

How to prioritise participant voice in data analysis when a third voice is present – the use of advocates in research



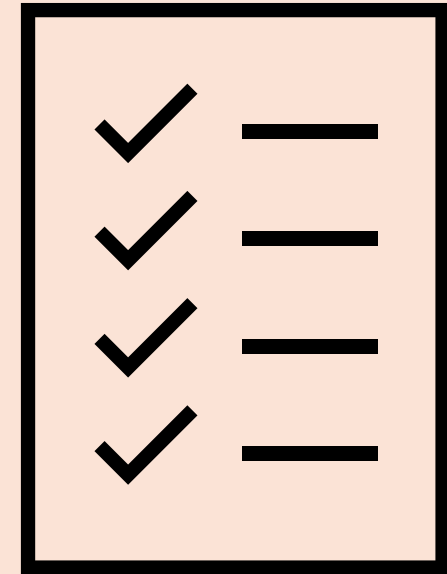
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What are we going to look at?

- Introduction to the research project
- How advocates became involved
- Notion of voice
- How I incorporated the 3rd voice
- Strengths and pitfalls



Comparing experiences of inclusion in the classroom



The request for advocates

Taylor ASD & SpLDs

- Discomfort with unknown people & activities
- Communication differences
- Processing information

Ocean ASD & SEMH

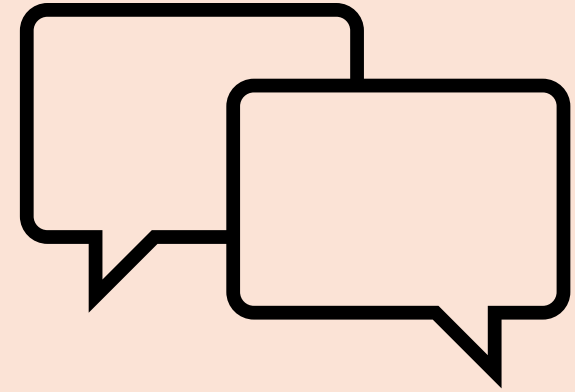
- Discomfort with unknown people & activities
- Communication differences
- Emotional regulation

Voice in interpretivist research

- Aim:
 - Listen to & represent the authentic voices of participants
 - Reduce additional lenses filtering their voices
- Advocates:
 - Adds an additional lens
 - Can misrepresent participants
 - May dominate the conversation
 - Can have their own agenda
 - May have power over the participant

What is voice?

- Normalised voice:
 - Speech & text
 - Directly from an individual
 - Autonomous & independent
- Risks:
 - Alternative communication seen as invalid
 - Marginalised communities silenced even further



How advocates worked

- Chosen and directed by participant
- Questions directed to participant
- Verbal and non-verbal confirmation sought
- Bringing the conversation back on focus
- Family members

- Understand the person well including how they communicate.
- Witness to their experiences.

- Can make it about their experience.
- Can prevent participant from being honest.

What about data analysis?

- Do I include the advocates words?
 1. I could remove them from the transcripts
 2. I could leave them in but not code them
 3. I could include them in the coding



I went for option 3

Coded script example

K: How you finding it?

O: OK, just a lot of drama of falling out with friends and stuff.

K: Ah OK.

ADVOCATE: We're in the middle of changing schools.

K: Oh are you OK.

O: Yeah.

K: Right. OK. So you're gonna go to a different one?

ADVOCATE: Yeah.

- Moving schools due to issues
- Social problems have a big impact

How did I check it was still about the participants

- Looked for confirmation from the participants in the transcripts and recordings:
 - Verbal agreement or disagreement
 - Non-verbal agreement or disagreement
 - Continuity from other parts of the conversation

*They do group work, but you can only have like 1 go and it's individual to the pupil. So it might be like Taylor struggles speaking in small groups. So if she's able to like just share 1 point of view then that's fine but you can add or take away as much you want. You don't need to like have to do the whole group all the time. (Taylor's **advocate** – mother)*

**Nods (Taylor, year 7, ASD/C SpLDs mobility)*

Sometimes there was none

- To include or not include?

*Everyone had to be really quiet so you couldn't, like, say when you are struggling and things like that. (Taylor's **advocate** – mother)*

However, Taylor (year 7, ASD/C SpLDs mobility) did not confirm either verbally or non-verbally that this was her interpretation of her experiences so this might be solely the viewpoint of the **advocate**.

Reflexivity

- Integral part of this type of research
- Additionally important for the impact of advocates

- Kept a reflexive journal
 - Entries after every interview
 - Entries after every analysis session
- Regular discussion during supervision

Presenting this in the findings

- Clear indication of whose voice
- Inclusion of confirmation

*I think you're one of the only ones that keeps your TA, aren't you? (Taylor's **advocate** – mother)*

**nods (Taylor, year 7, ASD/C SpLDs mobility)*

*That was in front of the whole class that was. (Ocean's **advocate** – guardian)*

Yes. (Ocean, year 8, ASD/C SEMH)

And one was shouting at her to make her cry...she's not having a good time.

*(Ocean's **advocate** – guardian)*

**Nods (Ocean, year 8, ASD/C SEMH)*

Was it a good idea?



Strengths

- Enabled voice from those otherwise silenced
- Elicited more detail
- Reassured & encouraged participation
- Added additional insight
- Provided context

Pitfalls

- Not easy to check confirmation
- Diverting focus away from the participants
- Threat to normalised ideals
- Unknown approach

Would I use them again?



Absolutely

Questions

