

Family Kids and Youth

RESEARCHING CHILDREN'S WORLD

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Children's opinions count

- Children like to be asked their opinion
- They are refreshingly honest, and clear about what they want
- But they also like to please, and it is important to ensure that they feel able to say what they mean
- This can sometimes mean using projective techniques that help them to express feelings, thoughts and opinions

Understanding children's world

- Immersion is important
- Children are not like you were when you were a child
- Their lives, their toys, their school, the way they learn, their families are probably very different from 10 years ago

Children can get confused

- Research needs to be easy and simple to understand
- Any session with a child should not last too long – children's attention span is not like an adult's
- Changing pace, and making the process fun and interactive helps a lot

Children need to be understood

- Carrying out research or communicating with children without a basic knowledge of developmental and cognitive stages is foolhardy, a waste of time, and money!
- Children can be very sensitive to adult messages, and can find the research process frightening or intimidating, so the researcher needs to be aware of their own mood, their demeanour, and be sure to give positive regard to the child.

Responsible research

- Consent should be given to take part in research by a parent or guardian for any child under 16
- Researchers should adhere to the Codes of Conduct of the MRS and ESOMAR
- Researchers should also be aware of the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society
- Children's researchers should have enhanced CRB clearance

Ethical research

- Ethical considerations are paramount
- The researcher should ask the questions:
 - Will this upset, harm, or damage the child in any way?
 - Does the child understand what is being asked, and why they are taking part?
 - Has the child given informed consent?
 - Does the child feel they have the right to withdraw at any time?
 - Am I safeguarding the confidentiality of this child and ensuring that she or he cannot be identified in any way?

Informing the client

- Sometimes clients do not understand the special circumstances of research with children
- It is important to ensure that they are aware of the Codes of Conduct
- But giving them insight into children's world is also helpful

Types of research

- Children under 10 cannot always read and write very well
- Adapting methodology to children's age and ability is important
- Online works well as children from 10 or 11 become adept at communicating online
- But to understand children, it is sometimes best to see them face to face

And finally - communicating with children

- Children are small
 - Obvious, but sometimes surprisingly overlooked
- Children, mostly, have parents
 - And parents have a big influence on their lives
- Boys and girls are different
 - So it's important to be aware of gender differences
- Children want to have fun
 - Which adults can sometimes forget
- Children don't always want to read
 - Visual is often best
- Children are not like you
 - Understand them, but don't try to be like them