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10

Researching as a Popular and Professional Practice

Rachel Thomson

In the twenty-first century, the speed of development of commercially available social media technologies has outstripped the timelines of academic social research, meaning that we have become increasingly reliant on commercial platforms such as Facebook, SnapChat, Instagram, YouTube and Google as a route through which to conduct our enquiries. As explored in Chapter 5, these platforms have become the 'everyday archives' through which lives are documented, stored and shared (Beer & Burrows 2007). Researchers cannot help but work with and through these platforms and devices, 'repurposing' them for social research, so that 'their capacities of data collection, analysis and feedback, come to be incorporated into social and cultural research' (Marres 2012: 151). For Evelyn Ruppert, the term 'big data' is not simply a question of large data sets, but rather, marks a set of practices that are now a ubiquitous part of social worlds changing our 'research relations as social scientists' as well as our everyday lives (Ruppert 2016: 15). In the introduction to this book, we cite the view of Adkins and Lury (2009) that the digital revolution changes our relationship with the 'empirical', something with practical and theoretical consequences, including the emergence of 'live methods' that involve a wider set of actors and spaces in knowledge production (Puwar & Back 2012). Noortje Marres (2017) points to the potential of tracing 'research in the wild' for understanding how researchers can form part of *experiments in living*, contributing to projects of knowledge-making and world-changing. These debates coincide, not surprisingly, with a renewed interest in the co-production

of social research, emerging from campaigns by and with marginalized groups, 'public science' and community archive based activism.

Everyone it seems is involved in research. Knowing how to search and assess sources is a requirement of the National Curriculum.¹ Teachers are expected to research their own practice, and may well film classes to facilitate critical reflection. Advertising is based on research, in fact, advertising is based on knowing what we are *researching* and matching product placement with target audience. And we re/search for fun, to relax or to perhaps to work and demonstrate the kind of person we want to be. The internet is the clearing house for most research activity providing access to immense data bases and creating new data about our interests and desires. We opened this book by reference to public debates over the wellbeing of children and the consequences of an immersion in digital culture. In the face of rising anxiety and conflicting evidence, we have proposed research as a solution – inviting readers to pay attention to digitally mediated practices, socialities and materialities. We have made a case for a particular kind of slow research that notices detail, nuance, feelings of awkwardness and the passage of time. Paradoxically, we have used research in order to discover its place in everyday cultures.

What can we learn by focusing attention on everyday research practices? In this final chapter, we take 'research' as a topic of enquiry in its own right – describing and reflecting on practices of research in the everyday cultures of children and teenagers. The chapter works through a series of empirical examples. The first two capture something of the redistribution of research methods, noting their distinctive affordances and associated affects. We ask what the role of the professional researcher may be within this new division of labour, noting the potential of 'repurposing' of both traditional research methods and digital tools. A final example suggests the potential for reflexive methods that open up the project of knowledge building in surprising and generative ways.

Research as everyday practice

Lucien: Becoming an expert

Lucien presents his 10 page PowerPoint about cars. This is his topic. I keep quiet and let him do his presentation which involves reading the slides verbatim. Afterwards he tells me that he researched this all himself using Wikipedia and his car magazines. It is not homework but Lucien will 'email it to him' (his teacher), he expects it 'will surprise him'. I later discover from

¹For primary school, KS2 History (www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects/zcw76sg) and Computing (www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects/zvnrq6f).

All About Cars

By Lucien

FIGURE 10.1 *Lucien's car project*

his parents that Lucien has been working on this for the last 6 weeks. He learned PowerPoint at school (they don't use it at home). I got a sense that he likes school and pleasing his teacher. This was my introduction to Lucien's prodigious capacity for focus and information, as long as it is his chosen topic. [Researcher field note RT]

Lucien's interest in cars was established early in the research process (see Figure 10.1). He clearly gets a great deal from accumulating knowledge about cars. His sources for this research are varied and, in the past, involved magazines and a computer game, and only recently extended to Wikipedia. Knowing about cars is one of the things that distinguishes him from other boys, and he is able to use this expertise to connect to adults. Research skills have the potential to travel across the spaces of school and home. In the following extract taken from Lucien's 'day in a life', we can see how Lucien's teacher acknowledges these research skills within an educational economy, even though the task was set by the research team rather than as homework.

9.50: Back on the carpet to reflect on the learning. 'I promise maths will get better if you concentrate and try. Let's warm down with a bit of counting. You're on fire Charles!' Senior assembly now as sounds of piano begin to draw our attention into a new space [audio]. Lining up silently, 'let's make it the best we've ever done'. As the children leave the class Mr B turns his attention to me and mentions Lucien's amazing PowerPoint presentation and asks if I have seen it. 'Great research and presentation skills'. [Researcher field note RT]

A couple of hours later, research is on the official curriculum – yet fraught with problems. Although the school endorses research skills as having educational value – it cannot provide a research friendly environment. The reflexive loop that allows teachers to record their own practice does not seem to extend to the children.

11.30: Major negotiation over laptops. Who 'needs' one to do their research. The topic is inventors – some are researching the Wright brothers, others Thomas Edison. Twelve hands go up, 'we should have enough'. Mr B gives Lucien the keys and I decide to help so that I can see the system. The lap tops are in a locked cupboard outside the door with shelves and facilities for charging. Each machine and shelf is numbered [photos 42–3]. I unplug and pass onto Lucien and other children who gather round. Probably upsetting Mr B's system. I sit near Lucien and he tells me that yesterday Mr B had gone to a website called 'goo' rather than Google. He has also tried searching for himself and even managed to get Google in Arabic! The main source for research is Wikipedia, but he also tries others on the list. He is amused by an entry for a Wright Brothers restaurant. Others are 'educational' but full of product placement. It is interesting for me to see these websites in a school context where the advertising seems a shocking intrusion. Ads for Snickers bars flashing up alongside sites for the Wright Brothers (*they* have done their research). A couple of times Lucien's searches are blocked for no apparent reason [photo 46]. Mr B asks 'are people on computers using them to good effect' – he must be reading my mind. Some on our table are diligently copying out words from Wikipedia. Mr B shares an 'in-joke' with Lucien from across the room about searching for 'goo'. He glows. [Researcher field note RT]

As a researcher who can see across boundaries, I feel the need to answer the question of why Lucien seems so big and bold at home and so small and quiet at school. How can his car research project help us understand this? I think of the girl who shared something inappropriate at circle time at the end of the school day. Mr B had invited the children to bring something important from home and to talk about it. This girl brought a McDonald's toy, which was dismissed very quickly. It evidently had no educational value for Mr B. So perhaps Lucien's research is a kind of stealth show and tell – enabling him to secure recognition for another, bolder version of himself – revealing his hidden treasures. He is not simply recognized by his teacher, but he is also seen doing this by researchers. So cultivating 'expertise', with its gendered and classed histories, continues to be an effective strategy and a vindication of his willingness to be visible.

Abi: Cultivating obsession

If research involves 'systematic enquiry' then it is distinguished from the forms of know-how in everyday life that involve us knowing enough to get along and get by. For something to count as research suggests that it is more than the ordinary, drawing us into practices that may be seen as within the orbit of professional or expert practice. In the past, a travel agent may have 'researched'

the ideal itinerary, or an estate agent may have sought to match potential buyers and sellers of property. Yet increasingly, digital interfaces and databases allow us to undertake these searches ourselves. Researching holidays and properties becomes integrated into a new kind of everyday – being as much about fantasy and pleasure as it is about securing a transaction. The epithet of ‘porn’ (property-porn, holiday-porn) that is attached to these new kinds of popular research suggests something about the unconscious desires that may be invoked by the practice of research and the trouble caused by transgressions of expert and popular boundaries. It warns us that research practices may be repetitive, compulsive, addictive.

The language of obsession is drawn on by Abi to narrate a succession of research projects that might, in an early era, have been describes as hobbies or interests. An ‘obsession’ on the book, play and film versions of *Oliver Twist* focused on the character of the Artful Dodger, and a desire to know and consume everything possible about the character. Being involved in a production of *Alice in Wonderland* prompted research into rabbits and a growing and active interest in animal care and rights. Both these passions drew Abi in new practices: travelling to the city to see a show; working as an intern in an animal shelter. Fellow fans of *Oliver Twist* tended to be adults. Working at an animal shelter made her cautious about dedicating her future to an area where wages are so low. An obsession with horses involved accumulating a full riding kit, yet no animal, and was unsentimentally resolved by selling the collection on eBay.

Acquiring a tablet transformed Abi’s searching abilities. A nascent interest in the band One Direction initiated through hearing and memorizing songs was soon consolidated by watching films on YouTube until she exhausted the supply of material. She then set up a Twitter account, following each of the band members, discovering that by following retweets she could access a huge community of fans (see Figure 10.2). Abi explains that Twitter was decisive in turning the latest of her singular ‘obsessions’ into a collective practice:

Yeah definitely because I think that is what– I think it is Twitter that does it. Because you might like you might like something, but then like if you go on Twitter it is just like mad because everyone else is on there liking it loads, and like Tweeting pictures, keeping you constantly up to date. So you just get like obsessed with it, you constantly know where they are, and stuff.

She now understands herself as a ‘fangirl’, gaining and sharing pleasure with others in relation to a common object of desire secured both by detailed knowledge but also imagination and curiosity:

And then there are so many people that are like Fangirling about it. So it is just like when you talk to people who are like that too, you are just like

more and more obsessed, and mixed with the interviews and the songs and it is just like (laughs) . . .

Drawing on another of her ongoing obsession is with YouTube stars Dan and Phil, Abi explains to researcher Sara the phenomena of 'shipping', through which fans (sometimes with the encouragement of celebrities) fantasize about erotic relationships between their objects of desire. 'Phan' then expresses the romantic joining of Phil and Dan and the role of the fan in creating this link. Abi explains:

Abi: Erm yeah Phan is their ship name.

Sara: And do a lot, so a lot of Phans- erm a lot of people who like Dan and Phil want them to be in a relationship.

Abi: Yeah, yeah.

Sara: Are they in a relationship?

Abi: (.) Well technically not but that's (.) well like everyone's like- most people that are ship Phans think that they are, but they are just not saying.

Sara: Hmm.

Abi: Though technically not, but you know.

Sara: I was just wondering about that. I checked them out after we met, and I was wondering if they were gay and in a relationship, or just two straight guys who happened to be-

Abi: Phil's bi (sexual).

Sara: How do you know that?

Abi: He used to go out with another You-Tuber called Charlieskies who used to be a girl, and is now a boy (laughs).

Sara: Oh right. Interesting.

Abi: Yeah.

The intersection of fans, celebrities and YouTubers (who begin as ordinary fan and turn into celebrities themselves) involves a dynamic cultural circuit that depends on practices of search as well as the production and circulation of content by users. It is clearly a great deal of fun, as well as providing opportunities to travel (camping out with fellow fans to see the celebrity and to get a selfie) and to make friends with those beyond your neighbourhood. The question of whether such practices are 'progressive or reactionary has come to dominate much academic discussion of the phenomena. Some like Jodi Dean (2005) suggest that 'communicative capitalism' relies on fantasies of participation, contribution and circulation. In practice, these networks are, for Dean, apolitical in that they are contained and literally privatized with economic value harvested by advertisers and corporations. Others, like feminist historians Laura Cofield and Lucy Robinson, suggest that female fandom has long been misunderstood as a reactionary cultural form rather than a site of

FIGURE 10.2 *Synchronicities: the smart phone and One Direction*

innovation and resistance (Cofield & Robinson 2016). Abi's comments suggest that her participation provides her with access to 'publics' in a new and rather slippery way, something that cannot quite be separated from her participation in a research project that seeks to understand these practices. We can glimpse this in Abi's explanation of the update accounts through which fans effectively survey the every movement of the band.

Abi: Update accounts.

Sara: Update accounts where they tell you where they are, and you know. And where are One Direction at the moment?

Abi: I don't know actually because I haven't been on Twitter today.

Sara: Where were they yesterday?

Abi: I think at the moment they are in – I don't – I am scared to say this because if I get it wrong then One Direction are going to hate me!

Sara: (Laughs).

Expert and popular cultures of research

The line between expert and popular practices of research has long been porous. Mass Observation is a fascinating example of the democratization of

research, inviting the public to act as informants on their own lives and investigators of the lives of others. In an analysis of responses to Mass Observation in the late 1930s, Mike Savage (2007) suggests that a particular fraction of the ‘technical middle class’ looked to Mass Observation as a way of identifying themselves as intellectuals. Alongside the nascent Workers Education Association and Pelican paperbacks, contributing to Mass Observation calls was part of a middle class cultural claim that distinguished them from both the working classes and the landed gentry. So social research is not simply a mechanism through which we can find out about social class (the focus of Savage’s enquiry) it also offers a set of practices and spaces through which classed identities can be claimed, created and expressed. Turning to contemporary research practice, we might also consider how democratic practices of research may be taken up by particular groups as part of projects of self-making. Following Savage, we may consider how research practices (in both expert and popular form) may be understood as part of wider cultural formations, expressing something of the spirit of the age as well as being practices colonized by particular groups.

During this project, we became aware that the methods that we proposed to use with young people, echoed practices that they were familiar with from popular culture. As explored in Chapter 2, our invitation to young people to share a typical ‘day’ and a ‘favourite thing’ mapped onto genres familiar to teenagers from the world of YouTube self-documentary (see Figure 10.3). Aliyah’s favourite thing was a memory box inspired by YouTuber JacksGap. His memory box, collated at the age of 15, includes a series signifiers of nonthreatening middle class masculinity: a prefect’s badge, skiing medal, BBC pass and a poem to a dead hamster. Aliyah’s box of memories included obsolete technology (her Tamagotchi) and an old school tie – also obsolete in the face of the academization of her school – signifying social class in a rather different way. These methods can be understood as practices that travel between expert, popular and educational

FIGURE 10.3 Popular genres of research: JacksGap and Tyler Oakley

cultures, retooled in new settings and with new actors to achieve contingent purposes, yet bringing with them some vestiges and associations of these other spaces. It may be that the spaces *between* these different versions of self-documentary, and between expert and popular practices of research, are particularly revealing of the 'intensive materialities' described by Lash as a feature of the polymedia landscape. For example, we have gained much by thinking of the relationship between Aliyah's memory box and the inspiration for JacksGap, as well as thinking through the rather different stories told in Aliyah's self-made 'day in a life' (which foregrounds a common teenage culture) and the researcher-led observation (where, for example, ethnicity and religion are made visible).

Reflexive methods?

An important feature of self-documentary culture is the value generated by the passage of time. This may be expressed through the disarming nostalgia associated with changing technology (for example the 'dead' Tamagotchi or the retro-appeal of mix tapes) or the powerful effect of witnessing bodies as they grow and age as captured in the many timelapse animations that document children changing over time. The potential of film to capture the *liveness* of youth marks the birth of the cinema and remains central in its passage into the post-digital age. Vicky Lebeau (2008, 2013) suggests that our ability to film the everyday lives of children and to then control these images, even folding them back into second or third-level representations involves a 'votive epistemology'. The materiality of time becomes palpable through the documentation of 'growth'. One of the affordances of the digital is the ease with which we can access these reflexive and iterative methodologies, which fix us at the moment of recording and then refix us in new moments of consumption and display. The everyday use of recording devices as a way of documenting vitality and growth is captured in the following extract from Jasmine's 'day in a life' observation. Researcher Ester records how she uses her phone to communicate about and with her baby daughter:

Jasmine gets her phone out to take a selfie of baby R. The carer's son runs into the room and Jasmine makes him pose for a picture too. I take a photo of Jasmine taking a photo of baby R. The Jasmine plays me a recording that she made yesterday of a telephone conversation she had on her phone – in the conversation she is telling her friend that baby R. 'pooed' and then R. makes a noise that Jasmine says R. says 'pooed'. I can't hear it but Jasmine swears that is what baby R is saying!

Decline is also captured by these methods, and we see affinities between Jasmine's documentation of Baby R and the attentive documentation practices encountered around Sean whose deteriorating health condition had made speech almost impossible. Here researcher Liam describes the way that Sean and his carers use his tablet and digital picture frame as a methods for memorializing his body and ability as it changes:

Sean communicates using just a few subtle body gestures during the interview, but smiles a few times when [his carers] Linda or Karen tell him jokes. One of the first objects that Linda produces from Sean's bag are four baseball caps. Apparently Sean has a large collection of baseball caps, and often wears matching caps and scarfs. Today he is wearing a bright cheque cap with a matching scarf. Two caps in particular appear to have significance for Sean, a blue Chelsea cap and a red Ferrari one. In the photographs on his digital picture frame we see him sat on the side lines of a football match, wearing his Chelsea cap and scarf. There are also photographs of Sean in various 'flashy' cars, including a Ferrari. Whilst Karen is holding up the digital picture frame for us to see the photographs, she asks Sean if he wants us to continue looking at them or to move onto another objects. He indicates with his hands that he'd like to continue looking at them. I ask if he has the digital picture frame on in his room and he indicates yes. We look at two small silver toy cars from when he was younger, and he gives a big smile as Karen drives them over his stomach and chest. We look at his tablet from home, which has a video of a care worker who has left the school to go travelling for a year. The video shows her on her last day receiving gifts from the staff and students. Sean filmed the video on his tablet by himself. Apparently he keeps in touch with the care worker whilst she is travelling by Skyping her on weekends using his tablet. According to Linda and Karen he keeps photographs and videos on his tablet to remind him of people and events

Digital research methods also have the potential for reflexivity, iterativity and surprise. In previous longitudinal research with young people, we engaged in these practices through representing young people with extracts of audio recordings of interviews that stretched back over 10 years – filming the process of them listening to and reacting to the sound of their own voices. Our shorthand for this process was sharing their 'best bits', employing a phrase familiar to us and our participants from the then relatively new reality TV show 'Big Brother', whose consolation prize to those leaving the house was to edit together their bespoke highlights from a vast body of video data. Our experience of using this as a research technique was that as the time elapse between the making and the broadcasting of these images increases, the potential for

pathos is amplified. Witnessing your former self can be funny, moving, embarrassing and most importantly, 'entertaining', as demonstrated by the popularity on YouTube of reading out your old diary entries (ThatcherJoe). An exemplar from popular culture comes from YouTube star Zoella who celebrates reaching four million subscribers by using a slip screen to share a video diary that she made at 12 years old – the gap between the juxtaposed texts is both unsettling and revealing as we move between the polished 'face to camera' Zoella of the present (surrounded by products and endorsements) to a girls-eye view of packing for the holidays, naming and enjoying the consumer culture that infuses her bedroom.²

As a third stage of research in this study, we went back to young participants with extracts from previous interviews, with the intention of sharing the perspective that we had generated through gathering data with them over time (and thus negotiating informed consent for the research process) but also beginning the process of agreeing on a document that could be shared more publicly. We called this method the 'recursive workbook interview' because it explicitly involves engaging with material from the past in the present. For the teenagers in the research, this involved looking at extracts collected over the course of 12–18 months, but for the younger participants in the extensive sample, the 'beginning' of the research process stretched back to before their birth, when we had met their mothers in the final stages of their pregnancy. As we explored in Chapter 2, these encounters could be surprising, unnerving and creative – suggesting the potential of live digital methods to open up new critical spaces. We end this chapter with an edited extract from researcher Liam's final interview with Megan, where they review her 'day in a life' and favourite things multimedia outputs made using Prezi. Though Megan has only been involved in the study for a year, much has changed and the process of looking again at the documents created by the research and thinking about what will now happen to them focuses attention on continuities and changes, which are both spoken and unspoken.

At the beginning of the interview we discuss her involvement over the last year ... She talks about how being involved was better than she thought it would be and that she had mainly been worried that it would be 'lots of questions' that she wouldn't be sure how to answer. I feel slightly unsure asking what she thinks has changed in her life over the past year as I'm aware that her home life may be in the process of significant change. We end up staying in fairly 'safe' territory by discussing her transition into secondary school. She talks with amusement about how she is taller than most of the other year 7s, and the topic of size comes up again after the

²link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZvRxVbxOKo>.

interview when she complains to her dad that her feet are getting too big now and that she needs 'adult' shoes ... When we move on to discuss the fieldnotes it turns out that Megan hasn't really read them. They're a bit too long for her to read and so her mum has just discussed parts of it with her. Her mum says how she found them really interesting and remarks on how busy the day seems. Megan remarks how she feels primary school already feels like it's becoming a part of the past. There's some amusement at the choice of 'Megan' as a pseudonym as apparently they had originally planned to call her Megan but changed their mind [. . .]

We move on to look at the Prezi and look at each slide in turn. I ask Megan questions about the day as we go through it and she seems to remember most of it quite well. When I ask how she felt about being observed she says it was fine and that most of the time she didn't even see that I was there. It strikes me that this seems to be a characteristic of day in a life observations conducted at school. We get to the last two slides of 'day in a life' part of the Prezi which are of Megan playing Minecraft. The first one contains a recording of her describing Minecraft to me and how she came to get into it. As the recording plays she instantly hides her face in her hands with embarrassment, much to the amusement of her parents. I ask how she feels about having the recording of her voice and she says it's just embarrassing playing it here in front of everyone, but that she won't mind it going online. Megan says that she isn't as into Minecraft as she was. She still plays it but not as much as she did then ... Until this point I hadn't realised that Megan had been holding her tablet the entire interview. Her parents point this out and say that she carries it with her everywhere. Later on Megan shows me that she was able to bring up the Prezi on her tablet. After going through the Prezi we talk about publishing it online and also archiving the data from the study. I try to address this to Megan as much as possible. We finish the interview with enough time for her mum to sign the consent form again with Megan and a brief discussion of the Curating Childhoods event in December. Megan seems quite excited about the event and the prospect of meeting some of the other children involved in the study.

In a critical review of 'creative methods in media research', David Buckingham (2009) is scathing about the naïve use of participatory and visual methods in research with children and young people, suggesting that it is rare to see researchers using mediation as a way to open up critical space for thinking about mediation itself. In the face of a plethora of approaches that claim the empowering potential of making and doing as forms of self-expression he challenges researchers to pay attention to the contexts through which images

are produced and consumed and the kinds of identity work that being involved in research demands of its subjects – including how ‘tasks’ may echo other genres they are familiar with through school or popular culture. The recursive interview certainly has parallels in popular culture, as noted previously, yet it has affective affordances of a particular kind – demanding a live engagement with material from the past in the present. In Chapter 2, we presented material from the recursive interview with Lucien and his mother Monica, who together looked back over his whole lifetime revisiting a birth story that had not previously been shared. In this example, the collision between past, present and future that the situation involves is dramatic and is responded to creatively by Lucien, who moves between ‘baby-talk’ and a fluent performance of field notes that involve him quoting his father’s words. This example involving researcher Liam, Megan and her parents is less dramatic yet equally poignant, capturing an important transition from primary to secondary school and the complicated feelings provoked by seeing an earlier version of self.

In Chapter 2, we characterize this recursive method as a form of ‘performative research’ within an emergent live methods tradition described by Back and Puwar (2013), a form of inventive (Lury & Wakeford 2012) or ‘affirmative’ method (Massumi 2002) which effectively breaks the fourth wall that distinguishes research practice from life as lived (see also MacLure 2013 and Staunæs & Kofoed 2014). We see this approach as engaging in the materiality of the media as a way of talking about things that might otherwise be hard to articulate. The recursive interview also draws participants into the research process, understanding themselves as objectified and documented, yet involved in the project of interpretation. In a similar way that the early days of video diaries appeared to provide glimpses into new critical documentary practices (Pini & Walkerdine 2011), it may be that the affordances that excite us here will soon be normalized and glossed so that the potential for the past to disrupt the present in such a visceral way is taken for granted.

Learning from researching childhood in a digital age

In this chapter, we have thought critically about what it might mean to ‘research’ in a digital, even post-digital age – when the incitement to research is built into our platforms and tools and takes form as new structures of feeling within the culture as we ‘stalk’ and ‘obsess’ for fun. In the face of claims of a crisis for empirical research or the discovery of research in the wild, we point to the way in which expert and popular cultures of enquiry have long been in conversation while also acknowledging the specificity of the digital and the potential it raises for new modes of engagement. Rather than seeking to

preserve the specificity of the expert researcher, we are interested in the connections between popular and professional practices, asking what the spaces in between can allow for in terms of creative and critical meaning making. Mindful of critiques of naïve approaches to multimedia methods, we consider the specific affordances of the digital, its potential to generate surprise in recursive movement between past and present, and between cultural spaces. Far from collapsing the idea of research into everyday or commercial practice, we are interested in thinking how a critical and ethically engaged research practice may play a role in the creation of hybrid public spaces, ephemeral yet networked and animated by logics that may be diverse and undetermined.

This chapter brings to an end our account of researching everyday childhoods in a digital age. Throughout the book, we have drawn attention to new kinds of materialities that are part of a digitally saturated culture. This is fast moving terrain, and the examples that we showcase will soon be superseded by new applications, augmentations and adaptations. Yet, we hope to have introduced a conceptual language, a mode of enquiry and pointers for policy and practice with salience over a longer term. This includes the following.

Conceptually

- The need to move beyond the online/offline binary to think of the emergence of new kinds of materialities, socialities and forms of care.
- Understanding media as having their own biographies and understanding individual biographies as mediated in ways that are both contingent yet patterned.
- Conceptualizing media landscapes as underpinned by powerful logics of practice, for example the crosscutting imperatives of participation and in/visibility that characterize the social media landscape for young people.
- An alertness to the central role of children and teenagers for the creation and circulation of value in communicative capitalism.
- Recognition that institutional habits of ‘protection’ may cut across young people’s capacity to participate, and to create and access ‘publics’.
- Awareness of the extensive and intensive dimensions of digital culture and how these may reveal distinct challenges and sets of concern around children’s well-being.

- Critical insight into the ways that old social divisions such as gender, race and class may be recalibrated and obscured in a 'post digital' landscape.

Methodologically

- Digital documentation is an everyday practice that connects professional and popular modes of research.
- We can embrace a new relationship with the empirical that acknowledges the performative/live dimensions of digital methods and the potential for collaborative experimentation.
- The value of being alert to the material and affective affordances of our different research methods.
- Recognition that research can start rather than end with an archive, opening projects of knowledge production up to a range of stakeholders.
- Understanding the value of long and slow methods for making sense in a digital age
- Realizing the multimodal potential of digital data and developing new modes of publishing that are fit for purpose.

Policy and practice

- It is important not to make assumptions about young people's digital media access and competence which is likely to be varied, and dynamic, especially among younger children;
- There is currently a strong divide between personal and popular digital cultures and educational spaces which may be understandable (having developed over time in response to circumstances) rather than defensible.
- Schools are increasingly data driven, giving rise to new kinds of pressure in the classroom. Opportunities for individual research and creativity are circumscribed.
- The current focus on risk and danger in children's digital culture obscures more ordinary modes of interaction, a concern with digital safety needs to be balanced with an awareness of young people's digital rights.

- Young people are keen to discuss and understand the practical, ethical and economic dimensions of digital media, including the competing imperatives of participation and visibility and the creation, ownership and control of content.
- Participatory research is an ideal tool for building digital literacy and debating questions of privacy, visibility, value and ownership.