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The novice researcher: Interviewing young children

Names and Affiliations of Authors:

Professor Susan Danby (PhD)
School of Early Childhood
Queensland University of Technology

Lynette Ewing (B.Ed – Hons)
School of Early Childhood
Queensland University of Technology

Professor Karen Thorpe (PhD)
School of Psychology and Counselling Psychology
Queensland University of Technology

The corresponding author's address and telephone number

Professor Susan Danby (PhD)
School of Early Childhood
Queensland University of Technology
GPO Box 2434,
Brisbane Qld 4001
Australia
Telephone: +61 7 3138-3547
Fax: +61 7 3138 3989
email: s.danby@qut.edu.au

Brief biographical statement:

Susan Danby is Professor in Early Childhood at Queensland University of Technology. Her areas of research are in childhood studies, and language and social interaction in institutional contexts, including educational and health settings. Her recent Australian Research Council research projects investigate children and young people's interactions on a young people's counselling helpline, and young children's friendships and peer interactions.

Lynette Ewing completed her Honours thesis in early childhood education at Queensland University of Technology. She is currently working as a practitioner in the field of early childhood education.

Karen Thorpe is Professor in Psychology at Queensland University of Technology. Her research examines children's early experiences in home and early education contexts. A key component of her work has been development of methods to assess children's perspectives of learning and social inclusion.

The novice researcher: Interviewing young children

Abstract

Being a novice researcher undertaking research interviews with young children requires understandings of the interview process. By investigating the interaction between a novice researcher undertaking her first interview and a child participant, we attend to theoretical principles, such as the competence of young children as informants, and highlight practical matters when interviewing young children. A conversation analysis approach examines the talk preceding and following a sticker task. By highlighting the conversational features of a research interview, researchers can better understand the co-constructed nature of the interview. This paper provides insights into how to prepare for the interview and manage the interview context to recognize the active participation of child participants, and the value of artifacts to promote interaction. These insights make more transparent the interactional process of a research interview and become part of the researcher's collection of devices to manage the conduct of research interviews.

The novice researcher: Interviewing young children

Studies inviting children and young people to be active research participants have gathered momentum since the early 1970s, when researchers started to show an interest in children's perspectives in matters relating to their everyday lives. The method of the research interview has become influential and a useful tool to allow researchers to access topics that, although potentially relevant to children, may not necessarily occur naturally in conversations and therefore be unable to be observed. However, undertaking a research interview requires the act of 'doing' an interview and this practice brings to the fore a range of practical issues to be managed within the interview itself.

Although a growing number of researchers see the importance of inviting children to discuss matters pertaining to themselves (for example, Danby & Farrell, 2004; Irwin & Johnson, 2005; Schiller & Einarsdottir, 2009), there is the additional and more fundamental issue of what children want researchers to know about. The study by Stafford, Laybourn, Hill and Walker (2003), eliciting the views of children about research, found that children want to be consulted about issues pertaining to them; that is, that the researcher listen to the total views given, and not just the ones that fit the agenda of the researcher. The aim of interviewing is to invite children to present their own perspectives, rather than from the perspectives of the adults making interpretations on their behalf (Eder & Fingerson, 2001). The researcher's task, then, is invite the children to present their perspectives, take their views seriously and to seek to elicit these understandings and to present them in a way that recognizes child agency (Christensen, 2004; Eder & Fingerson, 2001; Waterman, Blades, & Spencer, 2001).

This paper attends to some main issues in relation to the practical matters of interviewing young children while working within a framework that recognises the competence of children as informants (Christensen, 2004; Danby, 2002; Forrester, 2002; Hutchby &

Moran-Ellis, 1998a, 1998b; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Waksler, 1991). Changes in social and welfare policies have been pivotal in informing the belief that children are competent social actors in their own right (Alderson, 2008). The importance placed on children's rights and their social competence is leading researchers to offer children an opportunity to speak on issues that pertain to them with the recognition that children are competent in sharing and expressing their concerns, perspectives and understandings of their social worlds (Brooker, 2001; Mayall, 1999).

Very often, the quality of the interview data is dependent upon the interviewers' management of the interaction between themselves and the child participants. The skill of the interviewer involves undertaking the interviews and modifying their approach to the specific context and to the child's engagement to enhance the interaction (Kortesluoma, Hentinen, & Nikkonen, 2003). For example, the interviewer may draw on a number of strategies that include gaining the child's confidence, encouraging the child to participate in the interaction (Kortesluoma et al., 2003), taking on a least-adult membership role (R. Edwards & Alldred, 1999; Mandell, 1991) and employing role-play and other familiar activities (Holmes, 1998). Some studies examining questioning approaches when interviewing young children found that researchers who used questions while articulating their thinking out loud to the child were more likely to receive more communicative responses (Brooker, 2001) and that open ended questions increased the likelihood of narrative accounts (Krahenbuhl & Blades, 2006).

Context of study
The interview reported in this paper was undertaken as part of a study of twin children's friendship in preschool settings. Lynette, the interviewer, a co-author of this paper, was undertaking her Honours research project that examined the social experiences and friendships of preschool children who were twins. In total, she conducted audio-recorded interviews with ten children who had a twin. The interview discussed in this paper was with Tammy (all children's names are pseudonyms), and this was Lynette's first

interview. Tammy, aged five years, was a member of a preschool classroom located in Brisbane, Australia. We examine this interview in close detail to explicate the interview process and how it is co-constructed *in situ* (Psathas, 1995). Of particular focus is how the interviewer constructed the interview situation, how she asked probing questions and responded to Tammy's comments.

The interview occurred in two phases. In the first phase, the interviewer initiated the interview and asked Tammy questions about friendship (e.g., what does being a friend mean to you?). The second phase involved the interviewer asking Tammy to engage in a sticker task to create a pictorial representation of her friendships and her relationship with her co-twin following the protocol of Thorpe and Gardner (2006). The sticker task provided a focus on which to build the discussion and led to Tammy commenting specifically on her best friends, shared friends and the games that they played. The inclusion of concrete materials provided a focus and shared meaning for both the child and interviewer. Other studies also have used artifacts to support the research interview, including toy props (Nigro & Wolpow, 2004) and drawings (Angelides & Michaelidou, 2009). For example, Christensen and James (2000) included concrete materials and asked the participants, aged approximately ten years, to represent their week within a large circle labeled 'My Week' on a sheet of paper. The children represented on the circle the times of day and the activities they undertook to show how time was apportioned across their everyday lives. Another set of studies that drew on concrete materials (Danby & Thorpe, 2006; Thorpe & Gardner, 2006) asked twin children aged 6-10 years to use stickers to represent their friends and co-twin. The sticker task, with its use of concrete materials, provided a focus for discussion in a way that the first phase, relying on questions and discussions, could not. Examining in fine detail the talk, including the pauses and overlapping talk, preceding and following the sticker task, demonstrates how the latter approach enhances the interaction.

The interview data were analysed drawing on a conversation analysis approach (Sacks, 1995) to reveal communication strategies within the social interaction. Conversation analysis applies a fine grained analysis of the audio-recorded interviews, and the production of the transcript involved close and careful listening to reveal to detailed features of the talk, including silences, pauses, overlap of talking, laughter and other interactional features (Baker, 1998; Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997; Psathas, 1995) (see Appendix A for transcript conventions). Some studies using conversation analysis have explored naturally occurring child-adult talk (Baker & Keogh, 1995; Danby, 2002; Danby & Baker, 2000; Filipi, 2007; Forrester, 2010; Wootton, 1981b). This approach is concerned to understand the components of the co-constructed talk, consisting of the language used, and does not engage in the exercise of hypothesizing what children "'really' think" (D. Edwards, 1993). Child-adult talk occurring in research interviews warrants further analysis to explicate how child and adult orient to responses and to the context-specific rules that are employed. Understanding the co-construction of adult-child interviews enhances understandings of the language resources that are used to create social order with each participant's turn. Excerpts are used in the paper to illustrate particular points, and each excerpt is numbered sequentially as it appears, although on occasions there are repeated excerpts.

Preparing for the research interview

In preparation for understanding the interviews, Lynette undertook a number of activities. First, due to the focus of the study, she read scholarly literature in relation to friendships, twins, and young children's transitions to school. She also read literature on interviewing, particularly related to interviewing children. She developed a set of probing questions prior to the interviews to allow for exploration of the children's friendships and their experiences of transition to preschool. As a key theme was that friendships are important to children's adjustment and development (Dunn, 1999; Ladd, 1990), she developed probing questions relating to friendship about the number of friends that a child names, sharing friends, the child's meaning of friendship, and the child's relationship with their

twin sibling. She also developed a set of probing questions seeking information about the children's experiences negotiating their transition from home to preschool, and the role that the twin relationship played in this transition.

After completing the first interview, Lynette commented that Tammy did not address the interview questions that had been asked of her. We listened to the audio-recording of the interview, and later read the transcript of that interview. At that point, we decided to undertake a micro-analytic investigation employing conversation analysis on the transcript data to investigate the interactions within the interview itself. As the replaying of the audiorecorded interview unfolded, it became evident that Tammy did indeed show understanding of how language works and was an active co-participant in the construction of the conversation. For example, the following extract shows how Tammy attempts to close the discussion, and possibly the interview, after several minutes of discussion.

Excerpt 1

> 162. **R:** Mmm and what sort of things do you talk about?
> 163.→ **T:** um (1.0) being best friends and (1.0) and and always being
> best friends hhhhh that's about ↑<u><all></u>
> 164. **R:** So when you play with <u>Kay</u> is it usually just you and Kay
> playing together ↓alone?=

In this excerpt, in turn 163, Tammy successfully employs the strategy of a preclosing (Psathas, 1995; Wootton, 1981a). In other words, she attempts to close the topic of what friends talk about. Here, Tammy addresses this by answering the question asked of her and then indicates, "that's about all" (turn 163). In this way, Tammy attempts to close down the question about "what sort of things do you [friends] talk about" and the interviewer goes on to ask a question about how many friends play together.

Together, we decided to explore further the audio recorded interview with a view to understanding how the interview unfolded and lessons that could be learned when conversing with young children in a research context. The rest of this paper investigates

several interactional features used by both the interviewer and Tammy. They include how the child and researcher search for preferred responses, the researcher's inference-making and privileging particular topics, the researcher not inviting the child to elaborate on comments, and occurrence of pauses and overlapping talk that show how the interaction itself is proceeding.

Phase 1: The interviewer privileges particular interests and knowledge and makes inferences about shared understandings

Rapley and Antaki (1998) examine adult interviews to point out how the interviewer privileges particular interests and knowledge by the delivery of the questions and their responses. Similarly, on examination of transcript of Lynette's interview with Tammy, it was evident that the interviewer privileged particular topics. For instance, the topic of the quality of friend relationship was privileged and what became evident was how the interviewer assumed that both she and Tammy had similar understandings of what friendship meant. The interviewer returned on a number of occasions to the idea of 'being nice' but did not take the time to unpack this concept from Tammy's perspective.

Excerpt 2 marks the start of the interview. The first part of the interview is marked by the interviewer's rapid entry into asking questions originally identified as probing questions, and Tammy's searching for the preferred responses.

Excerpt 2

1.	**R:**	Okay °so Tammy° What does being a friend mean to <u>you</u>
2. →	**T:**	Um being ↑nice
3.	**R:**	Being ↑nice °anything else°
4. →	**T:**	Not saying naughty ↑<words>=
5.	**R:**	=Mmm
6.		(2.0)
7. →	**R:**	so a friend is somebody that's nice to ↑you
8.		(2.0)
9.	**T:**	((Nods her head))

The interviewer focused on her first probing question without a preliminary easing into the interview. Missing at the start of the interview is social talk that often begins an interview, designed to create a relaxed interactional space. While Lynette had spent several hours previously in the classroom and had engaged in informal conversations with Tammy on previous occasions, on this occasions she did not afford an interactional space for either her or Tammy to ease into the interview.

The interviewer's first question demands a particular sort of response from Tammy. The question and place emphasis is on the final word, 'you' (turn 1) suggests the researcher's interest in Tammy's own views, which perhaps may be different to the researcher's views, or even perhaps different to the view of the twin sibling. Tammy replies quickly in turn 2 with a rising inflection on the word 'nice.' This rising inflection makes her response seem like a question and indicates that perhaps she is not sure of the adequacy of her response. So Tammy, in her second pair part, like the interviewer's first pair part, searches for information (Sacks, 1987). In this instance, she appears to be searching for the sort of answer that the interviewer might be seeking. Tammy's response with the rising inflection seems to indicate that she is seeking feedback regarding a preferred response. Tammy does give a response that is constructed as a preference for agreement (Sacks, 1987), a response found in interviews (Rapley & Antaki, 1998) and certainly in adult-child interactions (Aronsson & Hundeideb, 2002; Wootton, 1997)**.**

Tammy's answer is repeated back to her and she is asked, "anything else" (turn 3). Repeating Tammy's response with a rising inflection indicates it is not just an acknowledgement of the prior utterance (Eder & Fingerson, 2001; Wells & Montgomery, 1981), but also anticipation of another response (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997). The researcher indicates that she is searching for a more extended response from Tammy. Tammy then offers another idea, "not saying naughty words" (turn 4). This time Tammy uses not only a rising inflection on the last word but also places emphasis on it by saying

it more slowly than her previous words. The rising inflection again suggests that she is
seeking a preferred response.

The interviewer prompts Tammy to introduce ideas of her understanding of friendship
and privileges the concept of friends 'being nice.' Tammy first indicates that being a
friend means 'being nice' (turn 2) and then indicates that being a friend means 'not
saying naughty words' (turn 4). However, the researcher (turn 7) does not pick up on this
suggestion but returns instead to Tammy's earlier idea of "a friend being nice". Here, the
focus is on the quality of a friendship relationship, and the interviewer does unpack what
Tammy's understanding of 'nice' is.

In Excerpt 3, Tammy is asked if a best friend is different to a friend.

<u>Excerpt 3</u>

12.	**R:**	is a best friend a little bit different?
13. →	**T:**	Mm Hm
14.		(2.0)
15. →	**T:**	<u>n::o</u>
16.	**R:**	Just the ↑same
17. →	**T:**	((Nods her head))
18.	**R:**	What w- would a best friend be like?
19. →	**T:**	Good
20. →	**R:**	So they would be <u>nice</u> too?
21.	**T:**	°Yeh°
22.	**R:**	And what does being a twin mean?
23.	**T:**	Uhm:m
24.		(3.5)
25.	**R:**	If if I didn't know what what that meant what that word meant how would you explain that to me

Tammy responds with a continuer in the form of "Mm Hm" (turn 13). According to
Gardner (2001), *Mm Hm* may be uttered in place of something more substantial or to
offer the floor to another speaker. The use of *Mm Hm*, coupled with the pause in turn 14,
indicates that Tammy is possibly handing the floor back to the interviewer or thinking

about a way to respond to the question. In turn 15, Tammy then refutes the suggestion that a best friend may be different. She places emphasis on the word 'no' while stretching out the 'o' sound. Tammy's disagreement is delayed (Wootton, 1981a), possibly suggesting a weak form of disagreement.

 The interviewer does a formulation (Heritage & Watson, 1979) that summarises what Tammy has said so far: friends and best friends are "Just the ↑same" (turn 16). Tammy nods in agreement (turn 17). The interviewer attempts to draw out information from Tammy about best friends (turn 18) and Tammy replies "good" (turn 19), which the interviewer does not take further, but returns to 'being nice' (turns 19-21). Here her use of 'so' in "so they would be nice too" (turn 20) links Tammy's comment of 'good' to 'being nice,' referring to Tammy's earlier idea of being a friend. There were a range of possible ways that the interviewer could have responded, such as asking Tammy to give an example of a best friend being 'good,' but the one used showed a preferred type of friend, one who is 'nice' and the closed question format suggests either a yes/no response. Tammy replies in turn 21 with a softly spoken "yeh."

In Excerpt 4, Tammy and the interviewer seek information from each other by placing emphasis on particular words in the form of a rising inflection. This is evident in Tammy's turns 39 and 44, and in the interviewer's turns in 42 and 45.

Excerpt 4

36. →	**R:**	is there anything that you would tell twin:s that where about to start preschool (.) is there anything you think they would need to know? (.) °what sort of things°
37.	**T:**	Um
38.		(2.0)
39.	**T:**	to be ↑good
40.	**R:**	mmMM (.)
41.	**T:**	< not say naughty wo:rds >
42.	**R:**	↑ Right
43.		(4.0)
44. →	**T:**	And to be best ↑friends

45. → **R:** So you would <u>tell</u> (.) the <u>twins</u> to be best friends with each
↑other? (.) so that's a special thing that you think twins would
need to ↑know?
46. **T:** ((Nods her head))

In the interviewer's turns of 36 and in 45, she fires a number of questions at Tammy. In turn 36, she asks three different questions, one after the other: A question about what to tell twins starting preschool is quickly reframed as a question about "anything they would need to know". And then, a further elaboration is sought in terms of "what sort of things," asked very quietly.

In turn 37, Tammy's "um" is perhaps effectively used as a placeholder until she continues in turn 39. After the "um" (turn 37) there is a two-second pause (turn 38) and an opportunity to return the conversational floor to the interviewer. Tammy comments, "not say naughty words" (turn 41), recycling a previous response (line 4, excerpt 2). In turn 42, the interviewer responds with "↑ Right," accompanied with a rising inflection. In the English language "right" has many uses and meanings (Gardner, 2001). In this extract, the use of "right" is a news marker to give Tammy's prior response recognition of it being newsworthy (Gardner, 2001) and acknowledges the information that Tammy provides. In this way, the interviewer offers Tammy approval for her response.

Another example of inference making is found when the interviewer formulates Tammy's comment about "best friends" (turn 44). The interviewer infers that Tammy would tell the twins to be best friends with each other (turn 45). Tammy did not actually suggest this in turn 44. 'Needing to know,' as stated in the question in turn 36, is then reframed as 'telling' in turn 45. The 'needing to know' and 'telling' are not the same. Here, the interviewer introduces the notion of 'telling,' which is a different interactional moment to 'doing' best friends. Tammy, however, confirms the interviewer's formulation with a nod.

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One final example is found in Excerpt 5.

<u>Extract 5</u>

     121.   **R:**   that's Mary and that's all the people you want to put on there?
     122.   **T:**   ((nods head))
     123.→**R:**   THAT"S <u>GREAT</u> (.) that's wonderful <u>so</u> who's your <u>best</u>
                         friend?
     124.→**T:**   Um (.) Kay
     125.   **R:**   Kay's your best friend °okay° (1.0) what what makes her your
                         best friend

In turn 123, the interviewer asks, "who's your best friend," rather than asking, for example, 'who are your best friends,' or to ask if Tammy does indeed have a best friend. Using the singular term of 'friend' in the question implies that there is only one best friend. Tammy may have taken this on board and answers accordingly, naming only one best friend (turn 124).

In these extracts in phase 1, we saw how the interviewer assumed that she and Tammy shared a common understanding of what 'being nice" meant and did not explore the concept of 'being nice' from Tammy's own perspective. As the interviewer's adult understanding of 'nice' may be different from Tammy's, and Tammy's understanding may differ from her co-twin and peers, Tammy's response warrants further investigation to explicate what 'nice' is from her perspective and how it relates to being friends. Such talk actively shapes and generates the responses rather than solicits views (Rapley & Antaki, 1998)

The use of fine-grained analysis of the interview made visible how Tammy oriented to the researcher agenda throughout the interview. She drew on a range of communication resources as she attempted to provide responses that might be considered correct answers. In this way, she seemed to be seeking approval for her responses (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). Both Tammy and the interviewer utilised a range of similar conversational

strategies, which include the use of try-marking, that is, rising inflections or an intonation that indicates a question (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). Another strategy employed is an emphasis on certain words, particularly those placed at the end of a question or statement. This has the effect of suggesting that both participants are searching for preferred questions and responses. In these extracts, we show how there were missed opportunities to have Tammy elaborate on her responses. Missing were questions such as what do you like doing with your best friends, and what do you like about your best friends?

The next set of extracts shows how the interaction itself shows on different interactional resources when the sticker task is introduced.

Phase 2: the introduction of the concrete materials
Midway through the interview, the interviewer invited Tammy to participate in the sticker task. The sticker task provided the opportunity for Tammy to represent her friends through a task that involved concrete materials.
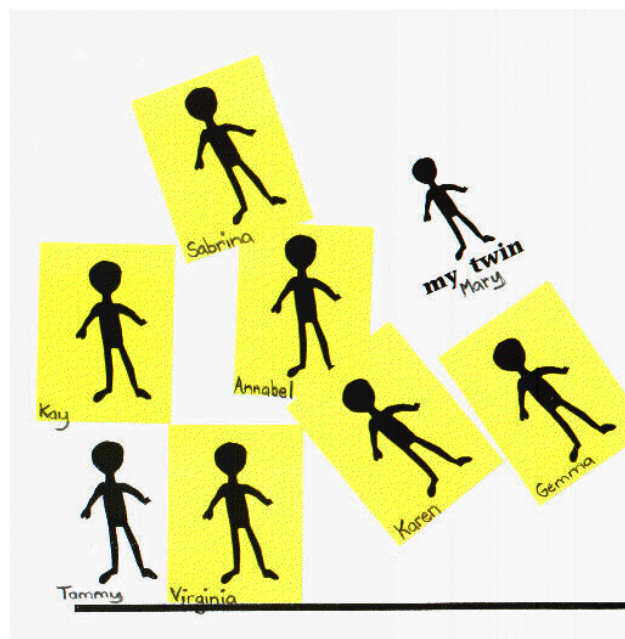
Figure 1 Tammy's sticker sheet representing her
relationships with her friends and twin
sibling.

The use of concrete materials facilitated the concept of friendship being concretized, that is, specifically about Tammy's friendships. It also moved the focus away from Tammy's verbal responses to the activity at hand. The sticker activity was designed as a fun activity and this meant the focus was not totally on the interviewee but also on the figures on the sticker sheet. Tammy was invited to complete a visual representation of her friendships using the sticker task (Figure 1), and she represented her friends and her twin in relation to herself, by placing them on the left of the page. The proximity of the stickers to Tammy's figure indicates the closeness of the relationship (Thorpe & Gardner, 2006). Tammy's responses appear to be facilitated by the sticker task. Excerpts from this phase of the interview show different interactional moments and the use of more elaborated responses by both Tammy and the interviewer.

In Excerpt 6, Tammy reintroduces her idea, and the one privileged by the interviewer, of a friend 'being nice' (turn 126). This time there is no rising inflection on the last word, suggesting that Tammy no longer seeks approval of this response from the interviewer. "Being nice" has already been established as a preferred response.

Excerpt 6

123.	**R:**	THAT"S GREAT (.) that's wonderful <u>so</u> whose your <u>best</u> friend?
124. →**T:**		Um (.) Kay
125.	**R:**	Kay's your best friend °okay° (1.0) what what makes her your best friend?
126. →**T:**		Um because she's n:ice
127.→	**R:**	Mmmmm
128. →**T:**		hhh she's always playing with ↑me
129. →**R:**		So you spend lots of time together?
130.	**T:**	((Nods her head))

131.	**R:**	What sort of games do you play?
132. →	**T:**	um power puff gir:ls (.) princesses and (.) fai::ries
133.	**R:**	and do you do anything else [with]
134.	**T:**	[no]
135.	**R:**	Kay?
136. →	**R:**	No (.) do you share any of these friends with Mary?
137.	**T:**	Yep
138. →	**R:**	the same friends >which ones do you share with Mary?<
139. →	**T:**	Um (.) Annabel
140. →	**R:**	Mmm
141.	**T:**	Karen Sabrina and Virginia and Kay Redmond

Prior to the sticker task, Tammy had named three friends. Within the sticker activity, Tammy identified one of the friends as her best friend (turn 124). Tammy expands by offering information about her best friend, "she's always playing with me" (turn 128). The next turn (turn 129) shows the interviewer following up on Tammy's response in a way that allows Tammy to elaborate her response with the formulation, "So you spend lots of time together?" (turn 129). At this point, the interviewer again makes an assumption that "playing with me" (turn 128) means "playing games" (turn 131). Playing may include a range of different activities and a more open question such as "What do you do together?" would have offered an opportunity for a less constrained response. In asking what games they play, Tammy lists three activities she and her best friend Kay play: powerpuff girls, princesses and fairies (turn 132). The interviewer then could have asked Tammy to elaborate on the nature of the games, how they are played, or who initiates the games. This was a missed opportunity to seek Tammy's account of how they negotiate what they are going to play and how the games are constructed. Instead, the interviewer starts a line of questioning about shared friends. The interviewer's turns 136 and 138 are about sharing friends with Tammy's twin, Mary, and produces the listing of five friends that already have been identified with the help of the sticker task.

A key aspect of understanding children's social worlds is understanding their interests in games and media, and being able to ask for elaboration of these activities. In the next

excerpt (Excerpt 7), when a later opportunity arose, the interviewer again does not seek elaboration about the games.

Excerpt 7

164.   **R:**   So when you play with <u>Kay</u> is it usually just you and Kay playing
                together ↓alone?=
165.   **T:**   =um no it's Virginia too cause she's Kay Redmond's friend too
                (   )
166.   **R:**   Mm Hm
167.   **T:**   hhhh
168.→ **R:**   so she plays powder puffs
169.   **T:**   Yep=
170.   **R:**   =and princesses with you=
171.   **T:**   =And fairies=
172   **R:**   =And fairies with you as well the three of you play ↓those
173.   **T:**   Yep
174.   (2.5)
175.→ **R:**   Who do you most like to spend your time with?

Although she does offer support to continue to elaborate on these games through the use of the continuer (Mm Hm) (line 166), the interviewer does not correctly refer to the "powerpuff girls[1]," but instead refers to the "powder puffs" (turn 168). Tammy, however, does not correct this mistake. While the repetition of what Tammy has said appears designed to encourage Tammy to continue, she responds with a minimal "yep" (turns 169 and 173). After a long pause of 2.5 seconds, the interviewer changes the topic (turn 175) to one about with whom Tammy likes to spend time. Despite the interviewer not asking Tammy to elaborate on a number of her responses, the sticker activity resulted in the questions being somewhat less abstract, and something concrete to discuss.

A comparison of interactional strategies before, during and after the sticker task
Examination of the interview transcript reveals that the occurrence of pauses and overlapping talk in the conversation were significantly different when looking at the talk occurring prior to and following the sticker task. Fewer pauses and greater overlapping

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[1] The "Powerpuff Girls" is an animated television program about three young girls with superpowers.

in the transcript after the sticker task show that the use of materials to manipulate enhances the interaction.

The interview situation is a context specific talk-in-interaction occurring *in situ* (Schegloff, 2000). As a general rule, when a speaker asks a question with a particular preference and the response is a pause, the speaker then reframes the question with the opposite preference (Sacks, 1987). In other words, the pause before the response indicates that there may be a dispreferred position about to be proposed. The questioner picks up on the respondent's cues for a disagreement leading to reframing the question to obtain an agreeable response.

Prior to the sticker task, the pauses or silences were more frequent. During turns 1-84, there were seven pauses longer than 3 seconds. For example, Excerpt 8 shows a number of extended pauses (turns 24, 26 and 28).

<u>Excerpt 8</u>

22.	→	**R:**	And what does being a twin mean?
23.		**T:**	Uhm:m
24.	→		(3.5)
25.	→	**R:**	If if I didn't know what what that meant what that word meant how would you explain that to me
26.	→		(4.0)
27.		**R:**	°So I understood what a twin meant°
28.	→		(7.0)
29.		**R:**	Not sure (.)

Following the introduction of the sticker task, there were only two instances where the pauses or silences are longer than 3 seconds. The pauses can be accounted for by Tammy adding friends to her sticker sheet. Following the sticker task, there were two instances of pauses. Both instances followed questions about Tammy's twin sibling, Mary. Excerpt 9 shows a pause in turn 194. After an extended wait, the interviewer reframes the question to which Tammy immediately responds (turn 196).

      193.   **R:**   more! (.) and what sort of things would you like Mary to play
                     with you? to do
      194.→   (6.0)
      195.   **R:**   If you spent more time together at at Preschool what what sort of
                     things would you like to do with Mary?=
      196.   **T:**   = I would (.) talk to ↑her
      197.   **R:**   Mmm
      198.   **T:**   Play some games with her (.) that's all

These two pauses are in contrast with the higher frequency of pauses occurring prior to the sticker task and the lack of long pauses that are evident after the sticker task.   Fewer pauses after the sticker task demonstrates that the activity is a useful tool for advancing the co-construction of the interview and, to a certain degree, contributes to the shared understanding of the concepts. The talk appears to be less awkward for both Tammy and the interviewer.

Another interactional feature found often in conversations is the occurrence of overlapping. Overlapping refers to speakers talking simultaneously (Schegloff, 2000), and this strategy is significantly higher after Tammy completes the sticker task. Overlapping talk is a feature that occurs in naturally occurring conversations (Schegloff, 2000). The overlapping talk is not problematic or competitive, but seen as a strategy for co-constructing the talk-in-interaction (Schegloff, 2000).

Overlapping occurs once just before the sticker task was introduced. This happens in turns 78, 79 and 80 (Excerpt 10).

Excerpt 10

      78.   **R:**   °okay° these stickers ((think something was dropped)) ((a noise))
                  there we go (.) this this person here that's ↑you I know it
                     doesn't look like you (laughter) but that will be you (.) one of
                     these white ones that says my twin so that's (.) who's that? If
                     that's [your] twin
      79   **T:**   [um] (.) my sister=

The occurrence of overlap during and after the sticker task happens on ten occasions. This suggests that the conversation occurring after the sticker task flowed more like a conversation with the two participants using the overlapping strategy to interact.

Extract 11 is an example of the overlap that occurs after Tammy places the stickers representing her friends on the sheet (turns 133 & 134, 146 & 147). The overlapping talk and absence of pauses in this excerpt indicate that the manipulative materials enhanced the flow of talk.

Excerpt 11

131.	**R:**	What sort of games do you play?
132.	**T:**	um power puff gir:ls (.) princesses and (.) fai::ries
133.→	**R:**	and do you do anything else [with]
134.→	**T:**	[no]
135.	**R:**	Kay?
136.	**R:**	No (.) do you share any of these friends with Mary?
137.	**T:**	Yep
138.	**R:**	the same friends >which ones do you share with Mary?<
139.	**T:**	Um (.) Annabel
140.	**R:**	Mmm
141.	**T:**	Karen Sabrina and Virginia and Kay Redmond
142.	**R:**	And are all of these children at Preschool?
143.	**T:**	Yep
144.	**R:**	ALL OF THEM
145.	**T:**	Some (.) but not lots [
146.→	**R:**	[so]
147.→	**T:**	s]ome of them
148.	**R:**	I know Karen and Sabrina are in in this room aren't they?
149.	**T:**	((Nods head))

The sticker task appeared to encourage conversational interaction. This finding is similar to that of Nigro and Wolpow (2004), who found that children who were given props during the interview increased communication with the interviewer. Future interviews started with the sticker task and some open-ended questions or statements specific to the participants and what they liked to do.

Notes for novice researchers when conducting research interviews

An examination of the sequence of the interaction between Lynette, the interviewer, and Tammy, the child participant, afforded an opportunity to look in close detail at how the interview itself was constructed. In the interview, both initially struggled to orient to the interview, with both searching for information, and analysis recognised the subtle nuances of the communication strategies of both participants. The interviewer privileged topics and made inferences, and the early part of the interview was marked by extended pauses in the interaction. We observed how both the child and interviewer searched for preferred questions and responses from each other. Even though the interviewer's intention was to elicit one child's accounts of her social world of friendship, Tammy was not asked to elaborate on her responses or the interviewer privileged certain responses, and thus there were missed opportunities to explore and elaboration of ideas that are important to Tammy. Asking questions about abstract concepts, such as 'being nice,' appeared to make the assumption that that there is a shared understanding of the meaning of the concepts. The interactional elements of pauses and overlaps in the conversation showed how their impact on the unfolding of the interview. The analysis also showed how the use of an artifact, a sticker sheet, prompted elaborated responses. For Lynette, an increased understanding of the interactions within her first research interview prompted several changes in how she conducted future interviews. She began her next interviews by introducing the sticker task upfront and establishing a comfortable conversational environment before beginning her probing questions. She also was more finely aware of how her prompts influenced how the child participant engaged in the interaction.

We offer four observations for novice researchers to consider in the conduct of the research interview. The first observation involves planning for the interview and building familiar contexts where both the children and the interviewer feel comfortable. Undertaking at least one or two visits prior to the interview maximizes opportunities to enter into the children's "cultures of communication" (Christensen, 2004), and develop

rapport with children, parents and staff (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The visits also provide opportunities for the interviewer to feel more comfortable in the setting. Written field notes during these visits can contribute to understanding the social and cultural aspects of the context (Eder & Fingerson, 2001). Such observations can provide ideas for opening the interview, as the interviewer could begin by commenting on these observations of the children playing particular games with specific children. As well, the informal visits could be useful in encouraging the children to role-play by interviewing each other and the interviewer while using an audio recorder (Holmes, 1998). Along with the field visits, there are benefits in conducting a pilot interview (Eder & Fingerson, 2001) and then analyzing it before conducting the series of interviews. Carrying out a pilot interview and then analysing the conversation offers opportunities to reflect on the interview skills. Identifying features of the interaction, such as the pauses, overlapping talk, rising inflections, and other strategies such as asking the child to elaborate, all demonstrate how integral they are in the co-construction of social order of the interview.

A second observation has to do with the context of the interview, and the value of the artifact as a resource for eliciting elaborated conversation. When the sticker task was introduced, the focus generated by this concrete resource produced more conversational interactions and greater elaboration of the topics under discussion. Both the researcher and the child participant oriented to the task, and the activity itself generated a conversation-rich environment.

A third observation involves recognizing children's participation in the research process (Alderson, 2008; Christensen, 2004; Danby & Farrell, 2005; Theobald, 2008). Recognising children as competent verbal and non-verbal communicators allows for new insights of how they construct their social worlds (Christensen & James, 2000; Danby, 2002). With competence and experience, the interaction between interviewer and child participant becomes a meaningful exchange that suggests a partnership (Kortesluoma et al., 2003). The sequential analysis of the interaction and organisation of conversation

allows an understanding of what was happening and how the talk sequences were put together (Sacks, 1987).

A fourth and final observation involves the methodological insights gained when closely analysing the interaction as a collaborative activity. Face to face interviews are best video-recorded than audio recorded to capture the gestures and other non-verbal interactions. As Pomerantz and Fehr (1997) note, "in cases where the interactants are co-present, it is preferable to have a videotaped recording so that at least some of the conduct visually available to the interacting parties also is available for review by the analyst" (p. 70). While recording devices may be regarded as problematic, Speer & Hutchby (2003) argue that the interview context becomes a site for analyzing all the talk and actions, and even those moments that might indicate some display of the presence of the device. Taking a broad perspective on data collection practices offers opportunities to understand the negotiation and *insitu* elements, as well as the interactional resources of the participants. The use of conversation analysis to investigate the interview context provides insights as the interaction process becomes more transparent.

The discussion in this paper pointed to the practical difficulties associated with interviews and highlighted key aspects for other novice researchers to consider when conducting research interviews, such as how the child may orient to the researcher's agenda. Investigating the interactional resources used by both researcher and child in the context of an interview highlights a number of practical issues involved in managing the interview with a young child. The quality of the interview data depended largely on the interviewer's ability to manage the talk-in-interaction with the child. Identifying and analysing certain interactional features within the interview, such as the use of questions and formulations, demonstrates the roles that the interviewer and interviewee play in co-constructing the social order of the talk. Understanding these conversational features within the interview can help to understand the work of the interview itself as it is co-constructed by participants and unfolds moment by moment. These insights can support

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novice researchers about to engage in interviews with participants by offering increased understandings of the research interview as a collaborative enterprise and recognising the value of specific interactional techniques, such as the introduction of an artifact as a conversational resource. These tools then become part of the researcher's collection of devices to manage the conduct of research interviews.

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Appendix A

TRANSCRIPTION

Interactional data are transcribed using the system developed by Gail Jefferson and described in Psathas (1995). The following notational features are used in the transcripts.

The following punctuation marks depict the characteristics of speech production, not the conventions of grammar.

no:o	sound is prolonged, multiple colons indicate a more prolonged sound
now-	a dash indicates an abrupt cut-off of the prior word
did.	a full stop indicates a stopping fall in tone
here,	a comma indicates a continuing intonation
hey?	a question mark indicates a rising intonation
together!	an exclamation mark indicates an animated tone

you	emphasis
YOU	greater emphasis
ºbutº	talk has a noticeably lower volume than surrounding talk
( )	the talk is not audible
(house)	transcriber's guess for the talk
(h)	an audible in-breath
[both did*	a single left bracket marks the point at which an overlap begins
	an asterik marks the point at which an overlap ends
[[not me*	double brackets mark multiple overlaps
=	no interval between turns
1.5	pause timed in seconds
((digging))	transcriber's description of the talk-in-interaction