Youth Centred Research Brief Report 4

Participatory workshops in action

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Group photo: Louisa (researcher), youth participants: Liz, Leila, Sahly, Tamika, Edison, Shekiba, Christine (researcher), youth participants: Ishika, Abhi, Rithvika, Nikith.
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Overview of Brief Research Reports 1-5

Given the scarcity of youth participatory research, and that young people are rarely consulted about the issues that impact on them (Langhout & Thomas, 2010), the following brief research reports hope to share knowledge gained in using collaborative and engaging research methods with young people. The brief research reports are an open-access series offering 5 brief research reports about collaborating with youth as active stakeholders in research.

The series includes the following reports, each building on the previous:

- **Brief Report 1**: Co-collaborating with youth as active stakeholders in research
- **Brief Report 2**: Establishing an active Youth Reference Group
- **Brief Report 3**: Assent process, group partnership building and visual ethics
- **Brief Report 4**: Participatory workshops in action
- **Brief Report 5**: Joint Dissemination and Communication: Youth informed stakeholder exhibition

The research briefs include the strengths, challenges and lessons learned about co-collaborating and engaging with youth participation in this research project. The overall aim of the report series is to share the steps taken in the youth centred pilot research project. We used a qualitative, visual methodology of participatory video, art (drawing, painting) and photovoice to explore youth educational experiences. Methods that originated and used widely in humanitarian situations and with vulnerable communities due to their ‘bottom-up’ approach. Key themes were co-constructed from conversations triggered by the visual data and disseminated through a youth-led exhibition.

The pilot project and the creation of Youth Reference Group took place at Monash University, Faculty of Education, Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education Academic Community in Victoria, Australia.
Participatory Workshops in action

Qualitative visual methodology

We used a qualitative, visual methodology of participatory video, art and photovoice to explore youth educational experiences. Since the pilot study is exploratory in nature, the study used a qualitative approach.

In this project, we’ve defined qualitative research as:

“... a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; p. 3).

Thus, qualitative research is not only a collection of diverse methods of data collection but also has a strong foundation in the potential impact it can create with its ability to transform the world through sharing the lived experiences of people in a particular setting or context. Creswell (2007) suggests qualitative research essentially begins with a set of assumptions and a worldview through a theoretical framework to investigate research questions that are centred around individuals or groups of people. Placed under the purview of a qualitative research approach, a workshop design was chosen for two main reasons: First, philosophically the workshop design is embedded in the constructivist approach as it acknowledges the importance of human subjective experience, the creation of meanings, and the social construction of reality (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Secondly, workshops can generate intensive and holistic descriptions through the analysis of a single bounded unit, situated in a specific context with the aim of providing insight into real-life situations (Pickard, 2013; Merriam, 2009).
Participatory methods

The participatory research implemented in this project is understood as that which is conducted alongside, with and for those who are researched, in contrast to research on them. Such an approach has gained traction over the previous decade, particularly in disability research (Bigby, Frawley & Ramcharan, 2014; Walmsley & Johnson, 2003), as a means of ensuring that research aims, methods and outcomes are aligned with the needs and values of those who stand to benefit. However, several areas in participatory research with young people remain underdeveloped, such as roles taken by young people and the level of their active engagement in the design and conduct of the research (Seale, Nind & Parsons, 2014). In this way, the research project embraces and echoes the call for researchers to conduct inquiry in a thoughtful and respectful way that attempts to move students beyond tokenistic participation (Hart, 1992; Shier 200) to roles that have a genuine influence in shaping the study such as research design and data analysis (Seale et al., 2014; Todd, 2012).

The premise of the workshops is one where youth are seen as authoritative commentators on their own experiences and can and were engaged as active partners in the research processes. This approach acknowledges students not only as beneficiaries of research developed by adults, but also (or instead) as competent agents that can be engaged with via participatory and inclusionary practices (Grové, 2020).
Visual Methodologies: Visual images and Photovoice method

Throughout these workshops visual methodologies were used such as photo-elicitation and youth-generated images, creating opportunities for students to be “protagonists in the knowledge building process” (Agbenyega, 2008, p. 4). Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through photography, and uses visual image to promote an effective, participatory means of sharing expertise and knowledge (Wang & Burris, 1997). The main goals of photovoice is to give participants a tool for directly observing and documenting their community’s strengths as well as its problems, to encourage a group to analyse social relations and conditions within their own community, and to reach policymakers (Wang & Burris, 1997). Wang & Burris (1997) suggest involving participants in a three-stage process that provides the foundation for analysis, which are:
• Selecting: choosing photographs that most accurately reflect the community’s needs and assets,

• Contextualising: telling a story about what the photograph means, and

• Codifying: identifying those issues, themes or theories that emerge.

In their Photovoice Participant Handbook, Foster-Fishman et al. (2013) provide guidelines for planning a photovoice project. These guidelines suggest first asking “What’s the story?” and thinking about what issues will be explored in the project. The next phase, ‘Focusing the Story’ involves formulating framing questions, which are questions posed to participants to answer through taking a photo, providing participants with a lens through which to examine their experience. The third step is identifying storytellers, and the number of reflection groups, considering diversity of the group and sensitivity of the subject matter. The final step in workshop 1 involved considering project duration, and details such as the number of meetings, time between meetings, and types of cameras being used as well as how data will be collected.

We used the steps suggested by Wang and Burris (1997) and Foster-Fishman et al. (2013) throughout the 4 workshops to engage dialogue and support discussion of youth educational experiences.

**Methods of Data Collection**

Additionally, we built on the above work and incorporated the Photovoice approach developed by Amanda O. Latz (2017). Latz (2017) recommends following eight steps of Photovoice that were applied as a structure during the workshops:

1. **Identification**: as researchers we identified the place, people, and the purpose of the study (adult-initiated) (see report 1),

2. **Invitation**: individuals are invited to participate and confirm their participation in the study based on their responses in the EOI survey (see report 2),

3. **Education**: participants are informed about the research project and what their participation will entail including, getting their consent and conducting a workshop on using a camera and its ethical considerations (see report 2 and 3),

4. **Documentation**: participants are asked to respond to questions or prompts through visual methods such as photography (see below workshop 3 and 4 sections),

5. **Narration**: during workshop discussions, participants were asked to discuss the contents of their visual data. These were video/voice recorded after all the participants indicated they were comfortable,

6. **Ideation**: involved participants wherein researchers and youth together generate themes from the narrations using an analytical co-analysis approach (see below co-analysis section),
7. Presentation: Took the form of a youth-led exhibition, examples of which include, posters, brochures, website, digital story and a library installation. However, due to COVID-19, the launch event for youth to interface with their community, policymakers and others was cancelled, and the online virtual reality exhibition was held instead (see report 5), also here: https://www.monash.edu/youth-booth-exhibition

8. Confirmation (researchers attempt to understand those who interfaced with the presentation phase and broaden the reach of the participants’ voices).

Figure 1 below provides an overview of the research methodology steps undertaken in this project that incorporated the works of Latz (2017), Wang and Burris (1997), and Foster-Fishman et al. (2013)

**Figure 1. Our Research Method Process**
Workshop Overview

All workshops were held at Monash University Clayton Campus. Each workshop was two hours long, and facilitated by the researchers, Christine Grove and Louisa Trainer. Pizza, drinks and snacks were provided for group members at each workshop. After the first two workshops, participants were emailed a feedback survey, and encouraged to anonymously provide their opinion on the workshop and what could be improved. This advice was taken into account in following workshops, for example merging the group together after participants indicated they did not like sitting in two separate groups, as they wanted to get to know everyone in the group wider than their immediate table.

Workshop 1 (November 2019)

The first workshop involved rapport building, explaining the project and setting up visual methods processes (Foster-Fishman et al. 2013; Latz, 2017; Wang & Burris, 1997). Participants were randomly allocated to one group of 5 participants. Each participant was given an introductory “pack” containing a 15-dollar travel voucher for each workshop, a digital camera, and an explanatory statement explaining the project. On each table was an assent form (see Report 3), and participants were asked to complete this form before the workshop commenced. Participants were encouraged to ask any questions or for help filling out their form if needed.

In order to build rapport between group members, as well as between researchers and participants, ice-breaker activities were conducted at the beginning of the first workshop. A ‘Human Dominoes’ activity was conducted, where an individual said two facts about themselves, and the next person was encouraged to stand on the side they

To encourage flexibility and youth-led decision-making, young people were encouraged to engage in creative expressions if they chose such as drawing, creative writing, painting, writing music or poems.
also had in common with that person, and so-on until everyone was standing in a circle. Conversation-starters were also displayed on the wall, and participants were encouraged to ask each other these questions, for example “If I had one super power, it would be…”. These games were chosen to encourage individuals in a diverse group to recognise similarities between each other, and provide talking points between group-members.

In the initial workshop, the researchers worked with visual live-notetaker Jessamy to visually create the values and expectations for each workshop that youth developed. Participants were encouraged to voice what they thought was important to help the group to collaborate and work together effectively.

In the introductory workshop, the visual method was introduced and explained to the group. In order to encourage flexibility and youth-led decision-making, young people were encouraged to engage in other creative expressions such as drawing, creative writing, painting, writing music or poems. As recommended by Foster-Fishman et al. (2013), some expectations were established with the group. Young people were given some photography tips, privacy guidelines and visual ethics were also outlined, for example not photographing other people without their consent. Young people were given their first topic or framing question: “What is your experience of school?”.

Each student was given an individual link to the platform Padlet, where they were able to securely upload their visual data before the following workshop, to be shared with the researchers. A group Youth Reference Group Padlet was also created, where individuals could share images they would like to be seen by the whole group. Participants were encouraged to add as little or as much visual data they would like over the 3-week period between workshops, which began part 1 of the data collection cycle outlined by Foster-Fishman et al. (2013).
Workshop 2 (December 2019)

Within this workshop, Part 2 of the data collection cycle began for the visual data (Foster-Fishman et al., 2013), with individual selection and reflection. Before the workshop, participants uploaded their chosen photos (most participants took and shared photos) onto their Padlet. These were printed ahead of the workshop, and given to participants in the workshop. Participants were asked to complete written reflection worksheets about their visual data, to help describe what was happening in the visual, and how the visual related to the topic (see Appendix for the worksheet disseminated). The visual data was then displayed on the whiteboard, to share with the group, fulfilling Part 3 of the data collection cycle: sharing, showing and telling.

Participants then moved through Part 4 of the data collection process: group selection and reflection (Foster-Fishman et al., 2013). Group members were given sticky dots to “vote” on which photos and explanations they liked the most, and identify the most important photos and stories to share (see Image 2, below). Participants were then given sticky-notes, to write down what themes they saw emerging from the photo wall.

At the end of the second workshop, participants were asked to take photographs about what they think the biggest challenges facing young people today are, as well as the greatest strengths of young people. Group members were given their initial survey response to the questions “In your opinion what are the main challenges facing young people today”, and “In your opinion what are the strengths of young people today?” to assist with visually representing their experiences of this topic.
During the time between Workshop 2 and 3, the researchers continued the process of co-analysis, by collating the visual data and sorting them based on the number of sticky dots or ‘votes’ on each. The most voted for images were then organised into themes, based on the themes identified by students in the workshop.

Workshop 3 (January 2020)

Workshop 3 continued the process of data collection and co-analysis. The visual images most ‘voted for’ by young people were placed on the whiteboard and grouped into themes identified by group members. Participants were given the SHOWeD image information sheet (see appendix for analysis sheet) to analyse their individual visuals they had taken or created. The SHOWeD image information sheet allowed participants to analyse their images based on 6 open-ended questions.

Young people were asked to stick their top 3 photos/images and SHOWeD image information sheet in a gallery style around the room, and again vote with sticky dots on the images they liked the most, or thought answered the research question best. Participants were again asked to write themes they saw emerging from the photos on the sticky notes. The group then came together as a whole, and the researchers facilitated a discussion where overarching themes were
Participants reading the SHOWeD image information sheet

generated from the images. To complete this process of co-analysis, in partnership with the researchers, young people identified six overall themes which were generated from the research: being digitally savvy, the stress of study, influence of social media, climate change, impact of poor mental health, and connectedness.

In this workshop, the final dissemination exhibition was discussed. Participants were encouraged to think about who they would like to invite to this exhibition, for example teachers, policy-makers, parents and classmates. An additional filming workshop was scheduled in January, which was optional for the Youth Reference Group members, and was designed to give group members an outlet for discussing their experience in the Youth Reference Group, as well as the opportunity to discuss their images and the issues they believed were affecting young people the most.

Workshop 4 (February 2020)

The final workshop was designed to celebrate the efforts of young people involved, and to plan for the dissemination of their data. In this workshop, a GoPro raffle was drawn, where one participant won a GoPro to thank them for participating in the group. Young people were encouraged to think about their ‘call to action’, and what message they would like to send to policymakers who were invited to attend the exhibition. Participants also reviewed and approved their visual data for the final exhibition, booklet and dissemination website. Participants also decided whether they would like their name included with their photo, and made edits on the titles and blurbs they had written for their photo. Participants were given a tour of the
Participants and researcher gathered together during a pizza break in Workshop 2 exhibition space (they selected Monash Library on Clayton Campus), and the group members also brainstormed ideas for the exhibition, for example one participant suggested making t-shirts for the group. Group members also brainstormed a name for the exhibition and dissemination of key information such as the call to action. All group members suggested names they thought of and wrote them on the board. Participants then voted by putting their favourite name in a hat which the researchers counted at the end, and eventually the majority of the group voted for the exhibition to be named the ‘Youth Booth’. The following report, brief research report 5, provides the projects research dissemination and communication.
Co-analysis of data

In order to have active youth participation in research, young people must be actively involved in every step of the research process (Hart, 1992), and should be included as partners who co-create the research design and data analysis. A key feature of youth participatory research is for young people to be co-researchers, and for group facilitators to guide young people to learn how to identify themes that are generated from the data collected (Cook & Krueger-Henney, 2017). The aim of the YRG was to involve young people in the qualitative analysis of the data they collected, and to co-develop themes with youth. In this way, the YRG aimed for active or ‘true’ youth participation, where decision-making is shared with young people, rather than a ‘tokenistic’ level of participation (Hart, 1992). Within the workshops, young people participated in an informal analysis of their visually generated data. Group members were encouraged to analyse their individual visual images, and then as a group identify overarching themes among their data. The final analysis of the data was conducted by the researchers, which involved collating and organising all of the images that youth selected as being related to each theme, and using youths’ descriptions of their images to attach to each image. Young people were involved in this data analysis step, and were given the opportunity to edit and approve the final themes and descriptions before publication.
A key feature of youth participatory research is for young people to be co-researchers, and for group facilitators to guide young people to learn how to identify themes that are generated from the data collected.

Group discussions during analysis

Latz (2017) suggests that participants may or may not be involved in the co-analysis process (step 5 and 6 above), however the participant in this pilot study were seen as co-researchers in the collaborative analysis of the visual data. This was framed by using Riessman’s (2008) adaptation of Gillian Rose’s (2001) sites of visual analysis:

1) production site: how and when the image was made, and other aspects of the image making process;

2) image site: the story behind the image, components of the image included and excluded; and

3) audiencing site: key messages of the image, how it is viewed, and captions for the image.

The SHOWeD worksheets supported the operationalisation of the co-analysis processes.

The final generated themes are provided in a publication of the pilot research project (forthcoming).
Establishing trustworthiness

In order to ensure quality of the data in this project, the following three procedures will be followed: peer debriefing (Creswell, 2007), member checks (Korstjens & Moser, 2018), and inter-rater reliability (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007). Peer debriefing were done using the researcher reflexive journal to discuss the reflections and workshop notes between research team and advisors who also use a qualitative approach with a voice-centred methodology. Member checks allowed the participants to review the information and ensure it represents them throughout each workshop. For the student participants, the image review process itself acted as a form of member check. Additionally, for the adults a debriefing was conducted post each workshop. Finally, as part of the inter-rater reliability process the research reviewed the visual data, its coding and the themes and sub-themes that were generated.

Resources about participatory, qualitative and visual research


REFERENCES


## SHOWeD Analysis Sheet

### Reflecting on your image

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Youth_Strengths_and_Challenges_in_Education/4903950