



Researching Agency and Relationality in Children's Kinship

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Theoretical Orientations

- ‘New’ approaches to childhood – children’s agency, perspectives and experiences
- Sociological approaches to kinship – how connectedness is negotiated, lived and practiced



Methodology and approach

- Agency and relationality/connection – sometimes an uneasy combination
- Creative methods, children at the centre – but how to reconcile this with lived relational realities



Researching agency and relationality in children's kinship

- Informed consent/taking part
- Who participates, whose perspective?
- Who owns the data?



Informed consent

- Children's perspectives through project
- Negotiating with gatekeepers
- Children's agency (some children very actively consenting to take part)
- 'freely informed consent *of those studied*' (BSA Ethical Guidelines 1b). Ethical obligations to non-participants?



Who participates in research: blurry boundaries

- Doing research at children's homes
- Negotiating time and space to talk to children on their own can be difficult
- Inevitable involvement and presence of family members when discussing family issues in the home (shared space and shared knowledge)

Others drawn into the research, but this

- Reflects lived experience of kinship
- Everyday construction of kinship is relational



Some examples- children negotiating participation

- Tamsin:
 - Restricted by parent's presence?
 - resisting Mum's interpretation 'Not about what Mums think!'
- Jake and Martine:
 - sibling's input as 'ethnographic data', respecting other 'participants', whose voices are heard?
 - Striking a balance without disempowering children



Ownership of Data

- Creative methods- children set the agenda
- Data generated exists in relational context. Who is involved in creation and ownership of data?

Examples:

- Abbie- contesting family members' alternative interpretations
- William- what is worth photographing?



Balancing agency and relationality

- Can children be considered out of context?
- Inevitability and relevance of family members' involvement
- Ethical and methodological issues?



Conclusion

- A negotiated and pragmatic approach – some compromises
- Sensitive to different dimensions and expressions of agency and relationality
- How far are the issues, and the ways we resolve them, specific to research with children?