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Researching sensitive topics with children: Methodological issues and dilemmas

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CONTENT

• Definitions
• Consent
• Methodologies
• Practical considerations
SENSITIVE TOPICS

• Children`s understanding of infertility

• Children`s experience of palliative care provision
Sex ?!

Cancer ?!

Death ?!
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