



# University of HUDDERSFIELD

## University of Huddersfield Repository

Balen, Rachel

Researching sensitive topics with children: ethical and methodological issues

### Original Citation

Balen, Rachel (2002) Researching sensitive topics with children: ethical and methodological issues. In: Health Policy, Practice and Research in the 21st Century - Making a Difference, May 6-9 2002, Auckland, NZ. (Unpublished)

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/9245/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: [E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk](mailto:E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk).

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

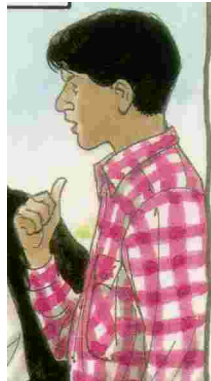
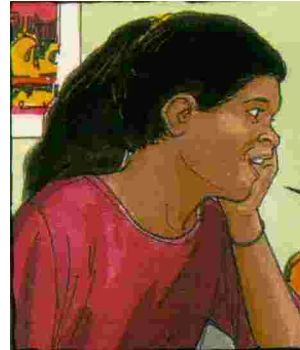
# Researching sensitive topics with children: Methodological issues and dilemmas

Rachel Balen & Claire Fraser  
Dorothy Fielding

Centre for Applied Childhood Studies  
University of Huddersfield, UK

# CONTENT

- Definitions
- Consent
- Methodologies
- Practical considerations



# SENSITIVE TOPICS



- Children`s understanding of infertility
- Children`s experience of palliative care provision

sex?!

Death?!

Cancer?!



School Governors

Teachers Ethics Committees

Parents

Local Education Authority

Health Trust

# AIMS

- To explore children`s knowledge and understanding of infertility and its implications
- To inform the development of appropriate psychosocial interventions
- To inform the current debate about the ethical implications of fertility preservation in childhood



# CONCERNS

- “Is the final year of primary school the right time to raise infertility in the minds of our children?”
- “Don`t they have enough to cope with as it is, without worrying about whether or not they may be infertile?”
- “How will parents be informed and involved, are we not just inviting trouble?”
- “Sex education is enough of a `hot potato` as it is, this venture could just complicate matters further.”
- “Are we not talking about just a few children & wouldn`t their concerns..be better dealt with specifically?”

# MISSION STATEMENT

- In the course of this research we wish to explore only what children know now. We will not introduce any new knowledge to children. Our overriding aim is that the research should be child-led, in line with our policy of research *with*, rather than *on* children

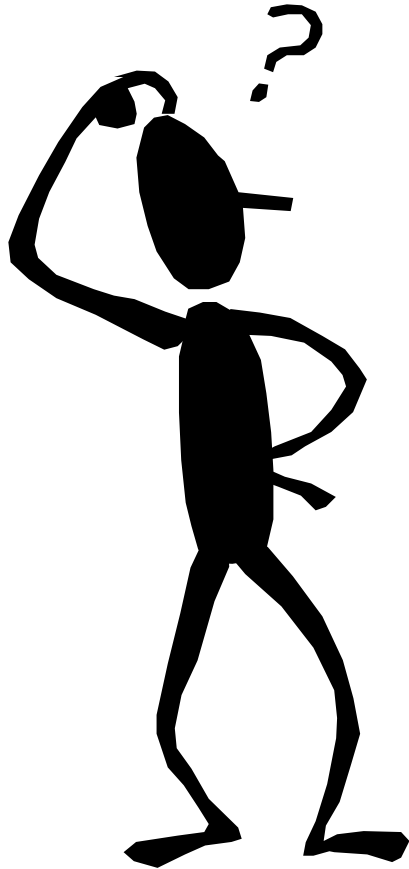
# WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW

- What are children's priorities for when they are grown-up?
- Does 'having children' appear on their agenda at different ages?

# WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW

- Are children aware that some people can't have children?
- Do they have any knowledge of possible causes and treatments?
- Sources of above knowledge?

# METHODS



- Age appropriate
- Child led
- Pluralistic
- Pilot study

# INTERVIEWS

- Group / Individual
- Linguistic skills
- Open / closed questions
- Non-verbal methods

# QUESTIONNAIRES

- Linguistic skills
- Written skills
- Design & layout

# SUMMARY

- *Variety*

= *Triangulation*

*Sustaining interest*



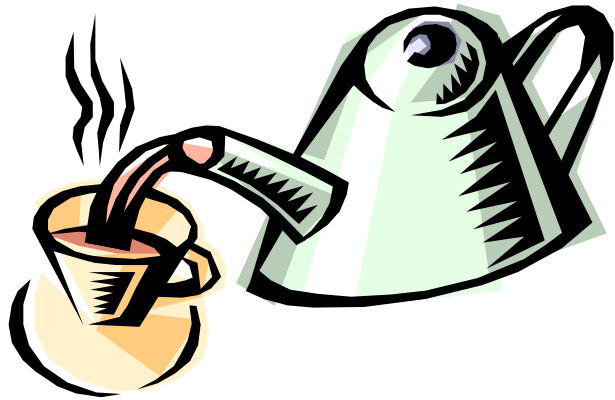
# PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Building rapport
- Informed participation
- Confidentiality
- Location & timing
- Contamination

# PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Abstract - concrete
- Power
- Recording
- Distress
- Endings

# CONCLUSION



- Read the literature
- Consult with colleagues
- Allow plenty of time