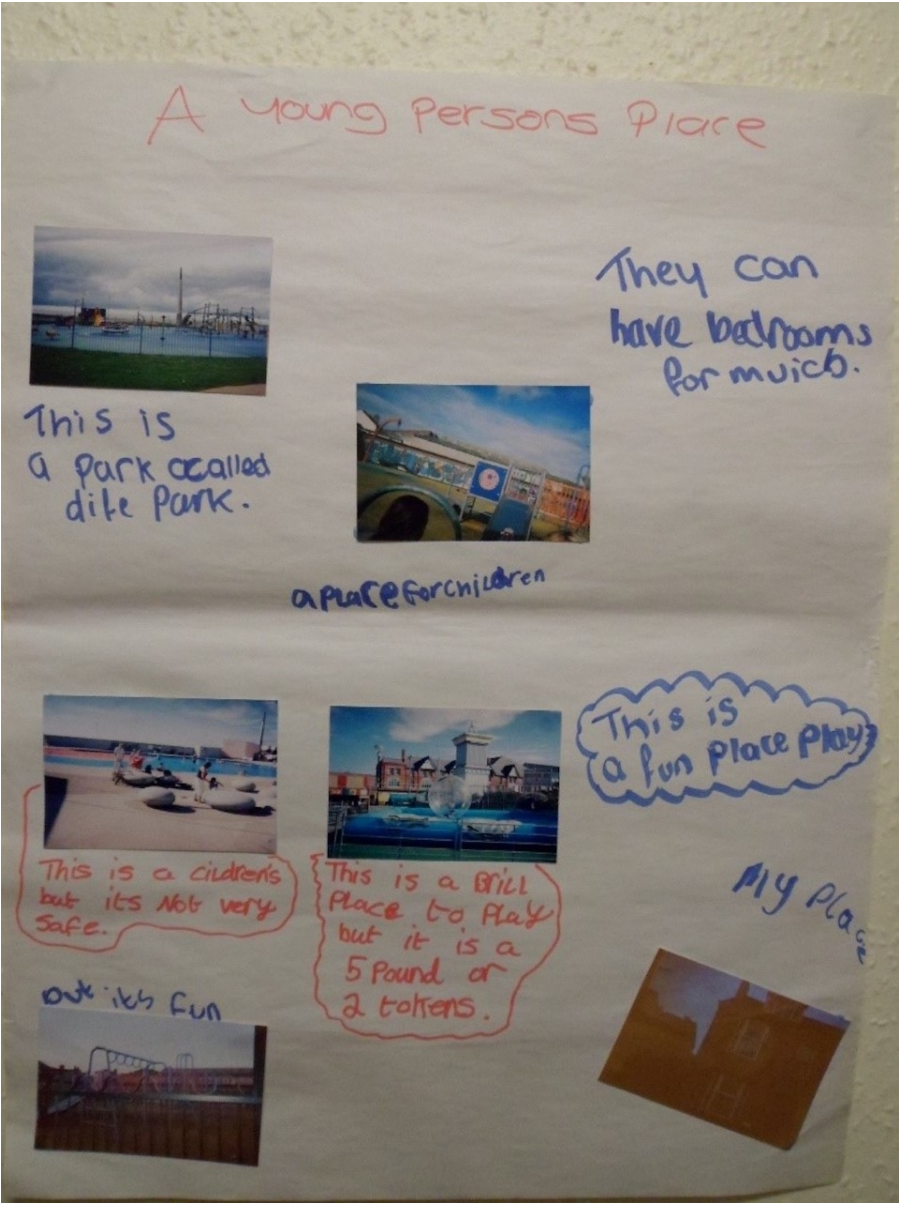


Figure 3

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