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## Title

Children as *research participants* in educational research using video-stimulated accounts

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## Abstract

While children may be positioned as active participants in early years research, few studies have detailed how this is accomplished from a child's perspective. Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis methodologies examine the recorded interactions of children (aged 5-9 years) in video-stimulated accounts. Sequential analyses highlight four interactional strategies the children used to steer the talk including 1) interrupting the researcher's flow of questioning 2) employing physical actions such as proximity and gaze; 3) diverting the topic; and 4) using the video-stimulated accounts as openings to enact their own interactional agendas. Detailing the unfolding turns of talk make it possible to show how children are competent when considered as research participants and the opportunities provided through video-stimulated accounts.

## Highlights

- Video-stimulated accounts enabled children to introduce interactional matters
- Children re-specified, defended, resisted and redirected the research encounter
- Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis offer a window into children's lives
- Analyses show perspective and competence of children as *research participants*

**Key words** Children's participation; video-stimulated accounts; qualitative research; early years research; interview; conversation analysis; ethnomethodology; social interaction; children's views; early childhood education

## Introduction

A cartoon included in the *Sociologist's book of cartoons* (The New Yorker, 2004), depicts an adult asking a small child to report on their experiences of school. When the cartoon was published, 1978, research asking children their opinion was considered humorous. Within the last four decades views on children in research have shifted from a focus on children as objects to children as active participants in research, deserving of social recognition (Mason and Danby, 2011; Prout and James, 1997; Morrow, 2005; Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt, 2014). Methods of involving children in research include seeking children's opinions and involving children in decisions about data collection methods and what to study (see Einarsdottir, Dockett and Perry, 2009; O'Kane, 2008; Mazzoni and Harcourt, 2014). Despite calls to include children actively in research rather than as research objects, little attention has been given to the action of *how* children do participate and the interplay with researchers in research contexts. With some exceptions (see Danby, Ewing and Thorpe, 2011; Dorner, 2014; Evang and Øverlien, 2015; Waller and Bitou, 2011), even less attention has been given to the actual interactional strategies children use to enact agency and demonstrate their competence as research participants. This article draws on ethnomethodology and conversation analysis to show *the ways in which* children demonstrate competence in research and displays the contingent nature of research design and methods.

### *Children's participation in research*

An increasing number of studies attend to children's participation in research. In their meta-analysis of 10 international early years journals (published 2009 - 2012), Mayne and

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Howitt (2014) reveal that 549 articles of a possible 17,000 were focused on research and children. Of these 79% were research on children, 17% research with children and 2% by children. These studies promote that opportunities for children to have influence are enabled when they are involved in the research design; collection or analysis of data (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001) and the potential for adults to ‘misinterpret’ children’s contributions is reduced (Alderson, 2000; Darbyshire, MacDougall and Schiller, 2005; Groundwater-Smith, Dockett and Bottrell, 2015; O’Kane, 2008). However, potential problems emerge when children are thought of as a homogenous group and not considered to have diverse views (Dockett, Einarsdottir and Perry, 2011). When age, appropriate developmental level or perceived ability of children to be competent participants is questioned (Scott, 2000) the ‘trustworthiness’ of children’s accounts comes into doubt (Dockett & Perry, 2007). These concerns result in children’s participation remaining superficial at times (Holland, Reynold and Ross, 2010; Pettersson, 2015; Sinclair, 2004).

Studies that closely examine the interactional context and the interplay between the researchers and participants, however, show that actions and responses within research encounters may be associated with the standpoint of the researcher or analyst. In some cases, the lens of the ‘child’ category is prioritized, typically at the exclusion of other categories such as gender, ethnicity, research participant or the aspects of the local context. A shift in analytical standpoint enables the interactional features and strategies to be observed from the point of view of the research participants *themselves*, rather than from an outsider’s interpretation with assumptions of ‘childlike’. From this standpoint, the ways that children align themselves with the interviewer might be evident, as they try to provide a ‘correct’

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response that they think an adult might want to hear (Aronsson and Hundeide, 2002; Pinter and Zandian, 2015). Similarly, how children may focus on providing what they *think* researchers might want to hear rather than producing relevant reports, is made visible (Hester, 2000). Using this lens, children's lack of response might be investigated as avoidance, diversion or resistance to adult questioning, rather than attributed to their childish ignorance (Evang and Øverlien, 2015; Hutchby, 2002; Iversen, 2012).

The interactional elements of the research encounter can be closely examined when a classification of children as *research participants* is applied rather than the classification of *child in research* (Danby, in press; Mason and Danby, 2011). From this standpoint, children as *research participants* involves considering participants' rights, roles and actions in relation to the co-constructed interactional context of research encounter (Danby, in press; Graue and Walsh, 1998; Potter and Hepburn, 2005). A sequential analysis of interactions between researcher, participants and the context in which research occurs, highlights the members' perspectives rather than an analyst's interpretation of the interaction.

Research is a dynamic process where researchers cannot foresee how participants may respond (Davies, 2014; Roulston, 2014). Acknowledging the influence of the context in which the research encounter takes place and attending to the interactional sequence enables analysts to show the interactional strategies of *how* children co-construct their competence as *research participants*. This approach takes into account the collaboratively built nature of conversation.

### **Method: Video-ethnography and video-stimulated accounts**

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Data are taken from two separate studies conducted in inner city Brisbane, Australia. The first video-ethnography, 'Participation and social order in the playground' (Study 1), examined children's peer culture and participation in a preschool playground, recording the interactions of 24 children (4-6 years) and one teacher for approximately three hours a day over two months. The second ethnography, 'The Playground Project' (Study 2), investigated teachers' management of children's disputes in the playgrounds of two schools. Children, aged 5-8 years, were video-recorded during 10 playtimes. Approximately 120 children and two teachers participated. Ethical approvals for each study were granted from the author's university human research board and informed, written consent was sought from each child's legal guardian. Each child indicated initial assent (Conroy and Harcourt, 2009) and ongoing consent (Danby and Farrell, 2005). After video-recording in the playground, children in each study watched extracts of the video-recordings in which they were involved and they provided accounts (audio-recorded in Study 1 and video-recorded in Study 2). In total, 15 video-stimulated accounts were produced in Study 1, and 12 were produced during Study 2.

Video-stimulated accounts can be compared to semi-structured interviews. In video-stimulated accounts, an extract of video-recording from a previous interaction is played to stimulate conversation about exchanges that took place (Pomerantz, 2010; Theobald, 2012a). Semi-structured interviews have a series of identified topics for discussion (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1988), while a video-stimulated account uses video-recorded interactions to prompt talk (Theobald, 2012a). In both methods, researchers may employ open-ended questions to provide opportunities to explore matters of possible interest to participants (Theobald, 2012a; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1988). As in interviews, participants use their local understandings to

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draw upon what they may consider to be expected codes of behaviour (Baker, 1997; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). However the aim of video-stimulated accounts is to elicit conversation, not recall past interactional events, differing from recall interviews (Pomerantz, 2010; Theobald, 2012a). As such, video-stimulated accounts are interactional events in their own right during which accounts are co-produced and responded to.

### *Analytical method*

Analyses draw on ethnomethodological and conversation analytic approaches. These related approaches focus on *in situ* interactions to find patterns in how members make relevant, produce and organize interactions (Garfinkel, 1967; Sacks, 1995; Sidnell, 2012). Investigations into how children organize and make sense of each other's activities using talk in interaction demonstrate the features of children's interactional competence.

The competence paradigm of the 1970s emphasized theoretical principles from phenomenology and ethnomethodology suggesting that children are 'competent actors' (Mackay, 1974; Speier, 1973; Waksler, 1986), not 'cultural dopes' (Garfinkel, 1967). Further work in Childhood Studies (or the 'new' sociologies of childhood), recognize children as 'social agents' whose opinions should count (Corsaro, 2014; Danby, 2002; Prout and James, 1997). Movements stemming from the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations, 1989) have been significant also in outlining children's rights in research. These movements are underpinned by the premise to 'empower' those who might otherwise be 'disempowered' (Einarsdottir, 2014; Freire, 1972; Tangen, 2008). Detailed investigation of social interactions using an ethnomethodological lens can detail the actual strategies children

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use to engage with others (Speier, 1973), including for example, the strategies children might use to respond to or to resist the actions of researchers.

The fine-grained analysis follows a five step process for conducting conversation analysis that includes 1) marking a sequence in which extracts of video-recordings are firstly selected and then transcribe the features of talk including gesture, gaze, laughter and intonation; 2) categorizing the type of action that each turn accomplishes, for example, to greet, to request or to announce; 3) considering how the talk is 'packaged' by looking at a first turn and the corresponding turn; 4) studying the way turns are taken, the transition between speakers and the timing of the turns; and 5) identifying the consequences for and the uptake of the members (Pomerantz and Fehr, 1997, p. 71 - 74).

Analyses consider video-stimulated accounts as conversations and interactional events in their own right, where generated accounts are influenced by the researcher's questions and how research participants respond (Baker, 1997). The next section explores the two video-stimulated accounts, chosen because the children actively took up roles as *research participants*. The first video-stimulated account (from Study 1) involves one boy (aged five years) who was asked to report on a dispute he had had with a peer about whose ideas would be used for the game. This video-stimulated account was audio recorded. The second video-stimulated interaction (from Study 2) examines the accounts of three boys (aged nine years) who had told the teacher about a dispute that took place in the school playground. Video-recording was conducted of this interaction. An initial analysis showed that in the first video-stimulated account, the research participant introduced another participant into the video-stimulated account, while in the second the research participants steered questions away from



a topic set by the researcher. The video-stimulated accounts were transcribed following the Jeffersonian method (Jefferson, 2004), with punctuation marks representing the features of speech production rather than grammar (see Appendix A). Pseudonyms are used throughout.

## Results

### *Video-stimulated account 1 (Study 1)*

The first video-stimulated account details events that occurred when one research participant, Paddy, was asked to comment on a video-recorded extract showing a dispute he had had with another child, Maddy. The dispute concerned whose ideas would be used in the game of enacting 'The three pigs'.

### *Extract 1*

01 R'cher: An:d um (1.0)↑When I w's-(0.3)tal- was talking to you  
02 about this you: said to me you were going to talk to  
03 M-Maddy about (1.1) about what was going on here.  
04 (0.7)  
05 Paddy: I di:d. h  
06 (0.3)  
07 R'cher: (°W-°) Did you talk to her about it?  
08 (0.3)  
09 Paddy: Yeah sh[e like said (0.6) um ah =  
10 R'cher: [>Wha' did-<  
11 Paddy: =ah:: hhh (0.6) can't re↑member  
12 what °she said°.   
13 (0.4)  
14 R'cher: What did you say to her?  
15 (0.4)  
16 Paddy: I w's say:ing (1.0) you always don't have to choose  
17 the game.  
18 (0.3)  
19 R'cher: O:h(hh)h. [(Y-)  
20 Paddy: [And she just said I do.  
21 (0.6)  
22 R'cher: She said she did have to.  
23 (0.2)  
24 R'cher: O[h:.  
25 Paddy: [Yeah but I I didn't believe her.

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26 (0.5)  
27 R'cher: Mhm?  
28 Paddy: †Not everyone has to: (0.7) choose the same game.  
29 (0.5)  
30 R'cher: No:.  
31 (0.7)  
32 R'cher: †Wonder what could happen.  
33 (1.1)  
34 Paddy: Wan' me go an: ' (.) tell her an' go an' .h  
35 I go and get Maddy.  
36 (0.3)  
37 R'cher: nhh \$Go(h) an' te(h)ll he:r.\$  
38 (0.9)  
39 R'cher: [What wouldju-]  
40 Paddy: [(How abo- )] (0.3) How I go and get he:r.  
41 (0.5)  
42 R'cher: Go and get her now?  
43 Paddy: °Mm°  
44 (0.5)  
45 R'cher: Oh. If you like?  
46 (0.5) ((Paddy moves his chair and stands))  
47 Paddy: °Yeah° I will.  
48 ((Sound of Paddy walking to the classroom toward Maddy))

Following the viewing of the video-recording extract of a game in which he had the dispute with Maddy, the researcher brings up a previously talked about course of action to be taken, in which Paddy had suggested he would talk with Maddy about who gets to decide what happens in the game (lines 1-3). Referring to a previous conversation this question holds the research participant in some way responsible for having pursued it or not. Paddy replied that 'he did' but this reply is ambiguous – is he saying yes that is what he told the researcher previously or does his response mean he did talk to Maddy? The out breath of air, and lack of further details may indicate that it was the latter and that the encounter did not go smoothly.

The researcher repeats her question, using an interrogative constructed for agreement (Schegloff, 2007), 'did you talk with her about it' (line 7), which is a demonstration of not having heard the reply, or that research participant's response is not accepted as adequate. The researcher's question suggests the view that he is a competent agent in managing his social relations. Paddy's reply starts with a delay token, 'ah:::' and an out breath, until he states that

he ‘can’t remember’ (line 11). This response is marked by awkwardness, which indicates that this response may be an avoidance strategy as Hutchby (2002) described. The lack of response suggests that this is worthy of further investigation (Pomerantz, 2010). The researcher picks up this hesitation by pursuing a response, reformulating the question into a more direct interrogative, ‘What did you say to her?’ (line 14).

Paddy’s reply brings the problem to the fore. He reveals he told Maddy his complaint, - she didn’t have to choose the game - but she disagreed. He provides his account of what he told Maddy: ‘you always don’t have to choose the game’ (line 16). The researcher produces an ‘oh’ in line 19 accompanied by out breath. This suggests an evaluative and event surprised stance. While ‘oh’ is often used as a change-of-state token, marking ‘having been informed’, it can have other uses depending on its position (Sidnell, 2012). In line 23, the positioning of ‘oh’ is in an evaluative function, and along with the researcher’s early reformulation conveys a sceptical stance towards Paddy reported story. Paddy’s next turn orients to the researcher’s signalled doubt. The researcher’s action prompts Paddy to reinforce that he questioned the accuracy of Maddy’s statement (line 25). He portrays himself here as being a fair classmate and that he attempted to make his point of view known to Maddy.

In the following turns, it is clear the matter about choosing the game is an unresolved issue for Paddy. He explicitly refutes Maddy’s claim that everyone has to choose the same game (line 28), and in doing so, proposes a moral rule for the how to play fair in the playground. The researcher’s next statement is prefaced with ‘wonder’ (line 32). Houen, Danby, Farrell and Thorpe (2016) showed that the lexical term ‘wonder’ used when a preconceived answer is not obvious, can open up the interaction that follows.

Paddy's next turn initiates action. Paddy asks to go and get Maddy (line 40), framing the suggestion as something the researcher wants, showing an orientation to the researcher's focused questioning regarding him talking to Maddy about the dispute. The researcher's response is given in a smiley voice. This smiley voice appears to be treated by Paddy that his suggestion is potentially humorous, as indicated by the hesitation evident in his repeat. The researcher, 'Oh. if you like?' (line 45), includes a change of state token (Heritage, 1998) and an upward inflection. The talk features described indicate that the researcher is questioning this action, and she displays an affective stance of surprise. The next turn sees Paddy employ his agency as a research participant when he walks off to ask Maddy to join in with the conversation. The researcher's pursuit of information using an open-ended statement of 'wonder what could happen' (line 30) and pursuit of topic provided an opportunity for Paddy to invoke the research participant role and invite Maddy to the research encounter. The next extract picks up the events that occur when Paddy returns with Maddy.

*Extract 2*

01 R'cher: Oh Maddy is it †alright if you: have a chat to us  
02 about what you've been doing?  
03 Maddy: [Yep.  
04 R'cher: [Paddy wanted to .hh to ask you, we've just been  
05 talking about- (0.8) making: whose (.) ga:me it is and  
06 how we decide (0.6) who pl- which †game to play.  
07 (2.3)  
08 Maddy: We:ll †I don't kno:w.  
09 (0.2)  
10 Paddy: >You c'n j's< sha:re (.) the game.  
11 (0.2)  
12 Maddy: Yeah. hih  
13 (0.9)  
14 Paddy: (Ha' you-) Bu' you †didn't let me share the game.  
15 (2.0)  
16 R'cher: °Oh° Paddy (.) thinks you didn't let him sha:re.  
17 (0.5)  
18 Maddy: I did let him share but I- .h I said (0.8) you can  
19 have this first and then he can have that first.

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20 (0.7)  
21 Maddy: Second.  
22 (0.4)  
23 R'cher: O:h d- is that what you think happened Paddy?  
24 (0.6)  
25 Paddy: No:. She didn't tell me ↑that.  
26 (0.4)  
27 R'cher: No:?  
28 (0.6)  
29 R'cher: O[:h. What happens usually?  
30 (1.4)  
31 Paddy: Someti:mes we ch- we play a vote but now- .h  
32 but not any more.  
33 (0.7)  
34 R'cher: Mhm?  
35 (1.3)  
36 R'cher: ↑Mm.  
37 (0.7)  
38 R'cher: .h So: (0.7) how do yih- (.) decide (0.4) then.  
39 What d'you think you'll do (0.3) [↑next time  
40 Maddy: [Mm  
... lines omitted  
46 Maddy: Ma:ybe: we could just (0.3) have .h Paddy (0.6)

This extract details how Paddy respecifies the interview to attend to his own interactional matters. The researcher takes the first turn, bringing to the fore the category of researcher and associated responsibilities of ensuring informed assent. Heritage (1984) describes this action as context renewing and as such it is consequential for the expected actions the participants will next take. This turn conveys to Maddy and Paddy the formalities of the interactional context.

The researcher starts to outline the reason for the talk starting with Paddy wanted to ask, but then makes a restart. The reformulation is stilted and interspersed with pauses indicating a level of awkwardness and uncertainty. There is a shift from naming Paddy as the initiator to using the pronoun 'we' (lines 4-6) and this move by the researcher brings a more unified approach to the interaction and indicates to Maddy that she aligns in some way with Paddy. A pause of over two seconds is apparent. Maddy's response is prefaced 'well' in 'well, I don't know'. This move indicates that what is to come is not straightforward (Schegloff and

Lerner, 2009). 'I don't know' has been identified also as a strategy designed to close down any further questions on a topic (Evang and Øverlien, 2015; Hutchby, 2002). Maddy's turn here marks this particular line of questioning as potentially problematic. The change in pitch at the beginning of Maddy's talk and the falling tone at the end indicates her resistance to answer.

Paddy brings forward his moral order for the playground, demonstrating his agency as a research participant. Paddy initiates the next turn, suggesting that they can share (line 10). In this research context where the researcher's interest is in matters of fair and unfair, making such a suggestion is a strategic move by Paddy. In so doing, he enacts his research participant status to make a complaint about his peer.

Paddy draws upon the researcher's role as an adult in a school context to support his claim that a moral order of taking turns in the playground has been breached. Accusing Maddy in front of the researcher brings forward Paddy's interactional agenda and makes Maddy accountable for her actions. It seems that Paddy's strategy and the researcher's alignment was consequential for Maddy suggesting that she will let Paddy have first game next time (line 46).

#### *Video-stimulated account 2 (Study 2)*

The second video-stimulated account involved an interaction that occurred when three boys, Mac, Sam and Ken, watch a video-recording in which the teacher questions them about a pushing incident on the playground climbing bars. In the initial incident, Sam first pushed Ken who consequently fell off the climbing bars. Mac then pushed Sam off the bars. The

video-recording the boys watched showed Sam and Mac giving differing versions about the events to the teacher (see Theobald and Danby, 2012b). Unlike the previous extracts, the extracts in the second video-stimulated account were video-recorded, giving the analyst further insight due to having access to the non-verbal actions and gaze of the children.

*Extract 3*

01 R'cher: what's happening the:re,  
02 (2.8)  
03 R'cher: what's happening the:n?  
04 Sam: we got in(h)to: \$trou(h)ble\$ ((gze → mac, gze → R'cher))  
05 R'cher: [°did you get into trouble?°  
06 Ken: [>hee hee hee hee< ((gze → Sam & Mac))  
07 R'cher: who (.) who um (.) wha' >what happened<  
08 how did the teacher kno:w about this°  
09 ((Sam gze → Mac, M gze → Sam))  
10 Mac: Sam to:ld ((point → Sam, gaze → Sam))  
11 R'cher: o:ka:y why did you decide to tell the teacher,  
12 Sam: coz I didn't want him doing \$tha:t\$(turns, point → Mac))

This interaction highlights the co-constructed nature of the video-stimulated account. The researcher's opening question, 'what's happening there', marks the event the children had just watched as noteworthy and provides a conversational space for the children to provide input. The lack of response that follows is noticeable and indicates a disruption to the conversational flow. The researcher repeats the question, pursuing a response. Sam is the first to respond (line 4) and he response is an orientation to getting into 'trouble' with the teacher. He shifts his gaze to Mac then back to the researcher indicating possible unease. This may be due to a wariness in how to further respond to the dispute and subsequent telling that they now realize has been captured on the video-recording. Ken's laugh (line 6) and the subsequent exchange of gazes further highlights the unease of the boys. Even though the teacher has offered space for them to contribute their answer the boys decline this opportunity. In doing so, as research

participants they are exercising agency in relation to the context of being questioned about a ‘trouble’.

The researcher pursues a response, the next turn requesting a recount of the incident that took place (line 6-7). This focus brings into play the teacher’s role as an authority in the setting, asking who told the teacher. Mac’s claim casts Sam in the role of being morally responsible for the ‘trouble’ and for bringing this trouble (of having to talk to the teacher) to him. The pointing gesture strongly supporting that this be the case. The video-recording shows the teacher, acting within the institutional role of maintaining order, reignites the dispute between the boys by questioning them about the interaction (see Theobald and Danby, 2012b) and the researcher’s actions are mirroring the teacher. As Sam provides an explanation for his action of telling the teacher, he takes the opportunity as research participant to attend to an interactional agenda of making a complaint about Mac’s behaviour. His turn to look at Mac supports that this interactional business. A next possible move of Mac is to take an opportunity to defend his position in the dispute. However, the next extract shows the teacher blocking this opportunity by asking Sam a question about the outcome of the telling.

*Extract 4*

01 R’cher: a::ha: so did it he:lp, (.) how did you fee:l about (.)  
02 [talking to your tea:cher] about it  
03 Sam: [yeah it did ]((turns → Mac, sits close))  
04 R’cher: how did it help?  
05 Sam: what (.) for me:, huh((Sam gze → Mac))  
06 R’cher: hhuh huh [how did you feel]  
07 Mac: [it helped (.) ] it helped fo:r (.) me as we:ll  
08 R’cher: did it=  
09 Mac: =as in after the cha::t (.) we were li:ke this  
10 ((moves close to Sam, stretches his arm over Sam’s shoulder))  
11 Mac: oh yea:h (.) best friends ((smiles at Sam))  
12 ((Sam links arms around shoulders with Mac))  
13 R’cher: you were be(h)st frie(h)nds we(h)re yo(h)u



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14 Sam: we're be:st frie:nds ((arm around Mac))  
15 ((Sam holds fingers in victory sign above Mac's head))  
16 Mac: and you had you:r (.) like your han:d up there  
17 ((Mac lifts hand to head and rubs S's hand on head))  
18 Sam: now - ((continuing to make victory sign))  
19 Mac: [huh huh huh]  
20 Sam: [ha ha ha ]((joint laughter))

In extract 4 a recasting of roles and who takes charge of the video-stimulated interaction is apparent. While a possible next action following extract 3 would be that Mac has an opportunity to defend himself, the researcher takes a turn asking for information about the outcome of the telling, drawing on the role of researcher to ask the next question.

Her first question is prefaced with 'so'. 'So' prefacing gets to the business of the interaction (Bolden, 2009). 'Did it he:lp', the elongation of 'help' bringing attention to this as the focus of the next line of questioning, and is quickly followed by 'how did you fee:l talking to the teacher about it' (lines 2-3). Sam's answer, 'yeah it did' (line 2) is in overlap with the researcher's turn. Sam's gaze and actions of moving close to Mac indicate that Sam is seeking alignment with Mac. The researcher then reformulates with a more specific question in 'how did it help?' (lines 1-4). At this point in the interaction, the body position of the boys is very close, nearly sitting on the one chair (line 4). In response, Mac confirms affiliation with Sam (line 5), saying it 'helped for me as well'. Mac's reply indicates unity and he moves closer to Sam. In response to the question of 'how did it help', Mac's reformulates their exchange with the teacher as a 'cha:t' (line 9), the elongation of the word bringing the description into focus. Recasting 'talking with the teacher' to having a 'chat' implies casualness to the interaction and plays down the seriousness of being called to the teacher.

The unfolding affiliation and unified stance of the boys to the researcher's line of questioning is now quite apparent. Mac's action of linking his arm over Sam's shoulder is an intimate gesture. This action is reciprocated and upgraded by Sam's public announcement and categorization of their affiliation as 'best friends' (line 11). The boys laugh while gazing to each other in a conciliatory manner and the laughing may also be a way of managing the discomfort of the current situation, where from their perspective, they could be getting into more trouble. The researcher's formulation, 'you were be(h)st friends', is interspersed with laughter. This could be a display of uncertainty or an attempt to be a part of the boys' very public display of affiliation that is confirmed by the boys' use of 'we' confirms (line 12) and continued physical contact. Sam forms a 'V' for victory sign with his fingers over Mac's head (line 13 -16), which Ken copies also making a 'v' for 'victory' sign. A closeness and united front formulated the boys as a 'best friends' is presented here. In doing so, the boys have projected a different construction of reality to the playground interaction being discussed.

The researcher foregoes further questions and it seems that the boys' combined gestures and laughter are effective in highlighting the researcher's exclusion in the interaction and limiting the questions asked. The boys have ignored the typical activities associated with being a 'cooperative' research participant and employ agency to recast their role. A study of interviews of children about their experience of family domestic violence, children showed similar actions as they used talk 'to regulate, limit and take the lead in the interviews' thus respecifying and redirecting the researcher's questions (Evang and Øverlien 2015, p. 113).

*Extract 5*

01 R'cher: [hah (.) hah] ha .hh so ho:w di y' (.)

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02                   does it help to sometimes talk about:  
03                   things in the playground?  
04 Mac:             [yeah ] ((nods))  
05 Sam:             [ ((nods)) ]  
06 R'cher:          wha' what happens(.) can you tell me mo:re about that?  
07 Mac:             If you've done something-  
08 Sam:             are you putting tha:t on the Internet  
09                   ((pointing to computer))  
10 R'cher:          no (.) no  
11 Sam:             GOOdee huh  
12                   ((turns to Mac, gze → Mac ))  
13 Ken:             [ha ha ha ha ha ha] ((taps Sam on shoulder and moves closer))  
14 Mac:             [ha ha huh huh ]  
15 Sam:             [ha ha ha ha ]  
16 R'cher:          nothing huh huh you're not going to get into  
17                   trou(h):ble. Huh[by ta:lk(h)ing to me:: about anything]  
18 Sam:             [ I don't want to see: ] (.) I don't want  
19                   to seem like a ba:d child((gze → Mac))  
20 Ken:             [huh huh]huh[HUH]HUH HUH[huh huh ha ha ha .hhh  
21 R'cher:          [no ] [no ] [I think Sam made a good point)  
22 Mac:             and your Dad on YouTu:be going (.) Sam  
23                   WHY're you on here getting into trou(h)ble  
24 R'cher:          No I can understa::nd that no I I don't want to (.)  
25                   I don't think you're a ((shakes head))ba:d child  
26                   just wanting to ta:lk about what °happens° in  
27                   ↑pla:ygrounds and I'm not going to put it on the  
28                   interne(h)t, ((shakes head))  
29 Mac:             [huh huh]  
30 Sam:             [phe:w ]  
31 Ken:             are you gonna to put it on the Internet  
32                   [at u::m ]((sweeps hands towards S))  
33 Sam:             [at the ] football stadium, ((gze from Ken → front))  
34 Ken:             >↑HA HA [HA HA HA HA] HA HA HA HA< .hh HA HA HA HA  
35 Mac:             [huh huh huh]  
36 Sam:             [ha ha ha ha]  
37 Ken:             [ha ha ha ha ha .hh]

Extract 5 picks up from the previous extract and shows further alignment among the boys. The researcher takes the next turn once again beginning with 'so' (line 1). Previous studies of talk have shown that insertion of the discourse marker 'so' indicates a return to interactional business after an interruption (Bolden, 2009). Used in this situation and at this point the insertion of so appears to be an attempt to draw back an already established institutional sequence of interviewer-interviewee. The researcher reintroduces the topic of talking to the teacher. In response to Sam's minimal response, a nod, the researcher asks for

more information using a post turn expansion (line 6). Her talk here is punctuated with stutters and restarts, displaying some uncertainty, and there is an interruption and loss of momentum in the flow of the interview.

The boys now use the researcher's uncertainty to introduce a new topic and are successful in circumventing further questions. As Mac responds to the researcher's next question, Sam interrupts to ask if the video will be available on the Internet (line 8). That this interruption occurs when Mac is replying to the researcher's question about the teacher's involvement can be interpreted as a way to prevent further talk about playground matters. Sam's interruption marks disruption to the key topic of the interview. His question, asking if this interaction might be put on the Internet, is taken by the researcher as a concern regarding the potential audience of the video, and he is quickly assured that this will not occur (line 10).

Sam's response, 'Goodee' (line 11) and gaze to Mac, brings increased laughter from the boys. Jefferson (1984a) showed that laughter is used to signal affiliation to a fellow participant and Walker (2013) proposed that children use laughter as an interactional resource when transgressions have occurred. Here the laughter signals the established affiliation between the boys as well as some discomfort about the wrong-doing that has taken place and the uncertainty of who will see the video. The wrongdoing is hinted at in Sam's earlier description of the interaction between the boys and teacher as 'trouble'. The researcher offers further reassurance that no 'trouble' will occur (line 16).

The boys escalate their attempts to avoid potential trouble. Sam upgrades the boys' reference to trouble by claiming he might be portrayed as a 'bad child' (lines 18-19). Mac's

next turn draws on his agency as research participant to introduce the possible consequences of having Sam's Dad seeing the video of him getting into trouble on the Internet (line 22). The researcher emphasizes this will not happen by shaking her head (lines 24-28) and the researcher's action indicates that the concern of the boys has been taken as a legitimate worry about the consequences of the video.

The boys continue to discuss the topic of seeing the video on the Internet and name a scenario of where the video might be viewed, suggesting public venues such as a football stadium. This escalation of topic builds group membership in a similar way to observations of boys telling stories as observed by Theobald and Reynolds (2015). The laughter carries over several turns. While the researcher attempted to join in by laughing, the boys did not align with her laughter and it is what Jefferson (1984a) described as an unsuccessful attempt for alignment. As a result, the researcher is an 'othered' and excluded non-member of the group who is silenced. The talk has been steered away from the topic of playground matters that was introduced by the researcher.

While the boys may have voiced legitimate concerns about where the video would be shown, getting off topic was an effective strategy in two ways: first, the children's comments halted the researcher's questions. The new topic of where the video would be shown, dominated the conversational track and enabled the boys to steer any following talk away from their indiscretions in the playground. Second, the boys' elaboration of the topic reinforced affiliation and group membership. To show membership of the group, each boy added a comical scenario to do with the viewing of the video. The boys' discussions show they had a high level of knowledge and displayed valid concerns about the use, access and the

public domain of the Internet that could have been explored. However, these were ignored by the researcher in an attempt to regain the adult-child social order.

*Extract 6*

01 R'cher: so wha:t do you think the teacher's job is  
02 in the °playground°.  
03 Ken: to ta:lk to people.  
04 Mac: to ta:ke ca:re of the kids,

The researcher's orientation to the category of 'researcher' by re-orienting the children to the topic first introduced is now apparent. In this extract, the researcher opens by asking a question, displaying an institutional role as 'interviewer' and introducing an adult sense of 'order' in terms of a question-response sequence (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998). The use of 'so' (line 1) here again indicates a return to the topic of teacher's role in the playground and brings to the fore that the 'interview' is the central interactional milieu. This works as an attempt to take back 'control' of the interview structure, after the boys' earlier side sequence. Such a switch back to the introduced topic makes visible the researcher's attention to the social order of the interaction ensuring interviewer-interviewee/adult-child accountability. By orienting to the 'researcher' role means a lost opportunity to investigate the children's perspectives on the implications of public access to the video-recording.

Asking what the teacher's job is reminds the boys of the adult agenda that is omnipresent. The boys' replies reflect an ethos of 'care'. Mac's response 'to ta:ke ca:re of the kids' (line 4) brings the teacher actions into the spotlight and introduces a moral order regarding the institutional responsibilities of the teacher's role. If this line of questioning was further explored, that children were in dispute in the playground potentially makes the teacher

accountable for the interaction that occurred. In so doing, they return to the agenda of the interview outlined earlier by the researcher.

## **Discussion**

Analyses have provided evidence of the dynamic interchange between research participants in video-stimulated accounts. The sequences of talk, gestures and turn taking are co-constructed and occurring within a particular moment in time, highlighting how research participants employ interactional competence. The actions that were accomplished by the research participants during the video-stimulated accounts are now reviewed.

There were at least four identifiable strategies that demonstrated the competence of the research participants to steer or divert the researcher's questions in the video-stimulated accounts. The first strategy was to interrupt the flow of talk through resisting answering questions or interrupting at critical moments. For example, in video-stimulated account 1, by responding with 'I don't know', Maddy stalled the questioning. In video-stimulated account 2, an interruption by Sam as Mac was asked a question about telling the teacher effectively prevented Mac from revealing further transgressions.

The second strategy was the way in which research participants used physical proximity and gaze. This was particularly apparent in video-stimulated account 2 when the boys positioned themselves within close physical proximity to signal their affiliation. Reciprocity or mirroring of actions were also features of their action.

A third strategy used by the research participants was the diversion off topic. ‘To get *off* them and to get anywhere else from them, one has specifically to *do* “getting off of them”’ (Sacks, unpublished lecture 1976 cited in Jefferson, 1984b, p. 191). Getting ‘off’ topic was accomplished in video-stimulated account 2 when the research participants initiated questions about where the video would be seen and then employed a sequence of upgrades about this topic.

The fourth strategy was the way research participants used the video-stimulated accounts to discuss matters of interactional consequence or not. That the researcher pursued talk about disputes enabled the children opportunities to respecify the interaction and ultimately recast or better position themselves with their peers. In video-stimulated account 1, Paddy actively worked to interpret the research participant status and make sense of his own peer culture to construct a playground moral order of taking turns. In video-stimulated account 2, the boys actively worked to evade the researcher’s pursuit of questioning by creating risky scenarios and even introducing the teacher as accountable and perhaps somewhat lacking in her duty to ‘take care of the kids’ (extract 6). These two examples highlight the agentic interpretive nature of children as research participants, when interacting within their own peer cultures and with adult peer cultures (Corsaro, 2014; Danby 2002; Evang and Øverlien, 2015). It is not possible to know the researcher’s agenda for the interview. Studying the actions of the researcher, however, exposed the researcher’s attempts to shut down the actions of the children as they enacted agency as research participants. These moments in the sequence of the interview might be identified as ‘interactional difficulties’



(Roulston, 2014: 289). Such actions invite considerations of *risk* for those working with children in research.

### **Conclusion**

The video-stimulated accounts featured in this article focused on children's disputes, witnessed and video-recorded in the school playground. When considering the notion of *risk* in research that includes children, the topic of a dispute is sensitive because it has the potential to upset participants. Rather than divert from such a sensitive topic, video-stimulated accounts place emphasis on participants accounting for their actions and in front of peers. The 'research design and relationships' of the video-stimulated accounts provided children with opportunities to be active participants in research (Waller and Bitou, 2011: 5). The research design of eliciting video-stimulated accounts gave opportunities for research participants to re-specify, defend, resist and redirect the researcher's sequences of questions. These actions offered children opportunities to attend to unresolved social matters and successfully avoid possible consequences for prior conduct. The questions positioned children as research participants, invited their input and conveyed a view that the children were competent in managing their social relations. The sequence of interactions enabled the children to *be understood as* research participants. Detailing the unfolding turns of talk and the co-constructed context of video-stimulated accounts made it possible to show *how* children are competent when considered as *research participants* and the complexities and opportunities provided through video-stimulated accounts.

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#### Appendix A. Transcription Notation

The transcription system used to transcribe conversational data was developed by Gail Jefferson (2004). The following punctuation marks depict the characteristics of speech production, not the conventions of grammar.

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

## Children as research participants in education research using video-stimulated accounts

together!	an exclamation mark indicates an animated tone
<u>you</u>	underline indicates emphasis
°hey°	quiet speech
( )	the talk is not audible
(house)	transcriber's guess for the talk
.	
.	
.	a vertical ellipsis 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
(.)	brief interval (less than 0.2) within or between utterances
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
(h)	Indicates breathiness in a participant's response, that could be laughter
\$	Smiley voice

## Children as research participants in education research using video-stimulated accounts

[hello]	brackets indicate overlapped speech
[	a left bracket indicates the overlap onset
]	a right bracket indicates where the overlapped speech ends
<stop >	speech is delivered slower than normal
>come<	speech is delivered faster than normal
((walked))	indicates the actions and non-verbals of the participants
bu-u-	hyphens mark a cut-off of the preceding sound.
=	no break or gap between turns
↑	shifts into high pitch
↓	shifts into low pitch
STOP	loud talk