

A Qualitative Interview With Young Children: What Encourages or Inhibits Young Children's Participation?

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Abstract

The goal of every qualitative interview is to produce rich data. Inducing storytelling is a challenge in every interview. Interviews with young children (ages 3–6) present an additional challenge because of perceived power differences between children and adults. This research examines how interviewers' questions and expressions encourage or inhibit children from telling their stories. We extracted 1,339 child interviewee–adult interviewer turn exchanges from a national study on children's perspectives on risk and protection ($N = 420$) and analyzed them in two steps. First, we categorized the interviewers' questions and expressions and children's responses. Seven categories were found for interviewer expressions and five for children's responses. We then examined the relationship between interviewer categories and children's responses. The categories that produced the richest data were encouragement, open-ended questions, and question request. Sequence of utterances and closed-ended questions produced the least storytelling. We did not find significant differences based on a child's gender with regard to the interviewer categories. The results and implications for researching young children are addressed.

Keywords

children's perspectives', qualitative interview, rich data, power relations, child-friendly methods

Introduction

Major conceptual shift in scholars' understanding of the nature of childhood and children's worlds informed by changes in theory and policy. The “new” Sociology of Childhood (Qvortrup, 2002) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, developed by the United Nations (UN, 1989), both emphasize children's right to express their views and to influence their own lives. Consequently, scholars and practitioners increasingly emphasize the importance of studying children's perspectives and including their voices in academic, practice, and policy-related discourses.

Researchers found that very young children (ages 3–6) not only hold their own views and opinions but also are capable of expressing valuable perspectives regarding their contexts and worldviews (Clark & Statham, 2005; Dayan & Ziv, 2012). This notion positions children as capable and valuable experts in their own lives (Clark, 2004). They thus possess ideas, perspectives, and interests that may be best studied by researchers who interact with children (Clark & Moss, 2001; Mayall, 2000). This perspective differs from classical childhood research. While children were previously regarded as dependent,

incompetent, and acted upon by others, they are perceived now as social actors (Elden, 2013).

Although many scholars aim to conduct high-quality research with children, qualitative research with very young children remains a significant challenge. This article summarizes an analysis of interactions between interviewers and children in order to shed light on the difficult task of researching young children's perspectives. Our recent study on children's perspectives of risk and protection in different neighborhoods in Israel (Wahle, Ponizovsky-Bergelson,

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Dayan, Erlichman, & Roer-Strier, 2017) evoked our curiosity regarding the adult–child exchange during the qualitative interview. Although all of the interviewers received extensive and thoughtful training, we noticed differences between both the interviewing practices and the richness of the data obtained. In analyzing these interviews, we aimed to answer the following research questions: (1) What encourages a young child to participate (providing richer data)? and (2) What inhibits young children’s responses (resulting in less complete data)?

Interviews With Children as a Qualitative Method

Einarsdottir (2007) describes interviews as the most common form of data collection in children’s research, although it can be a complex and challenging task (Clark, 2010). In conducting a qualitative interview with a child, the guidelines for interviews with adults, such as developing rapport, using clear and understandable questions, adopting the terms used by informants, and attentive listening, are all relevant (Arksey & Knight, 1999). However, when interviewing young children, additional methodological and practical considerations should be taken into account (Dayan, 2008; Hatch, 1990). These considerations relate to the inherently greater power that adults hold in their relationships with children (Ailwood, 2011; Cannella, 1997; Clark, 2010; Einarsdottir, 2010); adults are used to telling children what to do and express less interest in young children’s opinions on how to run their worlds. From an early age, adults ask young children questions even though they already know the answers. Children thus learn that most questions asked by adults are just “test questions” to assess knowledge rather than to truly hear their opinions (Brooker, 2001; Hatch, 1990). Due to these power-based relations, children tend to respond to adult questions in an obligatory manner, whether or not they have an opinion. They wish to please adults by producing the “right” answers even to nonsense questions (Einarsdottir, 2007; Hatch, 1990; Hughes & Grieve, 1981 as cited in Brooker, 2001; Theobald et al., 2015). Another adult–child challenge is that the interviewer often assumes a parental or educator role when they control children’s behavior. Ailwood (2011) described her difficulties as an interviewer: “I considered my interviews a profound failure. I slipped into ‘teacher mode’ attempted to keep order, manage the children, the discussion and the sharing out of the photos the children had taken” (p. 24). Fleeer and Li (2016) mentioned that many researchers have commented on the difficulty of engaging young children in the interview process and that the question–answer format is less successful than entering into a dialogue or extended conversation: “We need to conceptualize the interview as a dialogue and conversation, where children feel comfortable in putting forward their own thoughts” (p. 354). With the aim of creating a dialogue and reducing the influence of the power–submissive relationships, researchers have suggested methods that are considered child friendly and encourage children to express themselves more openly. The most common methods are using photos and drawings (Ailwood, 2011; Groundwater-Smith, Dockett, & Bottrell, 2015; Sahimi

& Said, 2011). Asking children to take their own photographs or to decide by themselves what to draw allows them more control over the course of the study (Einarsdottir, 2007; Fleeer & Li, 2016). Drawings and photos are used to generate a narrative and interpretation of the children’s choices (Einarsdottir, 2007). Questioning in these studies is usually a dialogue between the researcher and the children about the “content” of the chosen photograph or drawing (Fleeer & Li, 2016). The inclusion of text explanation, interpretation, or narrative in visual-/arts-based methods is important because the artifact can be interpreted in multiple ways, which may not reflect the meanings implied by the creator (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2015).

Einarsdottir (2014) explains that the aim of asking the children to take pictures was not to analyze the pictures or look at them as true descriptions of daily life but rather to encourage and inform conversation between the child and the researcher. Liebenberg (2018) similarly explains that photos are used as prompts in interviews. The research described in this study utilized a similar method. Although scholars mention that interviewers’ skills are critical to interviewing children, most research reports focus on the research procedures rather than the interviewing process and the interviewers’ skills (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2015).

The interview setting is another aspect of the discussion. The research context might affect what children will talk about (Clark, 2010; Fargas-Malet, Mcsherry, Larkin, & Robinson, 2010). Clark (2010) recommended conducting interviews outdoors or in a familiar environment or during play. She also noted that some children will only respond if asked in a group, while others will only answer in the one-to-one situation (Clark, 2010). Clark also discusses the issue of recording the interview (Dunphy & Farrell, 2011; Te one, 2011).

The literature includes some recommendations regarding “How to start the interview.” For example, “Tell me about . . .” (Clark, 2010) or “I’m really looking forward to hearing your ideas . . . and whatever you say to me today, whether it’s a good thing or a bad thing about playtime, it won’t matter” (Dunphy & Farrell, 2011, p. 132). However, there are less descriptions and recommendations regarding the communication during the interview.

Clark (2010) suggested skipping “why” questions, which often lead to a refusal to answer the question. Dunphy and Farrell (2011) emphasized listening to children’s ideas, which include expressions such as body language, facial expressions, and silence, instead of the conventional question- and answer-style interview. Fargas-Malet, Mcsherry, Larkin, and Robinson (2010) suggested using nonverbal behaviors like eye contact and sounds like “mm” or “really” and head nods, as well as verbal prompts, such as “tell me more about that.” They also recommend avoiding closed questions and using more open questions. Tay-Lim and Lim (2013) elaborated their insights from the interview experience. They described several strategies: Utilizing open-ended questions, which encourages the child to reflect more deeply on her circumstances and giving the child room to pursue her ideas. Throughout the

conversation, the interviewer allowed the child to take the lead and to explore her emerging ideas, valuing the child's ideas. The interviewer utilized interjectory phrases throughout the conversation to demonstrate her keen interest and her respect for the child's developing ideas; this allowed the conversation topics to emerge from the child. She also utilized probing questions to extend the child's thinking, affirming the child's ideas with phrases including "Oh, I see," "Okay," and "Well this sounds interesting," and gestural postures.

Although existing literature relates to various issues that affect the quality of interviews, like the format of the interview, its location, its opening question or statement, and preferable questions and responses, data referring to which questions or expressions prompt rich and interesting stories from children have yet to be explored. Clark (2010) stated that researchers still face the challenge of finding the best questions and expressions in order to give young children the maximum opportunity to share their ideas and to elicit rich data.

The present article embraces this challenge. The research questions are "Which interviewers' questions and expressions encourage children to participate and provide rich data?" and "What inhibited children's responses?"

Method

The Research Context

The authors are four researchers from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, specializing in research on children's perspectives, qualitative and mixed-methods research, early childhood studies, and issues of multiculturalism. The study was supported by the Israel Science Foundation and approved by the Ministry of Education and the Hebrew University.

The current analysis was done on a data set extracted from a qualitative study exploring the perspectives of risk and protection among 420 children (aged 3–6) in different neighborhoods in Israel (Wahle et al., 2017). Children's perspectives were studied by the 11 master's students trained by the authors.

The interviewers who took part in the study came from various backgrounds including early childhood education, social work, and psychology. All of them received training in conducting interviews with children. They also participated in simulations with each other and conducted a pilot interview, which was followed by additional practice. The interviewers utilized three methods to encourage the children to present their perspectives about risk and protection: photo elicitation (Lal, Jarus, & Suto, 2012), drawings (Dockett, Einarsdottir, & Perry, 2011; Fleeer & Li, 2016), and group discussion (Fleeer & Li, 2016).

The trained interviewers collected the data in three steps: (1) Inside their kindergarten and in the outdoor yard, each child was asked to take two photos: first, of risk ("What in your opinion places children at risk [danger]?") and later, of protection ("What protects [defends] children, what makes children feel safe, secure or protected?"). Risk and protection were alternated to prevent order bias. In the second step, children

were asked to choose the best photograph describing "risk" and the best describing "protection" and to explain their choice. They offered their explanations as part of a group discussion with two or three other children. Presenting to other children sparked a conversation between them and encouraged them to elaborate and extend their arguments.

For the third step, children were asked to draw a picture. The drawing provided them with the ability to refer to the elements of risk and protection that were imaginary or to allow those children who could not take photographs at the location to participate. Each child received crayons and a sheet of paper divided into two parts (Einarsdottir, 2007) and was asked to draw "What in your opinion protects children?" on one side and "What in your opinion places children at risk?" on the other. Sides were alternated. Upon finishing their drawings, children were asked to explain their pictures (e.g., Tay-Lim & Lim, 2013). All comments and conversations were recorded and transcribed.

The interviews were conducted mostly in Hebrew; bilingual translators translated those that were conducted in Arabic and French. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The authors served as the research team and together designed the procedure, guided the interviewers, and were closely involved in data analysis (Liebenberg, 2018).

Consent process. The interviewers contacted different kindergartens based on previous acquaintances. The kindergarten teachers sent parents letters describing the goals and procedures of the study along with consent forms which they signed. Informed consent was also obtained from the children. They were asked to help the researcher understand what places children at risk and what makes them feel protected and safe. After confirming that they understood the purpose and the process of the study, their agreement was recorded on an audiotape. Children's participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study at any stage of the data collection. Moreover, the researchers were instructed to ensure support and counseling for the children if needed.

Data Analysis

The authors conducted a secondary mixed-methods analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) for the current article through ongoing discussion regarding the formulation of the categories for interviewer questions and interviewee responses. They conducted the analysis through the following steps:

1. *Open coding:* For a small number of interviewers, researchers identified the categories that emerged organically from the data rather than imposing predetermined categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through this process, they established uniform categories that reflected the data and could be applied consistently to all the following interviews (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process revealed that in order to understand the context of the conversation between the

Table 1. Categories for Interviewer Expressions and Children Responses.

Interviewee Interviewer	Yes/No (%)	Reporting (%)	Explanation (%)	Storytelling (%)	Silence (%)	Total (%)
Closed-ended question	183 (36.02)	147 (28.93)	83 (16.33)	74 (14.56)	22 (4.33)	508 (37.93)
Question request	11 (10.09)	27 (24.77)	35 (32.11)	31 (28.44)	5 (4.58)	109 (8.14)
Open-ended question	25 (6.8)	48 (13.07)	168 (45.77)	113 (30.79)	13 (3.54)	367 (27.40)
Sequence of utterances	26 (19.54)	45 (33.83)	38 (28.57)	16 (12.03)	8 (6.01)	133 (9.93)
Request	1 (1.38)	31 (43.05)	21 (29.16)	15 (20.83)	4 (5.55)	72 (5.37)
Encouragement	9 (9.18)	16 (16.32)	32 (32.65)	38 (38.77)	3 (3.06)	98 (7.31)
Silence	—	1	2	—	—	3 (0.22)
Total	255	315	379	287	55	

adults and the children, the interviewers' questions need to be analyzed together with the children's responses.

Ten of the 110 interviews conducted by 11 interviewers were randomly assigned to each researcher. These 10 interviews included 1,339 child interviewee–adult interviewer turn exchanges¹: 675 were given by boys (50.41%) and 664 by girls (49.58%). Fifty-four percent ($n = 723$) were explanations of drawings, and 46% ($n = 616$) were explanations of photographs (see Table 1). The interviews provided a wide range of insights regarding children's perceptions of risk and protection. To enhance the reliability of our own analysis, each researcher shared her analysis of the interviews with the other researchers. This process of triangulation (Patton, 1999) facilitated cross-referencing of different perspectives through the analysis. The process of triangulation also encouraged researchers' participation in the deliberations and the consideration of additional categories that emerged from the text and enriched the categories definitions for the analysis. The triangulation contributed to the precision and unification of the analysis and enhanced the study's rigor.

2. *Crystallization of the analysis*: After we analyzed the interviews, we discussed the categories in order to reduce, consolidate, and refine the categorical definitions that emerged from the interviewers' questions and the children's responses.
3. *Standardization of the analysis*: After the analysis was completed, one researcher reviewed the overall interview analysis for standardization.

Findings

The findings present the categories established for the child interviewee–adult interviewer turn-exchanges analyses. Seven categories for interviewer expressions and five categories for children's responses emerged.

Interviewer categories included:

1. *Closed-ended questions* have a single option for an answer, usually "yes" or "no" or that specify the given information: "Is there anything else you want to tell me?," "Who fell?," and "From where is he trying to jump?"²

2. *Question request* is a type of closed-ended question formalized as a request: "Can you explain what is 'protecting'?", "Can you tell me that again?," and "Can you tell me about the tree?"
3. *Open-ended question* cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no" or specific information; they thus present the child with an opportunity to relay information: "Why do you think it protects children?," "How does the umbrella protect us?," "What happened to the girl?."
4. *Sequence of utterances* refers to two or more different statements or questions that cannot be replied to with a single response. In practice, it was difficult for interviewees when the interviewer used a sequence of utterances. They had to reply with several different responses: "What can you tell me about this drawing? You say it is the most dangerous. Why is it the most dangerous thing for children?," "How lovely! Home, ornaments and table," "And it's not dangerous, is it? That's for sure," "What's in the house that's safe? What's safe?"
5. *Request*: "Please tell me about the photograph you took."
6. *Encouragement* refers to giving the interviewee support and confidence, which included responses such as approval—"I see that," compliment—"Wow, well done!," "This is very interesting!," repeating the child's answer—"Oh, vegetables protect children," agreement—"You are right, it is very risky," and nodding—"ahhh," "mmmm."
7. *Silence*.

Children's responses were classified into five categories:

1. *Yes/No/I do not know and/or refusal to respond*
2. *Reporting*—usually in the style of a list: "A car and a fence," "It's the ladder, the swings and the slide," "Arabs here and Jews here."
3. *Explanation*—an account making something clear and understandable: "Because if there is a fence with dangerous spikes, one can get a scratch," "You can get hit," "Because there are no bars."
4. *Storytelling*—the telling of an event: "My mother and my father protect me; they keep me safe at home," "My



Figure 1. Drawing risk.

brother took a hammer. My little brother, Abraham, who is a baby, took a hammer and broke it, and he fell.”

5. *Silence*—the absence of speech.

We referred to these five categories in a hierarchical way in an ascendant order, from responses providing little data to responses providing richer data: silence, yes/no, reporting, explanation, and storytelling.

As can be seen in Table 1, the categories that produce the richest data were encouragement (38.77%), open-ended questions (30.79%), and question request (28.44%). An example of encouragement turn exchange is: Q: “Very interesting.” A: “That he went here and suddenly he left. The bus drove here and . . . he fell.” Another example: Q: “Ahh.” A: “That if we play I run there and they cannot catch me and in hide and seek you can hide and cannot be found.”

An example of open-ended question turn exchange is: Q: “What is dangerous?” A: “It can fall on someone, he throws stones that can fall on someone.” Another example is: Q: “Why is it dangerous?” A: “Because if a Jew comes to the road . . . If a car comes and he’s still on the road and . . . he runs over him. He can die.”

An example of question request turn exchange is: Q: “Can you tell me about the picture?” A: “That umm once I went to Jerusalem when it was snowing. It was fun so that’s why it protected me from the heat and the heat was not good for me, so it protected me. Then I went back home and it was hot. It was not good, but I could not go to the snow again . . .” Another example: Q: “Do you want to tell me something about this painting?” A: “Computers protects us because they know how to make tricks and how to do a lot of things. Also in the army computers protect us from enemies, and we also saw at the police station that they watched the cameras on computers screens, it is very advanced.”

Contrastingly, sequence of utterances (14.56%) and closed-ended questions (12.03%) produced the least storytelling. An example for sequence of utterances in a turn exchange:

Q: “And that is dangerous. What else do you want to tell me about this painting? Is there anything else? That is all?” A: “Slide.” Another example: Q: “And then there will be a fire too? And then how poor is that?” A: “Because that . . . I said already.”

An example of closed-ended question turn exchange: Q: “So, is it dangerous for children? A trap?” A: “Yes.” Another example: Q: “What did you paint?” A: “A lion.”

Below is an example that illustrates the categorization within the context of a child explaining his drawing on risk in an interview (Figure 1)

Q: “What did you paint here?” (Closed-ended question) A: “A car, a fence (reporting).”

Q: “Is that protection or risk?” (Closed-ended question) A: “Risk (reporting).”

Q: “And why is this dangerous for children?” (Open-ended question) A: “If there is a fence with sharp edges then it can give a scratch.” (Explanation)

Q: “Is it dangerous for children?” (Closed-ended question) A: “Yes.” (Yes/No)

Q: “And what is dangerous in a car for children?” (Open-ended question) A: “That if a child . . . the driver does not see well then he can cause an accident, he can run something over. Then the second car, if the window is open, the child can be thrown out the window . . . all sorts of things.” (Storytelling)

Q: “So, a car is always dangerous for children or just sometimes?” (Closed-ended question) A: “Only sometimes.” (Yes/No)

Q: “When do you think it is dangerous?” (Open-ended question)

A: “When driving on a fast road.” (Explanation)

Interviewer categories that mostly produce yes/no responses were closed-ended questions (36.02%) and sequence of utterances (19.54%). On the other hand, requests and open-ended questions produced the least yes/no responses (1.38% and 6.8%, respectively). Interviewer categories that mainly produce explanations of responses were open-ended questions (45.77%), encouragement (32.65%), and question request (32.11%), while closed-ended questions and sequence of utterances produced the least explanation responses (16.33% and 28.57%, respectively). Interviewer categories that mostly produced reporting responses were requests (43.05%), sequence of utterances (33.83%), and closed-ended questions (28.93%), while open-ended questions and encouragement were the categories that produced the least responses (13.07% and 16.32%, respectively). Lastly, interviewer categories that mostly produce silence were sequence of utterances (6.01%) and requests (5.55%), whereas the categories that produced the least silent responses were open-ended questions (3.54%) and encouragement (3.06%).

In order to check whether there was any difference in children’s responses between photography and gender as well as drawing and gender, a χ^2 test was performed to examine the relation between the child’s gender and method type (photography and drawing; see Table 2). The relation

Table 2. Interview Statements by Method and Interviewee Gender.

Interviewee Gender	Drawings	Photographs	Total (%)
Boys	370	305	675 (50.41)
Girls	353	311	664 (49.58)
Total (%)	723 (54)	616 (46)	1,339

between these variables was not significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,339) = .3638, p = .544$.

Next, we analyzed each interviewer category with regard to the interviewee's gender and method (drawing and photographs). None of the categories had significant relations between gender and method: for storytelling, $\chi^2(1, N = 311) = .166, p = .683$; for reporting $\chi^2(1, N = 328) = .056, p = .813$; for yes/no $\chi^2(1, N = 251) = .758, p = .384$; for silence $\chi^2(1, N = 63) = .739, p = 0.39$; and for explanation $\chi^2(1, N = 386) = 0.107, p = .744$.

Discussion

Most qualitative researchers take for granted that open-ended questions are more likely to provide richer data (or induce more storytelling) than closed-ended questions. The current study introduced to the dichotomy of open- versus closed-ended questions discussed in the literature, more elaborated categories of interviewer utterances. These categories may hopefully inform researchers and further explored in future studies of children's interviews. Seven categories were found for interviewer expressions and five categories for children's responses.

The results indicate that within the possibilities of open-ended questions, interviews should include more expressions of encouragement and ask more questions that express a request. Interviewers should be encouraged to avoid a sequence of questions and expressions as well as closed-ended questions.

In answering our research question, "what questions and expressions of the interviewer encouraged the child to participate in providing richer data?", we found that the answers were the following categories: encouragement, open-ended questions, and question request. In addition, open-ended questions produced the least yes/no responses, and open-ended questions and encouragements resulted in the least silence. The findings support Tay-Lim and Lim's (2013) study that recommended using open-ended questions that encourage children to reflect more deeply on their circumstances, leaving them room to pursue their ideas. They also suggest affirming the child's ideas, which echoes our finding that encouragement supports richer data. Interestingly, in contrast to Clark's (2010) advice to refrain from using "why" questions when interviewing young children, in our study "why" was found to be among the variations of open-ended question that received "explanation" responses. We therefore chose to consider it a useful expression. It may be that for the interviewee, the question "why" communicates the notion that the interviewers genuinely do not

know the answer and thus children are willing to enlighten them. Why questions may be combined with encouragement. "Please can you tell me why? I really want to know."

As Hatch (1990) and Brooker (2001) indicated based on a power relations argument, children are used to adults asking them questions to which the adults already clearly know the answers. Close-ended questions may be reinforcing the child's notion that s/he is undergoing a test and thus can prohibit elaboration. On the other hand, as suggested by Flerer and Li (2016), open-ended questions and encouragement may transform the interview into a dialogue/conversation, where children feel more comfortable in putting forward their own thoughts. Therefore, we recommend that adults reassure the children that they want to learn about their views and that their views matter and repeat this notion throughout the interview.

When we analyzed what inhibited children's responses, we found that sequence of utterances and closed-ended questions were the categories that produced the least storytelling and most formal yes/no responses. These categories also produced the least explanations of responses. More children reacted with silence followed sequence of utterances and requests, which might be overwhelming. It appears that children and adults alike do not respond well to sequence of utterances and closed-ended questions.

This finding raises an important question: Why do trained and supervised interviewers continue to use sequence of utterances and closed-ended questions when they know that those do not work? Although the data we received from 420 children revealed a multitude of perspectives regarding risk and protection, complex views, stories, and opinions (e.g., Wahle et al., 2017), almost 40% of the utterances asked by well-trained interviewers were close-ended questions.

This result shows that despite the common knowledge that closed questions inhibit rich data elicitation in interviews with children, there may be a natural tendency to ask closed questions. This tendency may be related to adults' view that children cannot articulate sophisticated opinions and construct new knowledge but rather report knowledge learned from adults.

Researchers may also not allow children enough time to answer questions. Children need time to think and come up with answers to adult questions; adults may be impatient or they may mistakenly think that the time taken by children to think is silence, refusal, or not knowing the answer. We are cautious in elaborating on interviewee and interviewer silences as there were very few of them.

Dunphy and Farrell (2011) suggested telling the child at the beginning of the interview that there are no right or wrong answers and the child should state his or her own opinion. We suggest that this position should be repeated throughout the interview followed by much encouragement. We found that different kinds of encouragement such as giving the interviewee support and confidence by approval, compliments, repeating the child's answer, agreeing, and nodding all led to increased verbal responses.

It should be noted that there were differences among the interviewees going beyond the analyzed categories. The

findings also include examples of children stories or elaborated answers after a closed-ended question or a yes/no answer that followed an open-ended question. Moreover, sometimes closed-ended questions can be useful, especially if the interviewer wants to make sure that he or she understands the child's response.

This study also explored whether there are child gender differences regarding the interviewer categories. No significant gender differences were found, in any of the categories for interviewer expressions. This result is in contrast to a large body of literature claiming that young girls acquire language faster and earlier than boys, producing their first words and sentences sooner speaking more, and accumulating larger vocabularies faster (Coates, 2004; Swann, 1992).

Dockett, Einarsdottir, and Perry (2011) regarded *methodology* as conceptual approach according to which we seek to study social phenomena. They defined *methods* as procedures and techniques for data collection and analysis. Another contribution of our study stems from the comparison between the two methods used (drawing and photographs). When we debated which method elicited better or increased children responses, we found no differences between photos and drawings. This finding may suggest that the interviewer–child interaction rather than the methods holds central importance in documenting children's perspectives. Photo elicitation as a method may have pros and cons. Photos are easier to obtain from young children and do not depend on children's desire or ability to draw. Many of the children who participated in our study were excited about taking pictures with a camera. However, children photograph what is photographable (Tunstall, Tapsell, & House, 2004, p. 202): While photographs were effective at capturing the physical layout of places, many aspects of social action cannot be photographed. For instance, social dangers or peaceful atmosphere is not easy to capture in photographs. In addition, choice of what to photograph is influenced by the adult authority since adults often control and restrict children's spatial movements (Barker & Smith, 2012). Other disadvantages, such as issues of confidentiality and the use of cameras in inappropriate ways, should be mentioned as well. The use of drawings and photos as two complementary methods may overcome some of the above disadvantages.

Our analysis has several limitations. While using methods of encouragement like nonverbal behaviors, that is, eye contact and sounds like “mm” and head nods (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010) may be of great importance, we did not consistently collect, document, and code this information. Further studies should examine interviewer nonverbal expressions by videotaping them and analyzing the effects on the quality and quantity of information received from young children.

Another limitation of the current analysis is related to the lack of cultural and contextual perspective. Adult–child communication varies across cultures and social groups. The field of research documenting children's perspectives has been influenced by democratic ideology and the UN (1989) resolution regarding children's rights. Both suggest that children have

rights and should be regarded as active partners in their world (Dayan, 2010; Einarsdottir, 2010). However, in many cultures, children are not viewed as equals to adults (e.g., Ben-Arie, Khoury-Kassabri, & Haj-Yahia, 2006). In some social groups, children are still socialized to refrain from talking in the presence of adults. Therefore, a more sensitive consideration of the culture and context of children is crucial for the understanding the nature of adult–child interactions and their influence on children's perspectives.

Implications

This study has several practical implications that may help researchers studying children's perspectives. First, training should include time for interviewers to reflect on their expectations regarding an interview with a child. Interviewers should also practice giving the interviewee time to answer and preparing supportive expressions (e.g., “your answer is really important to me,” “I don't know and would like to learn your point of view”). Finally, they should practice sentences that reflect patience as a respond child silence (i.e., “you can take your time, I will wait until you are ready”).

One of the main findings of the study is that encouragement elicited the richest data. While professionals working with young children may know this, it is important that researchers interviewing children stress how interested they are to hear what the children have to say, how important this information is to them and that the child is appreciated for his or her original contribution.

Conclusion

Interviews with young children may bare commonalities with adult interviews but they also involve unique challenges to be considered in training and planning for research. The child–adult interaction is central to these challenges and is affected by power-based relations including children's inhibitions and adults' lack of trust that young children are able to report important information. In a growing area of childhood sociology, further research with young children and an in-depth exploration of the most beneficial interactions and effective data collection are warranted.

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Notes

1. As the aim of the study was to explore what utterances made by the interviewer encouraged children to provide rich data and what utterances inhibited children's responses, we assumed that different utterances would lead to different responses. Thus, the unit of

analysis was the turn exchange between the interviewer and the child.

2. All citations are extracted from the child interviewee–adult interviewer turn-exchanges statements that were analyzed.

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