



Childhood: A Journal of Global Child Research

FUTURE SPECIAL ISSUE
CALL FOR PAPERS

Deepening collaborative research: relations of production, contexts and meaning making

Guest Editors

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Participatory research has become a cornerstone methodology in childhood studies. Much work has been done to define its meaning beyond using participatory methods. However recurrent questions remain about why, when, where and how participatory research should contribute to childhood studies and to what effect (see Lohmeyer 2020; Powell et al 2020). We invite contributions on these pressing themes, concerning the relations of production of participatory social research; understandings of contexts and ontology; and approaches to methods and meaning making. We use the term collaborative research because young researchers have said it is easier to understand.

This special issue also seeks to start to redress the adult domination of knowledge production in childhood studies by inviting coproduced manuscripts from children and young people engaged in collaborative social research and their adult academic allies. Examples of how child and young researchers are sharing their reflections on the process of participatory research are emerging (for example Mayes 2016, Dan et al 2019). Democratising access to knowledge on participatory research by, with and for children and young people, is not just about co-authoring. It also requires a diversification of outputs. We therefore invite intergenerational collaborators to submit full articles to this special issue together with accessible summaries in text, audio, film, or other form. These will be hosted on a website created by and for young researchers www.ucanmakechange2.org.

The intergenerational relations of production in social research tend to position children and young people as labourers, sometimes unpaid, rather than commissioners or directors of research studies. Awareness of the tendency for adults to underestimate the power dimensions at play in participatory research is growing, with authors proposing more complex, fluid and multi-layered understanding of the intergenerational processes (Horgan 2014, Crook 2021). However, there remains a need for deeper reflexivity to recognise the relational nature of participatory research (Canosa, Graham and Wilson 2018), including examination of which voices are produced and heard

in collaborative intergenerational analyses and the circulation of power and the flows of affect. To develop strategies to reveal and respond to power distributions is likely to require that we bring in social theory to help understand the social relations of production in which we are enmeshed in participatory research.

Childhood studies is gradually moving forward from the social construction paradigm, which has had a grip on our disciplines since the 1980s (Alanen 2015). Relational and relationist approaches are advocated, alongside encouragement to decentre childhood (Spyrou 2017), again calling for attention to the wider distributions of relationships and materialities which impact on how childhoods are lived. The new materialist and posthuman approaches to childhood that have emerged in recent years are numerous (Kraftl et al 2021). Cooper (2022) valuably points to the need to reflect on contexts and how wider aspects of research assemblages impact on data generation, suggesting that it is timely to invite young researchers to reflect on these questions. Rosen (2021) highlights the need to think temporally within participatory studies and this can be extended to thinking about how much of the context of children's lived childhoods are framed by geological time, for example through the generation and extinction of fossil fuels. Early findings from an ongoing systematic review of participatory research (Nowland et al 2022), highlight the value of exploring ontology and social theory with young researchers, as part of orientation to a field of study. Thus far, very little of this work seems to be occurring.

A more than human approach to childhood studies, in the context of pandemic conditions, climate change, and economic and digital divides, may require new methods or reengagement with established modes. Engaging with an interdisciplinary array of methods, may help us find ways of witnessing human as well as more-than-human entanglements (Kraftl 2020). Experimentation with the formats, technologies and resources that are all around us may help represent children's experience in ways that are compelling and emotionally resonant (Back 2020). The role of ethnography and micro-ethnography (Pink and Morgan, 2013), sometimes seen as incompatible with participatory approaches (Evans 2013) may be re-emerging as young researchers develop ways of looking into the lives of their peers.

We are therefore interested in paper proposals on topics including, but are not limited to, the following:

- Destabilising dominant relations of production in social research.
- Powers over and redistribution of the economic resources needed for research.
- Children or young people's ownership of research.
- Discussing the nature of the social world in collaborative research.
- Engagement with theoretical concepts in collaborative research.
- Young researcher's contributions to building social theory.
- Methods that respond to the need to decentre childhood or to recognise more than single narrative accounts of experience.
- Unresolved methodological conflicts, contradictions and ethical challenges?
- Making meaning that speaks to wide social or temporal understandings of children's experiences and concerns.

As the editorial collective for this special issue is intergenerational we ask that you please send in a plain language abstract.

We invite you to address one or more of these questions, which were cocreated by young researchers with the aim of making the focus of this journal more accessible.

- How have you challenged and changed how research is produced?
- How has control of money and other resources been thought about?
- How have the different forms of knowledge held by different people been valued and used?
- How have you researched the things around children that matter to them?
- What are your feelings about the research you have done?
- How have decisions about methods and ethics (things like consent and safety) been made?
- How do you think about the community and environment when you do research?
- How have funders been involved in your work?
- How do young people's opinions get listened to and followed through to the end result of the research?
- How are young people's views about how to do the research recorded to make sure people are doing their jobs properly?
- How do people write together so that everyone gets to contribute in the same time in the same space? Is meeting in a room together to write better than a video meeting?
- How have you introduced and used theories of childhood and/or youth in your collaboration(s)?
- How have you used concepts or theories? How have you developed new ones?
- How have you worked out who to share knowledge with and how to share it?
- What things are you still trying to work out how to do better in your research?

These questions can also be found on the accessible summary of this call ([LINK](#)). When you send in your abstract, please describe how young researchers and academics will be writing together.

Decisions about inclusion of articles will be taken by an intergenerational editorial collective. Please see the schedule for submission below and the co-authored accessible summary of this abstract for further details.

References

- Alanen, L. (2015). Are we all constructionists now? *Childhood*, 22(2), 149–153.
- Canosa, A., Graham, A., & Wilson, E. (2018). Reflexivity and ethical mindfulness in participatory research with children: What does it really look like? *Childhood*, 25(3), 400–415.
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- Crook, D. J. (2021). Children changing spaces, changing schools. *Children & Society*, 35(3), 445–460.
- Dan, D., David, D., Evie, E., Ollie, O., Thomas, D., & Larkins, C. (2019). Next steps in children and young people's research, participation and protection from the perspective of young researchers. *Journal of Children's Services*. VOL. 14 NO. 3 2019, pp. 186–193
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- Nowland R, Robertson L, Farrelly N, et al. (2021) Collaborative research methods and best practice with children and young people: protocol for a mixed-method review of the health and social sciences literature. *BMJ Open* 2022 12:e061659.
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- Powell, M. A., Graham, A., McArthur, M., et al (2020). Children's participation in research on sensitive topics: Addressing concerns of decision-makers. *Children's Geographies*, 18(3), 325–338.
- Rosen, R. (2021) Participatory research in and against time *Qualitative Research*,. 0(0) 1–17
- Spyrou, S. (2017). Time to decenter childhood? *Childhood*, 24(4), 433–437.

Schedule

March 1st	Deadline for submission of abstracts, in English (max. 300 words) and short biography of authors (150 words). Please include author's name(s), affiliation(s) and contact information. These should be sent to the Managing Editor, Ragnhild Berge: ragnhild.berge@ntnu.no
By March 15th	Decisions about abstracts
June 30th	Submission of full-length articles, and accessible summaries
February 2024	Final decisions on articles
August 2024	Anticipated publishing of the accepted articles and summaries

Where authors are aged under 18, signed consent to be named as an author must be secured - from children and their parent/carer. Accessible summaries of the articles can be in text, audio, film, or other form and will be shared, with consent, on the website www.ucanmakechange2.org. We ask you to think about accessibility in terms of communication needs as well as language. When you send ideas for articles back to us, please make sure you describe how you will be writing together. When you write the article together please include details of what this involved.

Information about the Editorial Collective

We are a group of young researchers and university researchers from The Centre for Children and Young People's Participation at the University of Central Lancashire in the United Kingdom. We have experience in doing research, writing and editing. We work through a long established partnership between adults and children and young people called UCan.

Our network – called *UCan* – supports young people's engagement in research (sharing ideas, getting funding, doing research activities, analysing data, sharing knowledge, teaching and taking action). Over 10 years of collaboration we have created many academic and accessible publications.

A key part of this work involves collaboration with the *UCMC2* editorial board, who run www.ucanmakechange2.org. This is a website by young people for children and young people with the intention that children and young people involved in research can share evidence, advice, and try to work together.

We are working as an editorial collective for this special edition, to be facilitated by Prof Cath Larkins and Prof Alastair Roy and members of the *UCMC2* editorial board of young researchers and the young researcher and adult academic allies in their networks.

Article abstracts should be sent within the first of March 2023 to the *Childhood* Managing Editor at: ragnhild.berge@ntnu.no

For enquiries about the Special Issue, contact:

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