

Supplementary note on the presentation of data

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/impact.21.03sup>

Pages xi–xii of

The Discourse of Child Counselling

Ian Hutchby

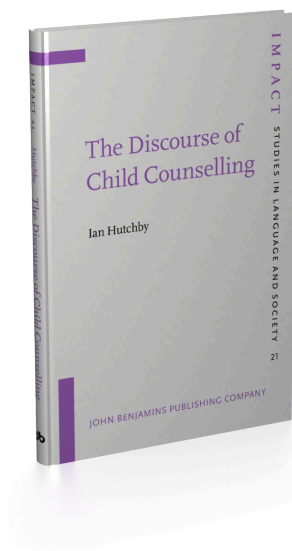
[IMPACT: Studies in Language, Culture and Society, 21]

2007. xii, 145 pp.

© John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way. For any reuse of this material written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: www.copyright.com).

For further information, please contact rights@benjamins.nl or consult our website at benjamins.com/rights



Supplementary note on the presentation of data

When preparing the manuscript for this book, I gave a lot of consideration to the question of how to describe the key participants in the data—that is, child counsellors and young children—and especially how to represent them as speakers in the data extracts that are scattered throughout these pages. Should I describe and represent them simply as ‘child’ and ‘counsellor’? Or even more neutrally, simply as ‘A’ and ‘B’? Or should I use the anonymised names I gave them for my own records, which would at least give the reader an indication of their respective gender? Or should I use a combination of names and, for the children at least, ages?

I quickly ruled out the ‘A’ and ‘B’ option, for the simple reason that in almost any conceivable situation of talk-in-interaction, and especially in institutional settings, we do not encounter one another as anonymous ‘A’s and ‘B’s. In certain quarters there is an argument that this is, in fact, the best way of representing participants for the purpose of analysis, since it avoids imputing any *a priori* identity characteristics that may not accord with the identities that are relevant, moment by moment, to the participants themselves. Such a position would therefore rule out my other options. For instance, to use the terms ‘Counsellor’ and ‘Child’ or ‘Counsellor, 35’ and ‘Child, 7’ might be taken to imply that these are fixed and concrete identity categories in terms of which the participants consistently orient to one another. Yet while this would, it is true, be an incorrect assumption (many other identities can become relevant and be demonstrably oriented to in the course of interaction) it seems equally true that the participants do not simply encounter one another as anonymous entities in a blank space, like characters in a Samuel Beckett play.

Therefore, in the interests of finding some balance between these positions, I adopted the policy of referring to participants in data extracts using single letters, but ones that both (a) indicated primary identity characteristics that were relevant—oriented to—by the participants themselves (even if not in every single utterance or action) and (b) provided a small amount of interpretive information (i.e. more than would be offered by ‘A’ and ‘B’) that could be useful for the readers of my analysis. Counsellors are referred to in all data extracts as ‘C’. Where it seems relevant to index their gender, that is mentioned in the text surrounding the extract. Children are referred to using the first letter of the Christian names I invented for each of them. The main names used, and their ages at the time of the

recordings, are Graham (4), Ben (5), Peter (6), Jenny (8), Dan (8), Pamela (10) and Amanda (12).

Thus, the following example is an exchange between a Counsellor and the child anonymised as Peter:

- 1 C: Are you surprised they said you couldn't go.
- 2 P: Yeah,
- 3 C: You are.
- 4 P: Mm.