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Children's Competence and Wellbeing in Sensitive Research: When Video-Stimulated Accounts Lead to Dispute

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Introduction

Research studies increasingly recognize children as active participants deserving of social recognition and as key informants in matters that affect them. This view is driven by a child rights agenda (United Nations, 1989), 'competent child' paradigm (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998; Mackay, 1991; Speier, 1973) and Childhood Studies (Corsaro, 2017; Prout &

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James, 1997), which suggest that children views and input are sought on a range of aspects regarding their everyday lives (for an overview see Tisdall, 2016). Such an approach shifts the research gaze from the child as an *object* of research to the child as an *active member* (Mason & Danby, 2011; Quennerstedt & Quennerstedt, 2014; Theobald, Danby, & Ailwood, 2011). Participatory approaches may promote better understanding of children's perspectives and enable child 'voice'; in research, however, when children exert their competence as research participants, the research encounter is unpredictable in nature, and matters to do with wellbeing may emerge.

The Unpredictable Nature of Research Encounters

The unpredictable nature of research means that research encounters with children, such as inviting children's perspectives in an interview, may not go according to the researcher's agenda, even with extensive preplanning on the part of the researcher. Guidelines may provide straight forward advice on how to undertake such an activity (see, e.g., Danby, 2017; Danby & Farrell, 2005). In reality, however, because the process of an interview is a mutually constructed and collaborative activity, there is scope for events to not go according to plan. For example, Danby, Ewing, and Thorpe (2011) showed how a novice researcher, who had undertaken multiple preplanning activities such as spending time in the classroom getting to know the children and undertaken practice interviews with young children, still found the interview process challenging. Reflecting on the interviews, the novice researcher commented that the interviews had produced limited conversation because the child participants had closed down topics and resisted answering the researcher-led questions. On closer examination of the interview data, though, the researcher realized that she had not made use of probing questions to extend the child's discussion and further found that having an activity or task to undertake at the same time as the interview promoted further discussion. When researching children's everyday lives, if something goes awry or is unexpected, researchers are expected to draw on their 'professional stock of knowledge' (Peräkylä & Vehvilƒinen, 2003), by employing appropriate and skillful ethical principles *in situ*

(Graham, Powell, & Taylor, 2015). This might be particularly true when what might be described as 'sensitive' research is involved (Antaki, 2002).

Divulging Sensitive Issues

Children may employ a number of strategies when asked to divulge potentially 'sensitive' issues. For example, researching playground disputes, Theobald (2017) showed how three boys, aged 8 years, 'hijacked' the video-stimulated conversation by competently using interactional strategies to avert or side track the researcher's line of questioning. Their interactional strategies included interruptions, topic changes, non-verbal signals such as gaze, physical proximity and laughter to signal alignment with their peers and disaffiliation from the researcher. Similarly, Evang and Øverlien (2015) interviewed children about their experiences of family violence and found that children steered the researcher's questions away from topics that they did not wish to discuss. Asking children to discuss sensitive issues such as their experience of natural disasters (Bateman & Danby, 2013; Lamerichs, Alisic, & Schasfoort, 2018), risky behaviors (Daley, 2013) or matters to do with sexual orientation (Skelton, 2008) can also provide children with opportunities to disclose their feelings, enabling them to deal with and overcome trauma or upset. Such studies highlight their competence to comment on such sensitive issues. Conducting such research is not straightforward, however, it does provide children with opportunities to employ competence and agency as research participants. Exploring sensitive issues have ethical complexities for researchers, however, as they strive to 'do no harm' (Sharpe, 1997: 197) when conducting research.

Children's Wellbeing in Research Encounters

Researchers have responsibilities for ethical compliance to ensure children's wellbeing is regarded in research. Attention is given to the procedures of ethics with studies examining ongoing consent (Danby & Farrell, 2005; Mayne, Howitt, & Rennie, 2018) and increasingly the tensions between wellbeing, competence and children's participation are highlighted

(Skelton, 2008). These guidelines inform the kinds of topics investigated, the age of the children involved and how and where the research occurs (Daley, 2013; Farrell, 2016; Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010; Skelton, 2008). For the most part, children's participation in research is still routinely promoted as unproblematic for both researcher and child participant. Increasingly, however, studies are exploring the power differentials between adults and children (see Powell & Anderson, 2005); matters to do with how children's views are interpreted and responded to (see Dorner, 2014); the design of the questions that are asked of children (Danby et al., 2011; Lamerichs et al., 2018); the agency of children and what they bring to the researcher-participant interaction (Theobald, 2017). Although ethical guidelines work to ensure anonymity and protect vulnerable participants (Daley, 2013; Farrell, 2016), these guidelines do not always capture matters that arise regardless of planning for the process, researcher expertise and children's competence may be under-recognized or overruled. This matter is further explored in this chapter.

The Study

This chapter investigates a video-stimulated conversation among a small group of girls when accounting for their playground actions. The focus is on what happens when a dispute emerges. Data are from a video-ethnography that studied children's participation in a preparatory year classroom, colloquially referred to as 'prep,' with 24 children aged four to six years. The prep year is the first year of compulsory schooling in the Australian state of Queensland. The children attended an urban school in Southeast Queensland. The data collection process took place early in the school year as the classroom rules and procedures were being established. There were two data collection phases in the study. The first phase video-recorded the everyday experiences of the children interacting within the playground. The second phase used video-stimulated interviews where short fragments of the video-recorded episodes were shown to the participating children and the teacher (on separate occasions). They were asked to make comments on what is going on in the video fragments. These conversations, referred to as 'video stimulated accounts' (Pomerantz, 2005),

were audio-recorded. This phase enabled children to take on a participatory role as they accounted for their experiences in the video-recorded play episodes and made points of interest.

The research encounter involved the researcher (first author) talking with a small group of girls aged 4–6 years as they watched a video-recording of themselves involved in a pretend game of 'school' in the playground. In this 'video-stimulated account' (Pomerantz, 2005; Theobald, 2012, 2017), the researcher's questions to the children about what was happening in the video clip lead to a dispute among the children. The dispute begins when one child initiates a complaint centered on an unresolved, and previously undisclosed, peer issue. The issue was that some children dominated the game by always wanting to be the 'teacher,' meaning that the others in the game were relegated to role of 'student' in the game, a role that did not have nearly the same authority as that of the self-assigned 'teacher.' This reflective activity of asking the children to talk about what was going on in the video creates a relational opportunity for some of the children to competently report on their own experiences, and they start to complain about one of the children involved in the play. The researcher faces the dilemma of how to resolve the dispute, one that she has inadvertently initiated, in a way that ensures the children's wellbeing, while acknowledging their competence in the video-stimulated account.

Analytical Approach

An ethnomethodological approach was taken using conversation analysis (Sacks, 1995; Sidnell & Stivers, 2012). Ethnomethodology studies the methods that people, including children, use to produce and make sense of social action. Conversation analysis employs fine-grained tools to uncover how social activities are produced and understood. As Garfinkel (1967) argued, there is a link between how people make sense of the world and their subsequent activities. Membership categorization analysis (MCA) also comes into play to examine the interactional tools that people use, and which are associated with particular categories (Fitzgerald, 2012; Sacks, 1972, 1995).

Using an ethnomethodological approach, video-stimulated accounts in this study are treated as interactional accomplishments in their own right and are not intended to test the recall of the participants or compare the

account with the events that occurred. Accounts have been shown to be strategic conversational devices (Gill, 1998; Silverman, 1987; Theobald, 2012). Using an ethnomethodological lens, questions such as 'what work is the account doing?' and 'why that now?' guide analyses.

In using video-stimulated accounts, this study implements a method within ethnomethodological studies that has been relatively unused. Within this field, there are few studies that document the responses of participants who are viewing video sequences and none that include the views of young children. Pomerantz (2005) reports a study that collected video-recordings as well as audio-recorded video-stimulated comments of the medical interactions between doctor and adult patients. The research team found that the comments enabled them to focus on events in the interaction that otherwise might have been overlooked. The main focus of video-stimulated accounts is to tap into the participants' accounts for explanations of and concerns from the initial event, and it is not a recall method (Theobald, 2017). Video-stimulated accounts provide a chance for children to provide their standpoint and inform data analysis and showed the children's social worlds as multifaceted (Theobald, 2012). In sum, the '*interpretations*, *aims* and *concerns* to which the participants may have oriented' (Pomerantz, 2005: 93, emphasis in original) can be exposed.

The video-stimulated accounts came from an extended sequence of interaction. Extended sequences provide analysts opportunities to understand how talk and interaction are instigated and unfold (Psathas, 1992). The next section introduces fragments of this extended conversation of approximately 15 minutes, between the researcher and the children who were involved in watching a video recording of themselves playing a pretend game of school.

First, the original interaction captured on video (a game of school) is described. Second, seven transcribed accounts of the video-stimulated conversation are presented for analysis. Transcription methods followed typical CA protocols using the Jefferson (2004) technique (see Appendix 1). This transcription method highlights the interactional details of the talk and interaction such as intonation, overlap, pauses and volume. These features provide analysts with clues into how the members are interpreting and responding to each other in the interaction. Pseudonyms are used for all names in the transcript.

Setting the Scene: A Game of School

In the playground, the researcher previously had observed and video-recorded six girls, Becky, Maddy, Cindy, Georgia, Ella and Macy, who were playing a pretend game of school. Each girl had taken a pretend role by drawing on the categories of student and teacher. Maddy, Cindy and Becky were teachers and the others played the role of students in the school. Playing the role of a 'student' required Georgia, Ella and Macy to follow the instructions and perform the duties outlined by the 'teachers'. The next day, the researcher asked the group of girls to watch and comment on the play episode in a video-stimulated account. At the beginning of the session, the researcher asked, 'what's going on there,' and the girls reported that a game of school was the activity being played. The conversation is picked up when the researcher comments on a disparity in how the game is reported and the lack of display of enjoyment.

Account 1: Accounting for unhappy faces in the game

1	R'cher:	'Cause I noticed di-you said it was fun to play the game
2		tch but Ma-Ella and Macy and Georgia (0.4) at one stage you
3		didn't have very happy fa:ces?
4		(0.5)
5		were you feeling?- how were you feeling then.
6		(1.2)
7	R'cher:	Georgia?
8	Georgia:	Well (0.4) um t sometimes we fi:ghted because Maddy always
9		be'ed the teacher because um Becky fighted becaused Mad-
10		.hhbecause she ne:ver getted to be the teacher because Ma-
11		was always the teacher and Cindy was always the teacher.
12	R'cher:	Ah,
13	Maddy:	Well then I let her be the teacher.
14	R'cher:	[An oh]
15	Macy:	[And we n]ever be the teacher.

This account starts with the researcher using a formulation as she comments on how the disparity between the girls reports of what has come so far, their reports of feeling happy playing the game of school and their unhappy faces (lines 1–5). In so doing, however, the researcher steers the agenda or what Heritage and Watson (1979) describe as '"fix" …(the) topic' (p. 149). As will be shown, this statement holds the girls accountable for their actions and is integral in directing the agenda for the remaining interview.

The pauses in the talk (lines 6) demonstrate a potential trouble in the interaction. The researcher selects Georgia to talk (line 7). Georgia hesitantly explains that Maddy is always the teacher. Her account starts by nominating that they all fought with Maddy, 'we fi:ghted because Maddy always be'ed the teacher' (lines 8–9). She then nominates Becky, who is not present at the interview, as the one who fights about being the teacher. Although initially Georgia named Maddy as always being the teacher, she later also includes Cindy (line 11), attempting to shift the course of the upset.

The shift from 'we' to naming Becky enables Georgia to competently nominate an absent party. This aversion may be the recognition that a dispute is not seen favorably by adults and particularly so by teachers. Georgia acts as an observer and reports Becky, the absent party, as being responsible for making complaints. Georgia instigates a complaint about Maddy on behalf of a third party not present. Similar to the 'he said-she said' scenarios identified by Goodwin (1990: 194), the provocation begins with relaying what one member accused another of in their absence.

Maddy treats Georgia's turn as a complaint and her next turn is a justification of her actions for a shared solution, 'Well then I let her be the teacher' (line 1). At the very beginning of the account, Maddy was named the owner of the idea for the game, a powerful position as the owner has control of the interactional decisions that follow. Another member, Macy, however, does not let this stand and further adds, 'And we never be the teacher' (line 15), effectively ignoring Maddy's comment. As interviewer, the researcher too lets this stand and continues with questioning about sad faces.

Account 2: 'So why did you keep playing if you were sad'

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23  R'cher:    So why did you [keep playing] (to Georgia)
24  Maddy:                    [jus-       ]
25  R'cher:    if you were sad playing the game,
26             (1.3) ((sound from Ella))
27  R'cher:    Ella?
28  Ella:      Um (0.5) .hhnobody (0.5) if you weren't (any)
29             show anybody's fa:ce and some'dy might come and
30             help you up?
31  Maddy:     Umm and (0.4) [we took them,]
32  R'cher:                  [In the ga:me?]A:h,so you were
33             showing a sad face [in the game but=]
34  Ella:                         [mmm.            ]
35  R'cher:    =you weren't really sad.
36             (0.5)
37  Georgia:   °Mhm°
38  R'cher:    Is that what was happening Georgia?
39             (0.8)
40  Georgia:   mm-[muh    ]
41  R'cher:       [Oh wou ]-what were you sad- (0.2) why did you
42             have a sad face?
43             (0.5)
44  Georgia:   We:ll (0.5)um (0.6) we:ll (0.6).mhht we didn't-we
45             all er: (0.6)we-we didn't-we didn't really cr:y
46             when our mums (0.5)and dads left.
47             (1.2)
48  R'cher:    N:o?
49             (0.6)
50  Georgia:   Because (0.3)  um (0.3)t- (0.7) she's talking
51             about um (0.7) it's (0.6) she's saying i-it's
52             bete::nding.
53  R'cher:    It w's pretending. ah no So you were pretending
54             in the game, (0.3)mmm But-but were you happy to
55             pla:y the game? or were you-[were you wanting to]
56             go somewhere else?
57  Georgia:                               [mmmaa              ]
58             (0.5)
59  Georgia:   Ah [we want (0.3) to     ]
60  R'cher:       ['cause Ella an' Macy ]an' Mad-an' you didn't
61             look very happy;
62             (1.7)
64  Georgia:   Ye:ah because um (0.5) .hhh because <Maddy didn't
65             really let us play someting?>
66  R'cher:    You wanted to be the teacher you said before.
67  Georgia:   No well we-we wanted to play >something else and
68             Maddy said we can't play a:nything else<
```

In this account, the researcher's next question asks more about the girls' playing of the game. She asks Georgia, 'So why did you keep playing if you were sad playing the game.' Maddy's talk overlaps with the researcher's talk, providing what might be some kind of objection (line 24). After the researcher's question, there is a 1.3-second gap. Ella makes a sound and the researcher selects her to respond. Ella's explanation suggests the action of being sad was part of the pretense of playing the game (28–30) At this point, Georgia interjects with quiet 'mhm' sound, perhaps suggesting some resistance against this account. This is a crucial point in the video-stimulated interaction. Georgia could have agreed with Ella's explanation, but Georgia's next turns (lines 44–52) explicitly reveal the different frames of reference the girls are operating in, pretend versus real.

As the researcher continues to pursue the notion of being happy (lines 53–56), a complaint about Maddy emerges from Georgia (64–68). Georgia's complaint moves from the pretend frame to the actual framing of the activity. A new social order is underway, one that has moved from an account of pretend crying children to a real frame where Georgia points out, 'Maddy didn't really let us play someting?' (line 68). Provided with the conversational space by the researcher to expand on the game play, Georgia presents herself as a competent informant by offering a complaint to do with the real frame. The complaint sequence continues and escalates as the conversation progresses.

Account 3: 'We're getting bored of it'

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83  Georgia:    =we al:ways play tha:t ga:me a:nd, and um Macy and me and
84              E:lla wanted to >play somewhere different because we
85              always play that game and we're getting bo:red
86              [of it<.     ]
87  R'cher:     [so why didju] sta:y
88              (1.2)
89  Georgia:    We:ll (0.5) tch (0.3) well she: (0.5) well Maddy didn't
90              want us to g:o.
91  R'cher:     A:h.
92  Maddy:      We did-I didn't want them to go cos I don't want them to
93              go ho:me.
94  R'cher:     O:h. So whose decision was it to sta:y then,
95              (0.5) ((Ella puts hand up))
96  R'cher:     Ella?
97  Ella:       Um becau:se they [al-  ]
98  Maddy:                       [No Ma]ddy's (0.2) say Maddy's. please?
```

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 99  Ella:      You al:ways play with us=
100  Maddy:     [yeh-]
101  Ella:      [=and] we never playing with [(someone-)]
102  Maddy:                                  [N:O        ] (0.5) mm (0.6)
103             it's not like that. She didn't mean-she didn't say tha:t.
104  Ella:      Yo:u al:ways play with us gu::ys,
105  Maddy:     No she didn't say that billy.
106  R'cher:    Well what well what are you trying to say Ella?
107  Ella:      Maddy and Cindy always plays with me and Macy and
108             Georgia.
109  R'cher:    A:[h.]
110  Maddy:       [No] we do:n't.
111  R'cher:    And how do you feel about that?
112  Ella:      Becos they always-
113  Maddy:     Oka:y I'm not going to listen if you're going to be like
114             this Ella,=
115  Ella:      =>I don't kno:w, I forgot [(all) I think-<]
116  R'cher:                              [How do you      ] fe:el about
117             that Ella?
118  Ella:      I don't kno:w. I forgo:t.
119  R'cher:    A:h. (1.2) [mmmhh]
120  Ella:                 [.hhh ] [hh. ((sighs))              ]
121  Georgia:                      [And an' I never get to play] with
122             Brigid because (0.2) she's actually my really best (0.3)
123             friend and I feel sad about it-
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As a complaint sequence is launched by Georgia (line 83), a history of discontent among the girls is evidenced with the descriptor of *always* locating the trouble source, '=we al:ways play tha:t ga:me' (line 85). Georgia supports her turn with an explanation to justify her complaint, presenting herself as a credible and competent participant.

The researcher orients to Georgia as a competent participant by inviting her to further account for her actions of playing the game, despite her lack of enjoyment of that game. Georgia's response makes relevant a rule nominated by the girls earlier: not going away. As a student in the game of school, Georgia is categorically bound to play the role of a student and to obey the instructions of the teacher in the game. However, if this comment is considered as real and not in the pretense frame, it refers to a code of conduct of how to be a friend. Georgia's explanation suggests that, as a member of the social group, she is morally obligated to follow the rules of the game and show alliance to the code of conduct.

When asked about who makes the decisions, Ella now complains about Maddy always playing with them. The use of an indexical expression (Heritage, 1984) in Maddy's response, it is not like 'tha:t' (line 103), is unclear to an outsider but is presented to Ella as one that she would

understand as an insider. Maddy here poses some doubt as to Ella's competence, suggesting that Ella has misunderstood the researcher's question.

The girls carry on the conversation between themselves. The researcher is now an observer to their interaction. Maddy's naming of Ella as a *billy,* saying 'No she didn't say that billy.' (line 105), suggests a characterization of Ella as a *silly billy.* In so doing, Maddy calls into question Ella's competence and explicitly portrays her as someone whose opinion should not be counted on, as she is *not* a competent member. The 'overall competence of one who would produce that talk' could be in doubt (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987: 210).

This matter has relational consequences. The girls have taken a number of turns to voice their complaints and accusations, highlighting the delicate interactional work being conducted in this interaction. Ella's alignment with Georgia and Macy has the potential to divide the group. Such a matter is not something that can be launched into lightly but rather one built over turns. Maddy cuts Ella's turn, telling her, 'Oka:y I'm not going to listen if you're going to be like this Ella,=' (lines 113–114). Maddy has predicted the trajectory of Ella's talk and uses what Church (2016) describes as a 'conditional threat.' This threat competently brings attention to Ella's telling and is possibly a pre-sequence to future courses of action of retelling.

Maddy's response to Ella's complaint moves the interaction forward to a multiparty dispute (Maynard, 1986). A dispute occurs in three parts, first turn is one child's action or talk, second another child responds negatively to first child's action or talk and third, the first child subsequently resists the complaint or control over their actions (Antaki, 1994; Cromdal, 2004; Danby & Theobald, 2012; Maynard, 1985a). Identified by Heritage and Watson (1979) as an upshot, this move by Maddy works to gag Ella. Ella immediately says, '=>I don't kno:w, I forgot (all) I think-<' (line 115). The use of *I don't know* can be used to bring the line of questioning to a close as Hutchby's (2002) study of talk in child counseling shows. If Ella continues with her accusation, she is displaying an affiliation to Georgia and Macy in front of Maddy, and her current relationship with Maddy is uncertain. The others are noticeably silent in this exchange.

Ella's turn, 'I don't know' is used as a justification for abandoning her complaint, which provides a momentary halt to the emerging dispute.

In so doing, Ella is orienting to the rules of play of 'not going away' and related moral obligations as a member of the peer group. Georgia's discussion about playing with her 'best' friend, Brigid, employs historical and local understandings as justifications. This dialogue is embedded with historical references that refer to past disputes and social orders, drawing on obligations as a member of the peer culture (to play with her 'best' friend).

Account 4: 'Stop talking about me'

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131  R'cher:     So why is Maddy the boss of you where there's
132              (0.8) places to pla:y?
133  Ella:       No only the teachers are the boss of this whole
134              school. Umm the whole teachers.
135  Georgia:    Um actually [the principal       ]
136  R'cher:                 [so wh-              ]
137  Maddy:                  [No the principal is.]
138  R'cher:     so who makes the decisions about where you pla:y
139              though?
140  Gerogia:    [The principals.]
141  Maddy:      [The principals.]
142  R'cher:     What about when you're outside.
143  Georgia:    [Uh             ]
144  Ella:       [The principal. ]
145  R'cher:     [If you wanned to] go somewhere else couldn't
146              you decide t[o go somewhere else?]
147  Georgia:                [A n d   t h e n  u m] (0.3) w'll I
148              [rea:lly wa:nt-]
149  Maddy:      [Stop  ta:lking] about me:.
150              (0.4)
151  Georgia:    < I re:ally, re:ally want to jis play 'iv a
152              different kind of friend¿ > .hhh I really wanna
153              play wiv [(0.5) Sawy-            ]
154  Maddy:               [STOP talking about me,]
155  Georgia:    Sawyer
156  Maddy:      I'm getting upset.
157  Georgia:    An an I never get to play with Sawyer.
158  R'cher:     Oh.
159  Ella:       And I never get to play with uh Sawyer as well.
```

Picking up the interaction a few moments later, the researcher instigates a line of the questioning about the social order of the group, naming Maddy as the 'boss' (line 131). Ella disagrees and says, 'Umm the whole teachers' (line 134). Ella's comment may refer to the real teachers, not the pretend game. Using membership categorization devices (Sacks, 1972), the girls collaboratively and competently reject the researcher's suggestion

of Maddy as the boss, by constructing the notion of 'boss' as the principal from the category group and institution, school. Here, we see the shift from a suggested boss of a pretend game, Maddy, to the real boss of the school, the principal.

In the next turn, the researcher appears to be displaying an epistemic standpoint about the interaction being discussed (see Antaki, 2002). The question, 'If you wanted to go somewhere else couldn't you decide to go somewhere else?' (line 145), is posed as a negative interrogative (Heritage, 2002) and suggests that the girls could not play anywhere else. This question, directed to Georgia and Ella, but not Maddy, separates the group and works to exclude Maddy. It also indicates to Maddy that the researcher is aligned with the perspectives of the other girls. Maddy picks up on this marginalization in her turn. She overlaps with Georgia's turn and, before any indication of the trajectory of Georgia's turn, says, 'Stop ta:lking about me:' (line 149). At that point, no one was talking about her. Maddy's directive may be responding to the girls' earlier talk about playing the game. Several times in the prior talk, her name is associated with negative implications and unequivocal complaints. It might act as an interactional warning to Georgia and the others that they are not following their moral obligations as members of the group. In the case of the latter, it is evidence that a code of conduct is at work in the interactional matters at hand here. Maddy's turn here can be viewed as a warning to the girls to follow this code.

Georgia responds by categorizing Maddy as a certain kind of friend, perhaps one that doesn't follow the suggested code of conduct. Georgia brings into play the moral obligations of the membership category of a friend, seen as an attempt to weaken Maddy's social status in the group. Georgia continues to tell about her desire to play with a 'different kind of friend' (line 152). This statement categorizes Maddy as one kind of friend, and Sawyer as another kind of friend. As both Georgia and Ella name Sawyer as someone with whom they would like to play, they competently make public their alignment and further marginalize Maddy's social position.

Account 5: 'I'm getting upset'

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160 Maddy:    [We:ll-jus STOP            ] [talking-  ]
161 Macy:     [An I never get to play with]
162 R'cher:                                [Wel-how do] what
163           do you think Maddy?
164 Maddy:    I just don't want them to talk about me anymore
165           'cause ~[it's getting me up-]~
166 R'cher:           [Well they're just t]alking about
167           playing with Sawyer; they're not really talking
168           about you are they?
169 Maddy:    Well they are because they're saying I don't get
170           to play with um Sawyer and ~they-that means they
171           are talking about me so I'm getting upset.~
172           (0.9)
173 R'cher:   Ah? Why are you getting upset?
174           (0.6)
175 Maddy:    Becos they're just being ~me:an (0.2) about me,~
176           (0.9)
177 R'cher:   What are they-how are they being mean?
178 Maddy:    'Cos they're saying (1.2) um (3.5)
179           well I don't know rea:lly what they're saying
180           but they're just being mean about me.
181 R'cher:   Oh, (.) is that-is that what's happening?
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As the account continues, Maddy portrays herself as a victim as she tells of her feelings of upset, using a tremulous voice. Addressing the other girls in the third person (line 164) is strategic, because it positions the other members of the interaction as an overhearing audience (see Heritage, 1985). Telling can be seen as a strategy to seek alignments from others (Maynard, 1985b, 1986; Theobald & Danby, 2017). Here, Maddy attempts to defend her position to the researcher. Maddy, the accused in the previous accounts, now narrates feelings of *getting upset* (line 165) and positions herself as the innocent party. There is a crossing here of who is now the offender and who is the offended (Goodwin, 1990). In so doing, Maddy attempts to recast herself.

The girls make known Maddy's reduced status in the group by reporting that they would rather play with others. Maddy makes explicit the particular moral order of the group at play, by drawing on previously reported obligations of the group (not shown here), not to talk about each other.

As the account continues, the researcher manages Maddy's claims of upset by further questioning her. In so doing, the researcher acknowledges her feelings and presents an opportunity for Maddy to give her version of events. A similar technique was observed by Danby and Theobald

(2012) in their study of a teacher managing two children's accounts of a playground dispute. Similar to the teacher in Danby and Theobald's (2012) study, the researcher, working in the category of teacher, shows respect to Maddy's competence and authority by asking her to further account for how she is feeling. Maddy takes this opportunity to respond and, in so doing, the affective display of upset seems to lessen, as noted by the more even voice as she takes her turn. The researcher here, acting in the membership category of teacher, is successful in momentarily disrupting the ongoing dispute exchange between the children.

Account 6: 'Well, now I'm upset'

```
178 Maddy:     'Cause they're saying (1.2) um (3.5) well I
179            don't know rea:lly what they're saying but
180            they're just being mean about me.
181            Oh, (.) is that-is that what's happening?
182 R'cher:    (0.6)
183 Georgia:   Not re:ally.
184 R'cher:    N[o.]
185 Maddy:      [N:]o you're making me mean now.
186 R'cher:    Not really, [Georgia-Georgia think-]
187 Maddy:                 [You're making me upset]
188 R'cher:    Georgia is saying that she doesn't think she's
189            rea:lly being mean, (1.3) [she's just] trying to
190 Maddy:                               [an I      ]
191 R'cher:    tell (0.7) me where she'd like to play (0.3)
192            >who she'd like to play with< Is that right
193            Georgia?
194            (0.5)
195 Maddy:     I just like playing school=
196 R'cher:    You like to play school do you?
197 Maddy:     =with [my friend.   ]
198 R'cher:          [Do the other-]Do you like to play school
199            then?
200 Georgia:         [No::::o.     ]
201 Ella:            [No::::o.     ]
202 Macy:            [No::::o.     ]
203 Georgia:   [I like to-]
204 Maddy:     [Well now  ] well now I'm ups:et.
205 Georgia:   I do like to play scho:ol (0.2) if I ne:ver play
206            scho:ol.
207 Maddy:     but we never play school now I changed my mind I
208            [never want to be the boss]
209 R'cher:    [°oh-so-°                 ]
210            (3.0)
211 Maddy:     Stop giving me (hop)
212            (2.8)
```

The dispute further intensifies in this account, as Maddy reframes her account to now portray the others as perpetrators. By explicitly identifying their action, 'being mean' (line 180), she categorizes Georgia, Ella and Macy as bullies. Maddy is doing what Maynard (1986) described as 'political' work here by soliciting support from a powerful third party, in this case the adult. *Meanness* is a tellable offense and one that typically stirs adults into action.

Maddy's affective state is evident in her mounting claims to being upset. She suggests that the comments that have been made are portraying her in a bad light, 'making me mean' (line 185), and she proposes a case of mistaken identity. There is a pronoun shift to '*you're* making me upset' (line 187), which competently attributes the blame to others. As the complaints continue, Maddy claims, 'Well now well now I'm ups:et' (line 204), the elongated and stressed talk also displaying her affected state. This narration about her escalation of feelings is achieved by its sequential placing: It comes directly after Georgia, Ella and Macy express, explicitly and strongly, their dislike of playing the game of school. In this way, Maddy's narrative sequence performs the social action of constructing a particular version of events that has to do with what Edwards (1999) described as blame and responsibility.

The narrative sequence affords Georgia, Ella and Macy the interactional space in which to back down from telling. Maddy's reported change of state works as a warning, and as a justification for her accusatory position and her view that she is offended, displays her competence achieving the upper hand in the dispute. The girls' complaint about Maddy has now been engineered by Maddy.

Maddy draws strategically on moral obligations from the membership category of classmates that were earlier articulated: that friends do not upset one another. This is an attempt to strengthen her social status in the group and solicit support from the other members. Similarly, in her Swedish study of the interactions of preadolescent girls in a playground, Evaldsson (2007) described talking about someone responsible for the trouble in her presence as a salient feature of the girls' talk. Evaldsson found that some members employed a taken-for-granted moral order that friends should not fight in order to advance their social status in the group.

It appears that Maddy's portrayal of herself as the victim has been effective for her social agenda. Georgia's next turn is a repair of a possible breach of moral order, 'I do like to play scho:ol (0.2) if I ne:ver play scho:ol' (lines 205–206). In this turn, Georgia gives an account for her not liking school—they play it too much. Georgia here competently diffuses the situation and attempts to appease Maddy, who responds now with a different line of defense. She addresses and makes explicit what she infers is the cause of the interactional trouble, 'but we never play school now I changed my mind I never want to be the boss' (lines 207–208). Maddy demonstrates to Georgia, Ella and Macy a willingness to act according to their particular code of conduct. The shared understanding made obvious here implies a previous history around this issue of being the boss.

Account 7: 'What do you think would be fair?'

```
213 R'cher:     So what do you think would be [fair? =]
214 Maddy:                                    [Can we] watch a
215             bit more?
216 Georgia:    [Um      ]
217 R'cher:     [=in prep?]
218             (1.0)
219 Georgia:    We:ll this what'd be fa:ir (.) we just take
220             turns to playing each [<one of the ga:mes?> ].
221 Macy:                             [°(and we can play)°  ]
222 Georgia:    So first we have Maddy's game first like so we
223             play school first then we play my game then we
224             play .hhhElla's game then we play Macy's game
225             and then we play Cindy's game.
226 R'cher:     Oh what did you say Macy?
227 Macy:       Uh
228 R'cher:     What did you just say? I didn't hear you.
229 Macy:       You have to be [kind to other people?   ]
230 Maddy:                     [Can we watch a bit more?]
231 R'cher:     You have to be kind to other people.
```

In the final account, the researcher here takes on the membership category and professional stock of knowledge associated with that of a teacher. In so doing, she orients to the typical rules of behavior in a classroom and attempts to restore a particular social order in the group. Promoting fairness is part of the learning outcome, *wellbeing*, outlined in the curriculum documents that support Australian early years settings (Department of Education, Employment & Workforce Relations [DEEWR], 2009).

Georgia responds to the researcher's question by detailing an elaborate plan for taking turns while they play (lines 222–225). In so doing, she indicates an alignment to a classroom order of wellbeing and fairness. Macy suggests being kind, which also invokes moral obligations of a classroom member and friend, responding to the category of teacher in play. Maddy's interruptions, suggesting they watch more of the video recording, may be a way of diverting further complaints about the sensitive issue to do with the playground game.

Discussion

Analyses revealed the competence of the children when asked to divulge and account for sensitive issues. Accounts do interactional work (Silverman, 1987). At the beginning of the interaction, the girls' responses portrayed an epistemic position, a claim to knowledge (O'Reilly, Lester, & Muskett, 2016), that indicated to the researcher that there was more to be told. The researcher's question design, use of formulations and continued pursuit of a topic jointly constructed the video-stimulated account and subsequent dispute. These actions offered some of the girls an interactional space to introduce their own relational agendas, which involved making complaints about one member of the peer group.

Making a complaint with an adult present was strategic. The complaint itself was an action constructed with others, and in front of others, with potential consequences for the complainants and the defendant. For example, talking about the offender in her presence meant in turn that the offender, the subject of the talk, could present a counter view or amend the situation. Through their inferences to rules, the girls attempted social exclusion and alignment with others and enforced their own social position. This resulted in a dispute arising and one of the girls, Maddy, claiming upset, a state that compromises feelings of wellbeing.

Children's disputes have implications for children's mental health and wellbeing and for researchers investigating children's these sensitive issues. Although Maddy did not actually cry, she did narrate a highly emotional state of upset, a potential concern for the researcher. Thus, the situation posed an ethical dilemma for the researcher, who worked between two

membership categories, that of a researcher and teacher. On the one hand, the researcher was interested to uncover more about the interactional trouble instigated, while still ensuring ethical practice in research. On the other hand, the researcher was also a teacher, who in this membership category has a duty of care with an interest in promoting positive relationships. As an experienced teacher, the researcher would have experience in routinely managing disputes. In this interaction, she was able to draw upon her pedagogic expertise and her 'professional stock of knowledge' (Peräkylä & Vehvilƒinen, 2003) of a teacher to acknowledge Maddy's upset while still enabling the other girls' interactional space to share their feelings. In the end, however, the membership category of teacher overruled the researcher's questioning, and she attempted to restore the social order of the classroom. Following ethical procedures associated with the project, the researcher also discussed with the teacher the upset that Maddy claimed and the possible support that the teacher might later provide.

Video-stimulated accounts provide children with an opportunity to discuss their play interactions, therefore acknowledging their competence in managing their relationships and manipulating social situations. There is an 'interdependency between children's 'voice' and their sociocultural environments' (Horgan, 2017: 247). Accounts of friendship, moral obligations and feelings of wellbeing arise after watching the play episode and these have consequences for their future relationships.

With more and more studies involving children as competent participants, it is likely that researchers will seek strategies for how to manage research encounters in ways that are ethical and sensitive to children's wellbeing. We provide three suggestions to support children's wellbeing in research encounters, while still recognizing their competence. First, providing opportunities for children to provide an account and have an opportunity to respond is important. This positions children to provide their views and be involved in analyzing their everyday lives. The researcher, however, should be aware of the complexities and consequences of such positioning, as identified by the growing number of studies (see Farrell, 2016; Horgan, 2017). Second, careful attention should be given to the researcher stance and question design. As shown here, question design in research shapes ongoing talk and subsequent interactional conditions.

Third, efforts should be undertaken to understand the symbiotic relationship between gaining children's perspectives and social environments. As shown, what is discussed has immediate and future implications for relationships and children's ultimate wellbeing. Fourth, this episode highlighted the importance for researchers to be well prepared for providing external and follow up support to participants. Such support might involve, for example, reference to teachers and parents, while still respecting the confidentiality of children's accounts.

This chapter has provided an illustration of how a research encounter, where children were invited to be competent informants of matters that affect their own lives, can unfold. Using an ethnomethodological lens and turn-by-turn conversation analysis, findings highlighted the children's orientation toward the contestation of their social rights. Meanwhile, the researcher was faced with a dilemma to do with respecting children's competence and agency, pursuing answers or ensuring wellbeing. It is hoped that the findings presented here will provoke further discussion to inform researchers who seek to conduct sensitive research.

Professional Reflection

Gillian Busch

Abstract

In this research encounter, I was struck by how the researcher managed the multiple membership categories to which she belonged and the obligations attributed to each category. I can see a number of strategies that the researcher uses that might support me in my research with children, such as acknowledging the feelings of the children or reading the non-verbal cues proffered by the children as they engage with each other and with the researcher. Here the researcher, perhaps drawing on her knowledge and obligations as a teacher, recognizes that the class teacher needs to be informed about the upset claimed by the child during the interview. This brings to the fore the link to professional ethics as outlined in the Early

Childhood Australia (ECA) *Code of Ethics*, which foregrounds the importance of negotiating 'children's participation in research, by taking into account their safety' (ECA, 2016).

Beginning to write a reflection in response to analysis of rich data required that I gain familiarity with both the data and the analysis provided in the chapter. So, in approaching this task my focus is on what I can learn from other researchers who, like me, are deeply interested in finding out about children's perspectives on matters of importance to them.

As both a teacher of young children and researcher of and with children, I was struck by how the researcher managed the multiple membership categories to which she belonged and the obligations attributed to each category. Although all researchers engage in thoughtful planning, which includes submission of ethics' approvals, the reality of doing the research, particularly with young children, is often unpredictable in nature.

One consideration when researching ethically is to ensure the wellbeing of the children. In this research encounter, I can see a number of strategies that the researcher uses that might support me in my research with children. This includes acknowledging the feelings of the children, reading the non-verbal cues proffered by the children as they engage with each other and with the researcher and also providing acknowledgements such as 'ah' or 'oh' that seem to encourage the children to continue with their talk about how they feel and why they feel that way. Although confidentiality is important in research, here the researcher, perhaps drawing on her knowledge and obligations as a teacher, recognizes that the class teacher needs to be informed about the upset claimed by the child during the interview. For me, this brings to the fore the link to professional ethics as outlined in the Early Childhood Australia (ECA) *Code of Ethics*, which foregrounds the importance of negotiating 'children's participation in research, by taking into account their safety' (ECA, 2016). In some ways, being a researcher and a teacher are not discrete undertakings, rather, each category carries with it obligations that collectively inform how I will approach my research with children.

Reflecting on the transcripts included in this chapter, it is apparent that the researcher has immense familiarity with the video data the children

were asked to discuss, and while it is not evident in the transcripts, it is apparent that the researcher's choice of video data to discuss with the children was also thoughtful. Thinking about this, I reflect on the way in which a conversation analytic approach urges researchers to have intimate familiarity with their data, and I consider my own work and the familiarity I have with data used for analysis. When using video-stimulated accounts with children, it seems that this familiarity with data is perhaps especially important. This is possibly because the researchers need to be able to select fragments and ask questions that enable the co-construction of accounts by the children and the interviewer. Familiarity with their data is also important to enable the researcher to construct formulations of what occurred and be able to recognize the agendas to which the members refer—both the local agendas (the unfolding disputes) and the earlier agendas referred to by the children. This capability would not be possible without that intimate familiarity with the data. Acknowledging that this familiarity is central to the production of video-stimulated accounts, the researcher commented that the video-stimulated conversations occurred the day following the recording. The closeness of the original recording time and children's opportunity to reflect seem to align with the methodology, but it does problematize how, as a researcher, I can decide on fragments to use with children and also become familiar with the data in a very short period of time. It might mean that this kind of work is done in consultation with a team of researchers—but of course many other implications might unfold if engaging in the process.

Following further examination of how the researcher managed the interaction with the children, I identified a number of features or strategies used by the researcher. Observations of how these interactional tools supported the children to co-construct video-stimulated accounts (Pomerantz, 2005) is now discussed.

First, the researcher used formulations (Sacks, 1995) of what happened in the video recording or what was said in a previous turn. For example, in account one, the researcher provides a formulation of a noticing of a mismatch between the observable emotions of the girls and what they indicate is happening. In posing the formulation, the researcher makes explicit what was being said or inferred by the children and prompts the children to account for why things occurred. So, in approaching the task

of engaging in video-stimulated accounts, as a researcher, it is important that I understand how formulations are used by researchers and that I am aware how such formulations may steer the agenda or the topic rather than follow the direction decided by the children. So, again, researching with children remains tricky as attempts are made to find out about their perspectives and supporting them to accomplish this task.

Second, in a number of accounts, the researcher explicitly requests clarification about what the children were talking about and why they acted as they did, which elicits an extended complaint by some of the members. Although the researcher requests this clarification, it is heard by the co-present girls and provides for the girls the perspectives of their co-players. Reflecting on what occurs as part of accomplishing such requests for clarification highlights for me the requirement that the researcher is fully present with the children during the interview process and is following the unfolding interaction. Although at first this sounds unproblematic, in placing myself in the position of the researcher, I can see how there would be a number of considerations regarding, the planned schedule of questions, the video fragments and the unfolding talk. It highlights the delicate and intellectual work of supporting the co-construction of accounts with children, requiring careful planning and deep engagement in situ.

Third, the researcher draws on her 'professional stock of knowledge' (Peräkylä & Vehvilƒinen, 2003) as a researcher and as a teacher, enabling child–child talk to unfold. In talk-in-interaction, the 'person who asks a question has a right to talk again' (Sacks, 1995: 49); however, in a multiparty setting, another person may self-select as a speaker. So, in account three, the researcher asks a clarification question and nominates the next speaker who takes a turn. Noticeable in this sequence is that the researcher does not interrupt the child–child interaction rather she lets the talk between the children escalate, and is an observer of the unfolding social order. As I read account three, I wondered how I might have responded given that a multiparty dispute unfolds and, as the researcher notes, it was a risky move. Although interested in how this is managed by the children, my sense is that the researcher would also have some concern about the wellbeing of the children, particularly given her previous role as an early childhood teacher where she would want to promote positive

relationships. This move by the researcher leads to interesting insights into children's peer culture.

As a researcher of children's everyday lives in family and educational settings, as yet, I have not used video-stimulated accounts (Pomerantz, 2005; Theobald, 2012). This method enables children to provide their standpoint and have their views listened to (United Nations, 1989) and aligns well with my own commitment to childhood competence and participation, and I am now motivated to develop a research project that uses video-stimulated accounts.

Overall, this chapter highlights the problem facing researchers where they strive to give children a 'voice' in research and in particular, when tackling sensitive topics, such as disputes and breakdowns of friendships between peers. The voicing of children's standpoint is important as it provides children with an opportunity to share what is important to them. For researchers and people who work with young children, it provides a window into children's social world and the matters that impact them.

Researchers may encounter ethical dilemmas regarding wanting to learn more about sensitive issues to do with children's relationships, but need to minimize potential upsets to ensure children's wellbeing. There is much to learn about how to engage in this type of research from this chapter and the challenges faced by the researchers as they worked with the children.

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Appendix 1: Transcription Notation

Gail Jefferson (2004) developed a transcription method to highlight the interactional features of conversational data. The following punctuation marks depict the characteristics of speech production, not the conventions of grammar, used in the transcripts.

did.	a full stop indicates a stopping fall in tone
here,	a comma indicates a continuing intonation
hey?	a question mark indicates a rising intonation
together!	an exclamation mark indicates an animated tone
<u>you</u>	underline indicates emphasis
¿	an inverted question mark indicates slightly rising intonation
°hey°	quiet speech
()	the talk is not audible
(house)	transcribers guess for the talk
⋮	a vertical ellipse indicates that intervening turns at talk have been omitted
(0.3)	number in second and tenths of a second indicates the length of an interval
So:::rry	colon represents a sound stretch
Dr-dirt	a single dash indicates a noticeable cut off of the prior word or sound
hhh	indicates an out-breath
.hhh	a dot prior to h indicates an in-breath
[hello]	brackets indicate overlapped speech
<stop>	speech is delivered slower than normal
>come<	speech is delivered faster than normal
funny	smiley voice
~upset~	tremulous voice

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