Qualitative Inquiry

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What is This?

Ethical Mindfulness and Reflexivity: Managing a Research Relationship With Children and Young People in a 14-Year Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR) Study

Jo Warin[1]

Abstract

This article draws on the articulation of a value for reflexivity that has accumulated within qualitative methods debates in the past decade. It demonstrates how reflexivity is interwoven with the concept of ethical mindfulness. The argument has developed from a consideration of the ethical dilemmas that were a salient aspect of an ongoing research relationship with children and young people during an unusually long longitudinal study, undertaken from the time the 10 participants were aged three to seventeen. The study explores the ongoing creation of a personal self during this time and draws on a range of ethnographic methods. The author focuses on two aspects of the "ethics in practice" that imbued her research relationships: the gaining and maintaining of consent, and the matching of methods to children's interests. The author makes a series of recommendations about how to *do* reflexivity, incorporating a set of guidelines for informed consent with children. The author concludes that reflexivity and ethical mindfulness are interdependent concepts, an understanding that is particularly valuable for child-focused researchers.

Keywords

Reflexivity, children, longitudinal, ethics in practice

Introduction

Ethics and reflexivity are closely intertwined within every stage of qualitative research. A constructive discussion about the connections between them has been conducted in the pages of *Qualitative Inquiry* in recent years (Etherington, 2007; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). This debate has illuminated ethical concerns in a longitudinal research study I have conducted with children and young people. The interdependency between these two key values has been a very salient aspect of this particular study due to its longitudinal nature together with its focus on children and young people. In this article I discuss some of the dilemmas and conflicts that I have experienced as "ethics in practice" in carrying out this research, to illustrate and further examine the linkage between reflexivity and ethics.

Ethical dilemmas were part and parcel of this study throughout its duration because my participants were children and young people. Researchers working with this participant group are often exceptionally sensitive to ethical anxieties due to the potential for exploitative relationships. The continuation of my study depended on the management

and maintenance of positive relationships, so I was particularly concerned with questions about rewards and threats to the child participants, and considerations about the nature of consent, including the interaction between child and parental consent, in addition to concerns about confidentiality and anonymity. While many of these interwoven ethical and methodological questions appear to be specific to studies with children and young people, they also apply to qualitative studies with adults since they turn a spotlight on the relational aspects of research processes.

In addition, the study belongs to the emerging genre of qualitative longitudinal research (QLR), as described by Holland et al. (Holland, Thomson, & Henderson, 2006) in their overview, so the relational aspects of the study were intensified by their ongoing nature, over a 14-year period. As Holland et al. point out, the growth of familiarity and

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trust through the duration of a QLR study can become a further source of exploitation. Longitudinal studies, they say, expose the extent to which consent is a process rather than a single act, and they caution that participants may feel coerced into continuation. How did the nature of consent change over time? How was mutual trust established? How was my own ability to gain insight into the children's interpersonal lives influenced by my ongoing relationship with them? These questions are particular to qualitative longitudinal research. So, the focus on children and young people as research participants was compounded by the longitudinal nature of the study in bringing ethical concerns to the fore. Before illustrating this claim and elaborating it to discuss the link between ethical mindfulness and reflexivity I will contextualize the study by outlining its purposes and describing the methods I used.

The purpose of the research was to study the ongoing creation of a personal self during the period of compulsory schooling (Warin, 2010). I intended to find evidence to illuminate our understanding of influences on, and strategies for, the creation and recreation of identity as children engage with the social world of school throughout their school career. This required a longitudinal approach in which "temporality is designed into the research process making change a central focus of analytic attention" (Thomson, Plumridge, & Holland, 2003, p. 185). The study was originally designed for a 3-year phase, for a PhD, working with a sample of 10 children prior to the start of compulsory schooling and over their first 2 years there. The children were then followed up, 7 years later, and reengaged during their second year of secondary schooling and they then remained as participants within the study until they were aged 17.

Ten children and their parents gave their consent to participate. The children were given the fictional names: Anna, David, Ghita, Jayne, Kelley, Liam, Martin, Shelley, Simon, and Umar. The selection of these particular children and their families was influenced in three ways. First, I was interested in the children's social experience prior to the start of school and so required a mix of types of preschool experience. Second, in order to explore how key social categories such as gender, social class, and ethnicity might become embedded in the construction of identity it was necessary to include a mix of these dimensions within the sample. Third, there were practical constraints relating to the agreement of primary schools and their feeder preschools to participate.

The first phase of the research, when the children were aged between 3/4 years and 6/7 years, included observational study in preschool and school settings as well as interviews with teachers and carers and with parents in the child's home. With its large component of observational work, this phase was rather more traditionally ethnographic than the secondary school phase. During the latter phase, the main method was the semistructured interview, used

intermittently from ages 12/13 through to age 17. However, the term "interview" does not do justice to the variety of activities and participatory strategies that were included and is a rather formal term for what began to feel more like two-sided conversations, as the relationship developed between myself and the young people.

Due to its involvement with children and young people as participants, as well as its longitudinal nature, ethical issues and reflexivity were highly salient. Consequently, a presentation of some of the specific ethical dilemmas implicated in this study may be illuminating for other researchers. Ellis (2007) points out that the minutiae of ethical decision making is generally absent from accounts of research methods and makes a strong plea for the inclusion of this dimension in published discussions of research practices so that we can gradually accumulate more and more stories of research to help us to make ethical choices. In this way we will develop resources detailing the practice of "micro-ethics" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Renold, Holland, Ross, & Hillman, 2008). These lessons can then be framed as recommendations for the practice of reflexivity as the research tool that will enable ethical mindfulness.

This article has three interlinked aims. First, I intend to develop the argument that reflexivity is a tool for achieving ethical mindfulness (Etherington, 2007) and to flesh out this idea with reference to an unusually long longitudinal study in which relational aspects of the research were dominant. Second, I will apply this concern specifically to the management of research relationships with children and young people, contributing to the debate about the nature and processes of consent with nonadult participants developed by a number of authors, including Lindsay (2000), Renold et al. (2008), and Gallagher (2009). Third, I aim to provide some grounded illustration of, and recommendations for, undertaking reflexive and ethically mindful research, contributing to the accumulation of stories of research dilemmas and conflicts from which we can learn and which have the potential to help us develop a more nuanced approach to the framing of ethical guidelines, especially those that concern children.

Ethics in Practice, Micro-ethics, and the Development of Ethical Mindfulness

"Is it ever ethical to probe into other people's lives?," asks Wolcott (1999, p. 284) in his discussion of ethnography. He points out that the individual with the most to benefit is always the researcher (ethnographer) and the individuals with the most to risk are always those among whom the ethnographer studies. Similarly Kellehar (1996, cited in Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 271) tells us that the qualitative research interview is ethically questionable: "an unnatural social situation, introduced by a researcher,

for the purpose of polite interrogation." Qualitative research is inherently problematic from an ethical point of view. Wolcott reminds us that the underlying issue is one of balance, a balance between risks and benefits that can be achieved through practices of openness and transparency. Etherington (2007, p. 614)) too emphasizes ethics as a balancing act "between our own needs as researchers and our obligations toward care for, and connection with, those who participate in our research."

These writers accurately portray the ethical balancing act I experienced in carrying out this study. It involved a recognition and resolution of ethical dilemmas within the research relationship to maintain trust. I had to ensure that the delicate balance between benefits and risks to participants did not slip too far to the side of risks. This kind of balancing act is not a one-off moment of ethical decision making but constitutes an everyday awareness or ethics in practice (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

Guillemin and Gillam have produced the term ethics in practice to distinguish the everyday and often unanticipated moments of ethical decision making from the more formal decisions that are particularly evident at the start of research studies and are increasingly constructed through negotiations with ethics committees. The emerging concept of *ethics in practice* is particularly helpful to a consideration of the day-to-day ethical dilemmas and concerns that arise during processes of social research. Guillemin and Gillam's identification of this distinction has been followed up by Ellis (2007, p. 4) who elaborates "ethics in practice" as "the kind that deal with often unpredictable, often subtle, yet ethically important moments, that come up in the field." Renold et al. (2008) have contributed further in bolstering a contrast between "ethics in practice" and procedural ethics by pointing out that the latter form is often "unhelpfully framed with a discourse of knowable ethical 'outcomes'" (p. 428). Ethics in practice is a set of day-to-day practical negotiations and compromises. It stresses the dilemma-laden nature of research and the unanticipated. Guillemin and Gillam also use the term *micro-ethics* based on a contrast between "big issue" bioethics and the mundane ethics that dominate clinical practice. Ethics in practice or micro-ethics are a particularly salient feature of research with children and young people where the power imbalance is a pregiven and where, consequently, the risks are all the greater (Gallagher, 2009).

My intention here is to discuss the various ways and means that I discovered for managing this set of research relationships in such a way as to maximize the data required for the study and minimize the ethical risks, as Wolcott advises. I now turn the spotlight specifically on some aspects of the micro-ethics implicated in this study to illustrate the balancing act of risks and benefits and to flesh out the concept of ethics in practice. I have selected two areas of ethical concern: the gaining and maintaining of consent, and the matching of methods to children's interests to avoid tedium and facilitate their active participation.

Gaining and Maintaining Consent

The difference between "procedural ethics" and "ethics in practice" referred to above, and identified by Guillemin and Gillam, is at its most stark in considerations of consent. Most codes of research ethics emphasize the need for a participant to provide "informed consent" (e.g., British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2004; British Psychological Society [BPS], 2009). This necessary negotiation and agreement, a form of "procedural ethics," is usually conceptualized as linear and fixed within traditional hierarchical concepts of the research relationship (Renold et al., 2008) . Even when working with adults "informed consent" is a much more complex business than it at first appears, since researchers have to make difficult decisions about the quantity, quality, and timing of information. When working with children, especially very young children, these difficulties are compounded. They are complicated with regard to children's capacity to be informed, that is, to understand the demands of the research (Epstein, 1998; Gallagher, 2009) and to give consent, that is, to enter into verbal negotiation about participation. Consequently, ethics codes identify parents and teachers as the gatekeepers of consent for research with young children, a feature of the study I discuss further below. While it was necessary to gain consent from the parents of the participating children it was also imperative to give some control to the children themselves by explaining my presence in their lives in a way they could understand, following the advice of Swain (2006) to ensure that consent was "as informed as possible."

In recent times, a considerable body of literature on research with young children has challenged the idea that consent is a verbal agreement and has shown that a shy or anxious child, for example, might be withholding consent through clear nonverbal signals (Lindsay, 2000). The maintenance of consent is a further problem. If a young child begins an interview happily enough but then appears to become bored, tired, or uncomfortable, the researcher needs to recognize signals that might indicate that the child is reluctant to continue. Lindsay's discussion of the limitations of ethics codes produces the concept of "continuing consent" as an appropriate term in research with children. Similarly, Thorne (1980) identifies "ongoing" consent as something that requires renewal, while Ellis (2007) uses the term "process consent," which she identifies as a process of checking at each stage that participants still want to be part of the research. Renold et al. (2008) discuss this issue at length and they use the term "becoming participant" in their research with children and young people, to represent how consent is always "in process" and "unfinished" rather than a single event.

The difficulties inherent in issues of consent were compounded by the longitudinal nature of the study. Holland et al. (2006) draw attention to the ongoing process nature of consent in QLR. Ellis (2007) also points out that research relationship conducted over a period of time require a particular kind of ethical sensitivity, an acting from "hearts and mind" to acknowledge growing interpersonal bonds with research participants and carry on *continuing* conversations. In my study I recognized that the ongoing nature of continuing consent must be matched by a corresponding process of continuing information from the researcher as the children become more able to understand the aims of the study.

Consent issues were further complicated in this study by the role of parents as gatekeepers. During the early phase of the study the children's parents were participants in semistructured interviews as well as gatekeeping for their children's consent. Researchers who have worked with multiple family perspectives draw attention to the differential agendas that can exist between family members regarding their motivation to participate in family-based research (Lewis, 2009; Warin, Solomon, & Lewis, 2007). It is one of the knots that researchers who engage with multiple family perspectives need to disentangle. In this study it was necessary to keep reflecting on and interpreting parents' reasons for the engagement of their children. In one or two cases the parents' own agendas for their children's participation became apparent. David's mother, for instance, told me that she hoped David might "open up" about the grief he felt on losing his grandfather by talking to me. While I had to be attentive to the dangers of coercion, especially in the light of the longitudinal nature of the study, I was also aware that coercion could come from parents. For example, Simon's mother Kath was particularly enthusiastic about the family's involvement in the study, but I wasn't so sure about Simon himself. It was a relief when Simon appeared very willing to talk further with me at age 17, and was very forthcoming in our conversations, as by this time I had ceased to use parents as gatekeepers for continuing consent.

These consent issues, as a form of ethics in practice, are well illustrated by the story of my contact with Umar and his withdrawal from the study at the age of 13. Umar's inclusion in the study was significant as he was the only ethnic minority participant: Asian-Indian, while the other children in the study were all White British. He was also the only child who had not attended nursery preschool provision, a significant factor during the first phase. Initial contact with Umar and his family was made through a home visit after his prospective primary school had released the contact details of families on their waiting list. I explained I was aiming to explore the social aspects of commencing formal schooling, particularly the development of a sense of

self. Umar's mother Zubeda gave her consent for me to come into their home and observe and talk with him and with herself. I had previously lived in their neighborhood and had also undertaken some voluntary English teaching with an acquaintance of hers, factors that may have contributed to the establishment of trust by the family. I met Umar's father on one occasion, an event that seemed important as a further milestone along the journey of mutual trust. When I resumed contact after the 7-year break Zubeda appeared very willing to reengage. Umar, at that time aged 12, also gave his consent and appeared to be a very willing participant during our first interview. Unfortunately, on contacting the family to arrange the second interview, Zubeda informed me of his reluctance to continue. This was frustrating. I experienced an emotional dilemma between the need to respect Umar's wishes and my own need to maintain his continuing participation. I had to respect his wish, channeled through Zubeda, while recognizing that his withdrawal constituted a significant loss.

However, I recognized the opportunity for reflexivity presented through an understanding of Umar's withdrawal. I was extremely curious to try to discover more about his reasons, or perhaps his family's reasons for his disengagement, in order to gain insight into his and their perceptions of the study, and of myself as researcher, perhaps unearthing some illuminating differences in class, culture, and ethnicity. Yet the ethical principle of withdrawal without obligation to provide a reason was at stake here and so I faced an ethical dilemma. While I resisted the strong urge to question Umar himself, I did ask Zubeda, who informed me that Umar thought the study was too "babyish." In interpreting this explanation I related it to the data I had recently collected with Umar, in which he expressed a strong wish to present himself as mature. I wondered whether he felt that my involvement in his early childhood somehow cramped his style as a developing teenager. I have since speculated further about Umar's reasons for withdrawal and how these may or may not have been interwoven with his parents' reasons. I wondered whether the purpose of my study—to explore the construction of identity—might have been perceived as too Western, too individualistic. This reflexive insight has helped me to consolidate the social, rather than individual, nature of identity building (see Warin, 2010).

These reflexive speculations enabled me to cast a self-critical eye over my research purposes and intentions, seeing them from a fresh and critical perspective stemming from my imagined and projected ideas about the beliefs of Umar and his family. My decision about how far to push Umar's family for an explanation of his withdrawal constituted an "ethically important moment" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) in which I had to balance the risks and benefits to the study and to its participants.

Matching Methods to Children's Interests

Research with young children is more ethical if there is something in it for the children—if methods can be devised that will be experienced positively (Barker & Weller, 2003; O'Kane, 2000; Renold et al., 2008). The ethics in practice of this study, which I have also portrayed as a balancing act between considerations of risks and benefits, implicated an ongoing question about the positive aspects of the children's engagement. So, rather than attempting to understand why Umar wished to discontinue the study, as attempted above, a better question is why any of the children wished to continue. What did they get out of their involvement? This was an important ethical question to keep asking, within an ongoing ethics in practice, a strategy for minimizing the exploitative nature of the relationship.

Working with children requires a high level of creativity in devising research methods that can both access the data needed to fulfill the purposes of the study and take these ethical demands into account. It is often those who work with children who pioneer innovative methods for use with older populations. Recent collections on research methods with children provide ample evidence of this (Alderson, 1995; Christensen & James, 2000; Greene & Hogan, 2005; Lewis, Kellett, Robinson, Fraser, & Ding, 2004; Lewis & Lindsay, 1999; Nutbrown, 2002; Tisdall, Davis, & Galagher, 2009). Christensen and James stress the importance of minimizing pressure and difficulty such as high literacy demands. Some researchers go one step further with the aim of creating positive research experiences for children by redressing power imbalances in adult–child research relationships through the use of participatory techniques. Connolly (2008), for example, advocates task-based methods that can foster rapport and a two-way exchange between the researcher and his or her research participants (see also O'Kane, 2001; Renold et al., 2008).

A variety of data collection strategies were employed throughout the study, in an effort to balance this mix of aims. I utilized methods that would prompt self-belief and beliefs about changes in identity, not only to fulfill the intentions of the study but also to ensure that these would be experienced as positive and participatory. During the early, ethnographic, phase of the study I adopted a participant-observer position as "least adult role" (Swain, 2006; Tisdall et al., 2009), sometimes entering into the imaginative play of the children, especially when I could see that this might help to build rapport, while being mindful not to intrude when my presence might have been threatening, for example, when David and his mates were engaged in the illicit climbing of the playground walls. My ongoing decisions about how far to engage and how far to observe at any particular moment during the course of the study (described more fully in Warin, 2010) constituted a further negotiation of ethics in practice.

I used other participatory methods; for example, I took a range of "dress-up" clothes for the children to select from as I believed this activity might prompt comments on matters relating to self, appearance, and gender and might also be experienced positively by some of the children. During the later, secondary school, phase of the study I showed the children, at age 12/13, the video recordings I had made during the early phase of the study when they entered the first year (Reception class) of school. Another visual stimulus, used in the sequence of interviews at age 12/13 was the Blob Tree (Wilson, n.d.) used for purposes of projective identification. We also drew a timeline together and discussed preferred photographs. The planning of this package of methods constitutes a further form of ethics in practice.

A constant alertness to, and engagement with, ethical dilemmas, an ethics in practice, as illustrated through the above description of consent and child-orientated research strategies, constitutes ethical mindfulness. This is a particularly relevant term, harnessed by Etherington (2007, p. 600) drawing on Bond (2000), to characterize ethical requirements for qualitative research. It is particularly apt in its fit with the ideas presented and illustrated above regarding micro-ethics and ethics in practice. It is the awareness of risks and balances, a sensitivity to the day-to-day and ongoing nature of ethical dilemmas within the research relationship, that can be characterized as the development of "ethical mindfulness." This describes the state that the researcher needs to sustain in conducting relational ethical research in order to preserve trusting relationships between researchers and their participants.

The Role of Reflexivity and Its Link to Ethical Mindfulness

The prescription to be ethically mindful is all very well but begs questions about *how* this state may be achieved. We need to analyze ethical mindfulness further to extract some manageable gems of practical know-how. A closer look reveals it to be an alertness or heightened sensitivity to understanding the relational aspects of the research process: an interdependent awareness of how I, as a researcher, am influencing my research participants' perceptions and a simultaneous and interdependent awareness of how they are influencing me. This representation of the meaning of ethical mindfulness appears to describe reflexivity equally well, revealing the interdependency between the two concepts (Doucet & Mauthner, 2002; Renold et al., 2008). This connection is strongly promoted by Etherington (2007) who suggests that reflexivity is a tool for bringing transparency to the research process and its outcomes, and by Guillemin and Gillam (2004), who argue that reflexivity is essentially an "*ethical* notion" (p. 262—italics in the original) and a key resource for dealing with "ethically important moments" (p. 262).

A value for reflexivity has accumulated within qualitative research methods debates in the past decade or so (see, for example, Brannen & Edwards, 2007; Broom, Hand, & Tovey, 2009; Brown, 2006; Conolly, 2008; Doucet & Mauthner, 2002; Ellingson, 1998; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Holland, 2007; Macbeth, 2001; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003;. Nicholls, 2009; Renold et al., 2008). This value is based on a strong tradition of feminist writers such as Morgan (1981), Roberts (1981), Spender (1981), and Stanley and Wise (2002), who have challenged traditional positivist research methodologies, arguing that what passes for objectivity in "hygienic research" is inauthentic, a way of writing the personal and subjective out of the research process. It has been developed further by methodologists such as Atkinson (1990) and Coffey (1999), who claim that when the researcher writes his or her own self into his or her research, he or she brings much greater authenticity to it. Etherington (2007, p. 611) points out that reflexivity is connected to the ethical dimension of research through the researcher's willingness to "emerge from behind the secure barrier of anonymity and own up to their involvement."

These authors, among others, have built a mounting critique of the illusion of objectivity. They have not only revealed that the researcher is relationally involved and exerts an influence on the processes and outcomes of data collection but they have moved one step further and positively encourage awareness of the researcher's subjective involvement. Harding (1993), for example, advocates "strong objectivity" in research, turning the traditional positivist value for objectivity on its head, in order to emphasize the need for reflexivity. She recognizes that, paradoxically, we gain more distance from the research process by exploring our own influences within it. This approach is also presented by Ellingson (1998) who advocates a simultaneous closeness and distance from those we study. Reflexivity provides a way of "penetrating the representational exercise itself" (Macbeth, 2001, p. 35) and is, therefore, a vitally important epistemological tool and constitutes a cornerstone of qualitative research. A value for reflexivity requires that we should undertake a deliberate search for indications of the management of impressions, expectations, and a recognition of the mutual positioning adopted by research participants and researcher as they interact.

In a study of family perspectives on the role of the father in families with teenagers (Langford, Lewis, Solomon, & Warin, 2001; Warin, Solomon, Lewis, & Langford, 1999) the research team deliberately collated data concerning participant perceptions of the research process within one of the six main nodes of the analytic software, QSR NUDIST. We labeled this node quite simply, "method," and it became a rich resource for participant statements about their experiences of the research process and their perceptions about the researchers, and consequently, crucial for the exercising of reflexivity during the process of

analysis. For example, through their experience of the interviewing process, our participants positioned the researchers variously as psychologist, teacher, therapist/counselor, fellow parent, fellow professional, fellow academic, and social worker (Warin et al., 2007). This deliberate capture of research participants' perspectives on the nature and experience of the research and their views about the researchers revealed how each party was relating to and positioning the other. It was a strategy for practicing ethical mindfulness and reflexivity.

In the longitudinal study discussed in this article here, I sought for clues to help me understand what the children and young people made of the study. Snippets of evidence emerged. For example, during the early phase of the study I overheard one child refer to me as "the camera lady," as I was often to be seen with my video camera. Others commented on the notes I was writing, recognizing I was writing about them. During the adolescent phase of the study it was much easier to glimpse the young people's understandings about it. For example, when I contacted the 17-year-old Jayne, a year after my previous conversation with her, I asked her, "What's been happening since we spoke last year?" She replied, "Starting work. Nothing major." Her rather surprising judgment about the relative insignificance of starting work suggested she thought I might be after more "major," perhaps more dramatic events. It may also have supported her negative perception of her job as unexciting, as later in the interview she was disparaging about her employment as a hotel room attendant. In a rather similar way, when I visited Shelley for the first time after the 7-year break and constructed a timeline with her to depict key events in the intervening years of her life, Shelley's mother commented, "We're quite boring aren't we?" These brief observations indicate participants' awareness of the impressions they were making on me.

The ending of an interview, when the tape recorder has been turned off, offers opportunities for both participants to reflect on the interview experience and is consequently a site for accessing the perspectives of our research participants on the experience of engaging in the research. An interesting insight into the way I was perceived by Martin, for example, came at the end of my final interview with him, at age 17. Martin had made two significant and dramatic revelations on this occasion, one concerning his recent "coming out" and the other describing his search for his biological father. "You weren't expecting anything like that," he said. The comment suggested that he was aware of the unusual nature of his story and that perhaps he might have been aware of this as being rather a "gift" for me.

Researcher reflexivity is not synonymous with self-awareness, nor is it synonymous with an empathic sensitivity to the socioemotional states of our research participants. It is both of these things, in tandem: *relational* awareness. This interdependence between a sensitivity to self and

others is recognized by Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody (2001), Brown (2006), Holland (2007), and Bochner (2001). Relational awareness is an interdependent awareness of how I as a researcher am influencing my research participants' perceptions and a simultaneous and interdependent awareness of how they are influencing me.

Relational Awareness: "Working the Hyphen" in Self–Other Relationships

So a way of drawing together a prescription to be ethically mindful with a prescription to be reflexive is to link sensitivity to self and sensitivity to others through a value for relational awareness. This concept is clearly linked to the idea of the *double hermeneutic*, the term used by many (e.g., Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001; Smith & Eatough, 2007) to capture the researcher's interpretation of the research participant's interpretation of their world. The reflexive to-ing and fro-ing between insights about self and insights about the other is the enactment of what Lincoln (2010, p. 5) calls "working the hyphen," drawing on Fine, Weis, Wesen, and Wong (2000). The hyphen in question is the one between "self" and "other."

The methodological process of my study echoed its theoretical perspective on identity as a fundamentally social concept, emphasizing the reciprocal nature of self-building and increased social awareness. It is not easy to maintain a perspective on the individual and on their social context simultaneously, especially because self and other are so often juxtaposed as oppositional. Lincoln's identification of the need to "work the hyphen" between self and other, keeping both in view, contributes an illuminating conception of this particular challenge. Reinharz (1997, p. 4) discusses a relevant perspective from Rose who describes the "unnamed space" where "our" study of them "meets and clashes" with "their study of us" within researcher–participant relationships in the ethnographic site. The unnamed space seems very similar in meaning to the hyphen referred to by Lincoln.

So how do we develop the necessary criticality, distance, and "strong objectivity" that combine reflexivity and ethical mindfulness? One way is to work from a conjunction of hearts and minds (Ellis, 2010), through the recognition and disclosure of the emotional aspects of the research experience (Coffey, 1999; Kleinman & Copp, 1993; Lucey, 2001; Walkerdine et al., 2001). In their discussion of the role of emotions in fieldwork, Kleinman and Copp emphasize that when researchers lack awareness of their emotional responses they are likely to be more influenced by them. Several researchers have demonstrated how we can draw from therapeutic training to develop a greater sensitivity to

the emotional dimensions of the researcher–participant relationship (Bond, 2006; Brown, 2006; Etherington, 2007). Brown's discussion of reflexivity elevates the training of self-awareness, though she points out that this is a mode of consciousness rather than set of prescriptions or methodological strategies. Etherington points out that reflexivity is a skill that therapists are trained to develop and which can be extended into the practice of reflexive research. Hunt (1989) and Raphael Reed (1996) draw attention to ways that unconscious processes influence and structure relationships between researcher, subject, and data and tell us that researchers need to become better at recognizing them.

Bochner (2001) invited researchers to consider a question that is essential to the surfacing of emotional responses to our participants and to working the hyphen. "Have you ever felt you were writing about yourself when you were reporting 'data' about other persons?" (p. 138). My answer is a resounding "yes." Several aspects of the children's lives, certain interests and preferences, reminded me of my own childhood. Some of the experiences I was privy to, and the things I witnessed in the growing up of these children, also reminded me of my own children, who are only a few years older. I have learned to recognize the moments in my interactions with research participants when I experience an identification with them, moments where I perceive a similarity between us and experience a "me too" feeling.

One example concerned 4-year-old Jayne's enjoyment of dressing up at her preschool; her frequent donning and doffing of hats, cloaks, bags, and shoes, from the available supply there. I felt that I recognized myself at the same age, and when I asked her about her preferred activities in school, she told me, "dress up"; the "me too" feeling was confirmed as I imagined that I might have given a very similar answer. It is worth making such identification experiences explicit and holding them up to the light for further scrutiny. This enables the reflexive researcher to delve deeper and ponder both the similarities and also, significantly, the dissimilarities. Psychotherapeutic training, as discussed above, sensitizes therapists to experiences of identification and warns of the dangers when they go unrecognized. My identification with Jayne might have brought about rapport between us, but the very nature of this positive affiliation might well have operated to hide differences between us, creating blind spots. In particular a sense of rapport threatened to swamp the dissimilarities between us, blinding me to, for example, the significant difference in social class. Lincoln (2010, p. 5) brings a constructively critical approach to the idea of rapport recognizing the limitations of this value as a goal of researcher–participant relationship management. She suggests we need to develop a *critical* approach to rapport that "does not ignore difference; that take account of vast deviations, conflicts and contradictions." Rapport is not the answer when we are involved in *critical* social science.

So the ability to recognize "me too" moments, to make them explicit, and then analyze them further constitutes a sequence of introspective practices that serve the purposes of developing researcher self-awareness and reflexivity and helps us to reveal our blind spots.

Guidelines for the Simultaneous Practice of Reflexivity and Ethical Mindfulness, With Particular Attention to Research With Children and Young People

This article has argued that reflexivity and ethical mindfulness are interdependent concepts in improving the ethics and practices of qualitative research. This link has become particularly apparent to me because my participants are children and because I have worked with them over a long period of time, two conditions that have served to heighten my awareness of research ethics. At this point in the article I draw together the conclusions reached above to present a set of guidelines for the application of ethical mindfulness in research with children and which can also be applied more generally to other types of research participants, especially those who may be vulnerable.

What then are the underlying practical principles that can be drawn out from the above discussion? While Guillemin and Gillam remind us that there is no set of rules about what a reflexive researcher must do, since it represents an awareness or sensitivity, Doucet and Mauthner (2002) emphasize the need to understand how to *do* reflexivity in order to expand on the well-rehearsed prescription to *be* reflexive. So, if we want to develop ourselves as more reflexive in our research, and if we want train others to be so, then we surely need to try to draw out some practical know-how, concerning the advancement of this crucial research tool. This is especially necessary when our research participants are children.

The following guidelines apply to ethically mindful research with *any* human participant (including adults) though they are especially relevant to working with children where the challenges for developing and maintaining a simultaneous reflexivity and ethical mindfulness are very pronounced.

- Recognize the complexity of consent. Reframe consent as a continuing process within the researcher–participant relationship rather than a one-off event. This is especially necessary in longitudinal studies, and in research with children, where there is concern about the child's ability to understand the implications of participation.
- Be alert to gatekeepers' agendas for participation. In research with children this requires the

researcher to be ethically mindful of disparities between gatekeeper consent and children's consent. They may not always be in harmony.
- While the consent of gatekeepers is essential for some groups of participants such as children, especially the very young, it should not replace researcher's attempts to gain consent from the participant (child) as well, as far as is possible.
- Devise positive research experiences in which there is minimum difficulty. Participatory, task-based, methods are especially helpful in research with children as they remove the pressure of direct face-to-face focus, minimizing interrogation and facilitating a two-way exchange.
- Recognize self in research.
- Look for self in the perceptions of those we are researching with.
- Devise procedures for the deliberate capture of data that reveals these perceptions. Debriefing occasions and endings of meetings and interviews and observations can often yield such data.
- Ensure that these data are recorded and analyzed, by creating a specific analytic category or node.
- Be alert to ethical dilemmas, especially when these can sometimes seem mundane.
- Be aware of emotional responses, which can help us to pinpoint ethically important moments.
- Analyze ethically important moments.
- Recognize similarities with our participants, identifications, projections, and "me too moments." When our research participants are children this may sometimes entail a revisit to our own childhood.
- Draw from therapeutic training to help us develop this practice.
- Recognize dissimilarities alongside similarities, revealing our blind spots.
- Delve deeper into these, to recognize similarities and differences between self and others. "Work the hyphen" to enhance our awareness of self and of others simultaneously and develop greater insight into both.

Conclusion: Where Do We Go From Here?

In addition to the above set of guidelines I offer two further concluding points as a springboard for the future of ethics in qualitative research, especially longitudinal research with children and young people. First, researchers need to make very deliberate and explicit attempts to incorporate the presentation of ethics in practice into published research outputs. A positivist research culture still exerts a powerful influence on the content and style of written

research publications within the social sciences. Researchers need to resist this dominant paradigm and, as Etherington (2007) prescribes, "own up to their involvement" (p. 611). Second, the connection between ethical mindfulness and reflexivity implies a need to make sure that we reframe consent as an ongoing and relational concept rather than a one-off activity. While some ethics codes try to make this explicit by including a prescription to maintain ethical awareness and responsibility throughout the research process, this awareness needs to become firmly embedded within the *practices* of qualitative research as a more visible dimension of the research relationship.

Recognizing the interdependence between the twin values of ethical mindfulness and researcher reflexivity marks a significant contribution to improving relational aspects of qualitative data collection and analysis. It leads to a greater understanding of practices we can develop to improve both. Researchers who aim to develop their relational awareness, working the hyphen between self and others, are likely to improve their capacity for reflexivity and ethical mindfulness. This is particularly valuable for child-focused research.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

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