

Notes from the field: Comparing face to face, telephone and Skype interviews with couples

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Aims and objectives

- To compare and contrast experiences of interviewing couples both same sex and heterosexual, using face to face, telephone and Skype (electronic communication) in two separate studies.
- To set out the challenges and drivers for joint or couple interviews using the various methods (face to face, telephone and Skype)
- To discuss the research method and methodological implications

The studies: Parents coping study

- **Parental experiences of care for children with a complex illness.**
 - **Principal Investigator Dr Anne Sophie Darlington, University of Southampton**
 - **Participants: Parents coping with a child living with a life limiting/threatening condition or bereaved parents with experience of living with such a child**
 - **20 semi structured interviews conducted in 2016 of which 4 were parent dyads**

Lesbian women making sense of maternity care

- Hermeneutic doctoral study
- Elaine Lee, University of Dundee (supervisors Taylor and Raitt)
- Eight women, two couples who requested to be interviewed together.
- Experience of maternity care

Joint/ couple/ multifocal occasion Interviews

Definition

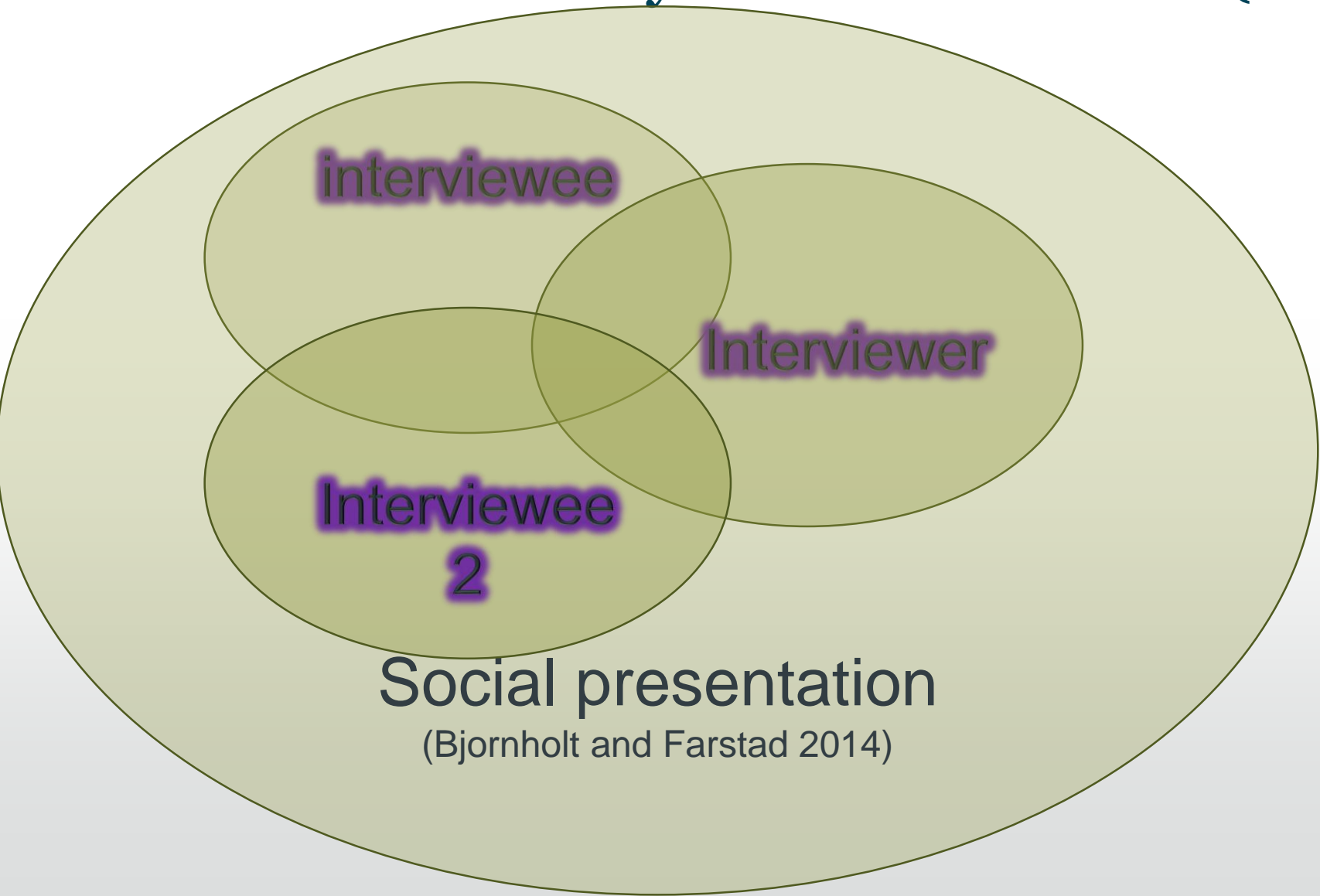
“an interview between one researcher and two people who share an experience” Sakellariou et al 2013 pg 1563

Racher et al 2000

- Assortative mating- couples share socioeconomic factors e.g. education
- Partner effects – dominance/ subservience by one partner
- Mutual influence- effect of each on the other
- Common fate- couple may have shared experiences e.g. death of a child

Not the same as a group interview or focus group where people may not be in relationships or intimate relationships with each other.

The Inter-view Taylor and de Vocht (2011)



Joint interviews of couples: methodological challenges

- Concealment vs negotiated disclosure? (Taylor and de Vocht 2011)
- Cueing Phenomenon, collaboration vs correction or contradiction (Bjornholt & Farstad 2014, Sakellariou et al 2013)
- Data opportunism, encouraging participation, cutting costs (Bjornholt & Farstad 2014)

Eisikovits Z & Koren (2010) gives good comparison between various methods of individual and joint interviews with couples

Joint interviews face to face

Context of nonverbal and other cues observations

May have environmental issues (noise, others listening in, coming in) but these are easier to detect and seek to minimise

Example of cueing and collaboration

- FP 1: ...Then once he, because he was completely dependent, he couldn't do anything for himself, non-verbal, so from then on one of us.
- MP 1: Toileting, dressing.
- FP 1: Toilet him, wash him, dress him.
- MP 1: Feeding.
- FP 1: He had his gastrostomy first when he was, how old was he when he had that? Six?
- MP 1: Something like that.

Joint interview face to face: Negotiated disclosure and contradiction

- FP 1: Shall I talk about my family and you talk about yours? Would be probably the most sensible thing wouldn't it? ...It's difficult isn't it because I think you have expectations of your parents because you want them to look after you and actually in this situation certainly since he's died we've felt a huge gap between our expectations and what we want from our parents to what they can provide.
- **Researcher 1: Emotional?**
- FP 1: Yes, I think so isn't it?
- MP 1: I differ from you on this because I've been disappointed. Summarising many years and this is a vast generalisation because there have been times when they've been outstanding but I've been disappointed in both sets of...parents.

Joint interview face to face: Negotiated disclosure and contradiction Lee et al (2011)

D: it was a pretty awful experience really, for lots of different reasons.

B: But I think that it was down to resources as well...I don't think it was attitude.

D: But some of it was attitude. I didn't know I could go anytime to visit you. Nobody ever said. Nobody explained. Nobody treated us like a couple really.

Joint interviews via telephone (no visual data)

No visual clues so relationship can be difficult to discern

Technical issues quality of the line, drop out, use of speaker phone

But can get rich data here an example of cueing

FP 2: Yes, we did but it was such a bad experience.

MP 2: We took her on holiday once and it was only when she was in good health we had a week for three years when she went to [names hospice], so we went for years where we didn't go abroad at all.

FP 2: But we did take her abroad, we went to Portugal with her with my parents.

MP 2: Oh yes twice.

Joint interviews via telephone (no visual data) 2

Also problems of controlling the interview environment

[older sibling enters the room]

FP 2: He's just come in the room actually.

Researcher 2: Oh has he? Does he know who you are talking to?

FP 2: No he doesn't. Some research and it's being recorded.

Sibling 2: Hello.

FP 2: No he always had a very strong relationship with his sister, no doubt about that.

Sibling 2: Sounds like a bad time.

FP 2: Can you make me a cup of coffee?

MP 2: The kettle has boiled.

Joint interviewing via Skype

Can get some facial expression and body language but limited to the shot/camera angle

Securing the internet connection, equipment and software (both ends)

The challenge of analysis at different levels “I” or “we”

- MP 3:... I actually said that to my wife that I thought it was all weird and wrong that we were trying to have another child. Of the two definitely I'm the one that I'm struggling with the sense of guilt of.
- FP 3: Having another one.
- MP 3: And moving on with life...I didn't know that she was pregnant already.
- FP 3: I didn't know either at that point... For some reason I had this really strong maternal instinct again and I thought that I really, really still wanted to try and fight for my family and still try to build one. For some reason that was really, really strong after C passed away.

Analysis of “I” or “we”?

- FP 3: But it took me a while to come to terms with that and luckily my husband could see that and so when I had bad moments about that he would be there for me saying don't worry it was not your fault, so I would go through the bad moment. The other way round when my husband had bad moments I could manage to find an angle to say it's normal, don't worry. We'd compensate in the dark moments of pain when you are hopeless the other would manage to bring the other bit up in a way. I think that for me was.
- MP 3: Yes, and also finding, sometimes you don't find out about each other until you get to these kind of conditions so you wonder how will you react to this situation but some situations like the death of a child you can't predict what will be your real reaction until it actually happens...We found each other very aligned and for me seeing how my wife reacted to the whole thing put her in a new light of strength I didn't know she had. She decided she wanted her cremated because she didn't want her buried somewhere, she wanted her with us in the house and I found myself agreeing with that extremely without even any thought about it I found that yes that was exactly what I wanted as well, ...I think we were finding that we were aligned in all this stuff, created a new bond. ...we'll have always this bond of having had a child together which is something but then sharing as well the death of a child

Discussion

- In the literature there is an assumption that face to face allows better rapport building = richer data, but comparing across the data appears rich in all 3 methods
- Is there sufficient evidence to suggest that one method is preferred in certain circumstances?
- Are cost and data opportunism sufficient reasons to alter the data collection method?

Summary

- Interviews are a co construction between the parties the interviewing of couples is different from the individual interview.
- Couple or joint interviews need to be designed, planned and implemented using different approaches and skills, the data should also be analysed considering the effects on the phenomena in question of relationships and power between the participants and between the participants and the researcher
- In illness, couple relationship and family research the joint or couple interview may be the most suitable to capture relational aspects in dyads that affect care

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