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Oh, what a tangled web we weave: experiences of doing ‘multiple perspectives’ research in families

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It is not uncommon to explore the views of parents and children in qualitative research with families. Yet the implications and challenges of a multiple perspective approach often remain at a relatively taken-for-granted level. In this article we draw on our experience across a range of qualitative interview-based projects, focusing in particular on two case studies, to illustrate the practical working out of the challenges posed by multiple perspective research in families. The implications of research with parents and children are discussed in relation to two themes – power and truth. This discussion reflects on the challenges and benefits of multiple perspective research at different points in the research process. It is not the intention of this article to try to provide definitive ‘answers’ to some of the challenges posed. Rather we aim to open up discussion by reflecting on a range of scenarios, offering suggestions based on our experience, and so, allow the reader to reflect on the particularities of their own research.

Keywords: multiple perspectives; family research; qualitative

Introduction

It is not uncommon to explore the views of more than one participant in qualitative research with families. Indeed, there are a number of reasons why researchers may include two or more family members in their research. The researcher may want to situate participants’ views in the context of the social relationships within which they are constructed. It may be considered that seeking multiple perspectives will provide a more rounded picture of family life. The researcher may want to compare and contrast the views of different family members or hope to build an understanding of family practices or family culture. The research may aim to ensure that the voices of a particular group are heard alongside others. Elements of all of these motivations may lie behind a decision to research with multiple family members. While researching with more than one family member is not unusual, it often remains at a relatively taken-for-granted level.

In outlining some of the drivers behind the methodological decision-making in research, we immediately touch upon a fundamental question: what meaning do we attribute to the term ‘multiple perspectives’ in family research? Ribbens McCarthy, Holland, and Gillies (2003) described several different dimensions of multiple

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perspectives including between standpoints (such as generation or gender), between individuals in ‘families,’ and between families.¹ These are not entirely separate dimensions and the experiences of being in a family often simultaneously reflect many of these. Researchers may also choose to focus on one particular dimension, such as between standpoints of generation across different families (Brannen, 2003; Seaman, Hill, Stafford, & Walker, 2006). Alternatively, researchers may choose to address several multiple perspective dimensions, looking both within and between families.

While many research projects focus on different dimensions of multiple perspectives in their research with families, how these intersect throughout the research is often not fully explicated. In this article, we reflect on the issues that have arisen in our research with parents and children within the same family.² We focus on our experience from a range of qualitative interview-based projects because it is still rare to do observational research in families (Smart, Neale, & Wade, 2001), and when this does occur it tends to be around very specific aspects of family life limited to certain times of the day – for example, focusing on television use (Jordan, 2006). Nevertheless, the ways in which interview accounts are produced in qualitative research with families is in itself a matter of continuing debate.

In order to illustrate the practical working out of the challenges that multiple perspective research in families poses, we focus on two projects that illustrate the challenges and the benefits of doing research with children and parents. The research aims, context, and methodology of the projects will be introduced to facilitate the reader’s understanding of the subsequent thematic discussion. It is not the intention of this article to try to provide definitive ‘answers’ to the issues raised. Rather we aim to open up discussion by reflecting on a range of scenarios, and so, allow the reader to reflect on the particularities of their own research.

Background

Case study 1: the Children and Risk Anxiety project (CARA)

The Children and Risk Anxiety project³ was part of the ESRC Children 5–16 program. The research explored children’s and parents’ landscapes of risk and the negotiation and management of risk anxiety in family contexts. Specifically, we examined the tensions between children’s empowerment and autonomy on the one hand and their passivity and dependence on the other. A sample of 52 children (aged 9–15 years) and 42 parents in 30 families was recruited, reflecting a broad spread of socio-economic and family circumstances. Single occasion, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents and children separately. All the children’s interviews were carried out by the first author, Jeni Harden (JH), who also conducted some of the parents’ interviews.

The analytic strategy reflected the context of the research. As part of the ESRC Children 5–16 program, reflecting an interest in, and focus on, children’s perspectives, the emphasis was on hearing children’s voices. Thus the initial analytic focus was on seeking multiple perspectives between the standpoints of generation *across* families. Initial analysis and publications focused on the children’s perspective (Harden, 2000; Harden, Backett-Milburn, Jackson, & Scott, 2000). At a later stage, the analytic strategy refocused on multiple perspectives *within* four families, exploring in greater depth the everyday processes of negotiation between parents and children around risk. The analytical focus turned more to the family groups; and the views and perspectives of

the family members were interpreted as both reflecting particular standpoints (generation and gender) and as individuals within the family (Backett-Milburn & Harden, 2004; Harden & Backett-Milburn, 2008).

Case study 2: the Work and Family Lives project (WFL)

The Work and Family Lives⁴ project was a qualitative longitudinal study exploring the way that families negotiate their work and family lives and looking at how family practices changed over time. The concept of 'family' had a key place in the research design and the objective was to use a multiple perspectives approach to build a rich and complex picture of the everyday practices constituting family life (Morgan, 1999). The sample comprised parents and one child aged 9–12 years from 14 families (16 children in total and 22 parents). As the research design involved interviewing participants on more than one occasion, the study was able to include both individual and family group interviews, conducted by the co-author Alice MacLean (AM). This multiple method approach aimed to generate a view on the families which would bring the group dynamics to the fore and allow the interplay of personalities and relationships to be observed over time.

The family group interviews were conducted as the second of three data collection waves, in between rounds of individual interviews. It was hoped that the research relationships built during the first wave of research would facilitate the group discussions. In particular, the aim was for children to feel empowered by having been listened to in their first interview and, consequently, that they would be better able to voice their opinions in the presence of their parents and siblings. In order to engage both children and parents in the group discussion, careful consideration was given to the methods used and topics raised.

The WFL project analysis initially focused on family groups in team analytic discussion meetings. This provided an in-depth exploration of the roles and identities constructed by family members across the different research contexts and over time. While this focus on the multiple perspectives *within* families has proven to be a rich source of data, we also identified a need for an *across* families overview, comparing and contrasting the experiences of families in similar socio-economic circumstances, and with similar family structures.

Discussion

The case study outlines begin to point to significant questions in researching with multiple family members including: what are the implications of the methods used, and how do we analyze data coming from different perspectives? In this section we synthesize our experiences in answering these questions through a discussion around two central themes – power and truth.

Power

The significance of understanding and reflecting on power relations in research with children has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Christensen & James, 2008). In this section, we reflect on the implication of generational power relations for multiple perspectives research with children and parents and consider its intersection with the power relations within the research relationship.

Research methods, fieldwork, and power relations

One of the first questions researchers often address is: if we are exploring the views of children and parents, should we conduct individual or group interviews? The trend in much sociological research with children and parents has been to conduct individual interviews. In the CARA project, there was a concern that, given existing generational power relations, parents would talk for, or instead of, the child, particularly in the context of one off interviews, resulting in a silencing of the voice of the child. On the whole, the individual interviews with children worked very well, by which we mean, they engaged with the topics for discussion and with the tasks, and seemed relaxed. However, we need to be wary of the implications of our methodological assumptions. It is certainly the case that generational power relations structure many aspects of children's lives. However, in the context of the home, children (particularly younger children) may be used to the presence of their parents and may take comfort and feel supported in a joint interview situation, allowing them to express their views in ways that might not be possible in an individual interview (Curtis, 2007; Irwin & Johnson, 2005). In one case in the CARA project, for instance, one boy seemed to feel very uncomfortable being interviewed and, after being asked if he wanted to continue, the interview was stopped. Reflecting back on this case, he may have felt happier with one or both of his parents present, but because of our efforts to give children their individual voice, he was not offered that option.

In the WFL project, we conducted both individual and joint interviews between children and parents. Despite some concerns among the researchers, during the family group interviews there were very few examples of parents talking for, or instead of, children. However, parents influenced children's contributions to the groups in a number of ways, including facilitating them by asking additional questions or reminding children of significant issues, modifying them by disagreeing or presenting an alternative point of view, and controlling them by quietening dominant children in order to give others a say. There was also evidence of parents modifying and policing one another's accounts as well as of children questioning and contradicting parents' and siblings' accounts.

This highlights that, while recognizing power relations, it is by no means clear how these will play out within the research process (Morris, 2001). The concerns about the impact of generational power relations for hearing children's voices in a group interview may not have been immediately visible in terms of how much the children spoke. However, the interaction between children and parents inevitably shaped the nature of the data in more subtle ways. For example, when we asked some questions about the impact of the economic downturn, several parents were evidently concerned to smooth over any impacts to protect their children from worries. Such reactions may not be problematical in a longitudinal study but, for single occasion interview projects, family group interviews may perhaps limit the extent to which the separate voices of children and parents can be heard.

The location and context in which the interviews are conducted may also be relevant. In a project exploring children's construction of emotions, JH noted the different reactions of children in different contexts. She interviewed children individually and in groups at school, and individually in the home. Some appeared to be confident and chatty in the school interviews but showed greater reticence at home, giving the impression that speaking with a relatively unknown adult in the context of school is not that unusual, but in the home the 'otherness' of the researcher is more apparent.

Thus, researchers should be wary of making assumptions based on preconceived notions about what is the best way to conduct interviews with both children and their parents. Researchers need to reflect on methods that enable them to answer their research questions while retaining some flexibility that takes account of the context, location, and needs of individual participants.

One of the ways researchers try to address power relations in research is by reflecting on the best ways to connect with the participants and by taking a reflexive stance about the role they play in the interview interaction and how this shapes the story that is then constructed (Warin, Solomon, & Lewis, 2007). In part this relates to how the researcher positions him/herself within the research, specifically within the interview. Such issues have been previously addressed specifically in relation to research with children (Harden et al., 2000; Punch, 2002). However, further issues may arise when seeking multiple perspectives within families. For instance, while researchers will adapt to each interview situation as a unique interaction, it is also likely that, in the course of the project, a certain way of being, a positioning of the researcher's identity, will occur when interviewing particular groups. However, if the same researcher conducts the interviews with all family members, this will require a shifting of position perhaps within a single visit to a family.

During the CARA project, in those families where JH interviewed both the parents and the children, she was aware of the challenge of moving between the differing interview contexts. Spatial and body management issues seemed to draw attention to the different contexts in which data were being gathered from adults and children. The question of where to interview children was discussed with parents when contact was initially made and again with parents and children on the day of the interview. In almost all cases, it was agreed that the interviews would be conducted in the child's bedroom.⁵ It was felt that the child's bedroom was the only space designated as their own space within the house and it was hoped that being in that space, with their possessions to refer to, would help them to feel relaxed. Often the child interviews involved sitting on the floor eating sweets, chatting about hobbies, and moving around the room to look at favorite games/books/toys, and the children seemed to enjoy showing their room to JH. In contrast, there was no suggestion that the parent interviews would take place in the bedroom. This would have been considered, particularly when interviewing the fathers, a risk to the interviewer. Moreover, the shared space within most households was usually more adult space, decorated in their taste and containing more of their possessions. The parent interviews were also different from the children's interviews in the form of interaction – they tended to involve sitting in one place and focused on the topics of the interviews. While these differences are not unexpected, it can be challenging for the researcher to shift between the different personas being presented in research with children and their parents.

Shifting between different research contexts can also be challenging for the researcher interested in accessing multiple perspectives. In the WFL project, AM also noted the different types of interaction she had with children and parents in the individual interviews. She then found it hard to strike a balance in the family group interviews (second wave of fieldwork) allowing her to continue to develop the differing relationships. It was difficult in a group context to build on the unique nature of existing relationships formed with each participant during the first individual interview. In some of the group interviews, she felt that continuing to develop certain relationships on the bases established in the individual interviews had been done at the

risk of neglecting relationships with other members of the family which were built on different foundations. In particular, she was concerned that some children, especially those in the few groups where parents' voices dominated, may have been disappointed with the way she had interacted with them in the group and might not have felt as listened to as they had in their individual interviews.

Multiple perspectives, power, and data analysis

It is not only at the data collection stage when researchers are concerned about power relations between the researcher and the participants. In all qualitative research, the perspectives of the researcher inevitably form part of the interpretation given to the data, and there are further complexities when working with multiple perspectives. It may be inevitable that we will 'hear' the stories that resonate most closely to our own stories, experiences, and beliefs (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). This is clearly an issue within research more generally but has particular implications when researching with children and their parents. In both the CARA and WFL projects, children's interviews were, in part, structured thematically with tasks relating to specific themes, while the adult interviews were also thematic but with no tasks. This difference in structure means that the data that are produced are also different. Researchers often choose to use 'child friendly' methods to facilitate children's engagement with the topics and to help them to feel more relaxed. There is often an assumption that children do not talk as freely around topics as do adults (Harden et al., 2000).

In both the CARA and the WFL projects, the children seemed to engage well with the discussion topics and the tasks; however, the interviews were less voluminous than the adults. The generation of different types of data also has implications for hearing the voices of research participants. It is the researcher's analytic task to ensure that children's and adults' accounts are given equal consideration. When looking at generational standpoints across families, that is when exploring the views of 'children' or 'parents,' this is relatively straightforward, as the difference does not come to the fore. However, when analyzing data within families, there may be a tendency to give more of our attention to adult accounts as they are usually denser. In both the CARA and the WFL projects, there were times when this began to happen during team analysis meetings and by reflexively acknowledging this we were able to maintain more of a balance. We must acknowledge and reflect on the implications of using different interview techniques with adults and children for our interpretations of multiple perspectives within families.

Our interaction with the data may also depend on the research context in which they were generated. The WFL project involved analyzing and comparing individual and group interview data which were also very different in nature. The individual interview data reflected the more focused and detailed one-to-one interaction between the researcher and the participant, whereas the family group interview data were characterized predominantly by interaction between participants themselves, and there was a potential for this to affect the direction and depth of the discussion. Analysis of the individual interview data involved interpreting participants' responses and considering ways in which the researcher had contributed to their construction. In relation to the family group interview data, exploring the impact of family dynamics and power relations on the types of interactions which took place and the ways in which parents' and children's accounts were controlled, inhibited, or facilitated by one another's presence and utterances, as well as those of the researcher, was central to the analytical approach (Krueger, 1998).

In comparing the different types of accounts, be they parents' and children's or individual and group, our analyses sought to explore the status of the accounts and engaged with them as co-constructions influenced by context and especially 'the public that is being addressed' (Morris, 2001, p. 556). This indicates that any analytic strategy designed to address multiple perspectives within families has to be reflexive to ensure that existing power relations and culturally based assumptions are clearly addressed and articulated as part of the analytic process.

Ethical issues

The standard considerations around gaining informed consent in families apply in research with multiple family members (Alderson & Morrow, 2004; Gallagher, 2009). However, there are additional concerns that children's consent may be influenced by the parents' attitude towards participation. By directing information material and consent forms to the child and parent separately, researchers can clearly indicate that the decision on whether or not to participate should be taken individually. This can also be reinforced in preliminary recruitment conversations with family members, where the value of each participant's individual views can also be stressed (Lewis, 2008).

As Alderson and Morrow (2004) note, the main 'risks in social research and consultation include distress and anxiety, embarrassment and loss of self-esteem' (p. 40). Of particular concern in the context of research with multiple family members is the potential impact of joint or family group interviews. In these interviews, it can be harder for the researcher to control or contain the dynamics compared with an individual interview. It is rare for researchers to receive training in relation to family interviews and there are few guides available in the literature. If any points of tension arise between partners or a parent and child, considerable skill may be required to deal with this. This contrasts with various forms of family interventions with treatment or therapeutic goals where protocols have been developed drawing on a considerable body of relevant (though contested) theoretical constructs and orientations to support a range of specific skills and techniques.⁶

It is standard in most social research to promise anonymity and confidentiality in public reporting of the study, but network confidentiality is another important aspect. This refers to keeping interview contents private from respondents' family or friends (Hill, 2005). Network confidentiality is particularly pertinent to research with children and parents, given that members of a family may wish to know what the others have said, when interviewed separately. When several family members take part in the same study, it may be easier for them to recognize who has said what. A balance needs to be found in anonymizing the details so that participants cannot be recognized, especially by someone who knows them well, while maintaining the authenticity of the data.

The expectation would be that the researcher should not share anything communicated in a separate interview. Yet there are times when researchers are sometimes subject to requests from family members, to indicate what another has said. In the CARA project, one mother asked JH whether her daughter had mentioned the fact that the daughter had attempted suicide. JH had a sense that this topic was not openly discussed within the family and it may have been the mother's attempt to gauge her child's attitude. In longitudinal research with more than one family member, such as WFL, the uneasiness of this position and the emotional pressure experienced by the researcher as a result is likely to increase over time as relationships develop and trust deepens. Extra care needs to be taken to be familiar with the data from the individuals prior to each

interview. The WFL project team has found that it is important to make a detailed summary of each interview. This summary can then be read prior to the next wave of interviews to re-familiarize the researcher with the data from each family member.

Power relations infuse multiple perspective research with children and parents throughout the research, and researchers are required to reflexively engage with the issues raised. Often related to notions of power in research is the question of truth and it is to this that we now turn.

The whole truth and nothing but the truth

Analysis of multiple perspectives in families brings to the fore a number of significant issues situated within wider epistemological debates. Ribbens McCarthy et al. (2003) developed a typology of analytic categories reflecting differences between objectivist and interpretivist epistemological positions. Within this framework, differences between accounts can be understood as contradictions or as different themes or concepts. Similarities in accounts can be analyzed as a form of confirmation or be interpreted as reflecting the production of similar themes or concepts in the interview. For those within the objectivist tradition, a belief in the notion that research produces facts/truths would lead towards attempts to generate accounts that could be compared and may be used to corroborate each other in producing an overall more factual or truthful account. For interpretive researchers the interviewer and the interviewee may be considered actively to participate in the construction of accounts generated through research, leading towards a more relativist position with each account having its own 'truth' (Hammersley, 2008, p. 48).

Between the broad positions, Ribbens McCarthy et al. (2003) indicate a middle position that reflects the intention to produce a 'story' of the family but recognizing that family members will have different versions of that story. In doing this, the researcher takes the 'birds eye' position, highlighting the analyst's ability to have an overview of all family members' accounts and, for example, to see and interpret in a detailed context where these agree and contradict. In taking this position it is possible to provide an interpretation that neither lays claim to be the 'truth' nor is simply one interpretation among many possible versions. In a similar vein, Perlesz and Lindsay (2003) refer to a post-positivist position which offers a sophisticated contextual analysis in order to generate a coherent 'story' but one that does not make claims to truth. The intention of this type of approach is instead to aim to produce 'less false stories' through the emphasis on reflexive contextual analysis.

When looking at the standpoints of 'children' and 'parents' across family groups in the CARA project, participants' accounts were interpreted as their own version of events and there was no attempt to establish or prove whether this version was a 'true' account. In the case study analysis of the CARA project and in the WFL project the intention was to interpret the individual accounts within the family as providing both a version of events in their own right and as being part of larger family story. It was the task of the researchers to weave together the threads of individual accounts, their similarities, gaps, contradictions, and silences.

For example, one father in the CARA project discussed the impact of the revelation, that a neighbor had been abusing children, on his concerns about his own children's safety in the neighborhood. It was not surprising that the children did not mention this because they had not been told, but what was surprising was that the mother made no mention of the incident. Since she was interviewed separately, before the father, it was

not possible to go back and explore this issue further. Rather we are left trying to explain this silence. Given that they were friends with the neighbor, there may have been a level of embarrassment, or a sense of guilt, at having not picked up on things sooner, that meant that the mother did not want to discuss this with the researcher.

In the WFL project it has been possible, within the constraints of confidentiality, to address such silences. For example, one child talked about being bullied at school during his first interview and said he had told his mother. However, his mother, who was interviewed first, had not mentioned this when asked about her children's experiences of school. Although in subsequent interviews it would have broken the confidentiality to ask the mother directly about any bullying, we were able to ask again about school as a means of broaching this subject. At this point, the mother reflected on a period when her son had felt down as a result of having to get learning support and being teased about this by others at school. However, she at no point referred to this as bullying.

In the WFL project and the case study analysis of the CARA project, by focusing on multiple perspectives between children and parents in families, we were trying to uncover a sense of how people are engaged in being a family. In the WFL project, this raised questions around the family group interviews. It is always important to critically reflect on whether and to what extent participants are engaged in self-presentation and performance (Goffman, 1969). In family group interviews, the research context is more 'public' and we initially questioned the extent to which conducting such interviews allowed access to typical family behavior, that is, forms of 'doing family' (Morgan, 1999) or whether families were presenting an idealized version of themselves, that is, were engaged in 'displaying family' (Finch, 2007). After reflection, it became apparent that families were doing both. The families often seemed very relaxed and interacted in ways that seemed to AM to be 'natural.' For example during one family group interview, the father, home from a long work shift, fell asleep. However, there were also times when AM felt that a conscious effort was being made by parents to present the family in the best light. For example, when asked to chart what had happened since their last interviews, most parents were keen to fill the chart, both with children's achievements and things they had done together as a family, and some seemed embarrassed if they struggled for things to put on the chart. Nevertheless, parents' efforts to present their family in a positive light were not always colluded with by children. In one group a father talked about one of the benefits of going on holiday with another family being that both the adults and children have more company, and his daughter jokingly added that the children get bored because the adults get drunk.

The research context is significant here. In applied research it can be very important to know whether an event actually took place and how often (e.g., committing of a crime), as well as multiple interpretations of how and why. For example, a study of young people in foster families recorded incidents of 'running or staying away' and disputes between carers and young people, alongside different perceptions of the triggers, meanings, and consequences of such actions (Walker, Hill, & Triseliotis, 2002). Therefore, it is important to consider the impact of a multiple perspectives approach on how different research users engage with the knowledge generated. This will undoubtedly vary according to specific audiences' interests and needs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that using case studies to present multiple perspectives can aid some users' (e.g., policy-makers) understandings of and engagement with the research by grounding it in the specific conditions of the historical, social, and cultural contexts lived by the research participants. However, other research audiences (e.g., those in

applied settings) may experience difficulty engaging with this type of research evidence, especially if a relativist stance has been taken in analyzing the multiple perspectives.

This raises the question of how the findings of multiple perspectives research with children and parents are best disseminated in order to demonstrate their inherent complexity and depth while not overwhelming or alienating potential users. In the WFL project, we used a combination of approaches depending on the target audience and purpose of the output. Case studies which took into account parents' and children's views, and ways they changed over time, have been used to illustrate in detail the different types of experience evident across the sample. In addition, we have also presented findings in the form of broader thematic overviews which took the whole sample into consideration and described the range of experiences across all families in relation to a specific theme.

In all our experiences of analyzing multiple perspectives within family research, we did not feel any imperative to find *the* family story; by weaving together individual accounts, it has been possible to develop a sense of the family as a whole but still retain sight of the different perspectives from which we formed the bigger picture. This is a challenging process, as Warin et al. note, 'the complexity of the analytic task in producing our story is almost overwhelming' (2007, p. 124).

Conclusion

In this article we have reflected on our experience of engaging in qualitative research with children and parents. As indicated in the introduction, we did not intend to offer 'answers' to the many questions raised, presenting instead different sides to the debates grounded in our own research experiences. Taking account of multiple perspectives involves recognition that the production of both the family life and the research data, by several individuals, involves dynamic interchanges in which individual versions are fluid, influenced by the anticipation of others' accounts and by the interaction with the researcher. It is important to scrutinize and report the processes of generating accounts as well as the accounts themselves that is to present multiple perspectives, not as running in parallel, but as a complex web. Despite the challenges, research with parents and children in families gives researchers privileged access to families' lives. Through multiple perspective research it is possible to explore the lives, not simply of individuals or standpoints but of families, and to gain a rich understanding of the complex and dynamic ways that children's and parents' everyday lives are experienced as part of a family.

Notes

1. For interesting discussions of multiple perspectives within individual accounts, see Power (2004) and Watson (2006).
2. In the research we refer to, the families were all situated within households.
3. CARA was the acronym for the Children and Risk Anxiety project 'The Impact of Risk and Parental Risk Anxiety on the Everyday Worlds of Children,' ESRC 1997–1999 (S. Scott, S. Jackson, K. Milburn and J. Harden).
4. WFL is the acronym for the 'Work and Family Lives: The Changing Experience of "Young" Families,' part of the ESRC funded Timescapes study, a qualitative longitudinal research consortium bringing together seven projects exploring family life at across time (K. Backett-Milburn, S. Cunningham Burley, J. Harden, L. Jamieson, and A. MacLean). <http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk>
5. In cases where a different space in the house was suggested, the researcher did not probe the reason for the choice of room. Interviewing children in their bedrooms does raise

ethical concerns and can also be considered as posing potential risks for the researcher. The space where interviews are conducted should be one in which everyone feels at ease, including the researcher.

6. Some of these are concerned with ways that could be helpful to researchers, e.g., designed to facilitate communication, reflection on emergent themes, and so on. Other methods would be less appropriate in research, such as the use of confrontation and paradoxical instructions (Dallos & Draper, 2005). Moreover, some of the assumptions common in family therapy, such as regarding the family in systemic terms, may be closely aligned to certain family research but stand in tension with other approaches that emphasize individual standpoints or voices.

Notes on contributors

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