

# Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

Leyva, Rodolfo (2013) Sue Heath and Charlie Walker, Innovations in Youth Research, Palgrave Macmillan Publishers 2011 [Book review]. Youth and Policy (111). pp. 92-94. ISSN 0262-9798

Final accepted version (with author's formatting)

This version is available at: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/14676/>

## Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

[eprints@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@mdx.ac.uk)

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy>

Review  
Sue Heath and Charlie Walker  
**Innovations in Youth Research**  
Palgrave Macmillan Publishers  
pp 281

Rodolfo Leyva

*INNOVATIONS IN YOUTH RESEARCH* brings together a collection of 12 articles, focusing on their unique methodological approaches and corresponding ethical concerns. Writing in a response to the recent wave of critiques of traditional qualitative methods (i.e., interview and ethnographic approaches), the editors argue that the book offers a plethora of innovative techniques that demonstrate how qualitative research can be updated and recharged to better gauge and document the complexities of modern young people.

When I first opened the book, I was immediately impressed and in agreement with the editors' lucid and convincing argument that research on young people needs to adopt a more holistic use of varied methods that compliment each other in order to generate uniquely different data that is otherwise inaccessible via the use of traditional qualitative methods. Indeed, reading through the contents page, I was delighted to see in the chapter titles phrases like, 'music elicitation', 'the use of mental maps', and 'mixed method', expecting to maybe read about the use of psychological priming tests on young people. Unfortunately, as I read each chapter, I was a bit disappointed with the content. This is not to suggest that the book is not insightful or well written. In fact, I agree with just about all of different authors' major conclusions and lessons, and to be certain the methods used in the studies described were innovative, at least in the strict OED sense of the word. Chapter 3 for example, describes an ethnographic study on young people's attachment to their neighborhoods, where the researchers added neighborhood car rides with their participants to their methodological toolkit.

However, I felt that the title and to some extent the introductory chapter are somewhat misleading. The book should really be titled "Qualitative Methodological Innovations In Youth Identity Research", since there is no article that describes the inclusion of the use of quantitative methods. Chapter 5 was equally deceptive in its use of 'mixed methods', and should have been titled 'Triangulation in Narrative Research', as it is a fine example of using multiple qualitative methods to triangulate a specific research exploration. Still, and this could just be my subjective interpretation, but at least from anecdotal accounts, the term 'mixed methods' is reserved for the utilization of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

As for the innovations (and with the exception of chapter 2, which describes the use of music elicitation on metal fans that likely generated higher quality data than would simple interview questions), I was not convinced that most of the ones described in these studies were particularly necessary. Take for example, the use of mental maps described in chapter 4 where the authors had participants draw out geographical maps of their communities in order to elicit thicker descriptions that can better elucidate their participants' affective attachment to space and place. Likewise the study in chapter 6 describes how youth participants in India were given cameras to take pictures of the buildings and locations that had meaning to them. While these

methodological additions certainly complemented the use of standard ethnographic methods, I really do not see how they helped to add anything uniquely different that could not have been captured via the use of carefully crafted semi-structured or open-ended interview questions. Contrary to the editors, I take the position that multiple methods should be used to validate, and not merely complement each other.

In other instances, a few articles, whilst insightful, seemed out of place for a book dedicated to innovations in methods. Chapter 12 for example, concerns an account whereby the author discusses some of the major issues of conducting research in cross-cultural settings (e.g., preparing for fieldwork, negotiating access). The actual methods used, however, were only briefly mentioned as simply ethnographic. While chapter 13 describes a conversation between a researcher and his former PhD supervisor talking about issues of reflexivity and the representation of participants that can occur after the ethnographic collection of data.

Nonetheless, this book is a great example of the literature of qualitative studies on youth identities and subjectivities, and anyone interested in this line of research can definitely pick up some pointers from this book. However, given that the major lesson and conclusion to most of these types of studies is always predetermined by some permutation of the argument that *young people actively construct their identities around the competing socio-cultural discourses and physical locations available to them*, than why bother with innovative methods at all?

I get it, identities are fluid and young people have an affective attachment to their respective local cultures and proximate geography. Do we really need participatory photographic and self-portrait methods to once again document this now overly documented sociological law?

Let's move on from this, and let's implement a creative methodology to match.

Heath, Sue, Walker, Charlie, eds. *Innovations In Youth Research*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire : Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Print. These citations may not conform precisely to your selected citation style. Please use this display as a guideline and modify as needed. [close Email This Record](#). From *Innovations in youth research /* edited by Sue Heath and Charlie Walker. Names: Heath, Sue, | Walker, Charlie, Published: Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Dr Charlie Walker is Associate Professor in Sociology within Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology at the University of Southampton. Charlie's primary research interests concern the impact of postsocialist transformation on different social groups in Russia and the former Soviet Union, and are located within the sociologies of youth, gender, work and education. This research has been the subject of a number of journal articles and book chapters and will be the basis of a forthcoming monograph. He is also editor (with Steven Roberts) of a new collection in the Palgrave Global Masculinities series, *Masculinity, Labour and Neoliberalism: Working-Class Men in International Perspective* (2017). He is editor (with Sue Heath) of *Innovations in Youth Research* (Palgrave 2012). This book explores and celebrates imaginative and creative approaches to youth research, showcasing a wide range of innovative methods including music elicitation, mental mapping, blog analysis and mobile methods. *Innovations in Youth Research: An Introduction*. Pages 1-20. Heath, Sue (et al.) [Preview Buy Chapter 24,95 €](#). As soon as that track starts, I feel *Innovations in Youth Research* Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited. eBook ISBN. 978-0-230-35588-0.