The roles children and young people want in research are not all the same

Just like adults, children and young people are not an homogenous group. Each individually contributes their own interest in research to a broad range of diverse. Simultaneously, the nature of participatory research is resource intensive and generally small scale. Results of qualitative small-scale research can add to and strengthen existing bodies of research and highlight further topics for investigation. However, findings are not simply transferable to other groups of children and young people because every child and young person is different.

Some children and young people will wish to exercise high levels of autonomy and agency to pursue topics which interest them. Others may be curious about an issue affecting their lives and want it to be researched by others. Still others may have no interest in carrying out research but may be willing to contribute towards an adult-led study.

Adults have a key role to play in research involving children and young people facilitating and empowering children and people's autonomy in ways they choose. Autonomy is located within the social research relationship between adult and child/young person. Creating good conditions for children and young people to take part in research involves creating an environment where people of all ages recognise their interdependence and diversity and feel comfortable expressing their views alongside each other.

The nature of the research questions

Most research 'on' and 'with' children and young people investigates phenomena or aspects of the participating children and young people's own lives. Look/look again at how Lees and Payler et.al. (2017) outline characteristics of different types of research in their *Spectrum of engagement with children and young people in research*. Children and young people can be both 'sources' and 'generators' of data. Some research requires 'data on closely defined topics or questions within tightly controlled inclusion/exclusion parameters' (Lees *et al*.,

2017) where children and young people are key sources of data to provide factual feedback on key issues. This research is often measuring or assessing phenomena. Research design is highly structured and controlled and there is less opportunity to empower children and young people to contribute to the design and conduct of research. For instance, clinical trials to test the reaction of children and young people to a new drug or health care routines. Research questions are typically 'What?' or 'How much?' questions.

Other research seeks to explore phenomena more broadly. Rather than measuring phenomena these studies explore the reasons for and seek greater understanding of phenomena. This type of research sets out to generate data with children and young people associated with the subject of research. Empowering children and young people can significantly increase insight into the subject. Research questions are typically 'Why? Or Why not?' questions. For instance, studies exploring why children choose to do what they do in their school playtimes.

Research 'by' children and young people can be about a broad range of topics but tend to focus upon questions prompted by children and young people's experiences of life, engaging other children and young people as research participants. Children and young people who lead research have to be aware of the same issues in conducting good ethical research as adult researchers. This is explored in more detail in *'How to research'* and in the children and young people's resource '*My Shout*' which offers training for child/young people as researchers. However, it is important that adults supporting children and young people to lead research recognise that imbalances of power often exist within groups of children and young people for instance due to differences in age, popularity, status, poverty or ability. Power difference can also operate in the reverse with participants taking part in child-led research in a stronger position of power than the researcher.

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