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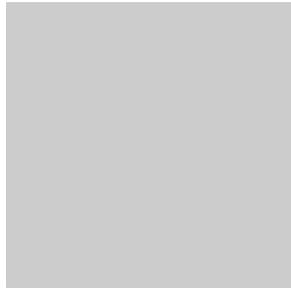
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The Ethics of Participatory Research with Children

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This paper argues that ethical problems in research involving direct contact with children can be overcome by using a participatory approach. A study of children’s participation in decisions when they are looked after is described in terms of how a view of the ‘social child’ (James, 1995) shaped the approach to establishing contact with children, the choice of topics and methods of communication which were used, and the way in which children were given opportunities to interpret the data for themselves. The paper concludes with the suggestion that a participatory approach can also assist with reliability and validity. © 1998 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

When social research involves direct contact with children, it may be necessary to face ethical questions that are avoided when the research is indirect or involves adults. Whilst most methodological and ethical issues that arise in work with children are also present in work with adults, there are important differences; and the process of addressing those differences can be educative for the researcher, enhancing the value of what is produced.

When Morrow and Richards suggest that respect for children’s competencies ‘needs to become a methodological technique in itself’ (1996, p.100), the implication is that ethically sound techniques can add to the value of research. Alderson (1995) conversely implies that methodological soundness may improve the ethics of research. ‘The slogan “bad science is bad ethics” applies as much to social as to other research’; ethical assessment includes considering whether the research questions are worth asking and the research methods an effective way of answering them, because ‘ethical research has to use appropriate and efficient methods’ (pp. 28–29).

We want to explore further the idea that effective methodology and ethics go hand in hand, in the context of participatory research with a group of children where particularly complex ethical problems have been identified (Butler and Williamson, 1994); those who are looked after by the state. Our argument is that the reliability and validity, and the ethical acceptability, of research with children can be augmented by using an approach

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which gives children control over the research process and methods which are in tune with children's ways of seeing and relating to their world.

Many ethical issues salient in doing social research with children are common to work with subjects of any age. The need to obtain informed consent is always relevant and can always be problematic. Questions of protection, and of the researcher's responsibility for the well-being of subjects, can always arise. Confidentiality is an issue in every case, as is the question of how to deal with disclosure of information which makes the researcher concerned for someone's welfare. The possibility of abuse of subjects by a researcher or exploitation by the research process is present in every research relationship.

In these ways research with children is not very different from research with adults. However, there are important ways in which such issues present themselves more sharply when the subjects are children. In part the difference is due to children's understanding and experience of the world being different from that of adults, and in part to the different ways in which they communicate. Above all it is due to different power relationships. For instance *consent* is complicated by the fact that, for research to be done with children, both children and adults may be required to give their consent. *Confidentiality* is complicated by the fact that adults may expect to be told about the private lives or thoughts of children for whom they are responsible. *Protection from abuse* is complicated by the fact that children are less able to protect themselves than most adults, and by the fact that social institutions have special rules for the protection of children.

Morrow and Richards contend that 'the biggest ethical challenge for researchers working with children is the disparities in power and status between adults and children' (1996, p. 98). Part of the task is to redress the power imbalance between child participant and adult researcher, in order to enable children to participate on their own terms. It is more difficult sometimes to redress the power imbalance between children and important adults in their lives, which may prevent children's full participation in the research. In the case of our own research the latter task was of critical importance in making the arrangements to do research with children; while the former was dominant when we came to meet them.

Ethics, views of childhood, and negotiating access: the Children and Decision Making study

The purpose of this paper is to explain how in a particular research project we tried to overcome the methodological and ethical difficulties in doing sensitive research with children. The research was a study of participation in decision making by children in middle childhood looked after by local authorities (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998). The research was done in seven local authority areas in England and Wales with the aim of finding out what part children are playing in decisions since implementation of the Children Act 1989 and what the participants think of the process. A survey of all 225 children aged between 8 and 12 years who were currently looked after by the local authorities was followed by a detailed study of 47 children. Each child was interviewed individually and most also took part in a group discussion. In addition, their social workers, their carers and some of their parents were interviewed separately.

The ethical standards we applied to the research were based in part on existing guidance, which although limited in some respects at least helped us to identify potential dilemmas. This included guidance from the British Psychological Society (1995) and the Socio-Legal Studies Association (1995) as well as the more focused guidance provided by Alderson (1995). It is essential in using guidance to leave room for choices by the researcher in response to particular situations (Morrow and Richards, 1996). We relied heavily on discussions with members of our research advisory group and with young people with experience of the care system who helped us in planning the research, and on our links with staff in the agencies. We also spent a lot of time in discussion with each other to clarify our own ethical positions and to address particular dilemmas that arose in practice.

Where ethical issues are different for research with children, the position one takes will depend in part on ones perspective on children and childhood. James (1995) identified four distinct perspectives which she called the 'developing child', the 'tribal child', the 'adult child' and the 'social child'. Our model appeared to correspond broadly to the 'social child' combined with elements of the 'adult child'. We approached the children we were to study as social actors with their own distinctive abilities to understand and explain their world. We wanted to use methods that would enable them to participate in meaningful ways in the research project. This led us to develop a range of participatory techniques designed specifically to allow children to participate on their own terms and to discuss decision-making matters that were relevant to their own lives as they saw them. These techniques are discussed later in this paper.

It was clear that it would be important to engage the trust and confidence of the adults who had responsibility for the children's welfare. One distinctive feature when children are looked after by the state is that there are typically several adults involved in making decisions about them. Butler and Williamson (1994) have described how these gatekeepers can present barriers to access to research with children. Difficulties in getting access have in effect shaped the design of much research; for example, researchers have chosen to study children in schools because it is easier than getting access to them in their own homes (Mauthner, 1997). Hood, Kelley and Mayall (1996) found that

we could not approach children directly; their sociopolitical positioning means that adults must give permission. In considering access to children, adults gave priority to adult duty to protect children from outsiders; this took precedence over children's right to participate in the decision to talk with us (p. 126).

Morrow and Richards (1996) also note that an over-protective stance towards children may reduce their ability to participate in research.

We wanted to anticipate and overcome these barriers as far as we could, in order to improve the quality of the research. Our success depended on the cooperation of more than 100 social workers in 25 separate teams, and the detailed study would require collaboration with more than 40 care placements and some families of origin. A strategic approach was needed in order to establish all these collaborative relationships. From the beginning we sought opportunities for dialogue with social work staff and foster carers, individually and in groups. Establishing good relationships with social workers in the first stage of the study enabled effective collaboration in the second stage. In establishing the confidence of social work agencies our own social work backgrounds were useful; we also arranged for the

results of recent criminal convictions checks on ourselves to be made available to all the authorities before we had direct contact with children.

Our aim was to work with a group of children who reflected the population we were studying and who actively wanted to participate in the research. One research question concerned conflict between a child's wishes and feelings and adult views of their best interests (see Thomas and O'Kane, forthcoming-b); and this was sometimes an issue in planning the research, since there were children who wanted to take part in the research but whose adult 'gatekeepers' were concerned that to do so might have an adverse effect on them. Because of existing relationships of power and responsibility we had to accept that some children would be prevented from taking part because of adult concern; but we wanted to ensure that children at least had the chance to say what they thought about the research, rather than being prevented from hearing about it at all.

The first principle of consent which we adopted was that inclusion in the sample would depend on *active* agreement on the part of the child, and *passive* agreement on the part of caretakers. The method we adopted was to ask for all children in the survey to be given an information pack which we had prepared. This included a leaflet or audiotape describing the research in a friendly way, together with activity sheets, a brief questionnaire and a stamped addressed envelope. It was accompanied by separate information leaflets for carers and parents. Children were able to find out about the research, to express a view on whether they wished to be included, and to discuss this with their caretakers in an informed way. We estimated that about 80 per cent of children actually received a pack. Recruiting cases for the detailed study still depended on our links with social workers; we made innumerable telephone calls to ensure that enough children were followed up to produce a balanced sample. However, our impression was that a number of children were included in the small group as a result of this early approach who would not have come forward otherwise. For instance, one boy asked to be included after hearing the audiotape, whose social worker had not expected him to be interested because he was usually reluctant to talk. If adults had concerns about a child's participation we attempted to resolve these in discussion, for the most part successfully. Some adults had objections to children's participation which we were unable to overcome, and in these cases we had to accept their judgment.

Our second principle was that children's participation in the research could be withdrawn by them at any point. They could conclude an interview whenever they wished, they did not have to answer any question, and they did not have to agree to tape recording. In fact most children, unlike some adult interviewees, were happy to be taped; we usually put them in charge of the apparatus so that they could switch off whenever they wished.

Our third principle was that children should have as much choice as possible over *how* they participated in the research, consistent with our remaining true to the objectives of the study and our obligations to our sponsors. This implied offering children some choice over the research instruments and allowing them to some extent to direct the course of their 'interviews', within the overall themes of the research.

In relation to confidentiality and to protection from abuse, one notable feature of research work with children, especially children looked after by the state, is the importance of the question 'what do we do if a child discloses that she or he is being abused?' The dilemma

here can be acute, especially with younger children, and we thought long and hard before arriving at our approach to the question. Again this was based on allowing children the autonomy to decide what they wanted to say and who they wanted to say it to. It was important for us to be able to give children an assurance that we would not repeat what they told us to other people, and for children to know that they could trust us. Any disclosure of information to us during the research would be an indication that the child was ready to pass on the information to someone they trusted. If the information indicated that the child was being harmed, it would be our responsibility to support the child in telling someone who was in a position to do something about it; but this would have to be done with the child's consent. We could envisage circumstances in which the information was so alarming that we would have to insist that someone else be told notwithstanding our commitment to confidentiality; but because this was so exceptional it did not mean that we needed to qualify the principle in advance. In the event we did not have to deal with any such disclosure.

The position we took is unusual in a climate where 'there appears to an emerging consensus amongst researchers that complete confidentiality can never be guaranteed to child research subjects' (Mahon and others, 1996). The National Children's Bureau's *Guidelines for Research* (1993) emphasise the duty of researchers to pass information 'to a professional who can take the steps necessary to protect the child or other children'. However, others take the view that such a position can reduce the researcher's credibility (see Boyden and Ennew, 1997). Alderson (1995) recommends that if a researcher feels that they must report a child's confidences they should discuss it with the child first. Butler and Williamson (1994) suggest discussing what strategy the child would like to pursue.

Because our starting point was to assume that children have their own views and priorities, and their own strategies for dealing with difficulties based on their own knowledge and experience (see Waksler, 1991), we thought it would be wrong to adopt procedures for dealing with 'disclosure' that failed to allow space for these. We did not regard ourselves as bound by institutional requirements to pass on any suspicion of abuse to specified people, and we were not asked to do so by any of the agencies where we carried out our research. It is our view that any such rule would be an inappropriate intrusion into the relationship between researcher and subject.

The above account illustrates how a view of the 'social child' in practice shaped our ethical approach to establishing contact with children as research subjects. The remainder of the paper will look at how it shaped our approach to children once contact had been established. We will consider this in relation to the following themes: participation and choice; creating space for children's own agendas; communication strategies and participatory techniques; the use of groups; and giving children opportunities to interpret the data for themselves. We conclude with some further reflections on validity and reliability, and on the vexed issue of power and consent.

Participation and choice

Boyden and Ennew (1997) suggest that participation can mean either simply 'taking part' or being present, or 'knowing that one's actions are taken note of and may be acted on, sometimes called empowerment'. While this is a valuable distinction, it seems to us that

there are several aspects or dimensions to participation in research and that different positions may be taken on each of them: for instance the planning and design of the research, the actual methods used, and the purposes to which it is put. In the case of the research discussed here the children's participation began after the objectives and design had been set. However, we would claim that the conduct of the research was participatory in a stronger sense than merely that it employed 'user-friendly' materials; children were involved not only in choosing how they participated personally but in consciously influencing the direction of the research and in making decisions about its dissemination.

Children's choice over their participation was central to the study. At each stage from initial contact to completion of the second taped interview, it was made clear that it was up to the children whether they continued with the process. Within their interviews they were shown the material we had brought and given freedom to choose any activity or 'just to talk or answer questions' (although we did suggest that certain activities might be particularly helpful; see later). They were also free to choose whether to attend an activity day, except a few who lived too far away from other children for this to be practical.

Choice over the interview arrangements was seen as particularly important. Privacy and confidentiality are important ethical issues in any research, and especially in relation to the power imbalance between children and adults. Factors such as when and where interviews take place, who is present, and who will be told, are all likely to have an effect on what the young person will talk about. For example, in school where children are used to having their responses defined as correct or incorrect, efforts need to be made to explain that there are no right or wrong answers (Solberg, 1996). The presence of a carer or parent may affect the atmosphere and the outcome of an interview (Brannen and others, 1994). Children seen alone may disclose matters which they do not reveal with their family (Mauthner, 1997).

We insisted on giving children the choice to talk to us alone and confidentially. They seemed to value being given space to express their views privately. Some researchers have reported that it can be difficult to negotiate privacy to speak to children on their own (Alderson, 1994); however, in this study most meetings were held in the child's home, and in virtually all cases in which children chose to speak to us on their own, their wishes were respected by their carers. This willingness may be due in part to the fact that children 'looked after' often have professionals visiting and spending time with them on their own.

Being open to children's agendas

One implication of the 'social child' perspective for research is that children's own understandings of their situation may be as valid as any other, and that children are likely to have their own concerns or questions, which may be as important to ask as those brought by the researcher. A similar assumption lies at the heart of much thinking about ethnographic methods, but it has only recently begun to be applied much to social research with children (Hill, 1997). There were three ways in which we tried to ensure that our work remained open to children's own understandings. First, before beginning the research we tried to ensure that our questions would be relevant to children's own concerns, by arranging group meetings with young people who had experience of the care system. As Diaw (1996) describes in working with young domestic workers in Dakar, we tried to ground our study in the reality of children and young people's experience of being 'looked

after'. From the members of Voices from Care, Who Cares? and the Back Chat group, we received invaluable guidance which enabled us to consider critically, as Alderson (1995) suggests, whether the research questions were worth asking and whether we were likely to get answers to them.

Second, our principal strategy for being open to children's agendas was to use 'participatory' research techniques to give children control over the process and to value what they had to say. We describe these in more detail later. Third, in addition to the individual interviews which we planned with all the children, we invited most of them to one of a series of local 'activity days' where they could share their views and ideas. These days were also based on participatory activities, and enabled children to produce ideas collectively which were different from those generated in the individual interviews. The days also had developmental value in that they showed to children and their social workers the value of creating opportunities for children looked after by local authorities to meet with one another.

Communication strategies and participatory techniques

Our aim was to go to our meetings with children equipped with a range of tools for communication that would enable us to be creative and flexible in our approach to each interview. This meant creating a varied repertoire of verbal and non-verbal techniques, in order to be able to adapt to the needs and preferences of individuals. For instance, some of the children we saw were keen to express themselves by drawing, while others had no interest in this method of communication.

James (1995) points to the advantages of using forms of communication such as stories and drawings to engage with children, who are often more skilled in these ways of communicating than are adults. The participatory activities which we used were intended to allow children to shape the agenda, to draw upon concrete events in real life, and to involve handling things rather than 'just talking', as the children so often described it. Although concrete, the activities enabled children to talk about complex and abstract issues and to interpret the social structures and relationships that affect their lives. This avoided some of the methodological problems around interpretation of children's activities by adults (see Hazel, 1996; Solberg, 1996).

Some of the participatory techniques of communication that we used were derived from tools used by social workers and guardians ad litem in working with children—for instance, time lines which are often used in life-story work (Ryan and Walker, 1993), or prepared sheets for drawings such as 'my favourite place' or 'what I would change with my magic wand' (see Striker and Kimmel, 1979). These were useful in that they enabled children to communicate non-verbally and they added to the range of choices we were able to offer. Other techniques were derived from work done in international community development under the heading of 'participatory rural appraisal' (PRA). These techniques have developed in work with communities characterised by low levels of literacy, limited experience of interaction with government or bureaucracy, and language barriers. They tend therefore to be vivid, graphic and concrete, and not surprisingly turned out to work well with children. Two in particular proved especially potent and deserve to be described

in more detail. In both cases they were specially adapted for the purposes of this research. (For a fuller account of these and other methods, see O'Kane, forthcoming.)

In the first interview with each child we asked if we could talk generally about decisions in their lives. Although our initial interest in doing the research was in decisions that related to being 'looked after' by a local authority, we did not want to prejudge what decisions would be of significance to the children. Previous researchers have found that children are able to discuss topics which have significance in their day-to-day lives, such as friendships, family relationships, moving home, schools and death (Mauthner, Mayall and Turner, 1993). The 'pocket decision-making chart', which we encouraged most of the children to use in the first interview, allowed them to construct a grid which represented what they considered to be significant decisions in their lives and the people who they thought played a part in those decisions, and then to map out using coloured stickers the importance of different people's contributions, including their own. This technique enabled children as young as eight to engage with quite abstract questions in a way that made sense to them. It also allowed children quickly to take over the direction of the interview, once they had grasped the essentials of the activity. In many cases it prompted a great deal of verbal comment and discussion, which followed the child's concerns but was clearly relevant to our research agenda. At the same time it enabled children who were not at all talkative to communicate their views without feeling that they were being 'grilled'.

In the second interview with each child we focused on formal decision-making processes such as reviews and planning meetings (Thomas and O'Kane, forthcoming-a). The technique we found most useful, and which most children who had attended meetings chose to do, was the 'pots and beans' activity. The child was asked to rate different aspects of their review meeting by putting a number of beans into each of a set of labelled pots. The activity again enabled children to deal with abstract questions in a concrete way, stimulated conversation in a way that straightforward questioning would probably not have done, and allowed children to direct the pace of the interview. Because the activity, once it had been explained and understood, was external to both researcher and child, the child was able to have as much control over the process as the researcher. The other unforeseen advantage of this particular method was that it produced from qualitative research a set of data that was eminently suitable for quantitative analysis, which for instance enabled us to demonstrate that children attending review meetings clearly value some aspects of the process more than others (Thomas and O'Kane, forthcoming-a).

The use of these participatory techniques greatly assisted in breaking down imbalances of power, not only by giving children greater control over the agenda and more time and space to talk about the issues that concern them, but also by creating an atmosphere in which there were no right or wrong answers and even some opportunities for children to interpret and explain their own data. In addition the meetings were more fun! A wide range of participatory approaches exist (see Pretty and others, 1995; Steiner, 1993) from which specific tools and techniques can be adapted. Adaptability is important because of differences in culture and language as well as in the purpose and setting of the interview. It has sometimes been suggested that PRA methods are a quick way of doing things; we found that careful use of participatory approaches encourages dialogue, joint analysis and learning, processes which may be complex and time-consuming. The success of the techniques is of course dependent in part on the skill with which they are employed as well as the context (Pretty and others, 1995). In particular, sensitive interviewing has been

shown to be central to the successful use of participatory research techniques: 'To become a research method they must be used in context and in continuous dialogue with the children concerned' (Nieuwenhuys, 1996, p. 55).

The use of groups

Most of the children were invited to participate in one of a series of activity days held in each locality where we did the fieldwork. Our initial model for these meetings was the 'focus group' (Kitzinger, 1994), but in the event they were influenced more by our experience of play schemes and facilitated workshops. Each day had a structure which represented a good deal of preparation by us, but also left space for negotiation with the children over the shape of the day; not enough space at first, but we learned from the children to make more. The slogan of the day was 'serious fun'; through a combination of enjoyable activities with more challenging ones and with plenty of time for relaxation, food and drink, we were able to work on some of the key questions arising in the research without anyone getting too bored. The children clearly enjoyed the days and in most cases asked if there would be a chance for them to meet again. They seemed to value the opportunity to talk through their ideas and listen to each other's views, whether the result was consensus or an agreement to differ. We were able to learn more about the kind of decisions which were significant to children and their views of such things as autonomy and relationships with adults. We also learned more about ways of collecting information in ways which are 'fun and not boring' (see Johnson, 1996; Narayanasamy and others, 1996; Theis, 1996).

Information gathered in groups can be different from information gathered from the same participants individually (Hoijer, 1990). Kitzinger (1994) notes that

focus groups do not easily tap into individual biographies or the minutiae of decision making during intimate moments, but they do examine how knowledge and, more importantly, ideas both develop, and operate, within a given cultural context (p. 116).

We found that discussion embraced a wider range of issues and people than had been discussed in the individual meetings, although in less depth. In an exercise where the outline of a child was drawn on the floor and everyone joined in listing what decisions are made in a child's life and who takes part in them, one group produced a list far more extensive than any that emerged from individual interviews—a list which included God and the police!

To emphasise that the activity days counted as work and that we had serious expectations from them, it was made clear that children would be paid for their participation. We considered the question of payment carefully at the outset in consultation with our advisory group, and decided that we would not pay children for ordinary interviews (any more than we did our adult subjects) but that where they agreed to devote substantial time to the research we would make a payment to reflect the value we put on their work. The payments were set at a level which seemed realistic in relation to the economic position of children in this age group, which we judged to be £10 each. It appeared that the children agreed with this assessment and appreciated the fact that we thought their time worth paying for—although several said they would have been happy to help for no reward.

Allowing children to interpret the data

Morrow and Richards suggest that

using methods which are non-invasive, non-confrontational and participatory, and which encourage children to interpret their own data, might be one step forward in diminishing the ethical problems of imbalanced power relationships between researcher and researched at the point of data collection and interpretation (1996, p. 100).

There were several ways in which we tried to create opportunities for children to participate in the interpretation and analysis of research data. First, by selecting research instruments that enabled children to choose subjects for discussion and decide what they wanted to say about them, and by giving them choice over which instruments were used, we made it possible for the research to follow their understanding of questions and concepts as well as ours. Second, by returning to see each child on at least one occasion (except where the child declined a second interview) we gave them a chance to review and refine what they were telling us. Third, by using group processes we created space where children could collectively reinterpret the research questions and do further work on the material brought from the individual interviews. Finally, at the conclusion of the research we worked with a group of eight volunteers from among the 47 children to make an audiotape of children's comments from the research. This involved the group in helping to select and edit the comments in order to get across the messages which we and they agreed should be taken from the research.

Throughout this process our own understanding of what were the important questions and the critical evidence concerning children's participation in decisions developed reflexively with the children's successive contributions to the research process. In the end it is hard to disentangle what was our contribution and what was theirs; but there is no doubt that the course followed by the research, and the final conclusions, were very different as a result of the children's own interpretations of the data.

Conclusion

We hope that we have been able to illustrate some of the ways in which, by addressing the ethical issues presented by qualitative research with children from a standpoint that respects children's autonomy, the methodology of such research can be improved. Far from being compromised by attention to these challenging ethical issues, both validity and reliability can be improved by allowing children an active part in determining their participation in the research and how the subject matter is approached. If 'reliability is the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research, and validity is the degree to which the finding is interpreted in a correct way' (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 20), then allowing children to participate freely and to share in the interpretation of data can enhance both. Kefalyew argues more strongly that 'the reliability of research ... taking children as a target group is dependent upon the degree of freedom they enjoy to take part actively in a research process' (1996, p. 204).

Our experience supports Mauthner's contention that 'when space is made for them, children's voices express themselves clearly' (Mauthner, 1997, p. 21). The children we saw demonstrated impressive abilities to articulate their views and experiences. Moreover, we

saw clearly how 'participation does not simply imply the mechanical application of a 'technique' or method, but is instead part of a process of dialogue, action, analysis and change' (Pretty and others, 1995, p. 54). Research is not value free, and Prout and James have pointed out how the 'double hermeneutic' of the social sciences applies particularly to the study of childhood (Prout and James, 1990, p. 9). In our case the focus on children's involvement in decision-making processes, based on a commitment to enabling them to participate meaningfully, puts us firmly within a 'political and participation' research paradigm (Trinder, 1996). Rather than reinforce views of children's incompetence by portraying them as victims, we have to develop methods which allow us to explore children's capacities, needs and interests from their own points of view. As John (1996) puts it, this means

developing research methodologies on the basis of partnership, which in turn involves a new role in the power structure for the researcher—a move from the plunderer of information to facilitator which enables the child to be an active part of voicing their concerns (p. 21).

It remains a concern that some children were not given a choice to take part in the research because adults thought it better to exclude them. Whilst we did our best to give children the information to let them decide whether they wanted to participate in our study of decision making, some social workers and carers in effect pre-empted this on the basis that the child 'had too much to deal with at present', 'wouldn't understand' or 'wouldn't be interested.' Not all saw the irony that in offering such explanations they were already excluding these children and young people from a decision-making process, and it caused some discomfort to us to have to accept that these children would not be allowed to decide for themselves whether they could handle the stress or boredom of talking to us. As Alderson puts it:

The question for social researchers is how to respect children's rationality and therefore their informed uncoerced consent. The right to consent has an impact on all other rights. Consent is about selecting options, negotiating them, and accepting or rejecting them. Beyond making a decision, consent is about making an informed choice and becoming emotionally committed to it (1995, p. 69).

By creating space for children to make these choices and to play an active role in the research process, shaping the agenda, speaking out about matters that concern them, and themselves reflecting upon our methodology, we may learn a great deal from them.

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