

Participatory Research with Children and Youth: Methods for Information Behavior Studies

Leyla Dewitz, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin School of Library and Information Science, Berlin, Germany & University of Applied Sciences Potsdam, Digital Participation and Inclusion Lab, Potsdam, Germany, leyla.dewitz@hu-berlin.de

Kirsten Schlebbe, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin School of Library and Information Science, Berlin, Germany, schlebbe@ibi.hu-berlin.de

Abstract

Studies in the field of information behavior increasingly aim to include the perspectives of participants and users, especially in the context of research with youth and children. Participatory research designs can serve as a guide for the inclusion of young people's voices in information behavior research, as they help researchers to view participants as partners and experts in the research process. This workshop introduces a variety of participatory methods to enable researchers to apply them in an appropriate way in their own studies. Based on the expertise of the organizers, the workshop will focus on research with two specific groups of young participants: preschool-aged children and youth. In addition to providing knowledge about basic aspects of participatory research with young people, it will offer the opportunity to explore various creative participatory methods in a hands-on session. The workshop is aimed at researchers of all levels of experience. Prior experience with participatory research is not required, as basic knowledge will be provided. However, researchers with more experience are also welcome to attend the workshop and share their expertise.

Key Issues addressed by the Workshop

Studies in the field of information behavior increasingly aim to include the perspectives of participants and users, especially in the context of research with children and youth (*e.g.*, Agosto & Hughes-Hassell, 2005; Barriage, 2021; Meyers *et al.*, 2007). This workshop provides basic knowledge about participatory approaches for data collection with young people addressing, inter alia, the following questions:

- Towards an understanding of participation in research: who is the expert?
- Conducting participatory research: what methodological and ethical aspects need to be considered in research with young people?
- Limitations of participatory research designs: is it really on an equal footing?
- Experiences in co-designing with young people: what are the challenges?

Furthermore, the workshop will offer the opportunity to explore various participatory methods in a hands-on session. Particular emphasis will be placed on involving the participants and their individual experiences. Therefore, the contributions by the workshop organizers will be complemented by various interactive activities designed to promote exchange and discussion among the participants.

Based on the expertise of the workshop organizers, the workshop will focus on research with two specific groups of young participants:

Including Young Children's Perspective in Information Behavior Research

Kirsten Schlebbe started her research on the information behavior of preschool-aged children in 2015. In 2021, she conducted a study on the information behavior of children aged four to six years in relation to their use of mobile devices. For data collection with families and children, she applied the Mosaic approach, a framework thought as participatory, reflexive, focused on children's experiences, and multi-method (Clark, 2005). Besides observing and talking to children, the approach suggests creative tools like photography or drawing as methods to "enable young children to communicate their ideas and feelings" (Clark, 2017, p. 25). In this workshop, Kirsten Schlebbe will present the Mosaic approach and some of the creative methods used to collect data with young children.

Including Youth's Perspectives in Information Behavior Research

Leyla Dewitz started her research on adolescents' information behavior in 2015, conducting a study on the information behavior of unaccompanied minor refugees in relation to their smartphone use. Here, mapping was used as an interactive-participatory interview element, to encourage the participants to articulate their information interactions before, during and after their flight to Germany. In 2020, she was part of a research group which conducted interviews on adolescents' information behavior and digital well-being during the Corona Pandemic. Participants were asked to track their daily routines (sleep patterns, smartphone use, etc.) and reflect on their visualized data during in-depth interviews. Leyla Dewitz also provides insights into a co-design workshop her research group (DISA) conducted with (young) people affected by social anxiety disorder. Playful elements were used to address this vulnerable group and better understand their needs (*e.g.*, a self-monitoring kit that included a workshop booklet and craft materials).

Workshop Structure

30 min.	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Short introduction by the organizers / workshop agenda- Round of introductions, including a short creative task for the participants
45 min.	Input by the Organizers <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Participatory research with children and youth: basic terms, concepts, and examples- Opportunity for questions and discussion
15 min.	Coffee Break & Socializing
60 min.	Hands-on Session <ul style="list-style-type: none">- For this hands-on session, the participants will be divided into two smaller groups. One group will focus on methods for research with preschool aged children, the other on methods for research with adolescents. First, the methods for data collection will be introduced by the organizers. Then, the participants are invited to try out the methods themselves.
20 min.	Joint Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The participants share and discuss what they have learned in the hands-on session.
10 min.	Feedback on Workshop & Wrap-Up <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The participants will be invited to share their feedback on the workshop.

Statements

Relevance of the workshop to ISIC 2022 themes

With its focus on the implementation of participatory methods in information behavior research, the workshop should be highly relevant for the ISIC 2022. The focus on the age group of young people is likely to be of interest for many participants of the ISIC. Moreover, many of the participatory methods discussed can also be transferred to research with adults, so that the workshop might also be of interest to researchers who do not conduct research with younger participants.

Significance of the workshop

The workshop will introduce a variety of participatory methods to enable researchers to apply them in an appropriate way in their own studies. Participatory methods are useful to stimulate and increase participants' interest through interactive elements that create a low-threshold access to research and enable participants to better verbalize their needs. Participatory research designs serve as a guide for the inclusion of young people's voices in information behavior research as they help to view participants as partners and experts in the research process. This helps to include issues that affect their lives and reduce biases and stereotypical assumptions that (adult) researchers may have. Involving young people in research empowers participants to play an active and expert role in science.

Number of attendees that can be accommodated

Maximum of 20 participants.

Requirements for participation (e.g., prior knowledge, skills)

The workshop is aimed at researchers of all levels of experience. General experience with qualitative research methods may be helpful. Prior experience with participatory research is not required; basic knowledge will be provided. However, researchers with more experience are also welcome to attend the workshop and share their expertise.

Special needs

Venue: For the workshop, a larger room with seating and tables for 22 people and a projector will be needed. A second room with 10 seats would be optimal for the practical exercises, which are to be conducted in two groups. The organizers assume that the workshop can also be conducted in digital format in case of a changed pandemic situation.

Equipment: Participants should bring their own mobile computing devices (laptop, tablet, etc.). Additional materials for the hands-on session (craft supplies, etc.) will be provided by the workshop organizers.

Confirmation that the workshop can be covered in half-a-day

The schedule for the workshop covers approximately three hours. We hereby confirm that the workshop can be conducted in half a day.

References

- Agosto, D.E. & Hughes-Hassell, S. (2005). People, places, and questions: an investigation of the everyday life information-seeking behaviors of urban young adults. *Library & Information Science Research*, 27(2), 141-163. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2005.01.002>
- Barriage, S. (2021). Examining young children's information practices and experiences: A child-centered methodological approach. *Library & Information Science Research*, 43(3), Art. 101106. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2021.101106>
- Clark, A. (2005). Listening to and involving young children: a review of research and practice. *Early Child Development and Care*, 175(6), 489-505. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430500131288>
- Clark, A. (2017). *Listening to young children. The mosaic approach* (3rd edn). London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Meyers, E.M., Fisher, K.E. & Marcoux, E. (2007). Studying the everyday information behavior of tweens: Notes from the field. *Library & Information Science Research*, 29(3), 310-331. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2007.04.011>