Youth-Engaged Research: Sharing Good Practice

Short Bibliography & Resources

This is an exciting juncture at which to bear witness to the growing, multidisciplinary support for youth participation and more inclusive collaborative research practices in geography and the social sciences. Participatory action research and practice offers a promising new framework for researchers who are committed to social justice and change. The multiple benefits of engaging the perspectives of young people in research have served to challenge social exclusion, redistribute power within the research process and build the capacity of young people to analyze and transform their own lives and become partners in the building of more sound, democratic, communities. In this paper, I offer a broad overview of the principles of participatory research and reflect on my own experience of doing a participatory action research project with young people. Specifically, I will discuss a ‘collective praxis approach’ (a set of rituals and practices for sharing power within the research process), the role of the facilitator, and the processes of collective data analysis.

This paper describes the development and deployment of the ReACT model of youth PAR. This model provides a simple and usable framework for involving youth in all aspects of research – from development of questions through dissemination of results and development and implementation of policies and procedures derived from the results. The paper focuses the most on youth involvement in development and analysis phases.

This paper provides a nice example of utilizing youth PAR with a group of youth over nine months to explore questions regarding youth involvement in social change and develop a framework for youth engagement in social change.

Jones addresses the issues she raises by describing how children and young people can be involved as researchers at all stages of the research process from design through to dissemination.

This paper is an excellent overview of many of the ethical concerns involved in PAR in general. While not being explicitly about youth engaged research, it contains many important points that should be considered by anyone developing a collaboratively engaged research project with youth. It also provides a good resource for educating IRBs and funding agencies. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953604005106


This paper explores the outcomes and impact of a youth PAR project on the youth participants themselves. The findings show how youth PAR can positively impact the youth involvement in ways that extend beyond the research study itself. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2012.00780.x/abstract


Peer research has the potential to empower young people to participate in research by minimising power imbalances between researchers and participants; this may reduce bias and promote improved understanding to inform policy and practice. However, these benefits are not automatic; the relative inexperience of peer researchers adds layers of complexity to the research process. Moreover, the validity of findings from research adopting less traditional methods may be questioned and policy makers may be cautious about accepting this evidence, thus limiting its contribution and impact. This paper explores the advancement of participatory peer researcher methodology in research with children in and leaving care and ethical, practical and data quality issues that arose in two studies exploring young people’s transitions from care to adulthood. It concludes that the peer research methodology can yield rich data but that adequate resources and effective research management are crucial. The authors also caution against a reductionist approach that privileges peer research methodology above other methods of inquiry in the study of transitions from care to adulthood.


This guide is about why and how to actively involve young people as researchers within health and social care research. It is about how to actively involve them, not as subjects of research and development, but as partners in the various stages of research, from commissioning, to evaluation and dissemination. This guide aims to give researchers and commissioners of research working within the NHS, Social Care and Public Health some guidance on how best to involve young people in their work. We hope it will also be read by young people, as well as parents, teachers and other members of the public who want to support young people’s involvement in research. We think it will help professionals to meet article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the UK in 1991) which asserts that children and young people should be involved in all decisions affecting their lives. The guide is not an academic document, but draws on the experience of young researchers and older adult researchers, both through workshops and through related literature. http://www.conres.co.uk/pdfs/Involving_Young_People_in_Research_151104_FINAL.pdf

(UK) NCB PEAR Project (Evaluation Report) 2011

This report presents findings of an evaluation of the PEAR project, which aimed to support young people to contribute to the UK public health agenda by: Helping young people learn about public health research and policy; Supporting young people to inform and influence public health research and policy; Raising awareness of public health research and young people’s involvement amongst researchers, policy makers and other young people; Helping young people to contribute to the development and dissemination of public health research for policy and practice. The PEAR project was funded by the Wellcome Trust, enabling the National Children’s Bureau (NCB) and UCL Institute of Child Health to build on the work of a pilot project. The PEAR project ran from May 2008 until November 2010. http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/111188/pear_evaluation_report_0211.pdf (Evaluation report)

(UK) NIHR & MCRN Young Persons Advisory Group

In 2006 the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Medicines for Children Research Network (MCRN), with support from the National Children’s Bureau (NCB), set up a pilot young person’s advisory group to explore how young people could be involved and have their say in the design of clinical research. The group was based at the MCRN coordinating centre in Liverpool and recruited 15 members aged between 8-19 years old. The group was a great success and one particular accolade of the group was the provision of invaluable advice to researchers, including the pharmaceutical industry, on various stages of research design. http://www.mcrn.org.uk/children/design/ypag
Historically the voices of children in research have been silent. They are often seen as victims or beneficiaries of research rather than co-researchers or partners. This is beginning to change with growing awareness that involving children in the design, delivery and evaluation of services can make services more accessible to them and their peers. This article reviews the processes involved in a research project commissioned by Children’s Fund, which investigated the use and non-use of services within a local area. The involvement of children was paramount and resulted in the recruitment of nine young researchers between the ages of 7–13. Various cycles of participatory action research evolved throughout the project and this article focuses specifically on two—recruiting the researcher and training young researchers. We consider the cycles of reflection and action crucial to any participatory project and discuss how lessons were learned to inform further stages of the process. Themes such as challenges, power and participation are discussed throughout.

Save the Children. Involving Young Researchers: How to enable young people to design and conduct research. (Book and Resource Pack); 2000.
http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/involving-young-researchers-how-enable-young-people-design-and-conduct
This publication demonstrates how young people can be competently and usefully involved in designing and conducting research. With plenty of case studies and examples, it explores the issues surrounding whether to involve young people as researchers, and the ways in which they can participate in the different stages of the research process.
http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Young-People-as-Researchers.pdf
A 109-page training pack for young people, with a curriculum and exercises for trainers.

ABSTRACT This paper discusses the methodological and ethical issues arising from a project that focused on conducting a qualitative study using participatory techniques with children and young people living in disadvantage. The main aim of the study was to explore the impact of poverty on children and young people’s access to public and private services. The paper is based on the author’s perspective of the first stage of the fieldwork from the project. It discusses the ethical implications of involving children and young people in the research process, in particular issues relating to access and recruitment, the role of young people’s advisory groups, use of visual data and collection of data in young people’s homes. The paper also identifies some strategies for addressing the difficulties encountered in relation to each of these aspects and it considers the benefits of adopting participatory methods when conducting research with children and young people.