

FULL-LENGTH ARTICLES

Online Intergenerational Participatory Research: Ingredients for Meaningful Relationships and Participation

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Over thirty years ago, children's participation rights were recognized internationally with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Increased involvement of children and young people in lead, collaborative, and advisory roles in interdisciplinary research has challenged 'traditional' adult research practices in numerous ways. Co-production recognizes participants as experts and creators of knowledge, engages children and young people in decision-making, and addresses traditional adult-child hierarchies. #CovidUnder19 is a movement that aims to foster intergenerational partnerships between children, young people and adult members of the child rights community to develop evidence-based advocacy to uphold children's rights throughout the pandemic, as well as in response and recovery. The COVID 4P Log smartphone app was designed to better understand ways practitioners and policymakers protect, provide, enable participation, and prevent harm in their practice. Children and young people aged 14 to 19 from countries around the world are involved as co-researchers and advisors in research design, data analysis, and knowledge exchange. This paper explores the experiences of #CovidUnder19 young people as researchers focusing on the data analysis and knowledge exchange phase and includes their reflections on meaningful intergenerational partnership in research. This includes the importance of relationships, embracing the 'inner child', and fostering meaningful participation in the research process. The paper concludes with recommendations for other researchers on how to work in partnership with children and young people meaningfully to strengthen the process and impact for researchers and children's human rights.

Introduction

While engaging children and young people in participatory research processes has become popular in social research, their role in analysis, report and article writing, and dissemination is often limited. There can be a tendency to "either exclude youth from actual analysis or involve them in ways that are more tokenistic than rigorous" (Liebenberg et al., 2020, p. 2). This paper introduces an international project collaboration between #CovidUnder19, an initiative seeking to place children and young people's views at the heart of COVID19 rebuilding and recovery decision-making, and the COVID 4P Log for Children's Wellbeing, a smartphone app that sought to better understand the changing demands on policymakers, practitioners and service providers working with and for children during the pandemic. This collaboration included the co-design, analysis, report writing, and knowledge exchange of the COVID 4P Log smartphone app, and subsequent findings. The paper first provides a background of the project and literature. It then goes on to introduce the methodology and process of children and young people, or

“Under19s,” working in partnership with people who are over 19 years of age, or “Over19s.” The paper focuses on the reflections and experiences of the Under19s in the analysis, report, and article writing phase. Next, the paper explores three thematic findings which emerged during young people’s reflections on the research experience: meaningful participation and its key elements—the inner child, and building trusting relationships. Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations on effectively working in intergenerational partnerships as co-researchers.

Background

The past few decades have called for more reflective and challenging discussion around children and youth’s engagement in research and decision-making (e.g. Jacquez et al., 2013; Liebenberg et al., 2020). This encourages young people’s active involvement and recognizes the value and rights of young people to be involved across all aspects of research knowledge production: from identifying research priorities, to acting as lead researchers and co-researchers, to carrying out knowledge exchange (Cuevas-Parra & Tisdall, 2019; Laura Lee et al., 2019). Greater involvement of children and young people challenge traditional adult research practices, such as authorship, ethics, intergenerational power relations, scientific rigor and reciprocity (Collins et al., 2020). The question is no longer should children and youth be involved, but how (and how to do it well). Several researchers (e.g. Delgado, 2015; Morrow & Richards, 1996; Spyrou, 2011) caution against tokenized ways of engaging youth and encourage researchers to carefully consider the entire process. Although recognizing the importance of trust development between researchers exists and time for “fun” to build relationships, the emotional relations of participatory research are “often treated instrumentally” but deemed not “important enough” to be included in the writing of research (Wright et al., 2021). The young people and adults involved in co-writing this article, however, advocated for the recognition of relational development, fun, and vulnerability as key elements of the intergenerational research process and meaningful participation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted children’s rights and meaningful participation and has caused challenges to conducting qualitative research methods. Researchers had to find creative ways to conduct research that had previously taken place in person by adapting to online contexts (Dodds & Hess, 2020). While some methods are commonly established online, such as surveys, others, like online focus groups, have grown in popularity (Woodyatt et al., 2016). Still, the pandemic pushed researchers to adopt creative practices in order to continue online and remote research. In light of this new, emerging research era, Marzi (2020) notes that new guidelines for participatory methods may be needed to mitigate risks and ethical dilemmas and to disrupt and equalize power relations. Hall et al. (2021) suggest that moving to a distant form of communication, such as online, may pose challenges for “creating and maintaining interpersonal relationships” (p. 11). Non-planned dialogue can support the establishment of space for spontaneous

interactions, which may be “key” to creating spaces for meaningful remote collaboration (Abrahamsson & Ollander Axelsson, 2020). While growing literature exists on online participatory research approaches, there is limited research on online co-production in research with children and young people globally. This article will address the gap and introduce processes and reflections on meaningful engagement through the discussion of an intergenerational research and advocacy collaboration between the #CovidUnder19 initiative and the COVID 4P Log smartphone app.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic thrust the rights and wellbeing of children and families around the world into greater risk. Particular concerns have been for those in low- and middle-income countries, and those already facing the greatest adversity—including children in detention, alternative care, migration (particularly those unaccompanied), and children in low-income households, among others (Terre des hommes, 2020; The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2020). Given the exacerbation of existing inequalities during the pandemic, qualitative research conducted online must adopt a child rights-based approach to ensure the voices of children and young people are heard and incorporated into decision-making, policies, and practices that will impact their lives. The *Lundy Model for Child Participation* provides further guidance for the implementation of rights-based participation across four areas: space, voice, audience, and influence (Lundy, 2007). Special effort must be made in online, remote qualitative research to include children from marginalized backgrounds and groups and to overcome the digital access barrier (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009).

This article shares the data analysis, report, and article writing phases of an intergenerational project with children and young people, as well as adult practitioners and service providers working with and for children and young people during COVID-19. It operationalizes the *Lundy Model* and a child rights-based approach to online research and advocacy.

#CovidUnder19 is an initiative that aims to foster intergenerational partnerships between children, young people, and adult members of the child rights community to uphold children’s human rights in pandemic recovery and response. Launched by Terre des hommes, the initiative brought together a group of children, United Nations bodies, academics, and roughly 30 civil society organizations to center children—and their human rights—at the heart of COVID-19 response and recovery. In 2020, the initiative deployed the global “Life Under Coronavirus” survey. Queen’s University Belfast led the design and analysis of the survey, involving children and partners as part of the innovative approach to child rights-based research developed at the Centre for Children’s Rights (Lundy et al., 2021). More than 26,000 children and young people aged 8–17 from 137 countries participated in the survey, making it the largest global child-participatory research and advocacy process during the pandemic. The results of the survey formed the basis of subsequent research and advocacy initiatives that sought to highlight the children’s perspectives and experiences of the pandemic, including the COVID 4P Log project.

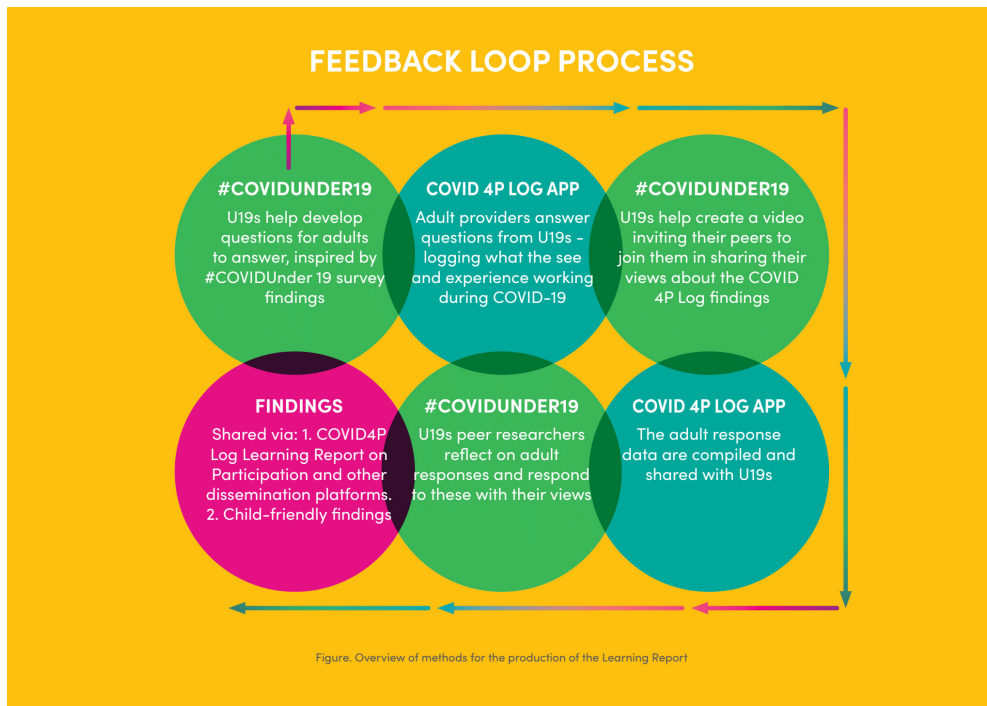


Figure 1. Feedback Loop Process: Participatory research with #CovidUnder19 and COVID 4P Log (Source: (L. Lee et al., 2022))

The COVID 4P Log smartphone app sought to better understand the changing demands of policies and practices across the world during COVID-19. The COVID 4P Log Project established a broad partnership of 17 international key partners, with roles spanning intergovernmental policymaking, child rights advocacy, workforce capacity-building, service delivery, and monitoring roles at the UN level. Details on the app and data across nine thematic areas can be found in a series of [Inspiring Children’s Futures COVID 4P Log Learning Reports](#) (Inspiring Children’s Futures, 2022).

Children and young people in the #CovidUnder19 initiative were invited to actively engage in the development of the COVID 4P Log Project through the development of a feedback loop methodology (see [Figure 1](#)) for operationalizing participatory research with rights-based participation and accountability with children using art and play. Children and young people’s roles included developing questions for the adults, reflecting on the findings, and analyzing the data together during facilitated online workshops.

For additional information on the partnership between the #CovidUnder19 initiative and the COVID 4P Log smartphone app, please see [Inspiring Children’s Futures COVID 4P Log Learning Report: Children’s Participation \(in partnership with #CovidUnder19\)](#).

Participants

In August 2020, #CovidUnder19 launched a “Virtual Skillz Camp,” designed to build the research and advocacy capacities of children and young people under 19 years old. Initially, 85 children from around the world were recruited through the #CovidUnder19 global partners and registered for

sessions. Partners organized a range of online, participatory workshops to build participants' skills in three key areas: research (quantitative and qualitative analysis and interpretation of the Life Under Coronavirus data); advocacy; and communications. The children and young people were given a choice about which workshops they were most interested in joining. Participants who were most engaged with these workshops were offered opportunities to apply their skills in the COVID 4P Log project. This led to a small group of five children and young people ages 17–19 who focused on the COVID 4P Log project. There was one youth from Brazil, two from India, one from Indonesia, and one from Nepal. The results of their work include a blog, an animated video, and the collaborative data interpretation and writing up of findings. Three of these young people from Brazil, India, and Nepal worked to shape and co-write this article.

Groups represented in the #CovidUnder19/ COVID 4P Log Project Collaboration as Researchers:

“Under19” Researchers

- Peer Researchers and Peer Mentors part of the #CovidUnder19 Child and Youth Advisory Group

“Over19” Researchers

- #CovidUnder19 Adult Researchers from Terre des hommes, International Institute for Child Rights and Development, and the Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures.

Participatory Research Process and Methodology

#CovidUnder19 young people's engagement in the research process included: COVID 4P Log question design, participatory data analysis, report writing, and knowledge dissemination. Below we focus on their engagement in the data analysis, report writing, and knowledge dissemination. This section outlines the collaborative, child rights, and strength-based participatory research approach, rooted in art-based and play-based methods, used to meaningfully engage #CovidUnder19 young people in analysis and knowledge exchange of the COVID 4P Log Data.

Prior to beginning these phases of the research, the Over19 researchers acknowledged that the international and digital nature of our intended collaboration may present both logistical as well as socio-emotional barriers for children, young people, and adults. Therefore, we built on lessons learned and the wise practices of our own and colleagues' experiences. We navigated digital participation barriers by providing multiple opportunities for input from young people, including written and oral, as well as being cognizant that participation for some participants may look different at various points in the process.

Participatory Data Analysis

The International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) team coordinated five 1.5-hour long online sessions over zoom with the #CovidUnder19 cohort (Peer Researchers and Peer Mentors) to analyze COVID 4P Log response data pertinent to child and young people participation. #CovidUnder19 young people who had already been trained on and engaged in the analysis of previous data were able to co-lead in facilitating the training of new Peer Researchers. This included the use of creative art and play-based participatory techniques, such as opening energizers, games, and creative visuals to support the younger participants to feel comfortable.

Once the new members were trained, all #CovidUnder19 young people engaged in sessions focused on: 1) introduction to the data and exploring themes; 2) ideas for the report (summaries and themes); and 3) report review and feedback. To review the data and identify themes, the young people engaged in an online group activity on coding. This activity invited participants to work in small breakout room groups to categorize different colored shapes. The young people were asked to provide the rationale for their categorizations when presenting to the larger group. A variety of approaches were taken, such as categorizing by colors, shapes, sizes, or themes (e.g. love (hearts and arrows)). This activity encouraged participants to reflect on how lived experiences, positionality, and knowledge affect the perception of themes. These reflections served to guide the data analysis process.

The Under19s next were invited to review quotes focused explicitly on child participation. An online tool entitled Jamboard (similar to a flipchart with sticky notes) was used for young people to review the quotes, develop codes, identify emerging themes, and move the sticky notes into thematic categories. Again, small groups were formed, and young people had the opportunity to share their ideas and collectively determine shared themes. Once the themes were agreed upon, they were written into the findings of the Learning Report.

Co-writing the Learning Report

#Under19s co-authored a [Learning Report](#) to present the findings of the collaborative data analysis to a mixed audience of young people and adults in policy, practice, and academia. Adult researchers (with permission from the U19s) drafted the introduction and methodology of the report, using quotes from COVID 4P Log Respondents and Under19s on thematic areas chosen by the U19s: adult perspectives on children's participation in policy and practice; steps already taken in participation and communication; and recommendations and suggestions. The #CovidUnder19 members reviewed the findings sections, suggested edits, and prepared further insights.

The Under19s took the lead in writing an introductory letter in the report, developed 10 top recommendations for working with children and young people, and created a graphic to show their vision for an ideal child-friendly practitioner and/or policymaker. In addition, Under19s shared their reflections and suggested actions for policymakers and practitioners where children and young people had not been meaningfully engaged during the

pandemic. This process allowed Under19s to be engaged in aspects of the report that excited them and utilized their expertise, but also honored the time they had available with their many life demands. Their active contribution took place both inside and outside of scheduled meetings. For example, one #CovidUnder19 Peer Mentor took responsibility for compiling his peers' ideas to write the open letter. No other content was added to the report (e.g., when an Over19 researcher introduced additional data from the larger data set) without review and approval from the Under19s.

Young people were key in the design element of the report, suggesting and reviewing ideas for images, graphics, and colors to ensure the report was user-friendly, accessible, and pleasing for readers. They also had the opportunity to develop their interests and skills through meeting and collaborating with an external creative design expert. They also suggested dissemination ideas, including contributions to communications strategy and the design of a youth-friendly webpage to host the findings in a way that is accessible for other Under19s.

Co-writing the Article

To co-write this journal article, Under19s and Over19s came together as a team to develop and conceptualize ideas. Under19s and Over19s engaged in a river journey process to reflect on experiences throughout the start, middle, and end of the research process. The journey explored strengths and challenges through the process of research design, data collection, analysis, report writing, and creative design. As co-authors, U19s and O19s reflected on experiences as part of the collaboration and discussed factors that best supported the process to identify themes to explore in the article.

Each of the Under19s took the lead in writing a discussion section, inviting other #CovidUnder19 peers to provide input and feedback where desired. The Over19s supported the writing of introductory and process-oriented sections, offered an overview of the process of journal article writing, and provided feedback or ideas where invited. The intergenerational research team met bi-weekly over a three-month period to share ideas, offer support, positive reinforcement, and constructive feedback, and hold silent co-writing sessions on a shared, online document. In addition, researchers often engaged in play-based processes (e.g. "What type of fruit are we feeling like today?"), shared any life challenges (e.g. illnesses, exams), or highlights (e.g. scholarship successes, birthdays, festivals, and weekend events). A WhatsApp group allowed researchers to stay connected, check in on others, and share updates on both the progress of the article and their lives. This time together reflects the values featured in the findings section of this article: reinforcing the importance of relationships, the inner child, and meaningful participation.

#CovidUnder19 Children and Young People's Reflections

The process of participatory, co-produced research requires critical reflection on the approaches, tools, and embodied experience of the research journey. While this article seeks to outline the participatory methodology of

the research, it is equally essential to highlight reflections from both Under19s and Over19s on the experience of co-producing research. Reflections on space, intergenerational interaction, relationship-building, trust, and shared experiences are critical in the development of a quality, intergenerational qualitative research process with children and young people.

The following three sections explore various dimensions of meaningful participation that emerged through intergenerational engagement in the research process. In this discussion, Under19s first explore the concept of “meaningful involvement of children and young people,” identifying ways that intergenerational power dynamics were diminished as children were engaged in the research process. The two subsequent sections explore key ingredients of meaningful participation as defined by U19s: engaging the inner child and building trusting relationships.

Meaningful involvement of children and young people

Meaningful involvement of children and young people is important to ensure that children’s voices are considered in and impact decision-making, a process embedded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). Throughout the process of the #CovidUnder19 Youth Advisory Group and the COVID 4P Log, meaningfulness was a central aspect of our relationships.

Creating meaningful space entails building a trusting environment and relationships which minimize traditional adult-dominated power imbalances. Effective ways to create such an environment include using creative, play-based approaches, such as ice-breaker activities. In the #CovidUnder19 and COVID 4P Log collaboration, we also established a feedback mechanism with the youths to ensure meaningful participation and establish a trusting environment.

The Feedback Loop Process

To work closely with children and seek their meaningful participation requires listening directly to them and actioning their views and voices at various steps throughout the process. To meaningfully engage with children, adults must keep them “in the loop.”

The foundation of a trusting environment rests in slowly building relationships and developing common interests, friendships, and bonds with both children and adults. It requires the adults to trust children, and show children and young people that they can, in turn, trust the adults too. This can be facilitated by asking children and young people about their opinions and views at every step of research, allowing them to freely express their views without the fear of correctness or judgment, actioning those views and ideas in the next stage of the process, and reiterating in the next step. In this project, the varied cultural backgrounds and age groups in the international COVID under 19 team led to some differences in opinions, norms, and varying levels of confidence. Differences were worked out through the intentional formation of meaningful relationships founded on trust and mutual respect.

When children and young people are involved in meaningful research, it enhances the trust between adults and children as they can observe the responsibility they are entrusted with and be actively involved with the research, sharing their unique perspectives. Moreover, when children and young people witness the direct and tangible impact brought about by virtue of their involvement and observe that their involvement has led to a direct impact in research, the feeling of being trusted is enhanced within their minds.

To this end, it's critical to ensure that children are not made to feel inferior during their involvement. A feeling of inferiority towards knowledge possessed by their adult counterparts tends to alter the participation and perspective of children, ruining the purpose of their environment. When children are involved in the research process, adults need to use child-friendly language, remain sensitive to their evolving capacities, and ensure that children are equipped with the tools and knowledge they need to meaningfully contribute.

In the case of the #CovidUnder19 and COVID 4P Log project collaboration, capacity building was not hierarchical or assumed. Training and skills development started with U19s learning tangible skills (like data analysis) from skilled adults. Once equipped with those skills, U19s were able to engage in peer-to-peer skills sharing, helping the next cohort of young people with the necessary skills to meaningfully contribute to the research process. Capacity building was also a mutual process, where Under19s offered adults new, unique perspectives, such as encouraging them to engage with the inner child.

Essential Ingredients for Meaningful Participation with Children and Young People: Engaging the Inner Child

Fun is central to meaningful, participatory research with children and young people. Although fun can be downplayed due to concerns that it “waters [research] down or makes it appear less rigorous,” (Leavy, 2020, p. 31) fun can “disrupt normative ways of understanding research as objective [and] neutral” (Wright et al., 2021, p. 1). Utilizing methods that include fun can also encourage both adults and children to recognize and value fun in research (Wright et al., 2021) and entice adults to explore their inner child.

The nature of participatory action research requires the input of individuals directly affected by the research (Anyon et al., 2018). In order to facilitate our participation and ability to provide valuable input as young people, we would have to be comfortable in meetings aimed at “research.” The practice of participating in fun activities as precursors to our research-oriented meetings, by engaging our inner children in a playful experience, formed positive attitudes towards our meetings (Raypole, 2020). The inner child is “the most passionate yet most overlooked part of us,” a subconscious personality shaped by childhood experiences (Pikorn, 2019). Feelings of nostalgia and safety allowed us to open up, create positive interactions with peers and adults, and contributed to the development of trusting relationships. Enticing one's inner child—rooted in fun—helps to develop bonds and overcome traditional adult-dominated power imbalances that may be expected during intergenerational collaboration.

Fun was featured in the participatory research process between #CovidUnder19 and the COVID 4P Log through play-based processes, including icebreakers. The icebreakers were light-hearted and silly, asking both U19s and O19s to describe what weather they felt like on a given day or to remember a series of items to be taken on a hypothetical picnic. Icebreakers were always different and equally silly, encouraging laughter, enthusiasm, and positivity during research processes which were not always light in nature. Embracing the inner child soothed the nerves of both U19s and O19s and contributed to positive experiences in our group meetings.

Icebreakers also helped U19s attach a personal element of their lives to their engagement with peers and adults. When U19s saw their peers and adults empathize with their personal narratives, it supported the development of a trusting environment and strengthened intergenerational relationships. For example, Carolina, age 18 and from Brazil, said that she was initially anxious and skeptical of the #CovidUnder19 COVID 4P Log meetings. She remembers the first icebreaker we ever played, a relay game where each participant added a line to a story. This moment of light-heartedness impressed Carolina and led her to not only appreciate the people involved in the process, but also the cause we worked for. Due to her positive experience, she began to take notes, pay close attention, and participate enthusiastically. Our experience implementing fun-based processes in research contradicts the notion that having fun may “water down” the research process. Instead, Carolina’s reflections highlight the value of fun on an intimate, intrapersonal level. Enthusiasm, drive to participate, and sincerity are needed among all participants for effective participatory research.

Similarly, adult engagement in play-based processes helped break down adult-dominated decision-making and power imbalances where children often felt that their contributions may be inferior. Having adults engage in lighthearted activities alongside youth caused everyone to acknowledge one another as equals, effectively creating and reflecting the conditions of our research wherein everybody in our intergenerational group is equal in their opinions and contributions. Sophie, an over19 COVID 4P Log researcher, shared:

I had some initial hesitations about joining the group. I was taking over engaging in the #CovidUnder19 group sessions from another COVID 4P Log colleague who had previously been involved in the process, and there was some anxiety about losing some of the relationships and trust which had been built over time. However, in the meeting to transition from my colleague to myself, a simple icebreaker activity (where each person added an item to a shopping list which started with the first letter of their name) was enough to alleviate any anxieties. That initial meeting was a refreshing opportunity to engage with O19s and U19s at a human level through warmth, laughter and joy, and set the tone for what I could expect in the collaboration to come.

Play-based processes played a key role in research informed by the unique contributions of children and youth on equal standing with adult researchers. Therefore, fun, play-based processes in the #CovidUnder19 COVID 4P Log collaboration embraced our inner child and became a precursor to a collaborative, respectful, intergenerational partnership, and the creation of participatory research. Measures to overcome traditional adult-dominated decision-making and research helped to develop confidence and enthusiasm among U19 researchers. Together, play-based processes aided in the development of the second essential ingredient for meaningful participation: building trusting relationships.

Essential Ingredients for Meaningful Participation with Children and Young People: Building Trusting Relationships

Participatory research “relies on building relationships between those involved in developing and carrying out research together” (Wright et al., 2021, p. 100836). When adults and children come together to work on a project and share ideas, brilliant ideas can flourish and the room for improvement becomes even greater than before. At first, however, it can be a nerve-wracking experience for both sides, as many children feel like they are not taken seriously by adults. Conversely, adults may be concerned about providing children with a comfortable and “perfect” research environment, showing the idealistic version of what research could look like and, for example, failing to provide genuine feedback for fear of upsetting children or brushing off their own mistakes. In this seemingly confusing—and often truly uncomfortable—situation, the only way out is to show up and build relationships and trust among team members. In this section, we explore and explain the relationship between members of the #CovidUnder19 initiative, reflecting on the process and tools employed, as well as the trust built between collaborators who share a passion for children’s rights.

The key to developing the relationship between adult facilitators, peer mentors, and children was simple but very effective practices that were encouraged each week, such as the creative play-based methods like icebreakers, breakout rooms (which allowed smaller groups to work together and become closer as a result), and meaningful feedback, which served as fuel for our motivation and allowed us to make better progress on the work we were co-developing. When regularly repeated, these activities have the ability to humanize all team members and build trust between them, even between those who seem rather aloof or too serious. While this may seem like a step-by-step guide to success, none of the progress and milestones would have been achieved if the participants had not allowed themselves to be vulnerable over time.

Brene Brown, a researcher in the field of shame, vulnerability, and leadership, defines vulnerability as “uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure” (Brown, 2012). Later, Brown (2012) continues, explaining that vulnerability is also “the cradle of the emotions and experiences that we crave. Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity.” In addition, Wright et al. (2021) state that participatory research “relies on

building relationships and engaging emotionally in a research process with others” (p. 1). This process resonated with these studies, concluding that while getting closer to our colleagues was fun, taking the time and courage to improve our relationships went far beyond that: it improved the quality of our work and allowed us to provide useful and honest contributions that otherwise would have been uncomfortable to explore.

Joining a new team and working with people you have never met before can be challenging for anyone, especially those who have previously had their opinions overlooked, like many children. Finding a welcoming and mistake-accepting environment can be crucial to one’s experience and can be the encouragement to keep working. That is exactly what #CovidUnder19 has given us. Our family, as we now call ourselves, is much more than just a group of people advocating for children’s rights or co-workers who need to finish a task; we have become colleagues who are much more willing to try new approaches to our work, receive feedback, and discuss what steps we should take to achieve our future goals as activists. And, most importantly, we became friends who support each other and share insights, experiences, failures, and successes.

Recommendations

This paper has sought to fill a gap in research on online co-production of research with children and young people across contexts. It has highlighted ethical and innovative approaches to engaging intergenerationally in online spaces and has shown that, contrary to assumptions (Hall et al., 2021), it is possible to remotely create and maintain meaningful interpersonal relationships across generations and global contexts.

The following foundational principles, approaches, and tips for meaningful intergenerational online engagement were co-developed through the research process and reflect our own experiences, strengths, and learnings in our journey to support meaningful participation and engagement that respects and values relationships and fun throughout the process. Online platforms provide a unique space for intergenerational and global engagement—the ability to bring together people and groups that would otherwise not meet. We invite those preparing for intergenerational co-research processes to reflect on these recommendations and how they connect with their own plans going forward and/or previous experiences.

Foundational Principles to Create Meaningful Partnerships with Adults, Children, and Young People

- **Trust:** build the element of trust. Be inclusive and allow time to build a trusting environment.
- **Diversity:** in cases of diverse groups of people, speaking about the differences in our cultures and backgrounds helps appreciate everyone and the circumstances and lives they’ve faced.

- **Equal partnership:** make sure that when researchers and data practitioners are engaging with youths, children are supported to not feel inferior to adults; steps need to be taken to ensure that power differences are minimized, and children and youth are engaged as EQUAL partners.
- **Relationships:** take time to nurture and build relationships: use play, online energizers, activities, and regular communication through mediums such as WhatsApp to build trusting, sustainable processes.

Suggested Approaches

- **Capacity building and mutual exchange between young people and adults:** young people and adults *look to each other* for their guidance and opinions on the tasks at hand, creating a balanced or bilateral partnership. Young people become peer mentors for new young people.
- **Peer-to-peer support:** widen the scope of research; make sure young people have space and support to engage with practitioners and one another. Online, use break-out rooms to enhance small group interactions.
- **Use fun, creative play-based approaches:** for example, icebreakers and activities, for children to do *with* adults! This can be facilitated through online tools such as Jamboard and Zoom polls.
- **Positive reinforcement and comprehensive feedback:** to all participants, enhancing their ability to participate confidently.

Tips for Building Meaningful Relationships

- **Plan time for relationship building and process:** do not rush the process! Facilitating this in online spaces requires multiple, regular meetings, allowing for time zone differences. However, also consider and respect young people's daily demands—study, work, family, etc.—through applying a flexible approach.
- **Allow yourself to feel vulnerable and look human:** fully engage in games and conversations, try to feel comfortable in sharing your wins and losses throughout the process, and participate in virtual meetings with your video on. Encouraging vulnerability by asking everyone how they are to provide the opportunity (but not force) participants to share what is on their minds before getting to work is instrumental in trust building.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to introduce a co-production approach to participatory research online, to spark international dialogue, and to reflect on meaningful participation in the research process, and to provide recommendations for researchers seeking to embark on meaningful intergenerational processes. While participatory methods are becoming more and more popular, this study provides detail and insight into the intricate ingredients of what makes a process meaningful and the value of relationships, all within a remote space. Art-based and play-based methods online were used to design, collect, analyze, and write up research, harnessing participation and knowledge not only across generations but across diverse contexts across the globe. Under19s and over19s suggest that there is no ‘formula’ for meaningful participation or handbook to get it right. There are, however, skills, relational ways of engaging, and approaches that take time to foster (in both adults and young people) to develop contextually and situationally relevant processes that contribute to young people’s and adults’ lives alongside the research impact. Recognizing and respecting the inner child in all of us and taking time to value fun and play (whether in an energizer, a joke, or a song) are critical ingredients for meaningful participation and relationship development that can aid researchers and participants intergenerationally to design, conduct, analyze, and disseminate research that contributes to transformative social change across communities.

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