

Bridging the 'individual' with the 'socio-political' through narrative analysis, the sociology of childhood and intersectionality: Applying an analytical framework to young women's accounts of experiencing domestic violence and abuse in childhood

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# AIM OF THE TALK

- Explore (on-going) process of developing an analytical framework - integration of social studies of childhood, intersectional feminism and narrative analysis, applied to young women's accounts of DV in childhood
- Early analysis, focusing on 2 interviews – focus on discourses around childhood, 'vulnerability', victimisation and the possibility of other intersecting identities.
- Reflections, discussion, thoughts and suggestions are much appreciated!
- **Situating myself....**
  - Cross-disciplinary: psychology (critical developmental psych and mental health), sociology, counselling & psychotherapy
  - PhD student, lecturer, CYP therapist.
  - Like to cross/challenge 'boundaries'/disciplines

# MY RESEARCH

- Aim: to understand more about childhood experiences of domestic violence (DV) when support isn't accessed
- Methods: Interviews with young adults, and will soon be interviewing children about their experiences
- Mainly drawing on Burman (2017), James & Prout (2014), Chadwick (2017)
- Background: Mainly driven by previous project – interviewed children in service contexts; 'voice' as produced contextually & relationally through service space. Little known about community based children who don't access support – yet the majority of children do not access support (therefore their experiences and 'voices' are not represented in current literature)
- My interests: exploring dominant discourses around children's resilience and agency in DV situations. Interested in multi-vocality and intersecting identities. Interested in the relational and contextual production of 'voice(s)'

# 'INDIVIDUAL' AND 'SOCIO-POLITICAL'

- Shift away from focus on individual, non-fragmented stories
- 'Individual'/'socio-political' – proposal that it is not useful to obscure one, in favour of the other. \*Both\* need to be central (Chadwick, 2017; Thompson, Rickett & Day, 2018)
- Situated knowledge (Harraway, 1988)
- Focus on multiple, situated 'I-positions' and concepts of the 'master narrative' (Nelson, 2001) to help draw out relations between ideologies and narratives within socio-structural power relations.
- Intersectionality as a way to draw out the multi-vocality within individual stories, and to contextualise individual experiences (Chadwick, 2017)

# WHY DO I WANT TO DEVELOP THIS FRAMEWORK IN CONTEXT OF MY RESEARCH?

- Greater attention needs to be paid to the ethics and politics of representation (Akerlund & Gottzen, 2016)
- Importance of not homogenising group of children just because they have all experienced DV – challenge assumption that there is a universal & common childhood experience that can be collectively represented (e.g. Burman, 2017)
- Soc of childhood – challenge ‘child’ as only category through which children’s experiences are understood. Child as socially constructed, child as agentic (James & Prout, 2014).
- View of children as social actors is beneficial, though does require more reflexive and critical analysis
- Intersectional feminism – multiple intersecting identities and speaking positions. Power relations. ‘voice’ as contextually & relationally produced (Chadwick, 2017). More recently applied to childhood studies e.g. age, time, space, place.

## ‘IT’S NOT SOMETHING THAT YOU DISCUSS’ (P7)

P: in my mind it wasn’t a big thing, and no one had a clue. It was me who kind of eventually told people

T: mhmm, so in your head, it wasn’t a big thing – you were surprised when they all were like ‘oh’

P: well yeah cos they all looked at me, obviously it was with my stepbrothers and they’d had a relatively [pause] they hadn’t witnessed anything like that and I didn’t know that they hadn’t witnessed anything like that cos it’s not something that you discuss

## ‘A LOAD OF CRAP, BASICALLY’ (P7)

P7: he said to me that he was pulled into the school, and the school said to him – he thinks this is one of the reasons why he never saw me again, which I think is a load of crap, basically.

‘OBVIOUSLY I’M AN ADULT AND I’VE  
DEALT WITH MY DEMONS’ (P7)

T: ... It sounds like not only was it really difficult when you went to see him [dad] but it was also difficult even when you were not with him

P7: yeah so my mum always says, and we laugh about it now, obviously I’m an adult and I’ve dealt with my demons...

..... I kind of learned that in order to forget I’ve kind of gotta forgive what happened. Not necessarily forgive him, but forgive what I was put through and accept that it was part of life, so that when I did see him, [pause] I was – I was over it, I guess you could say. I wasn’t too bitter about it. That for me made me able to say everything that I wanted to say,



‘BUT THAT WOULDN’T MEAN THAT I  
DIDN’T WANT TO NOT SEE HIM’ (P7)

T: if you are ok with sharing, what were the things that you wanted to say to him that you were able to say?

P7: well I wanted to erm, sort of ask why [pause] he gave up. So I think – when I was younger I was always confused as to why he did give up, although I knew that I made excuses not to see him, I always kind of wanted him to want me, and kind of stop it all and stuff, and obviously that never happened. Eventually he got sick. So I used to say ‘oh I don’t wanna come round because I didn’t like the food’ but that wouldn’t mean that I wouldn’t want to not see him, cos if he’d offered to take me somewhere I would have been fine, but he never did and so I just never saw him again. One of my things was ‘why did you just never speak to me again?’ but it – I’m still confused now, because I remember having all my nightmares and being so worried that he would come back, but then at the same time being so hurt that he rejected me in the first place. All really confusing. So that was one of my big things was why would you ever give up on someone? Especially your child?

## 'STUFF LIKE THAT' (P2)

P2: even when dad left I used to sit on the stairs listening to her cry. It was awful, you know, it was a horrible experience. But I'm similar to her – I'm just glad that I haven't sort of been massively [pause] cos I think people could be massively affected by stuff like that.

## ‘WE WERE THE DREAM FAMILY’ (P2)

P2: on the outside, to what people could see, we were the dream family, you know, boy, girl, and then happily married couple with a nice house, you know [laughs] so people sort of assumed that things were fine, and, erm, it wasn't fine. I don't know if it was because we had money... well my dad had a lot of money...'

## (ONGOING) CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of childhood experiences needs closer analysis of intersecting identities and speaking positions

‘Child’ as not the only category through which to analyse childhood accounts

Individual is important – but \*some\* story fragmentation, can support a critical analysis of socio-political context, which might help to develop an intersectional analysis of childhood accounts

Concerns around centralising marginalised voices determine agendas for non-fragmented representations of ‘voice’. However, ethical and political representation might require close socio-political contextual analysis too.

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Comments/questions/thoughts are welcome!