



Researching Children's Perspectives: choosing a 'child friendly' methodology and negotiating informed consent.

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Historical Background

- Research 'on' children
 - Model of child as research object
 - Child is distinctive, context-free, predictable, irrelevant (Hogan, 1998)
- Why the silent 'voice' of the child?

Academic Reorientations

- Research 'with' children
- Social action, participatory (action) research & participatory rural appraisal
- Ways of seeing children

(James 1995, cited in Morrow & Richards, 1996)

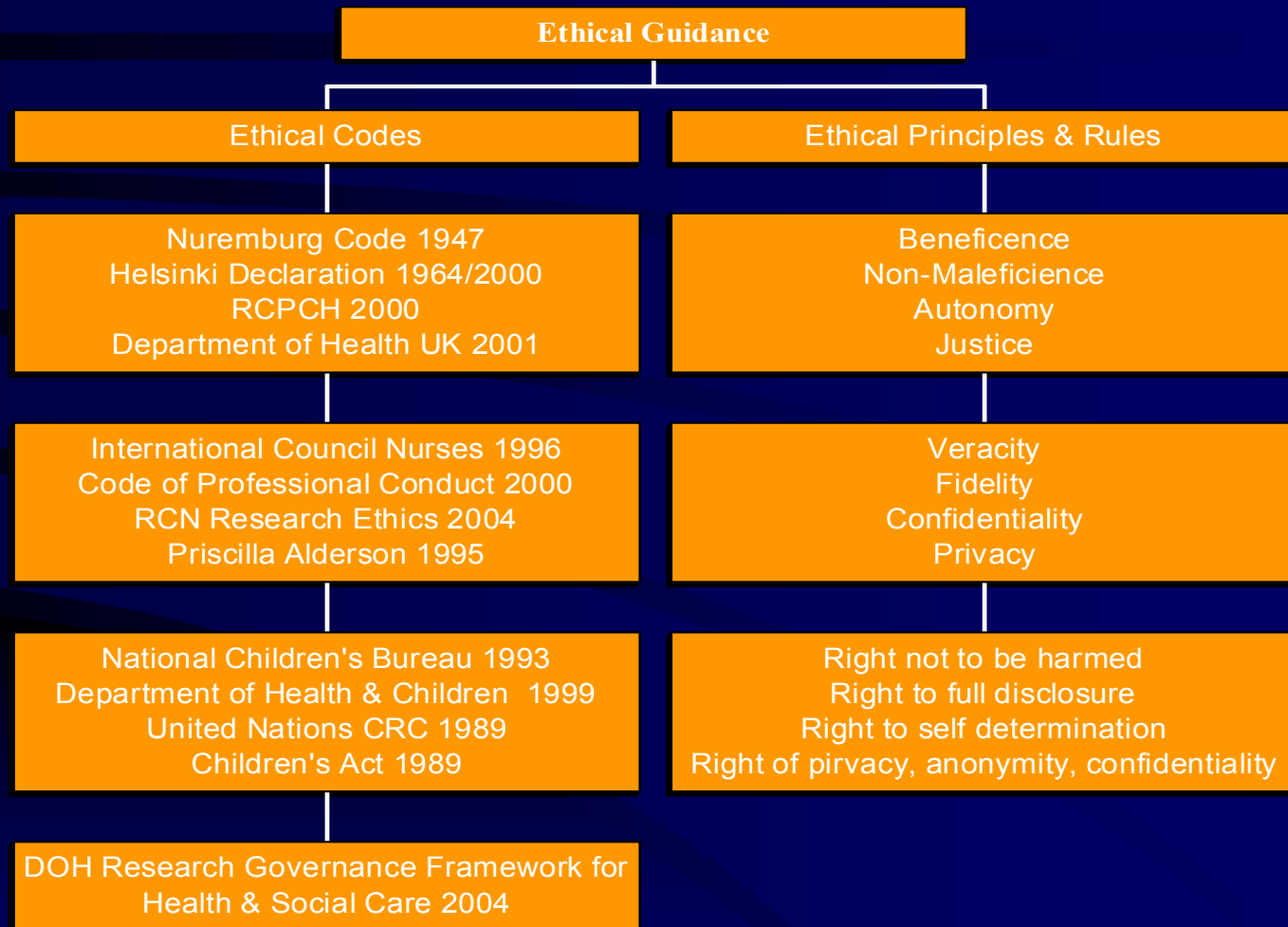
Ethics

‘ethics are about helping researchers to be more aware of hidden problems and questions in research and ways of dealing with these, though they do not provide simple answers...’ (Alderson, 2004)

‘to make a wrong decision is not unethical what is wrong is to fail to learn from it...’ (Johnson, 2004)

Ethical Guidance

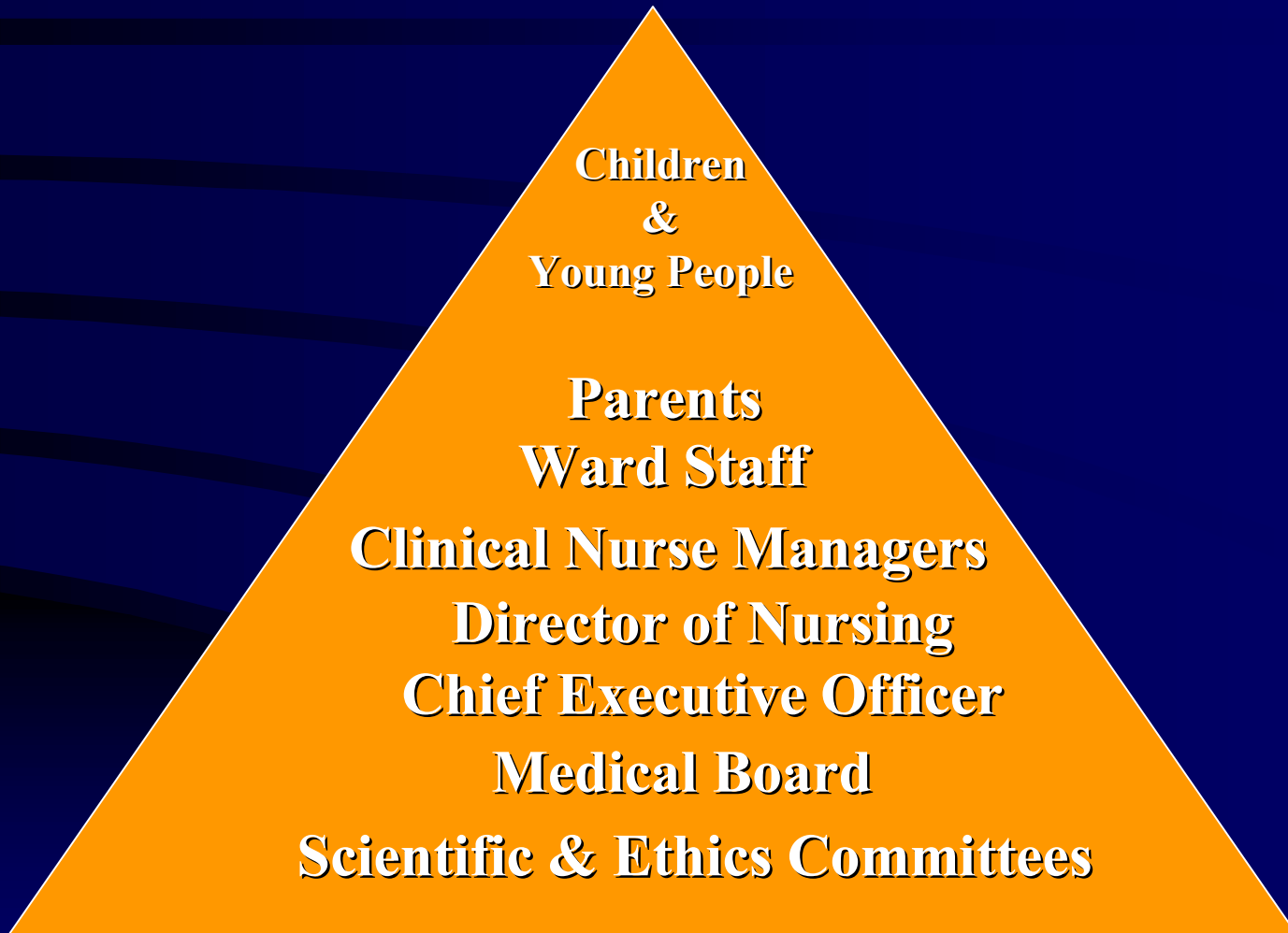
Researcher Integrity



‘...A paragraph or two about ethics is quickly written and added rather as decoration like a cherry on a cake. Ethics are however far more useful when they are seen as a vital part of the whole recipe...’

(Alderson, 2004)

Hierarchy of 'adult' gatekeepers



Informed Consent

- Competence to consent
 - Are children competent to consent? How do we know?
- Informed
 - What information should children be given and how?
- Voluntary
 - Are children consenting voluntarily? How do we know?

Competence

Law

- Age
 - Family Law Reform Act 1969
- Understanding
 - Gillick Case 1985
- Proxy Consent
 - Childrens Act 2001

Research

- Helsinki Declaration 2000
- NCB 1993
- Hill 1998
- Ondrusek et al 1998
- DOH UK 2001

Valid 'Child' Consent

- **C** - consider capacity to consent
- **O** - offer adequate and appropriate information
- **N** - no pressure is applied
- **S** - seek understanding
- **E** - evidence in questions / feedback
- **N** - negotiated continuously
- **T** - time to think about decision

- What about parent responsibility?

Partnership

**Right
to
Autonomy**

**Protection
of
Welfare**

Partnership

Child

Parent

Consent

**Respect
Parents
Role**

Researcher

Methodology

‘new ways of engaging children in research and development and application of methods which involve negotiation rather than imposition.....’

..... Ideally this would entail children playing a substantial part in the research design....’ (Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996)

Data Collection Methods

- Adult research methods
- Child-friendly methods
- Research (person)-friendly
 - Combining traditional adult methods with innovative ‘child-friendly’ methods (Punch, 2002)



Unequal power relationship

Stimulating

Motivating

Worksheets
Ecomap
Spider charts **Brainstorming**
Photographs **Drawings**
Role-play **Writing**
Puppets
Incomplete Sentences **Diaries**
Express Cards **Graffiti Boards**
Problem page letters
Post box / Secret box

Interesting

Fun

Aids communication

**Recognise individual
abilities & preferences**

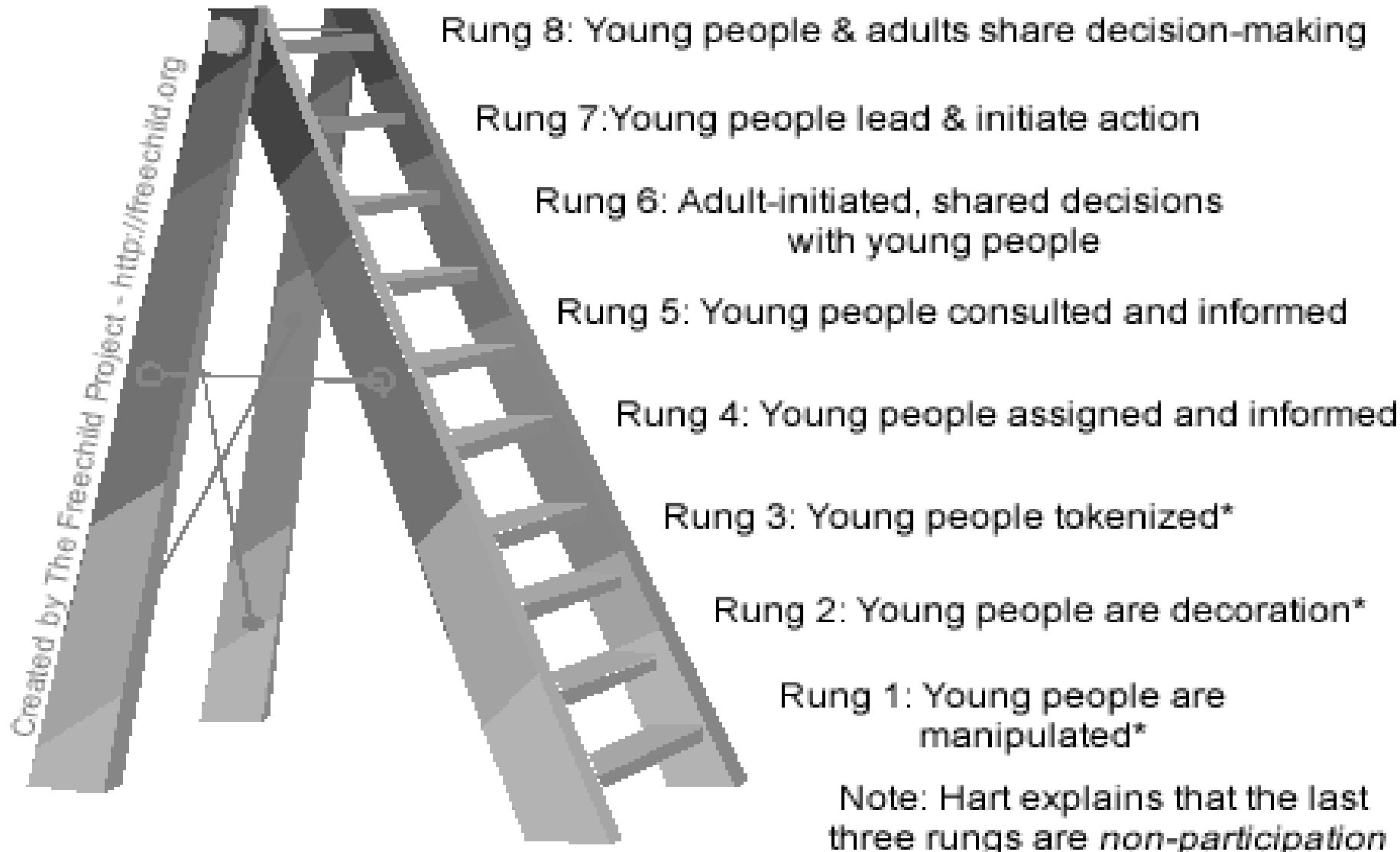
Enhance attention span

Enhance cooperation

Unequal Power Relationship

- Children as co-researchers
- Involving children as much as possible at all stages of the research process
- Providing choice
- Increasing control
- View research with children ‘along a continuum’

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Conclusion

‘...effective methodology and ethics go hand in hand, in the context of participatory research...’ ‘...the reliability and validity, and the ethical acceptability, of research with children can be augmented by using an approach which gives children control over the research process and methods which are in tune with children’s way of seeing and relating to their world...’ (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998)



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