

Ethical Research with Children

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Involving children in social research means generating knowledge and insight into young people's social environment in a way that corresponds with the youth's own perception of its situation. It also means giving children the opportunity to determine the agenda items and subjects to discuss in the research, so that the produced knowledge reflects the environment of youth as they perceive it. The expertise of young people on their environment can be combined with the research skills of a professional researcher. Involving children in social research is more and more common nowadays. It therefore remains important to stress the ethical issues that researchers working with children should be aware of. In 'Ethical research with children' Ann Farrell aims at these issues and does that thoroughly.

Reading 'Ethical research with children', researchers working with children become aware of the fact that ethics should be considered in every step of the research. It makes them realise that ethical research really is more than using a checklist. By giving practical examples and applications, for example on realising informed consent, researchers will be inspired to put ethical research into practice.

The introduction of the book enlarges the understanding of the historical perspective on ethics. It shows the similarities and differences between ethics in medical and social research. The connection with social concepts of risks as discussed by Gary Allen makes it possible to consider ethical research within a larger context. Virginia Morrow provides interesting discussion material on new ethical questions, for example, how can results of research be used to realise improvements in the environment of children?

By discussing several groups of children, for example indigenous children, young children and disabled children, the book provides insight into the variety of research possibilities with children, as well as the various ethical questions which arise performing research with different groups. The attention for researching sensitive issues can be seen as the ultimate challenge of performing ethical research with children. It is good that this issue is not neglected by the book. The ethical questions in this kind of research addressed by Kerryann Walsh are very recognizable.

Reading the book enlarges the awareness of the importance of asking ethical questions about the differences in power between researchers and children. Being aware that researchers are able to use their knowledge and capabilities to direct children in a direction they want to, may help in preventing researchers to move too quickly through the research steps. Young people should get the chance to influence the decisions made during the research and being provided with information necessary to take these decisions. It is the researcher who should create the conditions that maximize the possibilities for equal say and learning experiences for youngsters during all phases of the research process. The influence young people have on each other must be monitored and guided by the supervisor. The dialogue between youngsters and adults should take place on an equal footing.

The message of the book is clear and discussions on ethics will certainly be inspired by the book. The book could also be used in countries in which the discussion on ethics in social research with children is not as well developed as in the Anglosaxon countries the writers of the contributions in the book come from. At some places though, before using the book in the discussion on *how* to perform ethical research with children, the book might be used in the discussion on *why* involving children in research is ethical. In both cases though, the book provides enough ingredients to improve the quality of research projects for, on or with children.

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