

Understanding research with children and young people

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In this edited text, Clark et al bring together 18 chapters exploring various aspects of conducting research with children and young people. The authors represent a range of subject areas including Childhood Studies, Education, Health and Sociology, and the material discussed reflects this multidisciplinary approach through the topics covered and research examples provided.

The book aims to enable researchers to be reflective and mindful of their own assumptions, and think critically about the implications of decisions made at various stages of the research process. This is achieved by encouraging readers to contemplate why research with children is valuable, what can be gained from it, and what considerations need to be made, alongside raising awareness of available research options and the potential benefits and challenges of each. A key philosophy underpinning the text is the need to put the child or young person at the centre of the research process, work respectfully with them, and ensure meaningful involvement and collaboration. In addition, the important link between research and practice is a core feature, and how research can have a beneficial impact on children's lives.

The book is organised into four sections, each covering a specific theme. Section 1 focuses on critical issues in research with children and young people. Chapters explore how varying understandings of children and childhood have changed over time, and the impact this has had on research approaches. They discuss how the shifting historical, political and social context and increasing attention on human rights has been reflected in a move towards participatory approaches that recognise children's agency in their own lives. Section 2 is about methodological approaches, and how researchers can go about designing their research and generating data. Chapters include research design, participant observation, interviews, working with texts, images and artefacts and underpinning methodological ideas. In Section 3, the focus is on the reality of research with children. Each chapter presents a research story, exploring an individual study in depth and highlighting what questions researchers were faced with, how decisions were made, and reflections on what happened in specific research contexts. These firsthand accounts of research in practice bring to life what it means to carry out research with children, and the examples described usefully cover a range of methods, age groups, topics and scale (from small studies to large-scale multi-national research). The final section of the book is about dissemination and research impact. Chapters include a consideration of the different audiences for research and how research findings can contribute to knowledge, and inform policy, practice and academic debate. Each chapter uses a research study as the basis for exploring these issues, and how dissemination, engagement and impact were embedded in each case.

A particularly useful feature of the book is the integration of examples and case studies from research projects throughout. These 'in practice' elements illustrate how particular approaches worked in reality, and highlight researchers' thought processes and decision making - encouraging readers to critically reflect on the practical

considerations and potential implications in each case. I found this ongoing use of applied examples very helpful, particularly as the cases used were drawn from studies utilising different methodologies and exploring a range of topics with children and young people of different ages.

If you want a book that explains 'how' to do research with children, and provides practical tips and strategies that can be followed like a recipe, then this is not the text for you. Indeed, the authors make this point themselves in the opening chapter – acknowledging that there are other texts already on the market that perform this function very well. What this book does do however is prompt thoughtful reflection on a range of issues to consider when planning, conducting and disseminating research with children and young people to help researchers make informed choices and recognise the potential implications of decisions made at various stages. As is made clear in this book, there is no 'right' way to do research with children, but there are a range of things to take into account to ensure that each part of the research process has been appropriately thought through. In this vein, the book is a very useful contribution to the growing resource- base available to researchers undertaking work with children and young people.

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