

Who I was, Where I am, What I want to be

Methods in focus: Organising a Film Viewing Event

Introduction

This resource provides an outline of the decisions that should be addressed when organising a film viewing event in order to disseminate research findings and to share film footage created as part of a research project. There are a number of reasons why researchers may wish to produce and share a film as part of their research. In many research projects films are created to document the research process and to 'capture' the experience so that it can be shared with others. These films are then often shared with a wider audience as a form of evidence or advertisement.

One example of films being shown and created in this way can be taken from the ESRC funded 'No Outsiders' project, where a professional film company were hired to chart the progress of the project and to interview those involved. These films have been viewed by audiences at a number of events and continue to be used in lectures with trainee teachers as a way of discussing sexualities equalities issues more widely.

For other visual researchers a film viewing event is an almost 'natural' decision, for if the focus was on the visual (and this was the primary research method) then it makes sense that the research is also disseminated in this way. This is common practice for many visual anthropologists who, in addition to organising their own film viewing events, may share their films with audiences as part of wider film festivals. Bambo Soyinka's PhD research (undertaken at Cardiff University) provides a fascinating insight into this process.

The ESRC Qualiiti centre's '(Extra)ordinary lives' project (focusing on the experiences of looked after young children) provides a further example of how visual research may be shared with wider audiences. As part of this project the researchers and a professional film maker worked alongside the young people to draw out themes from the research data that had been generated on their lives. The film maker then worked to create a film that would represent these findings and which could be shared with a wider public audience. Several different films were created by the film maker, including a silent and symbolic film of static images edited together and a cartoon animation. A film viewing event was organised by the researchers at a prestigious local venue, where the young people and their friends, families and local policy makers were invited to view the film together.

This resource sheet shares practical experience from the WWW research project, a study which primarily focused on the social and educational experiences of young people in elite school settings. As part of the project the young people collaborated to create a film which they felt represented the research findings and which could be shared with their local community (friends, peers, family, teachers, etc). The film viewing event marked the end of the research process and was chosen because it could: disseminate the project findings within the local community, generate data on the audience's reaction to the film, generate further data in relation to the decisions made about to show the film and because it provided a space for the young people to develop further skills.



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Venue

Choosing a local, appealing and fairly priced venue is an important first step in planning your event. Ensure that the venue also suits the film you are showing. In the WWW project the young people chose a local arts centre venue that was significant to them and that they felt suited their work. Within the venue an exhibition room was chosen rather than a cinema screen in order to suit the quality of the images produced. Seats were arranged in cinema style and the room was darkened to create atmosphere.

Invitations

Choosing who to invite and how to invite them is also an important first step. You will need to decide who the film has been made for and the audience that you want to reach. Due to the young people being pictured in the film it was decided that only the local community would be invited to the WWW event. The young people decided that they would like to invite the guests and they chose to do this through 'word of mouth' and through the facebook event function.

Developing a programme

It may be that you want to simply show the film on the evening in a cinema-style presentation. But you should consider how you introduce the film and what activities surround it, for these will influence the way in which the film is interpreted. For the WWW event a programme was developed that allowed for a lot of talk. This meant that guests could chat with one another and the team, that the young people could introduce the film, that the researcher could introduce the project and that questions could be asked about the film and the production.

Displays

If you are interested in the audience hearing more about the wider research then you may consider setting up a display. The WWW event was arranged so that photographs from the project and stills from the film could be displayed around the room. No captions were used to accompany these as they were felt to limit the interpretation and to be out of context. The lack of captions also increased discussion and interest. Time was given at the start of the event for the guests to view the displays.

Added extras

Catering was seen to be a very important part of the event, allowing the guests to stay and talk for longer and to add to the sense of occasion. Cakes and drinks were served to the guests as they arrived. Comment cards were also produced and placed on all of the guests seats before they arrived. These were accompanied with pens. The cards meant that guests could write about their response to and their interpretation of the film at a time that suited them.

Budget

The costs of putting on an event can vary widely and will largely depend on the venue as room hire represents that most significant cost. The final cost of the WWW project event was
Around £250. This included:

- Venue Hire
- Equipment Hire (Microphones, PA, Projector)
- Catering (Coffee, Tea, Soft Drinks, Cakes and Biscuits)
- Printing (Posters, Leaflets and Photographs)
- Travel costs

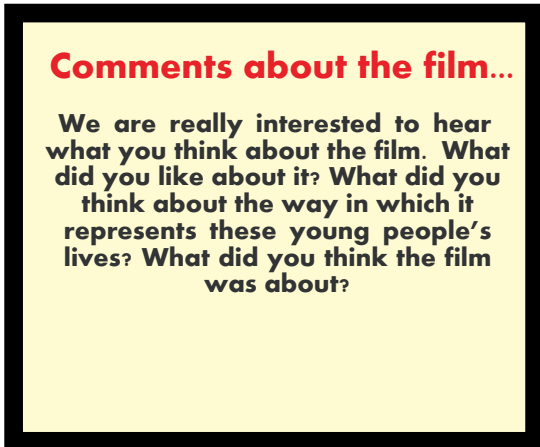
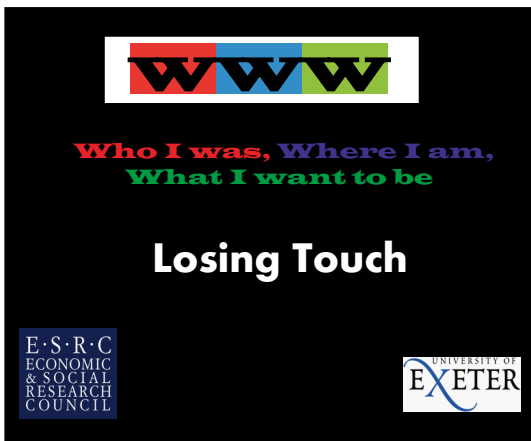
Links and references:

- www.wwwresearchproject.org.uk
- <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/qualiti/>
- Maclure, M., Holmes, R., MacRae, C. and Jones, L. (2010) 'Animating classroom ethnography: overcoming video-fear', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 23 (5): 543-556.
- <http://www.huliq.com/53790/two-short-films-me-myself-and-i>

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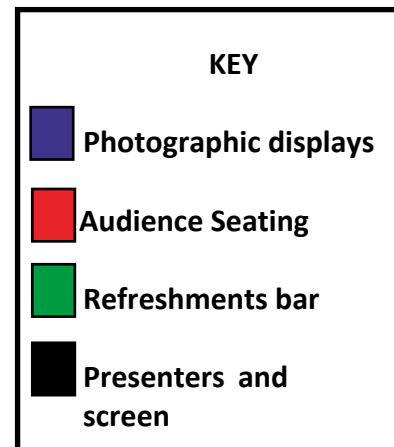
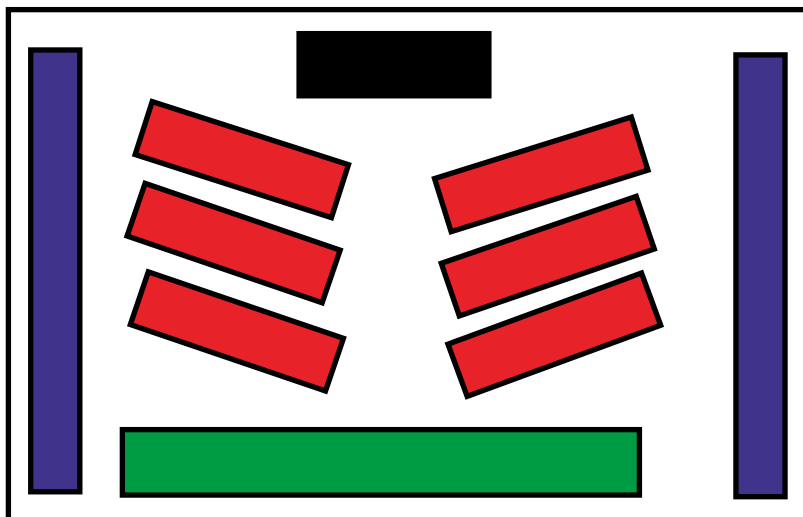
Examples from the WWW project



Example 1: Publicity and Comment Card



Example 2: Stills from the film displayed around the room



Example 3: Room Layout