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Not Special but Different: The adult only-child experience

The research question:
What is a female adult only-child’s experience of being an only one in child and adulthood?

Abstract
The challenge in my research was to find a way to look at both the social and psychological aspects of the only-child experience. I was mindful that most research in this area was of quantitative design. I wanted, however, to discover my co-researchers experience to themselves, others and the world. I chose a qualitative approach and conducted a small in-depth study looking at the experiences of female adult only-children. I defined only-child as someone who was brought up without siblings. Using a flexible design I have incorporated heurism and narrative inquiry as they offered a way of being reflexive and co-creating stories, which is fundamental to the way I work as a therapist. A voice-centred relational model (private, personal and public) enabled me to reflect on how adult only-children felt about their experience and how they felt only-ness might affect their sense of identity (private voice); how only-children relate to others, their parents, peers and significant relationships (interpersonal voice); and how aspects of the only-child stereotype might affect an only-child’s sense of identity (public voice).