Changing Conversations: Recognising Agentic Capacity
In Children With A Domestic Abuse Experience – Stories
Told By School Professionals

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Research thesis submitted in part requirement for the

Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology

The University of Sheffield

School of Education

May 2018

<u>Abstract</u>

Educational Psychologists frequently advocate for a systemic approach to supporting children and young people (CYP) in schools, viewing the adults around the child as fundamental to understanding their experience, advocating their needs and bringing about positive change for the child (Mackay, Lauchlan, Lindsay, Monsen, Frederickson, Gameson, & Rees, 2016). In recognition of this, my research listens to the stories told by three Primary School Professionals (SPs), who support children with an experience of domestic abuse (DA).

This was an exploratory, qualitative study, within a sensitive field which is under researched (Swanston, Bowyer & Vetere, 2014). Stories were co-created through individual conversations with Primary SPs based in schools in the north of England. I adopted a storied approach to both the creation and analysis of conversations (Phillips & Bunda, 2018). Stories were analysed using an adapted version of Brown and Gilligan's Listening Guide (1993) - a 'Voice Centred Relational Method'. I adopted a social constructionist framework, which recognises that knowledge creation is a collaborative endeavour. With this in mind, my research design, foregrounds the importance of a social justice and a feminist paradigm in shaping my research journey throughout.

The 'sociology of childhood' literature (James and Prout, 1990; 1997; 2015) has contributed toward a re-positioning of children's response to an experience of DA, as one characterised by 'agency' (Overlien & Hyden, 2009). Agentic capacity can be recognised as range of behaviours which signify resistance, protection, strategic thinking and planning, amongst others. Stories told by SPs afforded differing levels of agentic capacity to children, in relation to their experience with DA. This finding has implications for how Educational Psychologists support schools.

<u>Key Words</u>: domestic abuse, qualitative, feminist, social justice, reflexivity, agentic, relational

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<u>Glossary of Terms Used</u>

DA – Domestic Abuse

SP – School Professional

CYP – Child And/Or Young Person

EP – Educational Psychologist

TEP – Trainee Educational Psychologist

LG – Listening Guide

VCRM – Voice Centred Relational Method

SENDCo – Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator

SEN – Special Educational Needs

<u>Thesis overview:</u>

- <u>Chapter 1</u> – I present a critical review of extant literature, exploring the definition and extent of DA, addressing theories in relation to agentic capacity, resilience, discursive positioning and the relevance of Ken Gergen's psychological theory to this thesis. I conclude with my research questions.

- <u>Chapter 2</u> – I reason my theoretical positioning, discussing the relevance of this to research design and methods used.

- <u>Chapter 3</u> – I outline the procedures used to conduct the research considering: ethics, consent, sample, pilot study, participants, recruitment, transcription and analysis.

- <u>Chapter 4</u> – I offer an analysis of each of the three separate stories given by the SPs in relation to their experience of supporting a child/children in school with an experience of DA. I also engage with the notion of agency, and how this relates to children's experience of DA.

- <u>Chapter 5</u> – I reflect upon how the individual stories converge and diverge with one another, referring back to my research questions and to the literature base presented in Chapter 1.

- <u>Chapter 6</u> – I discuss the implications for Educational Psychology practice, together with strengths and limitations of this research and future research directions.

- <u>Reflexivity</u> is an element which threads and weaves its way through the body of this thesis. Reflexive boxes are used to capture this.

<u>Chapter 1 – Critical Literature Review</u>

<u>Overview</u>

I begin this chapter by critically exploring the literature within the field of DA, highlighting differing views regarding definitions, terminology and the extent of DA. I then consider how DA can be conceptualised, the potential effects of DA alongside possible moderating factors. I explore the notion of resilience within the literature and in specific relation to DA. I consider how subject positions are constructed, before moving on to reflect on definitions of agency. I highlight an increased recognition of agentic capacity for children and how this has contributed towards their greater 'visibility' within the qualitative DA literature. I conclude by considering the relevance of Ken Gergen's (2009) theoretical perspective regarding relational beings.

<u>Conducting the Literature Review</u>

Conducting my literature search began with accessing the University of Sheffield, online catalogue of peer reviewed journal articles and books, moving onto the search engine Google Scholar, as well as more bespoke search engines such as PsycNFO. I explored a number of combined phrases and key words (DA and CYP, DA and Schools, DA and Teachers/Teaching Assistants/School Staff, DA and Pastoral Care, DA and Educational Psychology, DA and Psychology) trying at this stage to keep by search broad. I realised quickly, that research within the field of DA, CYP and Education was limited. I began exploring the White Rose eTheses Online, as well as the British Library e-Theses Online Service (EThOS), for theses within the field of Educational Psychology (see below) accessing references and citations within text. Terms such as 'children and witnessing DA' and 'children exposed to DA' were searched as my reading progressed. As I began narrowing the focus of my research, I started to source journal articles using the search terms 'agency', 'agentic capacity', 'CYP and agency' and 'narrative'. Throughout my reading, I kept a notepad of key authors, articles, books and references which were relevant.

<u>Issues of Definitions and Discourse</u>

The definition of DA is contested ground, with interpretations being offered by the British Medical Association (2007), Women's Aid (WA, 2016) and the Home Office (HO) (2013 & 2018). The 2013 HO legislation included forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour based violence within its definition. It also included those under 18 years (16-17 year olds) in its definition. Since then, further legislation has been passed incorporating the 'coercion and control' of behaviour (2015), as an offence. Throughout this work, I have chosen to adopt the following definition, used by WA:

> Women's Aid defines domestic abuse as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner or ex-partner. It is very common. In the vast majority of cases it is experienced by women and is perpetrated by men.
>
> Domestic abuse is a gendered crime which is deeply rooted in the societal inequality between women and men. It takes place "because she is a woman and happens disproportionately to women" (United Nations (UN) Declaration on the elimination of violence against women 1993).
>
> DA can include but is not limited to the following:
>
> - Coercive control - a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use of threat, of physical or sexual violence
> - Psychological and/or emotional abuse
> - Physical or sexual abuse
> - Financial abuse
> - Harassment and Stalking
> - Online or digital abuse
>
> (Source: Women's Aid, 2016.)

My choice to work with this definition throughout my thesis, was taken for two reasons. Firstly, on the basis of authenticity, believing that the WA definition is closer to the lived experience of the women and CYP involved: it feels more respectful to use a definition from those who 'own the experience', rather than those who research it. Secondly, WA make it explicit that DA is a gendered issue and relates to inequalities of power and control between men and women. It is a crime committed primarily by men and primarily against women, reflecting the unequal and marginalised, status of women within our society (Humphreys, 2008). This is a feminist position and one which I adopt throughout this thesis.

The field of DA is one full of diverse perspectives and complexity and one reason for this is the broad range of 'stakeholders' involved in its cause. DA is an issue considered increasingly important to public health, both physical and mental (Royal Society for Public Health, 2016). Government interest in austerity measures (since 2009) and consequent cost implications has resulted in a greater focus upon the financial implications of inadequately supporting 'high risk' families. Women's Aid, provide a costs analysis of two trajectories -with/without support - clearly demonstrating that in terms of services such as housing, social care, NHS costs and education, a preventative, early intervention approach is one advocated by policy makers.

Of course, there are other 'stakeholders' - academics, psychiatrists, neuro-developmental psychologists, third sector organisations and most importantly, the women, CYP who experience DA. Such a broad range of vested interests has meant that language, definitions and concepts have not readily been agreed upon. For instance, the very term used to describe the phenomenon is contested: do we refer to 'domestic violence' (DV) - as is frequently used within the third sector - or domestic abuse (adopted by Women's Aid). Whilst DV makes explicit the notion of physical harm and draws attention to an extreme physical element of what is taking place within a relationship, I argue that this is too narrow a description and draws our attention away from the myriad other forms that DA can take (WA, 2016). The term DV may appear to only represent those women at the extreme end of a spectrum - experiencing physical violence, thus preventing a more inclusive concept of what it means to be abused (see Gallagher, 2010). 'Intimate Partner Violence' (IPV) is a term preferred by some, since it locates the abuse within the confines of personal relationships (see Goddard & Bedi, 2010), interestingly, focusing the gaze upon adults only.

Some researchers (see Worrall, 2013, Heath, 2015) have chosen a middle ground, with the intention of encompassing both views, by referring to 'domestic violence and abuse' (DVA): many government papers also adopt this term. Throughout my work, I have chosen to use the term 'domestic abuse' on the premise that DV may well represent one extreme element of domestic abuse and exclude many women and CYP from feeling that, what is being described is not reflective of their experience (WA, 2016).

As with the definition of DA, other terms remain contentious (McIntosh, 2003). For example, are women described as' survivors' or 'victims', the former having connotations of empowerment and the latter as weakened and powerless. My own preference is for a vocabulary that seeks to reflect the sheer strength, courage and determination that so many women and children display within their experience of DA and to therefore adopt the term 'survivor' throughout this thesis. Similarly, there is a growing academic discussion regarding the discourse used to describe CYP's involvement with DA: are they 'witnesses' (Laing, 2000, cited in Mc Intosh, 2003) who have 'exposed to' DA or are they individuals who have 'experienced' it, in all its nuanced, pervasive and complex forms? (Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith & Fellin 2015, Katz, 2016) The term 'witness' or 'exposed to' has been challenged because it implies passivity, the notion of a bystander or an objective observer: there in presence but not truly part of that 'adult', subjective experience. Discourse and its relationship to positioning is discussed below.

<u>Positioning Theory</u>

As noted above discourse and language is fundamental to understanding the thinking or meaning making behind the stories we all tell. A helpful theory for exploring the conversations held between School Professionals and myself was Davies and Harre's (1990) Theory of Positioning. Positioning is a discursive practice, something which we all engage in during social interactions. It is an extremely fluid practice, described by Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat (2009:10) as both "**ephemeral**" and "**momentary**" and perhaps due to it shifting, dynamic nature - a practice characterised by contradictions.

How we position ourselves and others is achieved through our discursive practices: our discourse. Discussing our use of positioning makes explicit the kind of implicit thinking and meaning making, which underpins all social interaction. It enables us to reflect upon and be curious about the discursive construction of both our own identities and those of others. It draws our focus into an awareness of how discourse and language works on many shifting levels within the stories with which we engage (both the telling and hearing).

We are both positioned by others and position ourselves. In order to understand the notion of positioning I refer to my own positioning. This is discursively created by reference to a range of concepts: for example, my own socio-cultural experience, those groups or categories with which I align myself (I may delineate within these based upon my moral and emotional beliefs, seeing myself as part of one group but not another). My positioning is also shaped by those discursive practices which I engage with - perhaps as a woman, a mother or as a TEP. Alternatively, my positioning may be established by resistance or challenge to discursive practices.

Although not engaging with a discursive analysis within this thesis, it is relevant and helpful to consider the positioning of characters through discursive constructions within the stories told. All stories attempt to accomplish something and it is insightful to explore how positioning of characters or groups, either obscures or supports this (Edwards and Potter (2000), cited in Harre & Davies, 2009:10).

Throughout this thesis, concepts such as DA and agency are discursively constructed; so too the notion of what it is to be 'a child', a SP or indeed a Trainee Educational Psychologist. As part of my own reflexivity, I draw attention to the tensions which exist in how children and their families are discursively positioned. The concept of 'pre-positioning discourse' is introduced by Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat (2009) and this is useful to hold in mind when listening to the stories told by SPs. Harré et al (2009:10) explain that:

> *Prepositioning* discourse involves listing and sometimes justifying attributions of skills, character traits, biographical "facts" deemed relevant to whatever positioning is going forward. Prepositioning might be positive or might be negative - it is just as much a positioning act to delete someone's rights and duties as to assign them.

This encourages us to think about where characters are positioned and how we discursively engage with these positions and whether or not we comply with an assigned position or resist this.

In positioning children as having little access to agentic capacity, then we are narrowing our understanding of the "**multiple selfhoods**" which exist in us all (Davies & Harre,

1990:3). If we discursively position children in this way, then we overlook their acts of resistance and resilience, effectively disempowering them (Harre 1993). Burr (2002) argues that we can resist such positioning but for those groups who are marginalised, such as children, this is often more challenging.

Extent of Domestic Abuse

During a conference of the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) in September 2016, DA was referred to as a **"hidden epidemic"**. It is one which cuts across age, religious background, socio-economic status, ethnicity and geographic location (Stern & Poole, 2009). Although it may be argued that DA is now much more present within political agendas, DA still tends to be a phenomenon shrouded in secrecy and stigma for those who have lived/living through it, where disclosure proves problematic for many reasons, such as safety, shame and fear. As a result, the official statistics cited below, need to be treated with caution as they do not reflect true prevalence.

In 2016, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that 30% of women internationally and 27.2% of women in Europe, had experienced either physical or sexual abuse within their intimate relationships. WA have documented that on average, two women in the UK are killed by a partner/ex-partner each week, as a result of DA (WA, 2006b; ONS, 2017). Pregnancy is an especially vulnerable time for women, where it is known that both prevalence and severity of DA increases during this period (Jasinski, 2004) – with 30% of women experiencing their first abusive attack during pregnancy (WA, 2009). The point of leaving an abusive partner is also a difficult time for women, with the British Crime Survey finding that 22% of them were abused by ex/partners, after a decision had been taken to leave the abusive partner (Home Office, 2003).

Across Europe, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) have estimated that 5 million CYP are experiencing DA. A study of prevalence amongst CYP in the UK, found that 5.7% of CYP will experience DA each year. As a total figure, approximately 29.5% of CYP will experienced DA before reaching the age of 18. When this statistic is broken down, it becomes clear that a developmental impact needs to be

considered. For example, of the 29.5%, 12% are children under aged 11 years and 17.5% of CYP are aged 11-18 years (Radford et al, 2013). Interestingly, this last statistic reveals a growing concern that the highest rate of abuse is currently amongst young people aged between 16-19 years, where a 2011/12 British Crime Survey found that this age group were the at the highest risk of experiencing partner abuse (Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick & Stevens, 2011).

How is Domestic Abuse Conceptualised?

The way in which DA is conceptualised is important for the ways in which, as a social problem, it is addressed. A number of theories have been put forward to explain the 'causes' of DA and whilst it is pertinent to consider the credence of each, the multi-faceted nature of DA, precludes adoption of a single theory to explain such a complex phenomenon (Ali & Naylor, 2013). For this reason, what will be supported within this thesis is an eco-systemic perspective of DA (also referred to as the ecological framework theory), where there is a more holistic and dynamic understanding of people, contexts and environments (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). This perspective rejects a notion of deficits in individuals and pathologies and instead, looks to the social structures within which DA is embedded (Dasgupta, 2001, cited in Ali & Naylor, 2013). An eco-systemic perspective eschews simplistic, linear models of explanation and leads to a more comprehensive, rich and nuanced understanding, which recognises the influence of a range of perspectives and theories (Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward & Tritt, 2004). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss theories in detail, thus what is presented here, is a brief selection of dominant discourses.

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977)

The 'cycle of violence' (Walker, 1979, cited in Ali & Naylor, 2013) or 'intergenerational transmission of violence theory' (which originates from social learning theory, Bandura 1977), posits that abusive behaviours are learned and repeated across generations, therefore implicating both adults and CYP alike (Kalmuss, 1984). The theory holds that an adult experience of abuse as a child, 'leads them' as a matter of 'cause and effect' into becoming a perpetrator or survivor, in later life (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990). Milner (2010) posits a similar concept: that those CYP who experience abuse at home,

go on to become perpetrators themselves. It is a theory which is contested because it offers an overly simplistic explanation for the occurrence of DA: empirical evidence is inconsistent and recent meta-analyses argues that the evidence base is over-stated (Smith Marek, Cafferky, Dharnidharka, Mallory, Dominguez, High, Mendez, 2015). It arguably offers only a limited, narrowly defined and linear understanding of the complex behaviours experienced in schools by School Professionals and CYP (Widom & Wilson,2015). It also overlooks the impact of factors such as resilience and how this may moderate. Women's Aid rejected this theory on the grounds that it was neither a helpful or comprehensive way of thinking about such a complex and complicated phenomenon.

<u>Feminist Perspective</u>

Feminists can be credited with drawing widespread socio-political attention to DA, the establishment of a women's refuge movement and successful lobbying of changes to the legal system (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni & Rice, 2007, cited in Ali & Naylor, 2013). Feminist theory situates the causes of DA within a socio-political arena, viewing it as a social problem, where a patriarchal society and traditional power structures have positioned men as dominant, women as subservient and thus more easily marginalised and oppressed (Ali & Naylor, 2013). From a feminist perspective, violence against women and girls, includes a range of acts perpetrated primarily by men, such as child sexual exploitation, rape and sexual abuse (Yick, 2001, cited in Ali & Naylor, 2013). According to feminists, DA in all its forms, contributes towards a pervasive injustice of gender which cuts across women's social, economic, political and financial standing. For this reason, many feminists adhere to the notion that feminism is an 'unfinished revolution'; for until there is embedded social and political change which eliminates gender disparity, then there will be little change to oppressive acts.

Nicholson (2010), a feminist psychologist, although acknowledging other causes for DA, situates its origins within the arena of patriarchy and the need for power and control of women, by men. Traditionally, the feminist perspective has been rather narrowly focused on a single issue, of the unequal power relationship between men and women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Nicholson's perspective, is perhaps more reflective of

current, broad based thinking, which has attempted to extend the discussion, by incorporating individual differences in both relationship dynamic and relationship context.

Attachment

It has been suggested that attachment anxiety has some basis in abusive behaviour (Dutton & White, 2012). Bowlby (2012) claimed that our attachment relationship to a significant other (typically mothers) establishes an internal working model, which shapes and defines how we relate to others. In 2012, Dutton & White referred to "**dysfunctional**" (p.478) attachment to explain the origin of abusive acts within relationships – finding that those deemed to have a **"fearful attachment"** (p.476) often displayed anger that was fuelled by an anxiety around jealousy. Godbout, Dutton, Lussier & Sbourin (2009) report similar findings – with a lack of availability to the attachment figure, acting as an instigator of abusive behaviours.

However, attachment theory can be critiqued from a feminist perspective, as situating the abuse within a dysfunctional familial context, where the mother's 'inability' to connect with her children is explained by attachment difficulty, rather than other psycho-social reasons (fear, intimidation, guilt). Using a narrow attachment lens to understand DA, leads to a deficit model of women/mothers and fails to take account of the gendered societal context of abuse (Buchanan, 2013).

Impact of Domestic Abuse

> ### Reflection
> I add a word of caution here, since at the heart of my thesis is a view that so far, much of the existing DA literature in relation to CYP, tells a dominant story - by adults - of deficit, harm and damage. Therefore, what I present below, appears to be adding to this literature and this perspective. This is not my intention: I present the literature as aspects of a 'broad-story'.

According to Glick, Berman & Clarkin (2003) DA is a chronic issue, with a gradually evolving pattern to it. Its impact upon CYP is multi-faceted and complex, with a range of differing and individual responses: making it difficult to explain its outcomes with certainty (Edleson, Ellerton, Seagren, Kirchberg, Schmidt & Ambrose, 2007). Complicating factors include, the co-existence of poverty, parental substance misuse and homelessness (Gerwirtz & Edleson, 2007). Whilst some CYP may be deeply traumatised from their experiences others may respond with greater resilience, a range of coping strategies and minimal impact to their wellbeing (Sullivan, Nguyen, Allen, Bybee & Duras, 2001). Whilst it is crucial that we understand how DA affects the lives of CYP, there is a need to be mindful of how the creation of a 'deficit' model, may detract from complexity of the issue and the similarly complex response to it, by CYP (Callaghan, et al, 2015). However, what Thompson, Bonomi, Anderson, Reid, Dimer, Carrell, & Rivara, (2006) have argued, is that it is the cumulative nature of experiencing DA, which leads to poor adult mental health outcomes. As the number of hostile experiences occur for CYP, so too does their likelihood of suffering poor adult mental health outcomes. In 2001, Rossman spoke about the long term effects of DA, noting that it impacts upon children:

> ...in the areas of an individual's cognitive, social, emotional or behavioural functioning.
>
> (cited in Graham-Bermann, 2002:35)

<u>Age and Stage:</u> A CYP's stage and age of development at which they experience DA is an important consideration, since developmental milestones can be adversely affected. Gewirtz & Edleson (2007) argue that DA potentially interrupts the formation of healthy attachments between a primary caregiver and their infant. It is suggested that an emotionally or psychologically unavailable parent would struggle to provide the security and confidence to their infant child, necessary in establishing a 'safe base', thus leading to insecure attachment (Bowlby, 2012).

For infant children the effects of DA may be seen in delayed language acquisition, feeding difficulties which impact upon weight gain and toileting (Osofsky, 2003). Pre-school children may also experience challenges in learning how to regulate their

emotions and behaviours, resorting to externalising aggressive behaviour: whilst others react by becoming more anxious, introspective and withdrawn (Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007, Carlson, 2000).

In terms of school aged children, the need to navigate increasingly more complex social relationships may adversely affect not only their learning but also the development of peer relationships (Hornor, 2005). Social skills have been noted as lagging behind those of their peers (Wood & Sommers, 2011). Gewirtz & Edleson (2007) have noted difficulties for children with a DA experience, in terms of social communication, noting that these children are not always socially well attuned. According to Carlson (2000) these children tend to experience a range of adverse effects including depression, anxiety, hypervigilance and PTSD related flashbacks. Carlson (2000) goes on to argue that these children have comparatively fewer friendships than their peers and unsurprisingly, these friendships tend to be less fulfilling.

For adolescents, the pathway into adulthood can be adversely shaped by an intensity of emotion, whereby the young person is acutely aware of being different to their peers (Buckley, Holt & Whelan, 2007). The breaking of bonds from parents and the establishment of these with peers, or intimate partners, can be made more difficult due to conflicting emotions towards parents (Osofsky, 1995).

Gender: In 1994 Cummings et al, found evidence for boys responding to DA with sorrow, whilst girls were found to display anger. Becker and McCloskey's work in 2002, supported this perception of girls, with their finding that adolescent girls were more likely to externalise their feelings through the expression of anger. However, in 2006, the findings from Sternberg, Baradaran, Abbott, Lamb & Gutterman, questioned these gender responses, in arguing to the contrary, that boys externalise their feelings through confrontation and aggression whilst girls internalise, through depression and anxiety. Findings regarding the differentiated impact upon gender remain inconclusive and are often critiqued for their reliance on cohorts deemed to be 'high risk', compared to the general population.

Physical Health: In terms of physical health it is known that these CYP can be at higher risk of a number of physical health problems, including somatic disruption (Rossman, Hughes & Rosenberg, 2013), impeded physical growth (Montgomery, Bartley, & Wilson, 1997) and high blood pressure (Ballard, Cummings & Larkin, 1993). Conflict in the home has also been associated with higher levels of sympathetic reactivity to stress (Heim & Nemeroff, 2002), leading to complications with the cardio-vascular system and consequent increased risk of coronary heart disease (Sternberg, Lamb, Greenbaum, Cicchetti, Dawud, Cortes & Lorey, 1993). The effects of early childhood experiences on stress responses are important, since the differing physiological responses to stress are thought to contribute towards susceptibility to illnesses in later life. A rapid and variable physiological response to stress is a useful short term adaptation. However, when this system is activated repeatedly and over long periods of time, then poor future health becomes a greater possibility (Markovitz & Matthews, 1991). Bradley-Berry (1998, cited in Byrne & Taylor, 2007) argue that neuro-biological alterations, in response to stress, lead to an over-reliance on the 'flight or fight' response, resulting in hyper-vigilance.

Psychological Impact: In terms of psychological impact, some CYP will react to experiencing DA, by displaying trauma symptoms (Levondosky, Huth-Bocks, Semel & Shapiro, 2002) thus becoming at a higher risk for the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (Rivett, Howarth & Harold, 2006). For younger children, if left unaddressed, this may continue into their childhood, through to adolescence and for some, adulthood (Becker & McCloskey, 2002). There is a consequent higher rate of anxiety (often in the form of 'tummy aches') and depression amongst this group (Sternberg et al, 1993). So too, is there an increased likelihood of bed wetting (Hester, 2007). Traumatic experiences can result from a range of sources, such as hearing the abuse, seeing it, being aware of physical injury to their mother or broken objects at home, as well as experiencing their mother's depression (McGee, 1997).

Educational Experience: The adverse effects upon educational experience and life chances can be far reaching. For some CYP, school refusal becomes an issue of protection, whereby they fear that leaving their mother at home, will lead to her being exposed and open to attack. When these CYP do attend school, they are noted to react

in one of two ways – either becoming quiet and withdrawn or loud and aggressive (Byrne & Taylor, 2007). These authors argue that CYP engage with behaviours which result in school exclusion – poor impulse control and self-destructive behaviours. According to McGee (2000), the result of DA at home and consequent trauma, is frequently transferred to the classroom in the form of detrimental effects on attainment, aggressive behaviour towards peers or staff and poor concentration. Self-denigrating behaviours have also been implicated, such as eating disorders and self-harm (Hanmer & Itszin, 2013).

An over active stress response system is thought to lead to poor concentration and a range of learning difficulties: anxiety is known to be a direct inhibitor of working memory: vital for learning (Eysenck, Derakshan, Santos & Calvo, 2007). Byrne & Taylor (2007), argue that CYP experiencing DA are known to have a higher chance of educational drop out; to struggle with self-esteem and self-confidence. Current school pedagogy emphasises peer learning – for CYP who struggle with forming and maintaining peer relationships, it is clear to see how educational outcomes may be compromised. Older YP are thought to be more likely to truant or become involved in substance misuse (Hornor, 2005)

Of course, not all CYP displaying these behaviours have experienced DA, and Hester (2007) found that some within this cohort showed no adverse signs: on the contrary, they found evidence of high achievement and use of positive coping strategies at school. However, Stalford, Baker & Beveridge (2003) argue for a direct correlation between poor academic attainment and DA. According to Gilligan (1998) positive educational outcomes are likely to be reduced as a result of an accumulation of adverse events, typically between three and four, with negative effects being linked to the chronicity of DA and weak support systems (Hester, 2007). For CYP living with DA, who may also be living in poverty, experiencing sleep problems, have feelings of low self-worth, difficulties at school, or coping with a depressed parent, it is not difficult to recognise the cumulative impact of co-morbid circumstances.

Moderating Factors

Some factors may mediate the negative effects of DA, such as positive family relationships and social support structures (Mullender, Hague, Imam, Kelly, Malos & Regan, 2002). The provision of nurture, stability and protection from at least one significant adult (often a grandma or aunt), is thought to act as a protective factor. High self-esteem and a sense of agency by the CYP themselves has also been found to help - being able to exert some sense of control in an otherwise chaotic experience, appears to make a difference (Callaghan, et al, 2015).

Schools also play a key role, offering a safe place and respite. Schools can act as an arena for fun and play - so crucial for CYP, in terms of social and emotional development (Wade & Smart, 2002). If schools respond positively, then they have the potential to provide an environment in which CYP can begin exploring their feelings, re-building a sense of self and purpose (Gilligan, 1998). Worrall (2013), found that the provision of peer group support within schools, was highly regarded by YP. This mirrors the findings of Mullender et al, 2002 which demonstrated that CYP felt at greater ease amongst small groups of peers who had also experienced DA, where shared experience and creation of their own DA stories, felt empowering.

More recent thinking has drawn attention to the importance of the mother-child relationship in establishing resilience and well-being, in the face of DA (Renner & Boel-Studt, 2012, cited in Callaghan, 2015). Although this cannot prevent abuse, its presence is promising for the repair of relationships at a later stage (Sturge-Apple, Davies, Ciccheti & Manning, 2010).

Resilience

The concept of psychological resilience is not without critique (Harvey & Delfabbro, 2004, cited in Lumby 2012:263). Nonetheless, there appears a general acceptance that it is an ability to adapt under conditions of adversity, retaining the capacity to achieve positive outcomes (Rutter 2012; Ungar 2011; Masten 2011). Defined in this way, resilience is conceived as common though not universal.

Achieving positive outcomes is thought to be related to a range of 'protective factors', including individual traits such as temperament, cognitive ability and positive/supportive relationships within the family, community and school. These are thought to moderate 'risk factors', such as domestic abuse, parental divorce, poverty (Ungar, 2011). Both Masten (2011) and Ungar (2011) argue for a 'social ecological perspective' of resilience being adopted, which positions CYP as having the capacity to:

> **navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided in culturally meaningful ways**
> (Ungar, 2008, cited in Ungar, Connelly, Liebenberg & Theron, 2017:2)

From this perspective, coping positively under adverse stress is the result of dynamic patterns of interactions, as a child travels between and within different environmental contexts. Within each context it is their capacity to access experiences and resources which strengthen their ability to manage positively (Ungar et al, 2017).

Resilience and Domestic Abuse

CYPs resilience has, over the past decade, been an increasing focus of research within the field of DA, with notions of resilience acting to resist or counteract the dominant **"discourses of damage"** (Alexander, et al, 2015:2). See for example, studies by Katz 2015; Buchanan et al 2014 and Collis, 2012. As with much of the research in relation to CYP and DA, **"[t]here is a noticeable paucity of literature that explores how children cope, or their capacity for resilience and resistance, in situations of domestic violence"** (Alexander et al, 2015). Much of the literature is quantitative in nature and locates resilience within individual differences (possessing good cognitive or social skills). Furthermore, resilience is portrayed as mediated by someone other than the child, such as their mother. This has led Alexander et al (along with other qualitative researchers such as Mullender et al, 2003; Overlien & Hyden, 2009; Swanston, 2014) to call for some **"balance to *problem-focused* debates around children's experiences of domestic abuse with a more *resilience-focused lens*"** (Alexander et al, 2015:2).

Callaghan & Alexander (2015) also argue that when considering resilience within the context of DA and CYP, we must be mindful of viewing the concept narrowly, where it is understood only as an outcome or collection of individual traits. Exploring resilience

broadly, requires a willingness and openness to take a more nuanced lens. Looking for a traditional model of 'resilience' within contexts of DA, might lead us to conclude, that it is lacking in these children: yet another example of damage sustained. However, through their research, Callaghan and Alexander (2015) have identified expressions of resilience, within the different means by which children cope, within extremely challenging physical and emotional contexts.

For example, during episodes of abuse within the home, CYP have been shown to seek out their own, alternative safe places. These may be under the bed, in a cupboard or fleeing from the home. From a professional's "**adultist interpretation**", this could be understood as succumbing to power and abuse, meekly hiding from it (Callaghan and Alexander, 2015:95). However, by exploring the meaning given to these acts, we understand that CYP actively find a place that makes them feel 'safer' or distanced from what is happening to them. By moving beyond asking CYP questions of 'how did you feel' within that situation, asking instead 'what did you do?' then we begin to comprehend behaviours which reflect more than 'simply hiding' or simply 'showing fear'. In altering the questions that we ask and allowing the space for CYP to express their experiences, in their own words, we begin to recognise resistant and resilient strategies to a threatening and volatile experience.

It is argued that clinical representations of CYPs response to DA are often plotted in binary opposition: they are either resilient or dysfunctional (Anderson & Bang, 2012). These authors argue that this understanding is too simplistic and that the two concepts (resilience and dysfunction) are intertwined, inseparable and on a continuum. Both concepts are part of the same experience "**resilience and impairment are not necessarily opposites, but are instead different aspects of the overall experience of coping and adjustment**" (Anderson and Bang, 2012:56, cited in Callaghan and Alexander, 2015:13).

Callaghan & Alexander (2015:91) speak about the concept of "**paradoxical resilience**" to explain that how a CYP behaves within an experience of DA. Whilst, on the surface they may appear to lack resilience, however, when viewed contextually and relationally, it is

quite the opposite. They speak about the "**inextricable intertwining**" of DA experiences: with the coping, resilient behaviour and the harmful experience co-occurring.

Finally, in Callaghan & Alexander's (2015) critique of resilience and its application to DA and CYP, they have called for a measured and balanced understanding of the concept. Their concern is to caution against a one-sided resilience perspective, pointing out that there are also risks and vulnerabilities present too. A research approach which relies too heavily on CYPs resilience (without consideration of risk/vulnerability also) may unwittingly position survivors as immune to the adverse effects of DA. This potentially has implications for social policy, funding for a social issue which is already underfunded, schemes of protection for survivors, as well as the availability of approaches and interventions for CYP.

The Importance of Schools

> While there is growing sensitivity to the issue [DA], the complexities which surround it can mean that this population [CYP] may have low visibility in certain key sites where opportunities for intervention potentially exist.
>
> (Buckley et al, 2007:296)

There is much capacity for schools as 'key sites' and the professionals linked to them to understand, recognise and build upon children's agentic capacity. So too is there great potential to provide nurture and emotional support, build resilience, support strong social relationships and offer a confidential space in which to talk (Unicef, 2006). They can provide boundaries and a sense of containment, safety and security for CYP whose lives feel beyond their control. For younger children, they are crucial as an arena for play - where light hearted fun is missing at home due to the intensity of living with DA (Huzzard,2015, unpublished). School presents an enormous potential. Indeed, the ever increasing threshold for access to services such as Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) has meant that more and more, are schools needing to internally address issues of mental health (Callaghan et al, 2015). Gilligan (1998) argues that schools can act as 'havens' for CYP: as an 'ally' and protector. They have the potential to provide access to adults who can support CYP by encouraging a sense of agency, building communication skills and a sense of their own worth, as someone to be

listened to and respected (Hester, Pearson & Harwin, 2000, cited in Hague, Mullender, Aris, Harwin & Johnson, 2002).

Family aside, it can be argued that school is the most influential aspect of CYP's development (Gilligan, 1998) and yet, in terms of DA and CYP, so little of the research lens has been focused upon them. My own search of the literature found academic papers from the field of social work, nursing, midwifery, even dentistry discussing the relevance of DA to the professionals within their field. Yet, in the field of education, where professionals spend significantly more direct time with CYP, the findings were frustratingly sparse: making attempts to understand the experiences of CYP in education and those of the adults supporting them, very difficult. Perhaps the 'invisibility' within education is indicative of how CYP have been situated within the field of DA (Callaghan, 2015). The paucity of research within Educational Psychology (noted above) perhaps also mirrors the lack of focus upon CYP and DA, from schools.

Agency – A Challenging Concept

Montreuil & Carnevale (2016:509) refer to the concept of agency as "**fuzzy**". Within the literature, it is a somewhat abstract and contested concept which lacks clarity and has a number of explanations, making a common or universal working definition problematic. This reflects a view that concepts are dynamic – they change through both a time, culture and a context dimension (Rodgers, 2000, cited in Montreuil & Carnevale 2015:504). Furthermore, the concept of agency can be theorised differently within differing academic fields, such as Health, Social Work and Philosophy (see below). Often, the difficulty lies in a lack of clarity from researchers who refer to agency within their work, without having defined it first. There appears to be an assumption that this is commonly understood, rather than an acknowledgement of its ambiguity.

The paradigmatic position from which agency is explored also shapes the way it is theorised. Baker (2013), in adopting a post-positivist approach, refers to a developmental account of agency which adopts prescriptive measures at given times in a child's development: these can be accounted for through the use of measurement and evidence. Accordingly, 'agential development' is a gradual process where key skills

need to be present, such as sentience, episodic memory, mirror self-recognition and theory of mind (Baker, 2013). In contrast, a constructivist paradigm views children's agency as the result of their actions (acts carry meaning) and their discourse. From this perspective, all children possess agency and are viewed as capable and able to shape their social worlds from a very early age.

Defining Agency

For the purposes of this thesis, I have attempted to draw together a number of views around the concept of children's agency, in order to create a working definition for analysing SPs stories and attempting to make meaning from these.

Much of the Childhood Studies research has located itself in response to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Naties, 1989). This promotes children's participatory rights and the right to their own views. Recent theorising within this broad field (appearing approximately 2010) from UK and Scandinavian researchers, has led to views of children's agency as the ability to adopt an active (and not passive) role in shaping their own lives, not only meeting their own needs but also *shaping* the choices/decisions made by others. An example of this can be seen in the research conducted by Katz (2015:69) in which she reports examples of children encouraging and supporting their mothers to leave abusive partners. Katz (writing from a Sociology/Social Policy perspective) argues that agency is present when **"children actively support their mother and siblings and wish to play direct roles in decision making about the domestic violence**" (Katz 2015:69).

Callaghan broadens our definition by pointing out that:

> children and young people can be articulate, strategic and reflexive communicators, and … good support … must enable space for children and young people's voice to be heard. This is possible only in an integrated framework able to encompass multiple layers and perspectives, rather than privileging the adult point of view.
> (Callaghan, 2017:3370)

What Callaghan is advocating here, is a sufficiently in depth exploration of children's experiences with DA, one which recognises that within that experience, expressions of agency may be communicated in ways not typically expected. Furthermore, looking for

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them from an adult perspective is negating the experience of the child. For only when adults listen to this and understand this (in its often complex and nuanced forms) will a real understanding of children's agency be gained. Callaghan also makes the important point that a recognition of children's agency necessitates adults effectively re-conceptualising what it is to be 'a child', understanding that agency is present in children if it is looked for.

A significant piece of research was conducted by Evang & Overlien (2015) which makes this point (of looking beyond established adult notions and recognising that children are more than capable of expressing their own perspectives) very well. These researchers were answering the critique that (especially young) children are dysregulated, overly emotional and incapable of expressing their views regarding their lived DA experience. This is the view often depicted in more traditional, quantitative research: CYP as damaged, rendered helpless and lacking in agentic capacity. Evang & Overlien explored the "**competence**" of young children (4-7 years) to act as "**participants**" in qualitative interviews (2015:113). They concluded that children as young as 4 years old, were able to:

> not only communicate important aspects of what it means for a child to live in a family with domestic violence but also to regulate, limit and take the lead in...interviews
>
> (Evang & Overlien, 2015:113)

Furthermore, children were identified to have relatively sophisticated communication skills and an ability to apply conversational strategies which allowed them elements of control within the interviews. This depiction reflects my own understanding and working definition of agency, as characterised by children who are able to subjectively engage in dialogue with receptive adults, in order to communicate their needs and shape the direction of their lives.

Numerous forms of self-expression are encompassed within this concept of agency, including speech but also physical, embodied expression and the use of this within a physical space (Alexander et al, 2015). Furthermore, a child's ability to *actively* reflect

on their experiences and *influence* the construction of their social world, is used to consider the presence of agentic capacity (Hampshire et al, 2011:702).

Callaghan (2017:3371) speaks about adults "**respecting their [CYPs] capacity to reflect on their own experiences**". Significantly, this ability to enact their agency is not reliant on the facilitation of adults, but upon themselves. From this perspective, agency is present within all children and not contingent on age or personal attributes (Montreuil and Carnevale, 2016:510).

Increased Recognition of Children's Agency – Its Origins

Since the mid 1980's there has been an important paradigm shift in the way that children are conceptualised. A number of theories coalesced, amounting to what James and Prout publicised as the 'New Sociology Of Childhood' (1990; 1997). In the 1960's American interactionist sociology began to problematize the idea of socialisation which positioned children as 'passive' rather than 'active' agents, in their interactions with peers and adults. By the 1980's, within the USA and Europe, social constructionism had made a significant impact within the social sciences, deconstructing and problematizing the very notion of 'childhood' and what it is 'to be a child'. This cast a critical gaze on the way in which 'childhoods' had been created over time and used an emphasis on discourse as a means of pursuing this point. During the 1990's and largely within Europe, structural sociology gained prominence, which located childhood as a social structure, similar to that of gender or social class and at the same time, feminist theorists positioned children as a minority group, on the receiving end of adult oppression. What we now have, is a perception of children as autonomous, capable of creatively shaping and re-shaping social institutions through their actions and their ability to make choices (Valentine, 2011).

Moving from a Liberal to a Social Model of Children's Agency

However, this model of an 'agentic child' is based upon socio-economically privileged children, who are educated, articulate, strategic and rational, able to use their agency constructively, positively and in a way which affirms social norms. Valentine (2011) calls this the 'liberal' model of agency. Eickelkamp (2011) makes a similar point, arguing that

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what we associate with children's agentic capacity, is shaped and modelled upon

children with high levels of self-control and social competence. Valentine (2011) has

contrasted this with an equally important, though often overlooked 'social model' of

agency, which highlights 'irrational' or potentially self-destructive displays of agency -

those which resist social norms and disrupt them but are nonetheless an equally valid

show of agentic capacity (Valentine, 2011). As Valentine explains:

> **People do not always exercise agency in their own best interests — this is true of everyone, but has effects especially for those whose competence and volition is often questioned. Individual trauma and structural oppression may inflect agency in such a way that people act as their own 'worst enemy', or act to resist power, and of course resistance to power may be interpreted as self-defeating behaviour.**
>
> (Valentine, 2011:354).

This mention of trauma is pertinent to children who experience DA. As will be

demonstrated during the analysis section of this thesis, the impact of DA often involves

children in classrooms attempting to navigate their way through this experience in ways

which foreground their 'behaviours' over their 'needs'. It is argued here, that there is a

level of agency within this but one which needs careful and sensitive recognition and

support (see Callaghan above). In terms of social justice, as professionals, we have an

obligation to hear the voice of all children, not just those who are able to communicate

this in ways which comply with social norms. As Valentine points out:

> **Given the conventional emphasis of agency on articulation, rationality and strategy, a failure to incorporate a critical, embodied, engendered, material account of agency... risks re-inscribing a model in which privileged children will be accorded more agency than those who do not display rationality and choice in conventional ways.**
>
> (Valentine, 2011: 355)

Kuczynski, Harach, & Bernardini (1999) have added to this discussion by arguing that

when looking for agency between children and adults, there is a need to focus upon

interactive relations, rather than those deemed as reactive. Kuczynski et al (1999)

discuss bi-lateral (as opposed to uni-lateral) models of parent-child interaction, where

children are perceived as powerful and intentional in their actions (as opposed to

passive). Kucyzynski et al (1999) discuss three elements of agency: the first, self-

efficacy, which amounts to children viewing themselves as active agents with an ability

to shape their personal outcomes. Secondly, meaning construction, which sees children

within their social environment, making choices in direct response to adult behaviours, either conforming, resisting or altering their own actions, in direct response to their interaction. Finally, intentional action, which refers to a child acting strategically and being goal-orientated.

With Increased Recognition of Agency – A Growing Visibility of Children and Young People

For a long time, academic researchers, government policy and a dominant discourse has positioned women as the main focus of concern in relation to experiences of DA - with their children being conceived as largely 'invisible' (Callaghan et al, 2015). If children were not directly physically harmed or abused sexually, then they were spoken of and referred to as 'witnesses' or as having been 'exposed to' DA. This notion has been challenged for implying passivity, observation of and detachment from the experience. It is argued here that children are not passive witnesses, but active participants.

Services and resources, have been largely targeted at women and it was women's experiences which traditionally populated the field of research. Despite an early call from Peled (1997) for the significant and pervasive impact of abuse upon CYP to be understood as more than a 'mere witnesses to violence', the status quo, had until recently, largely prevailed. For example, support services for CYP remain haphazard – an afterthought to those of their mothers. The majority of CYP who have experienced DA fail to receive specialist support: only 9% of UK CYP manage to receive help from CAMHS on a medium/long term basis (CAADA, 2014a). CYP still remain largely 'invisible' and marginalised within DA policy and even very recent legislation excludes CYP from being seen as survivors of abuse in their own right. A very recent government consultation document (Home Office, 2018) discusses the creation of a new definition of DA and within this, children are still perceived as an adult 'extension' rather than individuals in their own right, with their own experience:

> Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexual orientation
>
> (HM Government, 2018:13)

Apart from children being side lined to their mothers, when they have been visible to researchers, it has been from a quantitative research perspective. Here, the focus has been upon group statistics and documenting the behavioural responses of CYP (such as depression inventories) through the use of clinical/practice based examination. Although this approach has had its place within the field of DA research - particularly within the realms of policy, where scoping the size of the problem proves relevant to fiscal planning and service provision. It has also contributed to the creation of a pathologised and deficit view of CYP, whereby all the 'damage' (anxiety, bed wetting, sleeplessness, for example) is alighted upon (Katz, 2016). According to Valencia & Solorzano (1997) deficit thinking blames the person experiencing the difficulty and has attached to it connotations of power and oppression. It leads to a *within child* focus to problem solving, rather than an eco-systemic perspective to this. Such an approach, has led to an extensive focus upon the negative effects of DA for CYP (Meltzer, Doos, Vostanis, Ford & Goodman, 2009).

Consequently, what has been attempted, through qualitative research - is a move towards capturing the direct lived experiences of CYP, creating a discourse and a perspective that challenges and resists a notion of them as broken, damaged psychologically and emotionally dysfunctional. An early UK contribution to this work came from McGee's study, which explored the experiences of women, CYP living with DA and their interaction with support services. In 2002, Mullender et al produced an innovative study, documenting the specific experiences of CYP and began advocating for these to be heard by policy makers and practitioners. Within the Irish context, Buckley et al (2007) covered similar ground in making explicit the importance of CYP's individual and unique responses to DA and the necessity of services responding to them likewise. In the same year, Cater explored CYP's perspectives of their violent fathers and in 2008, Erikkson & Nasam gathered CYPs views on the legal system into which they were propelled, as a result of DA.

More recently, Radford, Aitken, Miller, Ellis, Roberts & Firkic's 2011 study of CYPs views on DA service provision in London, supported the view that they are more than capable of making sense of their experiences of DA and indeed are skilled navigators, who adopt a range of problem solving strategies and forward planning, as part of their experience

with DA. Similarly, Overlien has produced a number of studies (2009, 2010, 2017) which position CYP as 'experts' of their own experiences and capable of acting with 'agency'. Overlien belongs to a cohort of researchers, keen to challenge the notion of CYP as 'witnesses' or 'bystanders' to their DA experience: as powerless, passive and broken. Inherent within this perspective, CYP are:

> ...often reduced to descriptions of them as 'witnesses' or 'exposed' to violence. Such descriptions position children as damaged but passive, and can de-subjectify them further. Failing to hear children's experiences of domestic violence contributes to their invisibility in academic, professional and policy discourses...making these experiences visible is crucial in order to draw political attention and intervention
>
> (Callaghan, Alexander & Fellin, 2016:414)

Such writers have critiqued the practice of gathering evidence of 'damage done and consequent malfunction', for contributing towards a widely held deficit model of CYPs experience of DA. Whilst it is not to deny the pain, trauma and undoubtedly long lasting effects of DA for *some* CYP, it is to move the focus from dwelling in one place only. Instead, CYP are being shown to use a range of positive coping strategies, actions and resistant responses to a DA experience within their homes.

In listening directly to the experience of CYP, it has become apparent that they are far more than 'bystanders' or 'witnesses': they are instead, active subjects within that experience. Thus, hearing directly from CYP has made it much more apparent to adult researchers, that an experience of DA is a visceral, embodied and subjective experience. It is one that is deeply compelling and engaged in psychologically, physically and emotionally by the CYP who experience it is. It is far from a 'witnessing' and the child or young person, is far from passive.

This focus upon critique has enabled CYP to communicate how they themselves make sense of their experience. The recognition and documenting of this has shown that their response goes much further than passivity. Such critical research has begun to speak of **"disrupt[ing] this passive construction of childhood"**, Callaghan et al (2015:1552). Researchers such as McGee (2000) and Mullender (2002) and more recently, Overlien (2009, 2010) Katz (2015) and Callaghan (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) are calling for CYP to

be recognised as key actors within the dynamics of their DA experience. Saunders, Epstein, Keep & Debbonaire (1995) have discussed children's use of coping strategies during incidents of DA in their homes and how they provide comfort for each other. They have shown children as responsible for giving practical and emotional support to their mothers, which contributed towards them eventually making a decision to leave the abuse.

The Concept of Agency Within Different Professional Groups

Whilst the concept of agency in direct relation to CYP is a growing field of research interest within areas, such as Social Work, Health and Sociology it is noticeably lacking within Educational Psychology. Within the broader field of Psychology, Callaghan (2015; 2016; 2017 2018) has completed a range of innovative studies which focus upon children's agency and DA. These are notably interdisciplinary studies - related to fields outside of psychology, such a Health, Social Care and Social Policy.

One study within the field of Educational Psychology (Sharp 2014), explores those things which help young people (13-17 year olds) consider themselves agentic. For Sharp, being agentic means possessing the capacity to alter oneself or one's environment, in order to achieve something deemed to be of value. He sees this as empowering for young people, going on to link this to resilience and an ability to better manage challenges in life. Sharp's study is helpful in raising the profile of CYPs agency within the EP field and in offering a working definition. However, in terms of the complexities associated with DA, it does not address what Back (2007) refers to as "**the fine grained attentiveness**" needed to recognise the nuance and complexity of agentic expressions within a DA experience.

Within the field of Social Work, affording children agentic capacity has been in currency for well over a decade. For example, Aubrey & Dahl's 2006 UK study (published in the British Journal of Social Work) explored the views of Primary aged 'vulnerable' children, asking them to relay their experience as service users and how services could better meet their needs. Aubrey & Dahl spoke of the children as 'social agents' who exercise their agency largely within the home and with their peers, recognising that other more

powerful groups (such as Doctors, Teachers and Social Workers), often still (needlessly) represent their views (Mayall, 2002). They concluded from their study that Schools are well situated to promote children's agency. Furthermore, children under the age of eleven years were conceptualised as more than capable of expressing complex and sophisticated perspectives regarding many issues that concern them, such as their personal safety, their peers, their behaviour and wishes for their future.

A similar argument was made in 2007, in research carried out by Mason within an Australian context - again within the field of Social Care/Work – seeking the views of children who are looked after. This research rested on a presumption that children are the experts of their own needs. The findings from this study were that children felt it important that they had a sense of agency within their own lives.

A more recent study, conducted in Sweden by Bolin (2016) and published in the Journal of Child and Family Social Work, explored how the notion of children's agency is insightful in understanding the ways in which children actively shape their own lives. The study (which included CYP aged five to twenty years) focused on their experiences and perceptions of their agency and how they used this strategically within multi-professional meetings, such as those held by Social Workers.

It was concluded that CYP feel their voices are not heard within such meetings and it is mostly adult voices which dominate the space. CYP were very aware of the power imbalance and how this limited their opportunities to express their own perspective. A key finding within this study was that the CYP were acutely aware of the dynamics in power throughout the meeting and that they acted to circumnavigate this through a range of strategies. For example, feigning dis-engagement, whilst remaining very much switched on to views expressed and how they might use these to progress their own needs. CYP were also noted to act in ways which either hastened their pace or brought about an end to the meeting. Bolin notes **"This perception of agentic capacity may also be understood as an act of resistance, the children using their agency to protest"** (Bolin, 2016:509).

In terms of the Health literature, during the 1980's the notion of children as agentic began to appear. Initially, agency was portrayed as an ability that would gradually emerge in children as they matured. Over time this idea has changed and CYP are understood to possess agency, using this to influence and shape not only their own health care needs but also those around them (such as their parents). Now CYP are increasingly referred to as active agents, able to reflect upon and construct their social worlds. More recently, this notion has been extended to a view that CYP are capable of suggesting solutions to health problems and then act upon them (Montreuil & Carnevale, 2016:507).

Becoming Visible within the Field of Education and Educational Psychology

In the field of Educational Psychology, there are few studies which seek the direct voice of CYP, in response to DA. In 2009, Wagstaff used a qualitative approach to explore the DA experience of CYP aged 7-13, revealing the importance of school as a protective factor, in providing access to staff who can hear their story and offer structured support around this (Gilligan, 2004). In 2013, Worrall, captured the experiences of post sixteen young people with an experience of DA; this has brought the views of these CYP onto the agenda, by reflecting upon how educational practice within schools, might be adapted to meet their needs. Stanton's 2016 research, explored the role of school for Primary aged children (7-10 years) who had been forced to relocate schools due to DA.

Further studies within the field of educational psychology have adopted a more systemic approach - focusing upon the professionals around the child, such as Teachers, Head Teachers and Educational Psychologists. Gallagher's (2010) study explored how Educational Psychologists (EPs) conceptualise DA and work with CYP and their families. A significant finding from this study - which has implications for my own - was that children are often 'invisible' within the meta-stories of DA (Gallagher, 2010). This appeared to have implications for EP formulations, which were found to neglect the specific child experience, despite EP knowledge of DA in practice. Other systemic studies include, Ellis (2011) which investigated the experience of Teachers supporting CYP through DA; Kraft (2013), which addressed Head Teacher response to DA; Heath (2015) which focused on a DA training resource to support EP work within the field and

Dixon (2015) which explored Teacher response to DA related trauma. This was often overlooked as the CYP progressed through school, with an assumption made that the experience was 'in the past'.

There are a growing number of research papers voicing the more agentic DA experience of CYP, drawn largely from the UK and Nordic countries (Cater & Overlien, 2014). These build upon a body of evidence from childhood studies, which argue that CYP take ownership of their DA experiences, are able to actively reconstruct and shape them (Qvortrup, Corsaro, Honig & Valentine, 2009). The intention is to create an understanding and a positioning of CYP as agentic, proficient at navigating complex and challenging situations: responding actively, not passively, with resistance and not apathy (Callaghan et al, 2015). There are calls for a more complex, intricate and nuanced understanding of DA and the position of CYP within it. The argument critiques much of the extant dominant psychological (and quantitative) discourse of CYP as pathologised and largely powerless in shaping their own destiny: it is consequently an inherently empowering argument. It is an argument which seeks to disrupt a simplified understanding of CYPs response to DA as reductionist and deterministic: a binary, cause and effect model. Instead, it is contested that CYP employ a sophisticated use of problem solving, strategic thinking and planning within their DA experience (Callaghan et al, 2015).

<u>The Relevance Of Ken Gergen's 'Relational Being'</u>

The psychological theory offered by Gergen (2009) has supported my thinking around the relational processes embedded within the stories created by my participants. Gergen rejects the notion of an 'embodied individual' or a 'bounded being': a person who is self-sufficient, free standing or self-reliant. He argues that the dominant western paradigm focuses upon what the 'individual entity' can achieve, attributing successes to qualities of the self: being a 'self-starter', possessing 'self'-esteem, 'self'-confidence and 'self'-knowledge. Individual traits are applauded and held up for others to emulate in order to achieve and be successful. Actions and thought is attributed to the self and importantly, not the self *in collaboration* with others. Thus:

In order to know anything about the complexity of social interchange,

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> the belief is that we must begin with the individual who is most
> obviously the basic unit of examination
>
> (Mc Namee, 2012:153)

Gergen moves our thinking away from this introspection, arguing that as human beings we are borne of relationships, if they function well, then within them we develop and grow, are sustained and nurtured. They are the very starting point of us all, where we learn how to be human. We are never, ever (even when alone) self-contained beings since the thoughts in our heads, the whole array of human feelings created and the experiences had - are all the result of situated relational processes. According to Gergen's theory, it is not, therefore, people acting in *isolation* that should be the focus of attention but people in *collaboration*. Relational processes underpin **"collaborative, participatory practices"** (Mc Namee, 2012:152). So, in practice, rather than looking to what it is about the individual that brought about their success, Gergen points to the relationships within which that individual has been embedded and actively engaged. For here, is where we need to attribute the success.

Gergen's perspective seems relevant and applicable to systemic thinking and systemic working, locating the relationships surrounding the individual as significant, rather than the individual themselves (Gergen. 2009). It is a theory which allows me to reflect upon where SPs locate their own thinking, regarding the children they support. Whether we view children as embedded within relationships, greatly shaped and influenced by these or whether we choose to focus on the individual, their attributes, traits and characteristics, perhaps has implications for agency. This point is made by Mc Namee:

> This is a radical view for it shifts our focus from identifying features of Individuals that are responsible for the blame or credit we dispense to the relational patterns in which participants engage. This shift allows us to ask questions of social significance. Rather than blame or credit a sole individual, we come to explore the local, historical, and discursive traditions that make certain ways of coordinating with others possible and eliminate other options
>
> (2012:153)

A Rationale for this Study

There is a paucity of research within the field of DA and Education or DA and Educational Psychology. Likewise, although the concept of children's agency is

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increasingly explored within other fields of interest, such as Social Work and Health, there is a distinct absence of this within Education.

This is a qualitative, exploratory study which aims to deepen our understanding of children's agency within their DA experience. It does this by hearing the stories of SPs, who are responsible for addressing the needs of these children within schools. It is *their* understanding of agency in relation to children's DA experience which is of particular interest. Research detailed above is beginning to raise awareness that CYP have agentic capacity and use this in many forms within their DA experience: this research attempts to disrupt the notion that CYP are 'witnesses' or 'bystanders' to their own experience. My own curiosity is in exploring professional practice in schools, focusing upon whether there is a recognition of children's agentic capacity by SPs. If, within their role, SPs engage with interventions and support for these children on a daily/weekly basis, then it is important for Educational Psychologists to be aware of how children are positioned – as 'victims', 'witnesses' or 'bystanders'? This knowledge has important implications for the practice of Educational Psychologists.

<u>Summary</u>

- DA is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, requiring an approach which engages with the concept of nuance.
- Qualitative DA research - where the experience of CYP is the focus of the research - is slowly increasing within the field of Education and Educational Psychology.
- How DA is conceptualised has implications for the way in which we respond to it.
- The concept of agency in CYP has significant implications for how, as Professionals, we discursively position CYP and go on to support them.
- Considering how children are relationally embedded helps support our thinking around recognising their agency.

<u>Research Questions</u>

After reflecting on my critical review of the existing literature, my own personal experience and theoretical positioning, I wanted to explore:

Question One: What characterises the stories told by SP about children in school with an experience of DA?

Question Two: Do School Professionals recognise or position children as agentic within their experience of domestic abuse?

Chapter 2 - METHODOLOGY

Overview

Here, I summarise my theoretical research position and how this has informed my choice of methodology. My research is situated within a feminist, social justice paradigm, which seeks to unsettle and disrupt currently held notions of children's agency in relation to their experience of DA. Within this chapter, I explain my research design: the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning my research and my choice of storying for both the creation of data and its analysis. I also reflect upon the importance of establishing 'trustworthiness' in research, through the pursuit of rigour, pragmatic usefulness and credibility.
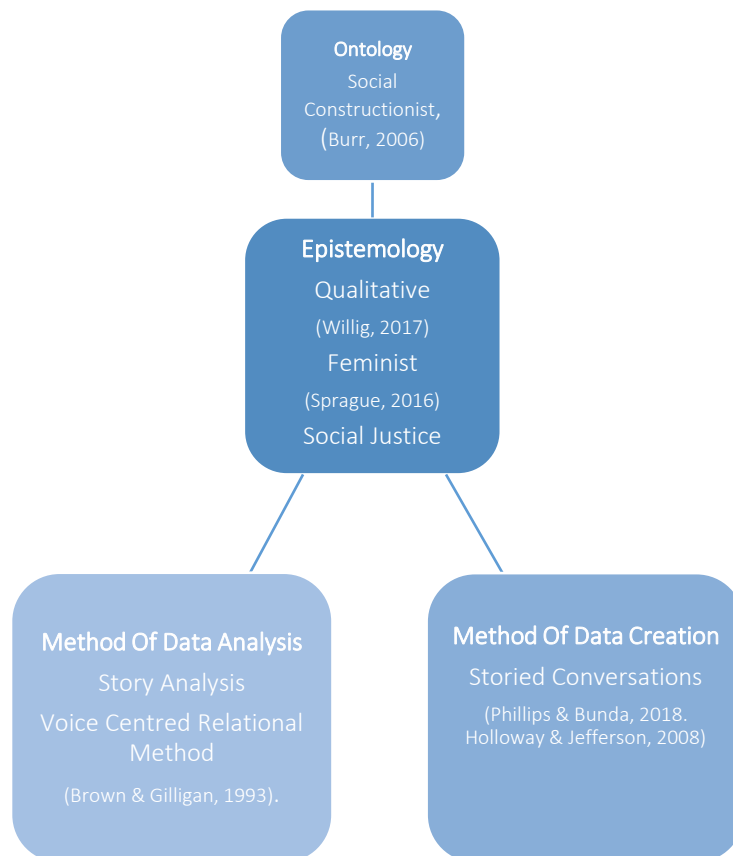
Figure 1: Diagram of Research Design

<u>Ontological and Epistemological Positioning</u>

Denzin & Lincoln assert that:

> any gaze we hold is filtered through the lens of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations situated in the worlds of - and between – the observer and the observed.
>
> (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:12)

We hold these views or assumptions, generally viewing them as implicit to us: a taken for granted, or common-sense perspective about how the world is (Willig, 2013). This is our 'ontological perspective'. Our ontological perspective underpins our thoughts in relation to what is 'out there' for us to research, what constitutes 'the world' and how we might go about exploring this (Willig and Stainton-Rogers, 2017). It is inseparable from our epistemology (Emerson and Frosh, cited in Hiles and Cermak, 2007). As Dixon & Paul Jones assert:

> ontological assumptions put the cart before the horse, for any ontology is itself grounded in an epistemology about how we *know* what 'the world is like'
>
> (Dixon & Paul Jones, 1998:250)

- our 'ontological perspective' reflects what we, as individuals, claim to know about our world, other human beings and our society (Lewis and Richie, 2003).

Sandra Harding (1987, cited in Sprague, 2016:5) talks of epistemology as an underlying "theory about knowledge, about who can know what and under what circumstances knowledge can be developed". Sprague speaks of methodology as encapsulating "the knower, the known and the process of knowing" (Sprague, 2016:5). She argues that "methodology emerges as the terrain, where philosophy and action meet, where the implications for what we believe for how we should proceed, get worked out" (Sprague, 2016:5). Insightfully, Sprague points out that, as researchers, our methodology can be incredibly empowering, for it enables us to reflect critically on ourselves, our position in the world, our own and others political philosophies, as well as the socio-cultural context in which we find ourselves. She asserts:

> Thinking about methodology in this way puts the technical details into a social and political context and considers their consequences for people's lives. It gives us space for critical reflection and for creativity.
>
> (Sprague, 2016:5)

Having done this, we are more cognisant of how our research may impact upon the lives of those who share their stories with us.

Social Constructionism

What is 'out there' for us to explore, is nebulous and rests upon interpretation, perspective and experience: gaining any 'objective truth' is simply not possible (Gergen, 1999). This perspective relies upon an understanding of the world as dynamic, organic and evolving: in constant flux. Never a fixed state. It relies upon an understanding of human beings as equally, in flux, subject to change, inconsistency and complexity. As Willig (2013) points out, many relativists reject the notion that there are objects, events and experience which exist, are 'real' and can be defined - independent of us human beings. On the contrary, these things exist because they have been constructed through the use of language, or discourse. As Willig highlights: **"it is language (discourse) that constructs reality rather than reality that determines how we describe or talk about it"** (Willig, 2013:18).

According to Burr (2015) there are four key elements to a social constructionist paradigm:

- A critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge

- Historical and cultural specificity

- A belief that knowledge is sustained by social processes

- A belief that knowledge and social action go together

This study adopts a social constructionist approach. This perspective encompasses views that are critical of our world and ourselves within it. It is a paradigm, that beckons us to question received wisdom of what is considered to be 'knowledge' of the world and the people in it (Burr, 2015). There are many, socially constructed 'realities' and 'knowledges' and as individuals, we actively and deliberately attempt to shape our own 'reality', from meanings which are readily accessible to us (Gergen, 1999). They are not the result of objective facts about the world but the result of our current, socially accepted and socially agreed means of understanding an experience (Burr, 2015).

A Methodology that values Social Justice

Social justice is deeply pertinent to the lives of CYP who experience DA. The social justice agenda is one that seeks to foreground both the personal and collective struggles of social groups living on the margins (North, 2006). Despite much political and social claim for recognising the voice of CYP, it is argued throughout this thesis, that societally (in our institutions, such as schools), we are still some way off from affording CYP an agentic voice which is respectfully recognised and acted upon (Goddard and Bedi, 2010; Cater and Overlien, 2014).

Whilst social justice essentially refers to equity and fairness, it also encompasses a recognition of human rights and dignity (Kaslem & Williams, 2008, cited in McGuire, 2017). Through its global aim of societal transformation, social justice critiques the status quo which protects and upholds oppressive practice: practice which ensures that resources are not shared equally in society, opportunities are not afforded to all equitably and power is limited and restricted, to those who use it to serve a minority of society, rather than the majority (Kalsem & Williams, 2008; Gray, Agllias & Davies, 2014). Social justice turns a critical gaze upon dominant social groups and questions their use of authority and privilege (Reid, 2004). Arguably, social justice:

> **Concerns the degree to which a society contains and supports the conditions necessary for all individuals to exercise capacities, express experiences and participate in determining actions. It requires not the melting away of difference, but the promotion and respect for group differences without oppression"**
>
> (Young, 1990, cited in Reid, 2004:2).

According to Freysinger et al, a belief in social justice, upholds of view of society where:

> **…the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. In this society, individuals are both self-determining and interdependent. Justice involves a sense of one's own agency and a sense of social responsibility towards others, and for society as a whole.**
>
> (cited in Johnson & Parry, 2016:18)

I also argue that this research is intended to progress the social justice agenda. My intentions are to produce a body of work that enables SPs – those who support children living with DA - to consider different means of relating to them. Means that empower the children and the adults, to think differently about an experience, how this is heard,

understood and how it is used to recognise agency, strengths, resilience and resourcefulness.

I suggest within this thesis, that children who live with a DA experience, have not received a fair or equitable start to their lives. The social justice agenda pushes for a 'just' society for everyone, for *all* children (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010), in the hope that they are supported and enabled to find and use their own voice and with this, bring about social change (Parry, 2014).

A Methodology that values Feminism

Adhering to a feminist methodology does not align me with any one, specific, 'feminist' approach, as Haraway asserts: **"There is no single feminist standpoint because our maps require too many dimensions for that metaphor to ground our visions"** (1998:590). However, there are some key points of commonality amongst feminist researchers, one of which is the tendency to reject a traditional social science methodology, such as positivism with its values for objectivity, neutrality and 'value-free' data (Spade,2016). Many feminist researchers have critiqued traditional approaches in psychology, in which researchers (typically white, economically and socially privileged men) have located themselves as 'experts' of others' (typically women) experience, adopting a **"God's eye view"** (Haraway, cited in Willig 2013:7). Haraway refers to this aloof, paternalistic stance as, **"the God trick"** (1988:581).

In this sense, it is their rejection of positivism that unites feminist researchers, rather than their unity, based on any given 'feminist' approach. So, what is foregrounded in feminist research, is a recognition that it is women who own and define their own experience and they who are recognised as the 'expert' of that experience (Hesse – Biber, 2011). Given the new sociology of childhood literature, arguing for the agentic position of CYP, I extend this argument to them too (James and Prout, 2015): as critiqued within this thesis, we currently have well intentioned adults, failing to recognise CYP as the experts of their own experience. Speaking of them, about them and for them, without questioning or reflecting upon how, the content of their understanding is formed (Billington, 2006).

On the contrary, feminist methodological approaches strive to be inclusive, diverse and embracing of multiple perspectives (Miller, 2010, cited in Childers, Rhee & Daza, 2013). Hesse & Biber (2012) refer to this as 'multiple feminisms'. Feminists have been careful to resist being linked to any 'given method' (Harding, 1986): instead arguing that their support for key tenets, such as progress within the field of social justice, the importance of researcher reflexivity, a focus on power relations and foregrounding the position of the socially disadvantaged is what defines a 'feminist methodology' (Fonow & Cook, 2005). In short, feminist methodologies, seek to bring about positive social change for oppressed groups (Sprague, 2016).

<u>A Methodology that values Reflexivity</u>

Being a reflexive researcher, is very much a feature of feminist qualitative research. Indeed, it could be argued that it is one of the key defining features. Reflexivity is an attempt to use subjectivity as a positive aspect within the research process. It prioritises the personal above the professional (Sprague, 2016) and seeks to make explicit (rather than deny) psychological responses (how we feel, the emotions underpinning our feelings and how we behave because of how we feel). Being reflexive, means acknowledging the very human aspects of research: the messiness of it, the complexity and contradictions which inevitably arise within it (Gergen, 2009). In direct challenge to objectivity and value-free positions, a focus on laboratory conditions and statistical certainty, reflexivity derides such notions. It argues for research being more 'reliable' precisely because of its openness, its honesty and its strides to address 'the genuine'.

Taking a reflexive perspective to my research, signifies my intention to acknowledge my own *personal reflexivity* (how I as a person shape the data-creation and the creation of new knowledge) and my *epistemological reflexivity* (my beliefs about the world and the people within it): both of which influence the creation of this thesis (Willig, 2013). It is my view, that reflexivity has been an intrinsic and ever present element throughout the research process. From the early stages of thinking and reading around the topic of DA, children and schools, I began considering the emotions, feelings and opinions that were evoked in me. The ethical issues for myself and my participants and indeed, for the children who were to be the focus of our conversations. I was aware of how my own

personal (as a child) and professional experiences around domestic abuse were influencing my research design: the research questions, my methodology and the pragmatic intentions for the finished thesis (Reinharz and Chase, 2002, cited in Sprague, 2016). I was drawn to Brown and Gilligan's Listening Guide (1993), in part, due to its explicit focus on reflexivity but also to its relational interest. At the core of reflexivity is a focus on relationships; between *oneself* and others and *between* others. The Listening Guide, appeared to offer a way of addressing both these aspects.

I argue that reflexivity empowers the reader with a richer, more complex, messier and at times contradictory understanding of the researcher and their participants. I also argue that critical reflection and analysis needs to be able to hold sometimes opposing or binary views, in order to fulfil its evaluative role.

With this in mind, I have chosen to include reflexive boxes within my interpretation and discussion chapter to convey my own personal reflections and make explicit my influence within the study. These additions were supported through the use of a reflexive diary in which I noted reflexive field notes during the research process and through conversations with university research staff, work colleagues, friends and family.

Choosing Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers are defined by the ontology, epistemology and axiology which they subscribe to (Linclon, Lynham & Guba, 2011). These foreground the interaction between the researcher and their research participant, recognising and acknowledging that there are many different 'realities' and meanings ascribed to that interaction (Willig, 2008). Qualitative researchers reflect how stories are co-created through inductive methods of inquiry, where *interpretation* is paramount. They argue for the importance of cultural validity and context, when attempting to understand social phenomena: socio-culturally, politically and environmentally. They uphold the importance of stories co-created from a small sample, in settings most akin to the natural environment, which enable closer proximity to the individual perspective and experience. They recognise and make explicit the subjectivity of their work (through,

for example, their reflexivity), recognising this as an important element of trustworthiness and transparency within the research process. Their focus lies in the search for nuance and complexity within their data, where it is believed that psychological constructs, such as DA, can be explored and better understood, through rich and detailed analysis (Pitney & Parker, 2009).

I wanted to gain a more sophisticated understanding of SPs experiences, at a more granular level that would allow me to create **"thick descriptions"** of these (Clifford Geertz, 1973, cited in Sprague, 2016). I was interested to explore the stories surrounding these children and the meanings ascribed to their behaviours. Billington (2006) draws our attention to how children are talked *about*, talked *to*, talked *of* as a means of understanding how children and their experiences can be conceptualised. Given the sensitive and emotionally intense nature of my research, if felt important to adopt a person centred approach as a means of capturing sense making: only qualitative research would enable me to address these observations.

I was curious to hear the meta-stories around these children. I wanted to learn about empathy, relationships, emotions and experiences: all concepts which could not be reached through a quantitative approach. These were all concepts which required a sensitive, attuned and relational research methodology (Brown and Gilligan, 1993). The phenomena of DA is a subject which needs addressing sensitively; it is an area of complexity and contradiction, of nuance and subtlety, it therefore needed a methodology able to capture this. My intention was to co-create stories which had depth and diversity to them (Willig, 2008). I was not interested in "**definitive concepts**", but in what Blumer (1954:7) defines as "**sensitizing concepts**".

Storying as a form of Knowledge Creation

I have consciously moved away from use of the phrase 'narrative' wherever possible throughout my thesis, choosing instead, the terms 'story', 'storying' or 'storied research'. I made this decision following a symposium I attended in 2017, where I was lucky to hear Louise Phillips present on her then forthcoming book with Tracey Bunda, 'Research Through, With and As Storying' (2018). The case against using the term

'narrative' was presented as one of distancing and separating oneself from the people with whom we collaborate in the creation of new knowledge. It is argued that, for our story co-creators, using the term 'narrative' is less accessible than 'story', conveying 'educated' or 'elite', rather than 'familiar' and 'comfortable'. Although my audience for this thesis, is an academic audience, I have pragmatic intentions for my research, hoping to use it as a means for changing conversations in schools, about CYP and their DA experience. 'Storying' a person's experience seems like a far more approachable and available term to use, with greater potential to connect (rather than create barriers) with people.

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<p align="center" style="color: #2e6ca4;">Reflection</p>

I had also been inspired by involvement with a research community within my own University, where there was a 'Re-storying Vulnerability Project'. The focus of this project was to explore CYPs narratives in schools about difficult/troubling times and to consider how and whether these are 'heard' by the Professionals surrounding them. The contention being that many CYPs experiences are storied by the adults around them. Means for creating a safe space where CYP could explore their own thoughts/feelings, potentially leading to a disruption of adult stories, was the focus of 're-storying'. Engagement with this group had certainly supported my early thinking around agency and a CYPs sense of 'self'.

</div>

When considering potential methods for creating data, I began from the starting point that I and generations before me, have used stories as part of our everyday discourse to try and make sense of the world, recognising that:

> Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities.
>
> (Clandinin and Rosiek, cited in Phillips & Bunda, 2018: 9)

Gottschall (2012) claims, that as human beings, we are very much **"storying beings"**, with a habit for the telling of stories (cited in Phillips & Bunda, 2018:8). Bruner (as well

as Arendt 1958, 1998 and Nussbaum, 1997 cited in Phillips & Bunda, 2018) argue that stories are an important means of recognising what it is to be human: of connecting with humanity and identifying as 'human' (Bruner, 2004).

According to White & Epston (1990) and Mishler (1986), as human beings, we are intrinsically predisposed to story-telling and within that telling, we strive to construct meaning out of, often chaotic experience (Hiles and Cermak, 2007). We share our lives through story, constantly constructing, re-constructing and deconstructing language to understand our experiences and our interactions with other humans and our environments (Bruner, 2004). What is created - is only a version of 'reality' or 'truth' (Hiles and Cermak, 2007).

The prevalence of story-telling in our everyday lives was what attracted me to 'storying' as a research approach. Taking a storied approach offered the prospect of getting closer to 'everyday experience' and it was this which I wanted to capture. Through my research I was keen to hear and explore the every-day stories in educational practice, notably, those that surround children with an experience of DA. Phillips & Bunda see great potential in storied research, claiming that stories:

> …remind us that when all voices are being heard through storying, regardless of positionality, we can have hope and create guide ropes to nurture relationships, form authentic collaborations and energise actions to support humanness in all our encounters
>
> (2018, viii)

It felt, that hearing the stories of SPs, would offer hope and potential for a different type of conversation.

Aware that DA research in schools was extant, I was curious for SPs to share their story, listening for an understanding or recognition of agentic capacity, or examples of this. In hearing these stories, I was listening for the ways in which children were positioned within the DA experience. It seemed that the best means of doing this, was to afford the

adults supporting these children a dominant voice, one that superseded my own:
allowing them to 'story' their experience seemed the most effective way of doing this.
Holloway and Jefferson argue that:

> Research is only a more formalised and systematic way of knowing about people,
> but in the process it seems to have lost much of the subtlety and complexity that
> we use, often as a matter of course, in everyday knowing. We need to bring some
> of this everyday subtlety into the research process
>
> (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000:3)

It is this desire to tend to **"subtlety and complexity"** that drew me to storying research,
as the best means of addressing my research questions.

Storying research appeared the most fitting for this purpose, since it would enable me
to explore the experiences of people who were engaged with sensitive, complex and
emotive encounters. It would allow me to hear the language used by my participants,
the context which they deemed important, together with the events and characters
given precedence or significance by the storyteller. In short, it would allow *them* a
greater role in setting the agenda and not *me*. Sprague (2016) talks about research as a
collective endeavour, I can relate to this premise, since here, the SPs were the
'knowers'; certainly of practice based evidence. A storying approach allowed me to
focus on *their* story, rather than one imposed by my findings from the academic
literature: epistemologically, it felt that there was some sharing of power and
acknowledgement of 'individual contribution and value' in our creation of knowledge.

Stories have a multiplicity of meanings and this is part of their attraction. Stories are not
definitive and this too is part of their attraction: as Arendt states **"Storytelling reveals
meaning without the error of defining it"** (Arendt, 1970:105, cited in Phillips & Bunda,
2018:10). This reference to interpretation, subjectivity and ownership of meaning by
the individual appealed to my theoretical positioning. It relates to a sense of reflexivity
spoken about by Gergen (2009), whereby as human beings we are honest and open
about uncertainty, about not necessarily knowing the answer and this being understood
as a strength, rather than a deficit. It refutes a notion of the all-knowing 'expert' (Mc
Namee, 2012). Through storying there is a freedom from the confines of stricture and

form: since meaning making lies in the ear of the beholder, in their lived experience, as it emerges (Phillips & Bunda, 2018).

Stories allow us to pass on our culture and our language: in this sense they sustain connections through generations and help create identities and communities. According to Chawla, **"A people without stories are a people without a history"** (cited in Phillips and Bunda, 2018:36). Phillips and Bunda (2018) explain that storytellers, even when telling stories of others and not themselves, will always give away aspects of themselves, through the **"intimacy of connection with [her] audience"** (p.10). Storying is a deeply relational process. A sense of intimacy in storytelling is also spoken of and according to Arendt (1958/1998), there is a network of human relationships created through storytelling, as links are forged between the storyteller, the story listener and others. Phillips and Bunda champion the subjectivity of storying and refer us back to feminists for claiming this ground. For this research, I am hopeful that in hearing the stories of children's experiences' with DA, School Professionals - in sharing how they relate to the children - also share insights about themselves (I Poems, appear to capture these).

A Search for Rigour, Pragmatic Usefulness and Credibility

Storied research cannot be accountable to positivist assumptions, such as generalisability, validity and reliability – from a quantitative paradigm, all of which are arrived at through the process of statistical significance or correlation (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Instead, qualitative researchers are attempting to interpret and understand, individual 'truths' - as subjective and shifting as these are (Schafer, 1992). They are also attempting to convince their readers of the trustworthiness of process, philosophical choice, theoretical application, ethical applicability and analytical interpretation (Riessman, 2008).

A number of qualitative researchers, such as Riessman (2008) and Yardley (2008) suggest that more appropriate to qualitative (and more specifically) storied research are the concepts of 'rigour', 'pragmatic usefulness' and 'credibility'. I address each in turn, in direct relation to this thesis.

Rigour: According to Yardley (2008), rigour relates to clarity of the research process which substantiates interpretations. The use of transparency addresses this point and at every stage in the research process, I have attempted to be clear and explicit about my ethics, the approach used for locating literature, my personal and professional epistemologies, my data creation methods and the process of analysis. My appendices offer evidence of verbatim transcripts and analysis. Any interpretations are also clearly accredited to direct quotations from my participants. I have prioritised reflexivity within my methodology, and throughout the body of my thesis, as I believe that this helps my reader gain better insight into the contextual, relational and situational aspects of the research. Reflections were supported through the use of a 'reflective journal' (Seale, 2002).

Pragmatic Usefulness: It is my hope that this research will be of benefit professionally, within the field of Educational Psychology, academically, by adding to a currently extant body of research regarding CYP, DA and schools and socially, by contributing towards positive social change (in relation to both feminism and social justice). As Riessman (2008) states, there is a very valid intention amongst many scholars, to create findings which are of benefit to the communities within which our participants are embedded: encouraging dialogue itself is beneficial. Riessman (2008) supports a pragmatic outcome for research, pointing towards researcher responsibility for dissemination within all three fields mentioned above (academic, professional and social).

Credibility: Riessman (2008) points out that the 'trustworthiness' of storytelling research is best achieved if the researcher is able to "bring the reader along with them as they uncover a trail of evidence, and critically evaluate each piece in relation to others". In grounding epistemologies in theory and interpretations in clear, structured, systematic analysis, it is my intention to story my stories, ethically and respectfully.

Summary

- My research is located within a feminist, social justice paradigm and adopts a social constructionist position.

- I adopt the term 'story' and 'storying' throughout, wherever feasible as an alternative to narrative.

- I explore the sense making of SPs through their stories of supporting children with a DA experience.

- I engage with the notion of agency and consider how this positions children with an experience of DA.

- Reflexivity was an important aspect of this research and I have addressed this through keeping a reflective journal and interweaving reflexive boxes throughout.

<u>Chapter 3 – Procedures</u>

<u>Overview</u>

In this chapter, I detail the steps and procedures of the research process, starting with the research context, considerations regarding ethics, safeguarding, consent and sample choice. I move on to discuss who my research participants were and how they were recruited. I discuss my pilot study and the implications of this, along with the resultant conversation schedule. I conclude with explaining my approach to transcription and analytical structure.

<u>Research Context</u>

The research was carried out across four separate, large Primary Schools, within one Local Authority (LA) in the North of England. The locality of the schools was one of high socio-economic deprivation and in all four schools, there was a higher than average number of pupils eligible for support through pupil premium. The children on role were predominantly white, working class.

In keeping with my thoughts around power, control and agenda setting, my participants chose the time and place of our meetings. My only request, was that we accessed a room which ensured privacy and confidentiality.

My pilot meeting took place on school premises, at the end of the school day and lasted approximately 40 minutes. My second meeting was conducted during the school day, in the SPs office and lasted for approximately one hour. My third meeting again took place in the SPs office, during the school day and lasted just over one hour. My final meeting took place during lunchtime, on school premises, again, within the privacy of the SPs office. Whilst all conversations were digitally voice recorded, very brief notes were taken, in order to support any curiosity around phrases used or to support follow-up questions. My reflections on all conversations were noted in my research diary, as soon as was possible following our meeting and used to support reflexivity.

<u>Ethics and Safeguarding</u>

Ethical approval for my study was granted by the University of Sheffield Ethics Committee (see Appendix 1) and the study complied with the ethical code of the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2018). I took care to ensure that the children and adults referred to within the stories were not identifiable within transcripts, using pseudonyms throughout. Any identifying details in relation to geographical location were removed and altered, as were ages, family relationships and circumstances. I also submitted a risk assessment detailing my considerations regarding any potential harm to my participants from either their own personal experience of DA or from any disclosures made (see Appendix 5 & 6). The same consideration was applied to myself, where having considered the potential impact of disclosures, I had gained prior consent from my service supervisor to access supervision should the need arise.

Ethical tensions are an inevitable aspect of working with such a sensitive topic as domestic abuse and as a researcher, it felt that at times, there were some real dilemmas and challenges to face. Although this research (in working with the adults around the child) was one step removed from hearing children's direct experience of abuse, it nonetheless, brought about some ethical concepts for me to reflect upon. Of course, such concepts were considered from the perspective of the "new paradigm of childhood" (Cater and Overlien, 2014:66) which views children as competent and agentic, whilst simultaneously having a right to adult protection. For example, how could I ethically justify hearing the stories of children – in such intimate and personal detail – without questioning their 'rights'. As professionals, we often speak about episodes and events within children's lives – which - were they our own lives, might cause us to feel a level of betrayal by the teller, or even a lack 'professionalism' for their telling without our consent.

Cater & Overlien (2014) attempt a justification for this, in suggesting that we carefully consider whether our research is 'justifiable': that is, does the research offer pragmatic value? I argue that it does in bringing about greater understanding of children's experiences of DA, through their relationship with SPs. It provides information regarding the positioning of children in relation to agentic capacity, which will help adults to

support them within a school setting and it explores any recognition of resilience or resistance to their life experiences as displayed through their attempts at communication with the adults around them.

This knowledge offers a rich understanding of the meaning making surrounding children's behaviours within schools, in direct relation to DA. Similarly, Ellsberg & Heise (2002) note the importance of DA research in awareness raising, improvement of support and intervention services, shaping government policy and attempts to implement social justice.

<u>Gaining Consent</u>

For three of my four participants, I gained verbal consent after approaching the SP. I gave a brief precis of my study, asked for an initial expression of interest and left the participant information sheet for them to read and digest. I explained that I would follow this up with an email to check continued interest and to ask for a date to meet. With the fourth participant, who had been referred by an EP colleague, I sent an email of introduction, attached my participant information sheet and explained that I would be in touch to confirm interest in the study and if this was positive, to establish a date to meet.

I ensured that a courtesy email was sent prior to attending school for the meeting – checking that agreed times were still convenient. When I arrived at the school, after introductions and thanks for participation, I gave a brief precis of my interest in the topic and asked if there were any questions before we began talking. I tried to keep the meeting as low key as possible and generally accepted hospitality whenever this was offered: my aim being to create a context more conducive to 'naturally occurring conversation'. I chose to make it a point to mention the EP who had passed on my information, and effectively gained me contact with the School Professional. As well as attempting to establish a sense of rapport through this, I also felt that, in some small way, it created a greater sense of trust towards me, in knowing that I had, to some extent, 'come recommended'.

I talked through my planned approach, explaining that I wanted to hear their 'story' of their own practice, in their own words. I stressed the importance of exploration, rather than 'interrogation' (Mishler, 1986), hoping to position the SP as the expert of their *own* experience.

I reiterated the importance of confidentiality, and asked if the child's name could be withheld wherever possible. I also made explicit the emotive nature of discussing DA and that, should there be a need, I was able to signpost for further information/support. After hearing the stories, recordings were transferred from the hand held digital device onto a password protected computer. All recordings will be erased from the digital voice recorder on completion of my thesis (approximately August, 2018)

<u>Sample</u>

I chose a purposive sample of school staff, with an inclusion criterion of having had recent, direct experience of supporting a child in school with a DA experience. The criteria of 'recent' was defined as 'within the past twelve months'. My participants were four female School Professionals (one was for the pilot study). Each was very well established within their role, very experienced and knew the child and their family in depth.

<u>Participants - Who are School Professionals?</u>

Locating who was responsible in school for supporting CYP with an experience of DA was a process of discovery. I had initially assumed that school SENDCos would be the focus of my study but following a conversation with a SENCDCo in one of the schools where I worked, I became aware of the Family/Parent Support Worker role, which some schools had chosen to fund. These members of staff are generally not qualified Teachers (although one person within my sample was a qualified Teacher and another was a degree qualified Health Visitor). They often have responsibility for safeguarding and for pastoral support. They work collaboratively with CYP themselves, Parents, SENDCos, Learning Mentors, Class Teachers and the Senior Leadership Team, as well as external professionals such as Social Workers or school counsellors, MIND, for example. Whilst the school SENDCo will address the SEN needs of CYP and liaise with the Class

Teacher around these, pastoral concerns - around wellbeing and social, emotional and mental health, tend to be addressed by the Family/Parent Support workers, together with Learning Mentors. In the case of children who have experienced DA, typically, Family/Parent Support Workers have a broader understanding of the child and their family context, since they have been involved in prior multi-agency safeguarding meetings, where information regarding the severity and chronicity of DA have usually been discussed. Throughout this study, I refer to these workers as 'School Professionals' (SPs), since their role encompasses more than family/parent support.

How were they recruited?

After having decided who my participants were going to be, I concluded that three in-depth storied conversations would provide sufficient detail for later analysis (excluding my pilot conversation). I began asking EP colleagues if they were aware of SPs who may have supported children around their DA experiences. After the EPs holding brief, scoping conversations, several contacts were provided to me (many more than I was able to work with). Given the nature of gathering stories, I decided that familiarity would be important for me, in establishing rapport. I therefore approached the SPs face-to-face, to clarify their role, check whether they met criteria, were interested in my study and happy to participate.

Pilot Study

The pilot study 'interview' took place on school premises, in an empty school library at the end of the school day. The interview was digitally recorded and lasted approximately 40 minutes. The atmosphere was generally relaxed. Cups of tea were offered and general chat took place about the kind of day each of us had experienced. We chatted a little about her background and what had led her into a school setting.

My initial 'interview schedule' was piloted at the early stages of my research design. At this point, my schedule was more akin to a semi-structured interview and contained many more questions and prompts than the final version. On using it, I found that establishing a rapport was greatly hindered by my schedule and interrupted a natural flow of conversation. I was unable to maintain good eye contact, making active listening

a real challenge. I lost the flow of conversation, as I attempted to write down responses to various prompts and felt, disrespectful to my participant for not keeping pace with her lead. The process felt extremely uncomfortable and far removed from what I had anticipated. Conversing about highly sensitive and emotive information within this context, was unsettling. Looking back at my reflective diary, I had noted that there was **"too much of me here"**. Whilst I recognise that the knowledge created was co-constructed, it felt very much that it was a 'top down' way of hearing another person's account, rather than 'bottom up'. It felt like it was an 'account' shaped and moulded by me and not a 'story' that came from my participant's heart and soul. It felt that what was elicited was very much influenced and driven by me. Woodcock (2016), speaks of how the Listening Guide allows for a more collaborative story to emerge from conversation.

Conversation Schedule - Co-Creation of Stories

I consciously use this term to address the connotations of objectivity and power implied by the term 'data collection'. Phiilips & Bunda (2018) encourage an understanding of stories as an embodied, relational form of meaning making, rather than a 'collection of data'. The latter phrase having implications of 'objectivity' and 'de-humanising'. The stories contained within this thesis were shared between May and July, 2017.

Carl Rogers talks about establishing a person-centred approach to being with people. Rogers put it this way:

> **Very early in my work as a therapist, I discovered that simply listening to my client, very attentively, was an important way of being helpful...it seemed surprising to me that such a passive kind of interaction could be so helpful**
>
> (Rogers, 1975:2)

In the same paper, Rogers discusses establishing empathy and the importance of doing this, when holding conversations which elicit deep emotion. After my pilot experience, I was certain that I did not want to use a semi-structured 'interview' schedule.

As an alternative, I discovered Holloway and Jefferson (2000) and their advocacy for a 'narrative' approach. They offered a critique of the more prevalent face-to-face, question and answer semi-structured interviews, where the agenda, is largely controlled by the researcher. According to Holloway and Jefferson (2000) interviewing in such a way, gives greater power and control to the researcher, by allowing them to choose the content of the conversation as well as the language used: the ordering of questions and terminology, creates strictures and boundaries of conversation from the outset. It essentially makes it more difficult for the person being interviewed to story their experience, according to their own temporal relevance, their own experience and in their own words: it stifles storytelling (Mishler, 1991).

In contrast, Holloway and Jefferson (2000) suggest a technique called 'free association narrative' and whilst I have not used this technique within my research, I have adapted that approach. I have attempted to adhere to its principles of prioritising the storyteller's experience, using questions that are as open as possible, avoiding the use of 'why' (thought to generate a theorising response) and noting the participants own words/phrases to seek clarity or further information. For questions used to guide the stories see Appendix 7 and for an example of this in practice, see an example verbatim transcript Appendix 8

My final version of a conversation schedule was very loose. I thought very carefully about the best ways of eliciting a conversation, striving for it to unravel as 'naturally' as it could. I drafted and re-drafted a range of questions, sharing these with both my research and placement supervisor, as well as my peers. It contained questions that attempted to draw out a story and allow the teller to take the lead in doing this. It felt very challenging to approach my participants in this way, since it was heavily dependent on the narrator 'telling a good story' and the researcher, being able to encourage, support and develop this. In the end, what I attempted to do, 'was start the story off', asking how the SP became involved, using the telling of more 'factual' information at the start, to break the ice. I then used prompts to generate story-telling and active listening strategies.

<u>Transcription</u>

Recorded stories were transcribed verbatim, including conversational details such as emphasis (see Appendix 8). These were kept to a limited number of codes, as suggested by Jefferson (2004). Audio data and transcriptions were all anonymised in keeping with the confidentiality agreement and pseudonyms were inserted. Audio files will be deleted from my computer on completion of my doctoral studies.

<u>Analysis of Stories</u>

I have used an adapted version of Carol Gilligan's 'Listening Guide' (LG) a 'Voice Centred Relational Method' (VCRM) as a means of analysis. The LG was borne out of Gilligan's frustration at being unable to use multiple codes for the same piece of text, during her analysis of qualitative data. She recognised that methods of analysis available to her, did not allow for the representation of human complexity, particularly around what she understood to be the inner and silent psychic processes. In creating the VCRM, Gilligan looked to the psychoanalytical theorists, Winnicott, (1960) and Fairbairn, (1944) who understood the psyche to be tiered, gaining its expression through multiple voices (cited in Giligan et al, 2006).

The VCRM is a method of psychological analysis that does not adhere to a fixed analytical framework. Rather, it is conceived of as a **"pathway into relationship"** (Brown and Gilligan, 1993:22), a means of discovering what does not seem immediately apparent. It does this through a focus upon reflexivity, making explicit the idea that:

> ...methods of data analysis are not simply neutral techniques because they carry the epistemological, ontological and theoretical assumptions of the researchers who developed them
>
> (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003:413)

The VCRM places great emphasis on, what Mauthner and Doucet call **"operationaliz[ing] reflexivity"** (2003:418): that is, making explicit and clear how not only the voice of the participant is multiple and complex, but so too is that of the researcher. Poirier and Ayres (1997:552) refer to this as the **"dual nature of narrative"**: interpretation takes place on two levels, first with the story teller (through their detailed depiction and

explanation of events) and then with the story interpreter. It therefore contextualises the speaking voice, arguing that this is highly responsive to the listener: voice is both culturally and socially situated. The attraction of the VCRM is that the intertwining of these voices - during the process of analysis - is attempted to be prized apart, allowing the reader greater insight over the analytical process (Woodcock, 2016).

However, Poirier and Ayres (ibid) remind us, that any story is **"contested ground"**, since what may be apparent to the researcher, may not be so to the teller. This **"operationalising"** of reflexivity, returns me to Willig's (2017) argument of making explicit the implicit: a process of unpicking the multiple influences that are voiced through story.

The method utilises a series of 'listenings' or steps, each having its own focus, which combined, allows the researcher to tune into what Gilligan refers to as the **"polyphonic voices"** (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertsch, 2006:254). The *first* entails a listening for the stories being told, who the main characters are, emerging themes, the context within which the stories are embedded, key events, as well as words/phrases that resonate (Gilligan et al, 2006). A reflexive response is also noted at this point, where I capture my own subjective response to the story I was hearing, by **"identifying, exploring, and making explicit [my] own thoughts and feelings…and associations"** (Gilligan et al, 2006:257).

The second listening involved attunement with the 'I' who was speaking (the SP), tracking use of the first person pronoun and from this, creating 'I Poems' (Debold, 1990, cited in Gilligan et al, 2006:259). Gilligan refers to this as a **"crucial component of a relational method"** (Ibid), since it allows the researcher to understand what the participant knows about herself and therefore minimises the prospect of the researcher distancing and objectifying her. The process for constructing an I Poem is shown in Appendix 11, together with an example I Poem (Appendix 12).

The third listening involves hearing what Gilligan calls 'polyphonic (or contrapuntal) voices' – the way in which the participants own voice may be shaped in relation to the

voice of others. The final listening draws the researcher's attention to the socio-political and economic structures within which the participant is embedded. This is process of analysis is represented in the table below.

Table 1: Analytical Structure (adapted from the Listening Guide, Brown & Gilligan, 1993)

Listening	With attention to…	Attuned to…
One (a)	Listening for the story plot	Overarching plot, events and themes. Work up of characters. Word choice, phrases, images created.
One (b)	Reflexivity and the researcher	Relational dynamics. Assumptions, perspectives and values. The emotional and verbal exchange. Resonance. Curiosity. Connections/distance created.
Two	Listening for the I - Sense of 'self'	First person utterance Creation of 'I' poems
Three	The polyphony of voice	Resonance of different voices within the story. First person voice and its relationship with others. Potential discord between voices
Four	Socio-cultural context	The workings of dominant discourse. The role of culture. Historical context. Structural and relational power.

Although it appears a fluid process, analysis was recursive, with a need to 'listen' many times over.

Summary

- Throughout the research project I have upheld an ethical position which adheres to BPS standards (2018). I received ethical consent for my study from the University of Sheffield.
- Working within the field of DA poses ethical challenges – these need careful and sensitive consideration.

- I adopted a purposive sample of SPs who had recently supported a child through their experience of DA.

- I met with four participants in total – one participant was the basis of my pilot study. All three stories (which are the main body of this thesis) were shared with me within the school environment.

- I encouraged the 'telling of a story' and for this reason, did not use an interview schedule. Instead, I adopted a loose set of questions which were used flexibly.

- The basis of my analytical method was 'The Listening Guide', a voice centred relational method.

<u>Chapter 4 – Analysis and Discussion of Individual Stories</u>

<u>Overview</u>

In this chapter, I present my individual analysis and discussion of the stories shared with me by three separate School Professionals. I begin each story, by introducing key characters, giving a summary of the story and loosely locating the story within a 'genre'.

<u>First Story</u>: *Carolyn's (SP) Story of Joe (Year 3)*

Joe's story tells of five main characters: Joe, who is in Year 3 at the time of my conversation and been present at his School since Foundation Stage, Claire (Joe's mum), his Grandad and his dad (who has died) and Carolyn, a very experienced SP.

The plot of this story is focused upon Joe's mum, Claire. Claire was a young mum, who had a relationship with a man, sixteen years older than herself. Their relationship is reported to have been heavily punctuated with many of aspects of DA: physical, sexual, psychological - all underpinned with coercive control. Misuse of substances (alcohol and drugs) is a key feature of this story and this appears to lead to a lack of attention and care being given to Joe - the little boy at the heart of the story.

Joe is initially cared for by his mum Claire and his dad. He also has an older sister (Adele). However, after dad dies, Claire quickly moves into another relationship, where she soon becomes pregnant. Claire's new baby girl (Stella) is born with medical problems and Social Care - who seem to thread and weave an influence throughout this story - make a decision that parents' are unable to adequately care for their daughter. She is taken into Local Authority (LA) care: Joe and his elder sister Adele, however, remain at home with Claire.

Over time, Grandad, emerges as the primary carer for Joe and Adele, as Claire is increasingly unable to care for either sibling. Joe, understandably, is extremely affected by the traumatic events within his life. Although he still sees his mum, he lives with Grandad and their relationship can be fractious: seemingly because of Joe's needs around attachment and the way that he communicates these. This fractious way of

being is also 'problematic' and 'challenging' at school, where Joe has many of his needs met by one-to-one adult support.

There is an overwhelming sense of tragedy at the heart of this story, where things not only start off badly, but seem to remain within a quagmire of failure and hopelessness. From the beginning of our conversation, Claire is discursively positioned as non-agentic (Davies & Harre, 1990). Her relationship with her partner (Joe's dad) is referred to by Carolyn as the result of a **"grooming situation"** (line 30) by her abusive partner and a number of events are described to highlight how Claire is physically, sexually and psychologically controlled by him. There are virtually no incidents of Claire exerting positive control over the direction of either her own life, or that of her children. Joe does, at times, attempt to make good and appear to resist what seems to be a dominant story surrounding him: but only to be quickly drawn back by the adult storyteller, into positions of failure. The overall outlook at the close of our conversation, was one of 'resignation' for the anticipated future failure of Joe and perhaps also, for the perceived failure of Carolyn (SP) to have helped Joe more than she feels she has (Mc Adams, & Mc Clean, 2013).

From the outset, parents are spoken of as non-agentic, with fundamental decisions about the direction of their lives (such as whether or not they have the capacity to parent) being controlled and monitored by Social Care.

> ### Reflection
>
> Our choice of language and our use of positioning is to enable the telling of a particular story, which makes sense to us as individuals at that moment in time (Hare et al, 2009). It may be that on the day I spoke to any one particular SP, it was a particularly tough day, with this foremost in their memory and perceptions of their experience. As Gergen (2009) would argue – we are all human beings, with associated imperfections and shortcomings. It may be that the SPs own sense of resilience or agency was not great on the day I engaged them in conversation. There are undoubtedly many factors (for example,

workplace stress, personal/private challenges, health needs) which as a researcher, visiting a person for one hour in their day, I am unaware of. Inevitably, this would affect the discursive positioning of children by adult participants and it would be naive of me not to acknowledge this.

Aware of Him on Our Radar

In Carolyn's story, Joe is introduced to me amid a catalogue of mounting parental failures, family loss and tragic circumstances.

Researcher (R): So if you could just start off really at the beginning of how you became involved with this child?

<div align="right">(lines 8-9)</div>

Carolyn starts by explaining her role and setting it within a multi-agency context. She states:

Carolyn (C): I support the parent, look at the behaviour of the child, social and emotional development and behavioural development and then I would work with the Learning Mentors and I usually set the programs, if you like, we look at what the requirement is and I usually do that in conjunction with, Ed-Psych have looked at it, have looked at things before, and behaviour support who look at what the child needs so, I usually do it consultation with somebody else if possible

<div align="right">(lines 12-18)</div>

Carolyn's language in describing early involvement with Joe and his family highlights her collaborative role within school as well as the systemic nature of her role, in working with the adults around Joe. Carolyn's 'I poem' (see Appendix 12) reflects her own professional positioning in relation to other professionals both in and out of school:

I work in the Inclusion Team
I also work with the four Learning Mentors
I support the parent
I would work with the Learning Mentors
I usually… set the programs
I became involved as the part of the core group
I explained to the social worker

Our conversation moved on to how Carolyn became involved with Joe: she begins by highlighting how he came to her attention due to his 'attendance':

(C): So the child first came to our attention because his attendance was really, really low, urm he was away more than he was here and that was in F1. Urm, so he is flagged

(Lines 18-20)

Here the word '**attendance**' hints at something else: within this context it appears to be acting as an 'indicator' of some difficulty beyond merely '**attendance**'. This is followed up with **"he was away more than he was here" (line 19),** acting to reinforce his absence from school. The socio-cultural context of schools and the discourses used within them, means that as fellow School Professionals, we recognise how words such as 'attendance' have broader connotations. They are more akin to an 'indicator' of something else, suggestive perhaps, of other concepts such as inconsistency regarding rules/boundaries, a lack of routine, inconsistent parental responsibility or possibly poor parental wellbeing.

The phrase **"so he is sort of flagged"** (lines 19–20) and later in conversation, Joe is referred to as being **"on our radar",** (line 26) sets the context and begins to build the story for Joe. The phrase suggests that, even before Joe is officially on role at this school, there is 'a story' attached to him, which threatens to define Joe, or pre-empt my getting to know Joe as an individual. It seems that these things: his 'attendance', his being 'away' and his being 'flagged' were almost a code, for something else. This felt like the beginning of, what Adichie (2009:1) refers to as a **"single story"** being told about Joe, or a 'dominant narrative'. For children with a DA experience, as **"[m]uch as policy-makers and practitioners might wish it were otherwise, there is no simple, single story we can tell about living with domestic violence"** (Mullender et al, 2002:114).

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As Carolyn's story progresses, we see how the phrase 'attendance' begins to unravel and acts, effectively, as a precursor to Joe's "**behaviours**" (line 41); it sets a context for these:

> (C): So then as he came into F2 urm because he'd been out of school very, you know, for a, hitting and missing *his* behaviours were very difficult because he wasn't used to being in a class, his language was poor urm and he, he would often call people names like 'wanker' and inappropriate names, for *older boys* so we sort of, so he was in F2 when we *really* became, we became aware of him on our radar.
>
> (lines 22-26)

When Joe is spoken of, it is in the context of his "**behaviours**" (line 22), which are described as **"very difficult"** (line 23) and this seems to be attributed to his poor attendance, where he had not gained a familiarity with school, it's rules and routines. His spoken language is portrayed as underdeveloped and his choice of vocabulary suggested to be developmentally inappropriate and offensive to others. His social interaction skills with his peers, also appear to be founded upon conflict and poor relational skills. These "**behaviours**" appear to be **"because he'd been out of school"** (line 22), his poor 'attendance'.

There were a lot of Parenting Issues

A series of events are then relayed which act to thicken the identity of Joe - but largely through the description of his family. During this early part of our conversation, it is difficult to find 'Joe', with much of the story focusing upon his parents. Davies and Harre (1990) would argue that this is part of the progressive and dynamic construction of meaning and identity (for Joe, through his parents).

> (C): Mum and Dad, so... Mum was younger than Dad, urm I think there would have been about...16 years err and Mum had met Dad when she was 15. So, I, in my opinion, is almost like a *grooming* situation in a way urm and he'd met Mum when she was 15
>
> (lines 29-30)

Here, when Joe's family are introduced it is interesting to note the details which are given. For example, we are told about a large age gap between the parents (with dad being much older than mum) and the very young age of mum when she met dad (15 -

still legally classified as a child). This is the first introduction to the concept of domestic abuse, where the notion of coercion underpins an imbalance of power between an older (more experienced and more knowing) man and (given that Joe's mum is 15) a child. What is being described by Carolyn, is effectively, an adult/child sexual relationship.

> ### Reflection
>
> Carolyn expresses her personal opinion of this situation, as one of 'grooming' (with all its connotations of power, manipulation and abuse) using the pronoun 'I', she quickly revised this to 'in my opinion'. Perhaps Carolyn felt that she was to remain 'professional' in relaying her account to me and that an 'opinion' was somehow less personal, more distanced. This highlights how we all bring our personal selves to our professional roles – much as we may try not to or for work purposes, to hide this. This highlights what Davies and Harre (1990) refer to as the 'ephemeral' nature of social interaction and the way in which constituting identity is dynamic and shifting within discourses.

The story continues with an explanation of how alcohol was used within the parental relationship. Alcohol use is relayed, with the word "**habitual**" (lines 32, 34) alluding to an entrenchment of behaviours.

> **(C): and they were both habitual alcohol users and she had fallen pregnant and…**
> **because of the way they had presented in hospital, because there were issues of a**
> **habitual alcohol use (although they were not on social care prior to it, urm then**
> **they went onto), they ended up removing the baby from the hospital because**
> **Joe's little sister had medical issues, she had like hydrocephalus and what have**
> **you**
>
> (lines 32-37)

An increasingly bleak picture is constructed here, with the introduction of social care and their 'parental' role in the lives of Joe and his family. Mum's admittance to hospital to have her new baby, appears to have drawn attention to the ability of Joe's parents to 'parent' effectively. Carolyn explains how the family became known to social care, resulting in Stella, Joe's baby sister, being "**removed**" (line 40) into Local Authority (LA)

care. Stella is born with medical difficulties (it was reported that she had a shunt fitted) – possibly due to the noted drug use. The accumulation of tragic events relayed here ('grooming', alcohol misuse, ill-health, children taken away from their parents into LA care), appear to be reported from an almost deterministic perspective: it seems that given the early start to this relationship, there is perhaps little surprise (an inevitability) that the story takes the direction that it does. So, when Carolyn says: **"… by this time we were…sort of becoming aware urm, like I say, of Joe through Joe's behaviours"** (lines 40-41), the possibility of being aware of Joe for anything but 'concern', would perhaps be surprising. It felt that this was to be a story characterised by an oversimplified 'cause and effect' relationship, where – having positioned Joe and his family, the story needed to then be told within certain constraints and limitations (Davies & Harre, 1990).

This part of Carolyn's story presents an image of hopelessness, personal and parental failure and adults who are barely capable of caring for themselves, let alone a child. This is the context which appeared to be alluded to when talking about Joe's **"attendance"** at the very start of our conversation and perhaps the reason why he was **"flagged"** and **"on our radar"**: resulting in the phrase **"everybody knows Joe in school"** (line 365).

He's on Child in Need

The notion of parents as agentic was barely evident throughout this story and learning about Joe was embedded in the language of 'state procedures and processes'. The vocabulary of 'the state' or institutions can be found throughout my conversation with Carolyn, with words such as **"statutory"**, **"social care assessment"**, **"supervision order"**, **"child in need"**, babies being **"removed"** and **"looked after"** dominating the conversation. Similar to the phrase 'attendance', the use of this language seemed to be acting as an 'indicator' of something else: in this instance, of parents apparently unable to shape the direction of their own lives. Davies & Harre (1990) would argue that such language is part of the 'discursive practices' employed to position individuals.

We first see an example of this when Carolyn speaks about Joe whilst he was attending nursery, she states:

> (C): …very little you can do cause it's not statutory attendance.

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She continues:

> **(C): Now, at that time... eh, which we wouldn't necessarily have known because he wasn't statutory, really statutorily, involved with us, at that time**
>
> (lines 26-28)

It could have been stated by Carolyn that Joe wasn't yet 'officially' attending school on a full time basis but instead a discourse, a choice of language, appears to be used which serves to gradually (as the conversation progresses) position Joe and his family as non-agentic. The same notion is echoed when Carolyn states **"although they were not on social care prior to it, urm they went onto"** (line 35), reflecting the presence of Social Workers and other such professionals, in the lives of Joe and his family.

In the following section, the power of 'the state' (and not the parents) is more explicitly referenced by use of the word 'judged' (i.e social care):

> **(C): So they judged...so that point, the social care assessment was done on the _parents_, they judged, that their parenting was good enough for Joe and Adele but not be good enough, wouldn't be good enough for Stella and her medical needs**
>
> (lines 37-40)

What seems to be conveyed here, is a construction of parents who are not fully in control of their ability to parent. Both Joe and Joe's parents are positioned passively, as 'subjects' caught up within bigger, more powerful procedural processes.

School become involved with Joe and his family after they are placed on a 'supervision order': this marks the beginning of a set of processes which seem to loom large throughout this story:

> **(C): he would have been...., urm... 5, would have been 5, urm and so as a result of, so as a result, although they said that the parenting was good enough, he went onto a supervision order, urm, so that then meant that school would, became involved because we would become part of the core group, urr, for this.**
>
> (lines 44-47)

A lack of agency is implied through the presence of 'the state' in the lives of Joe's parents: this has implications for Joe, since his agentic capacity appeared to be very

much entangled and inseparable from that of his parents. In Carolyn's discursive positioning of them as non-agentic, the concept of Joe being likewise appeared 'obvious', fitting with what Harre et al (2009:6) refer to as the "**normative frames**". Carolyn states: **"by then, it, it, you know, it was the start really, it was the start of the process"** (lines 57-58). Carolyn also explains **"so by the time he was in Year 2, still being involved with the family, still on supervision order"** (lines 68-69). This type of discourse and its positioning seemed to follow Joe throughout his time at school. Professionals within particular socio-cultural contexts tend to access those discursive tools commonly in use; if these are not challenged or discussed, then a re-positioning of children is difficult (Harre et al, 2009). Changing these conversations is a fitting role for EPs, who are well placed (in relational and professional terms) to do this.

The phrase 'process' is powerful: it relates to the use of 'systems' and 'procedures' but not people. It somehow serves to de-humanise the experiences of those people involved. 'Process' acts to de-personalise and separate: focussing attentions on processes rather than people. It threatens to override the identity of the individual, making the processes which they are at the behest of, appear more significant than the human being to which they refer. As part of this 'process' Joe is discussed as:

> **(C): he's on child in need currently now, but has been on child in need for the last two years and he, well, he went to looked after**
>
> (lines 138-139)

At the heart of this language is a little boy who has experienced loss, trauma (possibly) and emotional turmoil: the language appears to lose sight of this. The overall effect of the language is to position not only Joe but also his parents as lacking in authority, self-determination and responsibility - as non-agentic. Within this context, it is not difficult to tell a story of Joe, as similarly lacking in agency. It seems a non-sequitur, that an agentic child could emerge from such non-agentic parenting. To this extent, Joe appears an extension of his parents, rather than an individual in his own right (Callaghan et al, 2015).

He's Just so Damaged

Much of the discourse used by Carolyn to describe Joe's undoubtedly difficult early life experiences, lead to the creation of a 'deficit' identity for him and drew my gaze to the 'damage' endured. Carolyn explains:

> (C): so, so, from our point of view in school, at that time Joe's, you know, he, we were managing his behaviours, you know, we had a clear behavioural ladder, he was, you know, he, he, because *he was 5*, you know, so the, the trauma and damage, if you like, hadn't really manifested itself by then
>
> (lines 54-57)

Throughout our conversation similar terms were used to describe Joe, he was referred to as **"so damaged"** (line 250) - that school were unable to meet his needs, requiring **"more of a structured program that will delve more into how the damage that he's suffered [and] help him to come to terms with it"** (lines 269-271). He was said to have experienced **"emotional damage"** (line 109). This made it very difficult for him to regulate any of his behaviours and was reported to be why he was acting the way that he was, due to the **"emotional harm"** (line 119) and **"trauma"** (line 56) experienced.

Repeated reference was made to Joe's behaviour being **"off the scale"** (lines 68, 347, 349):

> (C): that's what keeps him from... being totally off the scale. Because I do think, that if we, if we weren't providing that one to one support, from when he, he gets here really to breakfast club, he comes regular, then I think that his behaviours would be off the scale, *I really do*
>
> (lines 346-349)

This portrays Joe as having an 'extra-ordinary', or extreme reaction to his experiences: calling into question his emotional competence (Callaghan et al, 2015). Such discourse serves to pathologise Joe's experiences, locating them very much 'within him'; rather than normalising them, as an understandable human reaction to some very difficult emotional experiences within his family and within the environment in which he lives.

Collectively, such discourse has the effect of disempowering Joe by presenting him as 'broken' by his experience. It functions in a reductionist way, and leads to a positioning of Joe as incapable, ineffective and helpless in the face of adversity. Feeling broken by such challenging experiences is not unimaginable. However, the singular perspective with little recourse to other perspectives, constructs an identity which is defined by what is 'diminished' rather than 'sustained', turning our gaze away from what strengths are also present during such suffering. It effectively undermines any resistance which Joe may have expressed. Although we all hold contradictions in how we discursively construct both ourselves and others, it felt that within this story, Carolyn was finding it very difficult to avert her gaze from the position which she had constructed, perhaps prior to our interaction (Davies & Harre, 1990). Being open to our inconsistencies and contradictions is perhaps something we share with people whom we have more open and trusting relationships; not those which are fleeting and potentially perceived as professionally threatening.

Carolyn told of how Joe tell 'lies'. She explained:

> (C): He tells, _tells lots of lies_, his lies are always about what he'd like his life to be, you know, that'd, what, his lies he'll say 'I've done this, I've have been to Disneyland and what's it's what he'd _like_ to do, you know, and or, you know, when he were younger, he used to say he was a Formula One driver, well _his Dad liked watching motor racing_ and he wants to be a Formula One driver and so... you know

<div align="right">(lines 265-267)</div>

Carolyn's assertion that Joe's views are "**lies**" overlooks the notion of him wanting (perhaps dreaming) of a better life, envisaging happier times and a future where there is hope. There is a tension between the word "**lies**" and "**what he'd like his life to be**": for on the one hand Carolyn appears to recognise the function of what Joe is saying, she states "**his lies are always about what he'd like his life to be**" but in calling these "**lies**", she shuts down the possibility of seeing his words from a different perspective: the possibility of a _different_ conversation. Taking a different perspective may enable us to see Joe as fantasising, in an attempt to understand himself and the extremely challenging circumstances of his life (Bettleheim, 1991); perhaps his comments are an

act of resistance against what is happening in his world, or maybe an expression of hope.

If we problematise Carolyn's description of Joe's "**lies**", we can begin to find an element of strength in a story saturated with sadness, hopelessness and powerlessness. Viewed from a different perspective, it could enable a conversation which offers the potential to bring about change for Joe. This however, sits uncomfortably and jars with Carolyn's story of tragedy, in portraying Joe as wanting to be someone who his dad admired (a Formula One motor driver). Perhaps this raises an element of emotional dissonance for Carolyn, since it is a clear expression from Joe that there was something good, something positive about his dad, which he relates to, is attempting to connect with and wants to remember. It also alludes to the discursive construction of identity and the challenge for Carolyn of locating apparent contradictions within this.

Carolyn referred to Joe's inability to express his feelings, saying:

> (C): He's said things over the period time, like, 'I don't have any feelings me, because they're no good, it's no good to have feelings' or you know, and he, he finds it very difficult to express things.
>
> (lines 262-265)

However, what struck me is that this was very much an expression of his feelings, and a rather powerful expression too. This appeared to be Joe initiating a rather profound conversation: an example of emotional intelligence rather than emotional incapacity. It seems to be him attempting to talk about the painfulness of feelings and if responded to differently, was potentially an invitation to express his emotions.

This overlooking of Joe's feelings also appears to be expressed here:

> (C): I just, I just, feel as though, he, he needs help to, to process and to look _forward_ and to.... be able to recognise. He just don't seem, he can't, he _knows_ what to say about feelings, he _knows_ when did you feel sad, oh 'I felt sad when...' and he can say, you know, but I don't think he feels it, I think he just says it, _basically_
>
> (lines 310-314)

Due to the way in which Carolyn has positioned Joe, she appears here, to be denying Joe's ability to have genuine feelings, to recognise his emotions and to voice these.

There seems an implication that he doesn't 'feel' the sadness of what's happened to him: he's emotionally aloof, disconnected.

As well as his feelings going unrecognised, so too are his actions. Accrediting improvement to Joe is given by Carolyn but this is done without recognising his sense of control over this.

> (C): his behaviour is up and down, it's inconsistent, some days he has good days some days he doesn't. I mean he's, he's, you know, he's better in some ways but that's only because we've upped our level of support

<div align="right">(lines 243-245)</div>

So, his behaviour is better but this has been mediated by the adults around Joe: improvement is not credited to Joe's own endeavours. Joe is not perceived as agentic; rather, it is the adult professionals around him. What we may be seeing in both these instances, is a negation of Joe's sense of 'self' and without this, he becomes positioned in such a way as to diminish his ability and capacity to act with agency.

I Wouldn't Say… We're Any Further On Really

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<div align="center">Reflection</div>

It seemed a complicated and messy mix of emotions and feelings for Carolyn, when relaying aspects of Joe' school life. I felt that she had 'invested' a great deal of her professional self in Joe and his family and it became apparent to me as we spoke (and much more so, on reflection) just how much meaning making she may have been grappling with within our conversation. It is not often we are asked in a 1-2-1 conversation to 'explain our professional role' at length. Due to the very loose structure of our conversation, much of the navigation was left to Carolyn. I reflected afterwards on how challenging this may have been for her – something I hadn't given much thought to beforehand. I wondered to what extent would Carolyn recognise the power and potential she held to support and encourage Joe create, or establish an alternative identity for himself.

</div>

Perhaps this meaning or sense making is evident when Carolyn talks about Joe's ability to regulate his behaviour:

> (C): he'll tell you *all the right answers,* if you sit down and do activities with him, he can tell you exactly what he should be doing, but when it comes to being in the moment, he, he doesn't, he won't

<div align="right">(Lines 113-115)</div>

In this section, the phrase **"when it comes to being in the moment"** appears to refer to occasions when Joe is emotionally overwhelmed. Use of the phrase **"he won't"** introduces some ambiguity, since this differs from he 'can't'. He **'won't'** suggests that there is indeed some agency involved and on re-listening to this point in the conversation, I am still unsure as to whether there is also an implication of 'choice' from Carolyn.

<div align="center">Reflection</div>

As a researcher, just hearing Joe's story evoked feelings of real sadness. Such a difficult start to life, with so many challenges for both Joe and the adults around him. It was difficult not to finish each listening without feeling entrenched in the sense of hopelessness and there was a definite effect on my own mood after each listening: out of all three stories, this was the one with which I least wanted to engage. It was however, insightful in helping me to think about the emotionally draining element of this kind of work. It appears that Carolyn had supported Joe and his family for many years, and perhaps without professional emotional support for herself, it is challenging not to 'tell a single story'.

I used a section of Carolyn' I Poem entitled 'the emotionally strained self' (see Appendix 12) to think about the impact upon School Professionals, in supporting children such as Joe, with a complex experience of DA. This section of Carolyn's 'I Poem' captures, what I understand to be a depleted sense of hope, which characterised her I Poem:

> I feel as though he's had everything that we could give.
> I wouldn't say we are any further on…
> I …don't… feel… that we have achieved anything
> I think that he and, and you know in the end,
> I think that he's just so damaged

I don't think we're doing anything from a long term point of view
I just...his behaviour is up and down

There is a real feeling here that school staff have made very little difference to Joe: as though they have exhausted all their support and yet, nothing has really changed. This contradicts and adds some tension to other aspects of Carolyn's story, where she is more positive about how school have helped Joe (for example, in 'containing' him), but is nonetheless significant in communicating her sense of disappointment and frustration. This also, perhaps, demonstrates her lack of perspective on her work and a need for her own professional emotional support and reflection. Were this in place, it may be that Carolyn discursively positions both Joe and his family in a more balanced perspective, which is better able to accommodate contradiction.

In this next section of her I Poem, we see Carolyn attempting to reason as to why school haven't had a more successful outcome with Joe.

I think he needs somebody to unravel *it*
I just feel as though he needs, he needs, more of a structured program that will delve more
I might be talking rubbish
I think that maybe some children have got to get to a certain point of maturity
I think that's what, that's what I feel he needs
I think that we can't address that, because we're not psychotherapists

There seems no recognition of school's positive contribution in 'unravelling' Joe's life with him or indeed with his Grandad or his mum. The 1-2-1 support from his Learning Mentor, interventions or support materials used to help Joe work through his experiences, the sense of 'containment' which Carolyn spoke about, for example. All these are overlooked, perhaps because they contradict or challenge the positions assigned. Carolyn talks about a 'structured program' being better suited to supporting Joe, rather than the programs which she spoke about school providing, at the beginning of our conversation **"I usually set the programs"** (line 14). There appears an implication that these have not been able to **"delve"** (line 270) deep enough into the **"damage that he's suffered"** (line 270). There is a real sense that there is something 'deep inside' of Joe, that needs 'fixing' by an 'expert' and not by school staff.

Carolyn then moves on to thinking about Joe himself and how he may have contributed to this perceived lack of progress and seems to reason, that he is not emotionally mature enough in order to respond to the support given. She concludes that once he is older and with some 'expert' advice and support, things may be able to improve for him. Again, it cannot be underestimated how challenging it is to support children such as Joe and I think there is a lot encompassed within this conversation, particularly around professional identity, professional competence and indeed personal dignity. It may be that Carolyn felt, professionally, she had failed Joe: in her opinion, even after all the support given by school, he had not moved on or made progress. In this next section of her I Poem, there is a real use of 'within child', discourse to explain Joe's lack of progress.

> I think he's urm an explosion waiting to happen
> I just feel as though he, he needs help
> I think that he is, he's a potential, a real potential for… criminality

Previous mention of Joe being **"so damaged"** sadly conveys an image of him as somehow depleted, injurious to himself or others: this seems to be alluded to here with the mention of 'criminality'. Within this excerpt of Carolyn's I Poem, it appears to build upon this concept, stating that Joe is **"an explosion waiting to happen"** (line 286) – perhaps, violently or aggressively. It certainly seems that whichever form the explosion takes, it will (almost inevitably) lead to Joe going down the criminal justice route. There is a sense from this, that Carolyn feels the emotional time and investment from school was somehow futile, noting: **"he's had everything that we could urm offer"** (lines 235-236) and yet Carolyn states **"I wouldn't say…. that…we're any _further on_ really"** (line 240). She continues, **"I, I don't, feel that we have achieved anything, _long term_ with Joe - at all"** (line 244). She expands:

> **(C): He's had an awful lot of input and our, _honestly_, we, _I feel_ and you know, in, in sort of chatting to everybody else, I feel that school have reached urm… the, the limit of our expertise in, in, in being helpful to Joe, for, on a long term basis**
> (lines 218-220)

Interestingly, she does not appear to perceive her own role - her own skills or experience - as instrumental in helping Joe. She previously appeared to seek

reassurance for her professional role, stating **"I might be talking rubbish"** (line 272). This apparent lack of confidence in both school and herself, seems grounded in the complexity of Joe's needs: **"he's just _so damaged_"** (line 250). Carolyn reflects that Joe needs somebody to **"unravel"** (line 251) him, again, not recognising that Joe's Learning Mentor, his 1-2-1 support, his Class Teacher and indeed Carolyn, have collectively almost certainly gone a long way towards 'unravelling' many of Joe's thoughts and feelings. Well supported professional supervision could offer an alternative appreciation of just how significant environmental support systems and the school community may well have been for Joe.

She feels that **"school have reached urm… the, the limit of our expertise"** (lines 219-220) and that she herself is **"not in any way an expert"** (line 261). When talking about experts, Carolyn is referring to psychologists and psychotherapists, naming both professional groups explicitly. She states: **"I think that we can't address that, [Joe's needs] because we're not psychotherapists"** (line 284). Later reference is made to **"psychiatric help"** (line 280), and this brings to mind the medical model as a panacea for Joe's needs.

> (C): I think that maybe children have got to get to a certain point of maturity, to be able to, be very….to be more receptive to things like psychotherapy and psychiatric help. I'm sure, but I think that he, he needs to be, he needs to, to _understand_ what's happened to him and to _process_ it properly and then to move on from it and thinks that what, that what I feel he needs
>
> (lines 278-282)

Second Story: *Sara's (SP) Story of Rachel (Y5) and her Two Brothers (Marky Y4 and Stevie Y1)*

Sara's story told of several main characters – Rachel, her two younger brothers, her mum (Rebecca) and Sara, a very experienced SP. There were also two male characters of significance in mum's life: the father of her three children (who was in prison) and her new partner, who she eventually leaves. Sara speaks about all three of the children, with the main focus on Rachel and Stevie.

The plot of this story centred around a family who had moved from Manchester to a new town (Rebecca's home town). The move was prompted by the breakdown of her relationship with her partner in Manchester. Rebecca had three children to her partner and I understand that during pregnancy with the third (and youngest) child (Stevie), incidents of DA had started. Sara (SP) described this as having detrimental consequences for Rebecca's attachment relationship with Stevie and for what she perceived, as the consequent level of need which he communicated at school. The children's father had been involved in various crimes, eventually being imprisoned for robbery. Sara had commented on the two older children having received "**some really good, urm, parenting initially**" (line 54) prior to family difficulties. She had also described how extended family (Grandma on dad's side) gave support to Rebecca. Grandma worked at the children's school and the children appeared to gain a sense of security from this. The children had friends at school and appeared settled in Manchester.

Rebecca had chosen to return to her home town on the expectation of receiving support from her own family. In relation to leaving Manchester, Sara spoke about Rebecca having "**uprooted**" (lines 47, 253) the children, who struggled with a consequent sense of loss (of family in Manchester, their home environment, their school and their friends).

On moving back to her hometown, Rebecca had become intimately involved with a man (known as 'Jono') - well known in the community - for his violence and aggression. The two moved in together, with the children. His aggression and violence appeared to

dominate the lives of the children and Rebecca. Rebecca is reported to have struggled with her parenting and Social Care became involved with the family.

Eventually, a disclosure was made at school to Sara, by Rachel, about the DA at home. Mum was reported to have been very angry at Rachel for this. Eventually, Rebecca fled from this relationship, taking her children to a Refuge. Rebecca was re-housed and the children settled into a new school.

Sara's story seems characterised by, what McAdams & Guo (2015:475) refer to as "**generativity**": a personal focus on the well-being of others. This appears to have been related to Sara's (additional) professional role – she was involved in training to become a therapist. This appeared to be a story most fitting of a redemptive genre, since it moved the listener through a journey from suffering and struggle, to a **"coherent positive resolution"** (Mc Adams & McLean, 2013:234). Difficulties experienced by the characters were eventually resolved, leading to closure of a destructive relationship and a more optimistic future for Rebecca and her children.

Social Care involved

The role of SPs supporting children with DA encompasses safeguarding and attendance. For families experiencing DA, there are often moves from one city/town to another, in an attempt to escape the abuse. For such families, children typically arrive at schools with a file of information – which has the potential to 'story' and pre-position them (Davies & Harre, 1990). Although unavoidable, there appears a kind of institutional discourse that becomes attached to children (and their families) in schools. This acts to constrain, reduce and to an extent disempowers them, before they have had an opportunity to give their own perspective on their lives, or make their own (more positive) impression upon the adults around them. In short, a dominant story (which is an often simplified story of an ultimately complex life) precedes them, which then proves challenging to counter and retell (Nelson, 1995). Arguably, this contributes towards a diminished construction of the 'agentic self', since the State and its institutions are shaping major decisions in both the adult and child's life. There is a

question of the extent to which this discursively shapes and defines an identity. Sara states at the beginning of our conversation:

> **(S): they were a family that we already knew had had, urm, social care involvement in Manchester and it were due to, urm, domestic violence**
> (lines 22-23)

I wondered how much of a discursive construction and consequent positioning of this family – the children – had already been formed by this statement and how this shaped perceptions of agency: not only of mum but most importantly, of the children. I asked Sara how she first became aware of the DA which these children experienced and she explained that:

> **(S): I found out because, urm, they came with all that information and I read their [file]**
> (line 31)

As professionals, it is necessary that we read files of information 'about' children but I remain curious as to how current knowledge and understanding (our pre-positioning) informs our thinking and ultimately, our actions. More specifically, if our thinking is not informed or challenged, for example, around the concept of agency, then what are the consequences for the children and families with whom we work and support. So, despite having read the file, Sara added:

> **(S): I don't think we had the full picture until a little bit later on**
> (line 35)

In relation to the experience of DA, Rebecca appeared reluctant to contribute to the 'full picture':

> **(S): Mum actually volunteered that information but she was very vague about it**
> (lines 39)

We are then told in more detail about the level of social care involvement:

(S): so social care were involved at that point but at child in need level, urm, this went on for quite a long time, I'd say for, they were involved for about 4 months, urm, but then felt that Mum were engaging, because she did engage to a point

It appears that social care moved this family up and down their 'priority' list dependent on Rebecca's engagement and the family needs. Throughout their time at school, the children in this family remained within the social care system. Sara remarks:

(S): now I made that referral, it was opened up again at child in need and it stayed at child in need for a few more sort of weeks, I'd say, probably about 5 weeks and then one Monday morning the children didn't turn up for school...

The reason for this was because:

(S): they'd been taken into Refuge at that time so because of that it stepped straight up then to, urm, to child protection so at that point we were still involved

Although this was a familiar pattern of institutional discourse (talk of 'child protection', 'child in need', 'social care') Sara did not allow it to saturate our conversation and whilst being aware of its presence, there were other stories that managed to compete with this one. Stories which afforded agency, for example.

Children Are Amazing

In relation to the children in this family, Sara appears to recognise a great deal of agency in them, particularly Rachel, the eldest (Y5). Here, she explains that Rachel made a disclosure to her:

(S): Rachel, came to me and made a disclosure ... she wanted to
say more but you knew that she were frightened to say more... but this particular day she came and she was very, very upset and it took her about half an hour, half an hour, to, to tell me and she sat there this little girl and said I am really frightened of Jono, he scares me Mum and Jono are arguing all the time, he has pushed Mum...

So, despite her fear, Rachel is able to communicate to Sara, that she feels frightened and scared at home and the reason for this, is mum's partner – Jono. Sara calls it a "**disclosure**" here but later speaks about Rachel having made a "**choice**":

> (S): at least they had me as a bolt hole to come and talk to because she made that choice herself
>
> (line 621)

The terms 'disclosure' and 'choice' although similar in that each are potentially empowering for Rachel, also differ in that one implies 'a telling', whilst the other implies greater cognitive engagement with the telling, more active reasoning and a level of evaluation.

Rachel's agency is demonstrated in her explanation to Sara about what happens at home when there is an incident between mum and Jono:

> (S): she talked about having to look after her brothers. Urm, I keep, I keep Stevie upstairs and Stevie cries and Stevie, urm, then has a behaviour outburst that she has to deal with, urm and she talked about that, urm, and you know, she was very brave and I did, and I'd already gone through, urm, confidentiality with these children several times over and before she did that I reminded that, you know, just remember that if you tell me something, where I think that you are at risk of any harm or you or anybody else, I might have to tell somebody else, we can't keep that in here… and she still chose to disclose…
>
> (lines 123-129)
>
> I have never ever, ever seen anything more brave in a, and I was so full of admiration for this little girl
>
> (lines 147-148)

So, Rachel looks after both her brothers during incidents between her mum and Jono, but it seems it is her little brother who needs most of her attention, as he cries or has "**a behaviour outburst**" (line 124). It seems that she actively removes him out of sight of what is happening "**I keep Stevie upstairs**" (line 123). Sara calls this demonstration of agency 'bravery': it is an example of a child actively and not passively responding to (presumable) acts of abuse towards their mum.

Later, agency appears to be referred to as Rachel's ability to 'mother' her brothers. This is a very clear example that children do not merely 'witness' DA, they actively respond to it, not only in the moment (as seen above) but also, as seen here, they hold and carry that experience into future actions:

> (S): Rachel came across as lovely little girl but she was a mother figure to those boys and we could see that. She was very, she was always asking, she used to come and ask me has Stevie had a good day? Like a parent, that she felt that she had to protect these boys from anything that was happening
>
> (lines 231-234)

Children acting older than their years - in taking on a carer role - is undoubtedly saddening: nonetheless, it clearly demonstrates their agentic capacity.

Further agency can be seen from Rachel, when placed in a differently challenging situation: for having 'disclosed' to Sara, Rachel then has to face her mum, letting it be known to her, that she has shared information with school about events at home.

> (S): ...she looked at Mum and she said I've already told Mrs Shotton why I'm upset. And that to me was just an admission that she weren't going to change what she'd said. She'd told me and Mum had to accept it
>
> (lines 158-161)

Here, we see Rachel, almost defiantly standing her ground, having taken control of a situation and quite dramatically, shaping its outcome. There is, arguably, a rather sophisticated level of agency being used here, where it appears that Rachel had built up enough of a trusting relationship with Sara, to recognise her as a collaborative source of help and support in changing her circumstances at home and the outcomes of both her own life and her siblings.

Sara went on to explain that once Rachel was away from experiencing the abuse at home and was supported at the Refuge, she expressed her feelings towards her mum much more openly:

> (S): Rachel apparently when they actually went into Refuge, urm,
> did, some of the stuff that came out, she was very angry with Mum,
> very angry with Mum, she felt that Mum had let them down and it all came out
> from the work that they did there... That, that, you know, this anger that had built
> up because she felt that Mum had not protected them, urm, so it did all come out
>
> (lines 536-541)

This appears a very obvious and clear expression of agency from Rachel, holding her mum responsible for much of her difficult and frightening experience. Interestingly, Sara speaks about **"anger that had built up"** implying that there seems to have been an element of timing for Rachel and possibly a level of control exerted over the point at which she would challenge her mum.

Interestingly, Sara later makes connections between DA and bullying and touches on the importance of 'control'. She makes the connection between DA denying children a sense of control over their lives and their attempts at re-gaining this elsewhere (Mullender et al, 2002). In substituting the word 'control' for agency, we again, see an example here of children acting agentically, in an attempt to 'manage' difficult and distressing emotions/feelings.

> (S): I've done lots of work on bullying, I think there is a link there as
> well. I think a lot of children that bully have, it's what, they have witnessed
> something and it's their way of, quite, of making sense and controlling because
> they are not in control of, of, of parts, massive parts of their life so they need
> something to be in control of
>
> (lines 578-582)

What makes this passage particularly interesting is Sara's use of the word **"witnessed"** and its juxtaposition, not only within this context but also within the context of new knowledge and thinking around children's agency (Callaghan et al, 2015). For there is a clear agentic response being described here. Valentine (2011) speaks of agency being expressed irrationally and in unconventional ways. Perhaps engagement in 'bullying' is an example of this, of an attempt to resist an unwanted experience in a way that unfortunately hurts others and oneself.

Marky, Rachel's younger brother (Y3) is spoken about with a degree of ambiguity, in terms of perceiving him as acting with agency. He is often spoken about by Sara as almout consciously with-holding his feelings/thoughts:

> (S): The little boy, Marky, was in Year 3, was a very quiet boy but very deep and in school we didn't really have any issues with him behaviour wise. Playtimes, sometimes, a little bit of disruption but he would, he was very polite, he, he followed instructions, he listened to adults, he had few issues with other children, urm, were he would fall out but he still had friends. He still made friends
>
> (lines 219-222)

A lack of agency often seems to be attributed to children with 'behavioural' difficulties: those unable to 'regulate their emotions', as will be shown below - when thinking about Stevie - the youngest of the three children. Marky, on the other hand, appears to be perceived by Sara, as primarily, non-agentic, for although he is able to navigate his way relatively successfully through relationships with staff and his peers by (generally) following the rules, being polite, listening and engaging positively with friends: he is unable to express his emotions/feelings in a way which moves things forward for him.

> (S): Marky but he were very deep and he would talk about his Dad, that he missed his Dad with me, urm, but you'd hit a brick wall with Marky, he, he didn't, he only opened up so far
>
> (lines 229-230)

It is this inability by Marky, to make his thoughts and feelings known, which perhaps strangely, troubles Sara most.

> (S): Marky if you were the teacher you wouldn't really, there'd be nothing, yeah, it, you know, he'd get into a few scrapes, urm but he wouldn't stick out as somebody that you might think oh, hang on a minute, there is something happening at home here, you just wouldn't. Urm, so it, it, would be really difficult cause you'd think oh,he don't need anything. Whereas actually probably he did
>
> (lines 244-248)

Sara alludes to Marky needing support, most likely around his ability to **"open up"** (line 618) or make his thoughts, feelings and desires known: to determine, influence and shape his world, to act with agency. It may well be that this silence was in fact, Marky's

expression of agency: perhaps this reflects a level of self-knowledge on his behalf, an awareness that he isn't ready to share, yet (Valentine, 2011).

Towards the end of our conversation, despite her sometimes contradictory thinking and reasoning around the concept of agency, Sara makes it very clear that she recognises that both adults and children are not only very capable of acting agentically but that this is the most effective way of bringing about change:

> **(S): actually it's not about helping them it's about getting them to see they can help themselves and that's what doing this counselling made me realise. We can't do it to them, we can't do it for them, we have to do with them and they have to see that and it's not about us coming with solutions it's them coming up with their own, cause your solution is your solution not theirs**
>
> (lines 724-727)

What marked Sara's story out as particularly interesting, was her ability to hold complexity and convey a story that contained nuance. Her ability to discursively constitute positions and perhaps re-constitute them also (Davies & Harre, 1990). Although she explained the needs of all three children and depicts these quite graphically, she managed to do this in a way that simultaneously acknowledged both their strengths and limitations. This allowed both attributes to sit alongside each other, therefore maintaining a sense of dignity for the children. It also brought the children to centre stage within her story, highlighting them as compelling and interesting characters for what they *could* do, rather than for what they *couldn't*. For example, when describing Rachel she recognised her needs within school and the detrimental impact of the DA: here, she explains how this affected Rachel's social skills, saying:

> **(S): she was a gorgeous little girl and you could, I could have brought her in here and you would have had lovely, lovely conversation with her…she found it very difficult to, urm, form friendships. Urm, she would but she couldn't sustain that friendship and I think that were part of that chaotic, urm, background that she'd had and she found it really difficult**
>
> (lines 305-309)

Later adding the consequence of this particular need:

> **(S): she weren't forming friendships, that, urm, the way she should**

> and, and, in the, and maintaining them and then she were really
> lonely
>
> <div align="right">(lines 358-359)</div>

So, whilst highlighting a little girl who was struggling with her social skills to hold onto friendships, she went onto to describe a scared but confident, resilient and articulate little girl, who was able to navigate her way through some extremely challenging adult relationships, managing to eventually achieve a positive outcome from these. Here, Rachel talks to Sara about things that had been happening at home, which she had made a decision to hold on to and not disclose:

> (S): She talks about, urm, and this was about June time, when she talked about an argument and she had been carrying that and what it transpired, it was, it had happened at the new, the, at New Year and she talked about Jono pushing Mum, urm, backwards over a, over the settee, Mum had landed over the settee and he'd really hurt her, urm, and she said she talked about having to look after her brothers.
>
> <div align="right">(lines 119-122)</div>

After Rachel had made this disclosure to Sara, Sara then confronted Rachel's mum with what she had been told. Sara depicts a little girl who is resistant to adult pressure and determined to make her feelings known:

> (S): Anyway at that point Rachel was stood at the door and Mum said come in and the little girl sat there and I have never ever, ever seen anything more brave in a... and I was so full of admiration for this little girl. Urm, she sat there because Mum said why have you told? Why have you told Mrs Shotton this? ... what are you trying to do?...
> we're moving and she were really shouting and I said no, no and, you know, I were trying to calm Mum down, but the little girl, she said is why, is it, tell the truth is it, is it because you are being bullied? So she were trying to sort of side step and say it was something else
>
> <div align="right">(lines 147-153)</div>

It clearly took a great deal of determination and will for Rachel to defy her mum in this instance and an incredible amount of resilience. There is also an issue of loyalty here, whereby, Rachel appears to be breaking this between herself and her mum. Rebecca seems to be offering Rachel a way of backing down (the suggestion that she is being bullied) but remarkably, Rachel stands her ground:

(S): So she were trying to make out that the reason why she is upset is for something completely different and she is substituting something because she'd daren't tell us she is being bullied. I know she weren't being bullied

(lines 156-158)

Sara recognised the **nuances** and shifting roles within the relationships. The different roles taken on by Rachel appear to display different elements of agency: for example, when she realised she no longer 'had to' try to mother her siblings, she apparently made a choice to cast off that responsibility:

(S): Very interesting cause I, I think she was, she was sort of backing away from that mother, mothering role and, and, being a child and she'd not been allowed to do that because she'd, she'd seemed a lot older than her years

(lines 302-304)

Perhaps it is her more holistic perspective taking which allows her to conclude that:

(S): these children they are so resilient, I, I, you know, I can't say
enough about that because, urm, they do so well. I mean, those
children, they came to school every day and they functioned in class,
and they, and they functioned well. Urm, how did they do that?
that would have bowled over some adults, so children are amazing

(lines 614-616)

It's Gutting to Think…

Our conversation took place within the physical context of a school building but within this are relationships, conversations, procedures and processes all shaped by the economic, political and socio-cultural context of a school. Having created Sara's I Poem, the influence and shaping of this context upon Sara's professional role, was much more evident to me. I created this section of Sara's I Poem and entitled it 'Contextual Voice' as it seemed to highlight how Sara perceived her professional role, how this was shaped by as well as responded to, by other professionals. Lots of her language refers to the procedural element of her role, for example:

I do all the safeguarding
I started working with that family
I did mentor

I found out because
I read their [file]
I had to do our referral
I got involved initially
I did confront Mum
I lead on attendance
I went to a meeting
I do a report for
I'm going to case conference
I get a full picture

This section gives a clear indication of what Sara does – she sees her role as keeping these children safe, checks on their attendance, makes referrals to outside agencies if she has concerns, engages in difficult and challenging conversations with parents, attends multi-agency meetings and writes and prepares reports for these. She works within what she calls a **"pastoral team"** (line 606) and the importance of this is argued to be fundamental to supporting the children in this family, through their experience of DA. Here, she reveals her feelings about school pastoral systems and how they relate to the phenomena of DA and children in her school:

I, do think that you need…strong pastoral teams in schools
I really
I fear for what would have happened
I always ask the TA as well
I often know the child but a full picture
I'll go to TA, Class Teacher
I'll go to Learning Mentor if they're working with them
I think that there are more available now
I think we've got a lot more support staff
I mean for example in this school, there is a TA in every class
I think support staff have made a massive difference
I think it is, yeah, it is starting to make a difference
I really, I really do

A further section of her I Poem, reveals the level of skills and experience that Sara has for this role:

I'd worked in a PRU
I worked for behaviour support

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> I've got lots of experience
> I were anti-bullying development officer
> I did a number of years as session worker
> I were a learning mentor in a comp
> I've been doing it for years and years
> I still care
> I mean I am doing, urm, off my own bat
> I am, I'm doing counselling
> I've just done my first year
> I'm going to carry on
> I'm going into counselling
> it's helping me in my role
> it helps me with parents
> it helps me with children

However, what is not conveyed through this is her level of commitment and concern, which I felt to be present in her work around this family. During our conversation, I hadn't picked up on the gravity of this and so creating her I Poem was really insightful. Several listenings allowed me to hear concerns and anxieties which I had not originally focused upon. Here, she explains how she felt uneasy about the children's non-attendance at school one Monday morning:

> I decided to walk down the street
> I went down the street
> I'm knocking on the door of the house
> I said, oh, ok, and he says no, there has been a big hoo-hah over the weekend and the police have come and removed them

This shows Sara responding 'out of protocol' for this family – she made a decision to call at their house despite, the usual three-day elapse that schools allow before such action might be taken.

Later on in our conversation, she revealed her continued interest in the children, despite them no longer being on roll at her school. This perhaps reflects the level of emotional involvement given to working at this level with children and their families. She states:

> I heard for Stevie was that he was on a part-time timetable
> I'm not surprised at, given the severity of his behaviour

> I checked
> I do ask people
> I am still interested in this family
> I think it were about 8 months ago,
> I made sure that I stayed involved
> I went to couple of meetings after
> I wanted to make sure that they got…the support in school
> I think carried on with support from the Refuge

She makes her continued concern explicit, in saying **"I am still interested in this family"** (line 643). She repeats the phrase **"make/make sure"** (lines 653, 674) twice and this, I feel, emphasises her commitment to keeping these children as safe as she can, within the remit of her role. However, I also wondered about this section of Sara's I Poem, in relation to a different theme which appeared to thread and weave its way throughout our conversation: time and resources.

Implicit within this theme, there appeared a sense of, perhaps guilt and frustration and a feeling that maybe she had not done all that she could for these children. This seemed to be focused around a lack of time and resources.

> I hadn't got the time
> I just didn't have time to do it
> I think there could have been more
> I think we've, we've, we've put more thought into it now
> I wish I'd have had more time for those children
> I didn't have
> I couldn't, couldn't, I just couldn't
> I didn't the time to do that
> I would have liked to have done more
> I think giving them more time gives them more
> it builds up more trust

Sara's story also revealed a lot about the very human element and the personal impact of SPs supporting children through an experience of DA. There were moments where her words and phrases appeared to very vividly convey the emotions held about the ways in which she had supported the children in this family. Sara seems to jump almost instantaneously, from the past to the present, when relaying events. For example,

> (S): The issues that we had were, that Mum would, urm, turn up late for the children for example, so there weren't a lot of stability in that family, it were very

chaotic, urm, and there were things that, it's gutting to think, coming through, there were things that I were concerned about but the children weren't disclosing, they, they weren't disclosing things, you'd get little snippets but not enough to actually say this is what's happening because then you'd, you'd confront Mum with it and she would completely dispute it

(lines 80-86)

The phrase **"it's gutting to think"** (line 82) expresses perhaps a sense of disappointment in herself or annoyance that she wasn't able to bring the situation to a point where further support could be given to the family, more quickly. Again, this appears to be an example of what Hiles (2005) describe as a **"contingent narrative"**; a conscious/unconscious, 'in the moment' attempt at sense making. Within the context of this conversation and with future listenings, it suggests that Sara is revealing a sense of frustration here at not having been able to get a clearer picture from the children about things that were going on at home. I surmise that had she had this information earlier, she felt she would have been able to keep them safe and protect them from some of their subsequent experiences. There was a similar moment here: **"so I asked Mum to come in, _I can still see this, this is why I am telling you_ about _this one_, because it really sticks out in my mind"** (lines 132-133). It is as though Sara is re-living this moment during our conversation.

Creating Sara's I poem highlighted to me, the co-constructive nature of meaning making at the point of conversation. With each listening I seemed more attuned to her attempts at finding her way through her professional role and its relationship to the phenomena of DA. Here, Sara appears to be grappling with the more theoretical elements of DA, in talking about the Rebecca (the children's mum):

I think it was entrenched with Mum
I think, Mum had low self-esteem
I think, urm, to the point that
I think she witnessed it when she was a child
I think you see this often they just jump from one relationship to the next

Interestingly, this section of the I Poem, portrays a person with little agency and there is an implication from the word **"entrenched"** (lines 542, 544) that mum is worn down

from a long period of abuse, that has resulted in her **"low self-esteem"** (lines 542-543).

The term "**witnessed**" (line 546) within this context, for me, suggests a reference to

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and a notion that mum has moved from one

stage of her life to another, with little self-determination or reflection about the nature

of her relationships. This notion is further compounded by the statement that she **"just**

jump(s)" from one relationship to next" (line 546), with little thought or regard for

implications, or indeed, whether her choice of partner is good for herself, or her

children. Within this context, the phrase "**witness**" aligns well with a notion of passivity,

rather than activity: inert and re-active, rather than alert and pro-active.

I later asked a question of Sara that was in response to a subject which she had raised:

the individual differences in response to children's experience of DA. Here, her I Poem

shows how she works through her thinking:

> I think it's just down to individuals
> I think it's how, urm, how, it's, it's partly personality
> how you deal with things
> I think you will find that in families
> I really do think that,
> I think you can have a family where, urm, the children have been subjected to
> loads of trauma throughout their lives
> I used to this, urm, so you might think that'd all turn out the same
> I think it's,
> I, and they've had the same upbringing

There is a clear recognition here of hope and a refusal of a homogenous response to

children with an experience of DA. This appears to be arguing for a more 'holistic' and

'emergent' understanding of children and a recognition of how individual or personal

traits play an important role.

Child Led

Much of the work which Sara did herself, or put in place for the children, was very child

led, or child centred and there was a sense that school attempted – as best they could –

to respond to the children's individual needs. There is a sense of empathy expressed

within this section of Sara's conversation, when she attempts to explain why she thinks

Stevie is finding it so difficult to manage at school and why he is noticeably more challenging than his siblings. She looks to a rupture of bonds and connections to explain where she thinks the difficulties lie, alluding to poor attachment bonds:

> **(S): I think, probably most of the domestic violence started when he was born and I think, I think, Dad, what transpired later was that Dad had attacked Mum while she was pregnant with him and I think he affected her bond**
>
> (lines 60-62)

The last reference to 'he' refers to Stevie's birth father and it appears that Sara is attempting to make sense of why Stevie may have been more openly and obviously affected from the experience of DA. She seems to be alluding to an awareness of the developmental impact of experiencing DA at a younger age, perhaps also the impact of its chronicity. There is a very definite awareness of how a lack of emotional availability to mum during Stevie's very early development and his formative years has led to a huge strain on their relationship. If we think back to earlier comments, we are also able to see that the impact of leaving Grandma, who it seems acted as a protective factor for these children, may well have affected Stevie more profoundly than his older siblings. Having assessed Stevie's needs, Sara seemed to feel that some of his difficulties were **"definitely attachment"** (line 60). Her response to this was in **"taking the child back really, it's, it's the missing building blocks. Now Stevie…, he needed that in spades"** (lines 425-426). When we spoke about supporting the children, there was a sense that Sara knew the children and their needs very well. In this excerpt, she describes how provision for Stevie was led by his needs:

> **(S): Stevie, urm, because he, he would almost have a trauma everyday so we, what we did with Stevie, we gave him time out, urm, and, he liked maths to be honest so everything that we did were maths led. He would sit there and just write long numbers, long, I don't know why he did this but that's what he liked doing so we tried to centre it around maths, urm, and we just gave him some time out to do that and just to sit with him**
>
> (lines 387-392)

Stevie's behaviour in school, is noticeably more challenging than that of his peers, with Sara referring to him as **"a child in crisis"** (line 492). However, again, she seems able to

recognise the broader relational explanations for this, rather than focusing on his 'bad' behaviour:

> (S): He crawled under the tables and it, it was just, to, to another, to anybody else, it'd look like he was a really naughty boy, we knew it weren't that, he just could not cope with that situation
>
> (lines 466-467)

In this extract, Sara describes an incident where Stevie had ran out of school and into the school field, where he had thrown his shoes in the bin:

> (S): he urm, took his shoes off, he were throwing them, I, I'd often get called, because they were frightened that he were going to run away and get out of school cause he used to threaten to escape and he would, he would go down the end of the field… we found that the best thing to do for Stevie would be to ignore the behaviour somewhat but because that particular day, he were really in crisis, he couldn't cope at all, he actually said I've thrown them in the bin, I've thrown them, binned them, in his lovely Mancunian accent, urm, so I sort of said, well Stevie they're your shoes, you know, you've got do what you thinks right, and, you know, really just not react, you know, not react to it
>
> (lines 512-522)

What is of note here, is the way in which Sara attempts to give back a sense of control to Stevie, whilst he is apparently 'out of control'. Although we didn't touch upon the issue of control for children experiencing DA within our conversation, based on her response, I theorise here, that she may have been aware of this through her apparent 'handing over' of control to Stevie. He isn't admonished for what he's done but encouraged to think about, consider, whether this is the best course of action.

This focusing on the individual and being led by the child may, in part, explain the ability of Rachel to place such trust in Sara. Offering this level of individual support and providing a separate space for children with a DA experience to open up if they chose to, appears to have underpinned school provision. Here Rachel explains what school offered:

> (S): So we do lots of things like that, urm, they'll have, probably have an individual learning mentor slot each week where, urm, they could talk about any issues, anything that they might want to talk about

> **and that will be tailored to whatever that child needs, so that it can be anything really**
>
> (lines 372-374)

The word '**tailored**' suggests a child led agenda and potentially, a more supportive context for children's agency to be encouraged. Agentic behaviours need to be supported, recognised and encouraged and it seems that Sara's child led approach may well have contributed towards Rachel's 'choosing' to 'disclose'.

Ayaana's story told of four main characters - May, a little girl, aged 6 when she joined the school. May's mum – Kat, who was a young mum (she had May at aged 16) and was reported by the School Professional, to herself, be a survivor of childhood DA (including sexual abuse) Grandna and Ayaana (the SP). There were a number of male characters, who came and went, intermittently in Kat's life.

The plot of this story centred around Kat. She was portrayed as **"wanting to be loved"**, as **"just a big child"** (line 284), having been raised in a home, where there appears to have been very little of this shown. Instead of finding love in her personal relationships, she is spoken about as apparently stumbling, with little thought, pause or reflection, from one abusive relationship into another. Eventually, over time and with support, she finally develops the capacity and strength to prioritise her children over her relationship with an abusive man. She eventually makes a decision to leave her hometown, her family (mum and sister), and move to a safe house, in a different city – taking with her, her two children.

Overall, this was a story of redemption, where we moved from a range of harrowingly sad, frightening and violent episodes of abuse and violence, to a place where Mum accepted and responded to support, using this to create better outcomes for herself and her children. Within this process, Kat's levels of agency and resilience appear to have gradually increased, with protection of her children apparently acting as a catalyst for agentic capacity. McAdams & McLean refer to this as a **"coherent positive resolution"** (2013:234), whereby there is a sense of closure and a definitive positive ending. An interesting point, which adds to the redemptive aspect of this story, is the knowledge that Kat was able to prioritise her children over the men in her life, when her own mother (May's Grandma) appeared unwilling (or unable) to do this for her. McAdams & McLean (2013:234) speak about this as **"meaning making"** and though I can only infer this within my work, it would be an interesting element to explore: had May's mum reflected upon and gained insight from her own experience with her mum, whereby children were not prioritised over men who were 'significant' in their lives?

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Was this perhaps, an example of agentic capacity from Kat, borne directly from her own experience as a child and further compounded as an adult. The generational aspect of not only agentic capacity, but also social learning theory is of note and interest here, since Kat had managed to take decisive action for her own children, in contrast with her own mum (Grandma), who it seemed – could not.

What's She Going to Need? Lots of Nurture

Ayaana's role within school was to identify and support May's needs, work collaboratively with other school staff, such as the Class Teacher, Head Teacher and SENDCo and to also support the wider family (Kat and Grandma). Ayaana worked within a multi-agency context, also liaising with Social Care when necessary. These sections of Ayaana's I Poem, were used to highlight perceptions of her role:

> I just said, you know, a little girl, what, what she's going to need, lots of nurture, lots of support, she has experienced a lot of trauma
> I met with, eh, Mum, Grandad and our Head Teacher to give her the feedback from, from her previous school

Assessing May's level of need was a significant part of this role:

> I have used Boxall profile but not, it was the Thrive profile that I used for May

From this point, a range of nurturing interventions and approaches were implemented, as Ayaana's I Poem highlights:

> I would do work around, looking at, urm, May, May as a being child in the, in the ages of development
> I felt that she were missing out on a lot of this at home
> I'd ask May questions to provoke thought around that
> Urm, we did little friendship groups with her in the class and just talking feelings

Ayaana's role in supporting May's family is a good example of the importance of embedded relationships in supporting positive change (Gergen, 2009). In an excerpt of her I Poem, Ayaana discusses, what she understood to be a good working relationship between herself and Kat. We also see a sense of disappoint, perhaps (as well as gain

some insight into the sense of shame and stigma around DA), that Mum had withheld information from Ayaana. Towards the end of this section, she attempts to rationalise why this may have happened (for fear of Social Services taking her children from her):

> I'd talk to her lots of days, er, in here about, you know, how she had needed to keep herself and the children safe
> I rang Mum and Mum said she was up at the hospital and she didn't feel, er, well so she didn't tell me that there had been a domestic violence incident
> I felt that we'd got a good relationship and she would come, but she didn't tell me this time
> I think she'd got fear that perhaps it would alert them and that social care and other agencies to remove children so she didn't tell me

Of course, the one to one work which Ayaana completed with May, seems to have allowed May to build a strong and trusting attachment with her. We see that a number of key decisions seem to have been taken by May within this relationship, which go on to have profound effects for both herself and her mum. May talks to Ayaana about how her mum was hurt – what physically happened to her. She talks about her own active engagement within this experience, where she was looking out for her mummy, making sure she was OK and she talks about sleeping arrangements within the household – who was present and where.

> I worked with her and had a chat with her she just said that her Mum, her Mum, she admitted to me, she'd been pushed into the cupboards
> I said where were you May, she says oh I were, I was making, I was checking Mummy was ok,
> I was ok, I was behind Mummy
> I gave her opportunities to open up

Although Ayaana appears to be relatively measured and calm about her role within school in supporting children and their families with DA, this particular case seems to have resonated deeply with her. Her I Poem reveals this:

> I, I think you feel you are never going to be shocked by anything what's told you, you know, you obviously you take on board and, and, it's, it's awful any domestic violence incident but this was one of the worst

The words "**awful**" (line 36) and "**shocked**" (line 33) indicates perhaps the emotive level of this type of work and its ability to affect staff on a more personal level. In this section of Ayaana's I Poem, she speaks about elements of working with May, which she found "**worrying**" (line 169). She seems to be referring to May's entrenched and chronic experience of DA and expresses a concern that she is beginning to see this as 'normal family life'. She is also making reference to (what Ayaana perceives to be a precocious ability) May apparently having learnt how to decipher which information should and should not be shared about life experiences at home:

> she thought it was the norm and I just think in a child that's worrying
> I thought, well I'm not saying anything and for a child to have that pressure
> I think that, that was worrying in itself

There Was a Definite Level of Resilience

When speaking about May, Ayaana states "**I felt that there was a definite level of resilience**" (lines 60-61). There appears to be a tension in this phrase whereby 'resilience' could also be understood as 'agency'. Much of what Ayaana goes on to discuss depicts a little girl acting far older than her years, with a level of control, rational thinking and behaving which is both inspiring and saddening, in equal measure.

This short section of Ayaana's I Poem, allows us to see an extremely resilient little girl who, despite her truly awful experiences at home, still shows up at school, still engages with those around her (she responds to Ayaana by showing her bruised arm) and seemingly refuses to let a 'bad' experience deny her access to other, more positive, in-school experiences. Ayaana states:

> I said did you get hurt at all and she says yeah and she shows me this bruise on her where she'd got pushed but yet she'd, she'd come into school

As well as a very clear example of resilience this also reflects May acting agentically: we cannot tell from the conversation held, whether there was any element of choice in May attending school that day but what is clear is that she did make a choice to engage

in conversation with Ayaana. She also appears to have assessed whether or not Ayaana was a safe person to engage with, going on to show her the bruising on her body. This section of the I Poem was concluded with **"but yet she'd, she'd come into school".** This sentiment echoes Sara's (with Rachel) same sense of awe, for children who have experienced such frightening and painful experiences at home, happening to those they love most and yet: they still show up at school, they still interact and engage and attempt to continue with their lives. This, I argue, has more to it than resilience and quite clearly demonstrates children determined to exert some level of control and direction in their lives.

May arrived at this school, having previously attended school elsewhere. She was described as apathetic and passive.

> **(A): she came from another Manchester School, her attendance was, urm, poor and she would be Foundation 1 at the time, she was a little girl described as unkempt, urm, and urm, quite distant, she had a glazed look when I first met her and, urm, was quite unresponsive to, to surroundings**
>
> (lines 9-12)

School noted her low attendance at her previous school and seem to understand this as a potential sign of other causes for concern. Noted concerns were her **"glazed look"** her being **"quite unresponsive"** and **"unkempt"**: for school, all suggestive of a little girl who was not receiving adult care and attention and enough to make them concerned for her wellbeing. Nonetheless, there appears to have been a strong sense of inclusion within school, with Ayaana noting **"as we all do in school, [we] welcome her with open arms"** (line 18).

What appeared to trouble school most about May, was an apparent sense of apathy. This excerpt highlights this:

> **(A): She didn't show any strong emotion to what had happened which I think is a concern as well**
>
> (lines 61-62)

Ayaana went on to explain, how school responded to having read the transfer notes from May's previous school:

> (A): class teacher at that point had a word with me prior to her coming because she wasn't sure what to expect and didn't know any of the background...Urm, and I just said, you know, a little girl, what, what she's going to need, lots of nurture, lots of support, she has experienced a lot of trauma
>
> (lines 12-17)

So, school assessed May's social, emotional and mental health needs, using a Thrive Profile, put in place a range of interventions and worked alongside other adults to support May.

> (A): ...so we, we'd do things like, just things about May making her feel special, urm looking at eye colours and we'd just get together one to one because I felt that she were missing out on a lot of this at home...we'd do role play, urm, just lots of one to one things, urm, and talking about families, different families and we've got lots of stories around keeping safe, obviously child focused and age appropriate, so we, we'd shared that and then I'd ask May questions to provoke thought around that. Urm, we did little friendship groups with her in the class and just talking feelings and understanding feelings, the basic feelings, angry, happy, sad and how did she feel, what does she feel inside and to just help her understand what she's feeling and giving her time to open up if she needed to
>
> (lines 264-274)

School's support over a period of years seems to have made a definite positive impact to bring about change for May. This section of Ayaana's I Poem communicates this:

> I think it was she felt safe, she felt security
> I think she improved considerably from when she first started
> I used the word resilient before that's what we felt she'd become

However, 'resilient' seemed to have ambivalent meanings and may, as I argue here, be a quality which is present alongside agency. Here, Ayaana is thinking about how May has been affected by her experience:

> (A): How she was affected? She was very, urm, blank expression, she was very, she appeared very resilient to what she'd gone through, she, she did, she'd just talk about it matter of fact and she would play with this house and talk about, xxx or did you know that, urm, my Mummy's, urm, been hit and my, my Mummy was

> sad and I was upset so she would talk about it, we'd, we'd share books and talk around it but I felt that there was a definite level of resilience, she didn't show any strong emotion to what had happened
>
> (lines 56-62)

Ayaana appears to be theorising that May is dispassionate about what's happened, detached, appearing silently traumatised: she alludes later to feeling that this lack of emotion, was "**worrying**" (line 65). In conversation, I suggest the word, 'disconnected' to explain May's response, and Ayaana agrees with this.

> (A): So when I used the word resilient before that's what we felt she'd become, you know, that it just almost
> (L): Do you mean resilient in a strength way, or in a, urm, immune way, so she'd become kind of disconnected?
> (A): Yes, exactly disconnected to, yes
>
> (lines 148-152)

However, there may be a range of explanations to explain May's response and perhaps her ability to rationally explain what she has experienced and to calmly talk about it - whilst focusing on the play opportunities which school provided - was her way of attempting to make sense of that experience. Another way of thinking about this exchange is that this is a young child, amazingly capable and able to take control of her own emotional response, within this exchange. What Ayaana seems to find disconcerting, is that May's response doesn't appear to fit with a response which she thinks would be more age appropriate. In part, this may be due to discursive constructions of what it is to be a child and childhood development: James & Prout's work has been useful in challenging such concepts. This also highlights some of the difficulties associated with recognising agency in children – adults often hold views on what children are capable of at given times in their development. As can be seen from work within this study, children often defy such notions.

In contrast to an "**unresponsive**" little girl, this extended section of Ayaana's I Poem gives very clear indications of May's agentic capacity. For example:

> I said where were you May

oh I were, I was making, I was checking Mummy was ok,
I was ok, I was behind Mummy
I think that's, that's huge isn't it, for such a young child
I also think that she had, she had an ability to know
I don't know but she had to think what she was saying
I think she, she, she realised that
I just, I just, I don't know how she did it at that age
I think she did, but she, but at the risk of losing her Mum
I don't know but
I think Mum had said 'oh we don't say anything' because, you know, these boys
are going to be angry
I think she took on the caring role a lot

Ayaana is quite rightly, deeply concerned about May's awareness of adult problems and difficulties, which result in May experiencing things which such a young child, should be protected from. This section of Ayaana's I Poem, makes for uncomfortable reading, since it portrays a little girl apparently acting rationally and with control in the face of violent and abusive adults. Her main aim appears to be keeping her mummy safe and keeping Professionals at bay: an incredibly strategic level of thinking for such a young child. However, much as this may be developmentally inappropriate behaviour, there are very clear indications here of May using her own agency to manage and cope with very difficult circumstances: she shows herself to be a very active participant within the experience, more than a '*witness'* to what is happening, more than a '*bystander'* and not simply '*exposed'* without an embodied, corporeal and subjective reaction (Callaghan et al, 2015).

May's **"checking Mummy was ok"** (line 165) is a clear example of a child actively engaged in what is happening to her mummy. Although she seems afraid of what is happening (she was stood behind mummy) she appears, nonetheless, to be making a choice to look out for mum, almost taking charge. There is also discussion regarding May informing Social Services about things which she had experienced at home. Ayaana states **"she understood that she needed to tell them"** (line 187), which refers to May telling them (Social Services) about what was happening at home. Ayaana points out that **"that's huge isn't it, for such a young child"** (line 189) but it appears to be a level of responsibility which May is able to manage: navigating her way through the needs of some very complex adult relationships, working out when to speak out and perhaps,

when to keep quiet. Ayaana surmises, that May **"took on the caring role a lot"** (line 202), again, whilst this is a responsibility way in excess of what a six-year old child should hold, it serves to counter and disrupt more dominant accounts of children as so damaged and traumatised by their DA experience, as to be incapable of shaping of their own destiny.

To Understand What a Good Relationship Is

Two aspects of the story told by Ayaana about Kat stand out: her poor choice of partner (when it came to choosing healthy, supportive and nurturing relationships) and her apparent love for her children. This section of Ayaana's I Poem reflects the occurrence of DA in Kat's life and as a consequence, in May's life also:

> I found out afterwards that, urm, May's birth dad who didn't see May had also inflicted domestic violence on Mum
> I, I think you feel you are never going to be shocked by anything what's told you,
> I think she was frightened for her Mum and her, herself

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<center>Reflection</center>

Part of what Ayaana shared in her story was deeply upsetting and made me very aware of how difficult supporting children with an experience of DA can be. I myself talked through some of the more upsetting content with my own supervisor and again, I was left wondering how SPs seek support. Margareta Hyden speaks about **"the relational state of affairs"** (p.16) when researching sensitive topics and the need for both participant and researcher to be supported otherwise there is a risk of **"getting down in all the old damned trash and staying there"** (p.16).

</div>

This gives an indication of the chronic nature of DA within the lives of May and Kat. The DA had been present when May was conceived but was still continuing (albeit with different men). The severity of the DA was also noted by Ayaana's reference to being **"shocked"** (line 33) as this case was **"one of the worst"** (line 34). This conversation continued with:

(A): Mum had been, urm, tied up and, urm, beaten and, urm, asked to urm to commit suicide for the camera and May had been a witness to some of this as well, urm, so it was a really awful domestic violence incident

<div align="right">(lines 34-36)</div>

Use of the term **"witness"** here, I argue, hugely misrepresents the significant impact upon May, positions her as passive (both physically, emotionally and cognitively) and somehow minimises the affect upon her: as though, she was merely there, but not involved (Callaghan et al, 2015:2). When we know from previous excerpts that May was very much involved with this experience.

We go on to learn from Ayaana that DA is generational within this family. This section of the I Poem highlights this:

I think Mum's experienced as a younger woman domestic violence with her Mum and partner
I think she was also abused, sexually
I think it needs to go a long way back
I think it's been a cycle
I don't think she [Grandad] was able to protect May's Mum in certain situations

Kat is constructed as lacking in agency throughout much of Ayaana's story, with extensive use of the word 'vulnerable' to describe her. She appeared to be controlled (with negative connotations) by men or alleged 'friends' or guided/directed (with positive connotations) by Social Care or Refuge. Regardless of who seemed to be influencing Kat, she was rarely positioned as acting with agency. For example:

(A): And this had on gone over a period of time where she would be given some freedom and then if this, this person her boyfriend was in that mood this, this is when the incidents happened

<div align="right">(lines 38-39)</div>

So here, she is dominated and controlled by her partner (she **"would be given some freedom"**) apparently not, it seems, directing her own life.

(A): And then Mum was supported with social care, myself and lots of other people, urm, Refuge were involved with Mum, Mum didn't attend all the meetings, urm, she had some one-to-one support, urm, in the home

<div align="right">(lines 44-46)</div>

> … and Refuge were also working with Mum on her vulnerability for, for meeting, these, this, this was the second one she'd met with who'd she ended up in domestic violence
>
> (lines 51-53)

Here, we see mum's vulnerabilities supported by social care, school, Refuge and **"lots of other people"** (line 44).

> (A): Mum then became involved with a female, not in a relationship, someone who, urm, became a friend that led her into relationships of violence within home
>
> (lines 68-70)

Here, mum is **"led… into"** (line 69) relationships by someone also said to be abusing her. This perception of vulnerability was pursued in more medical terms, where there was an attempted search for some more, 'organic' reason to explain her behaviour (references were made to 'assessments', 'issues through nature' and 'her past history'). Ayaana explained:

> (A): she was very vulnerable, assessments were done on Mum to assess her mental health and if there were issues through nature from Mum, mental health issues in her past and nothing was found because Mum did, she, you know, she was vulnerable you felt as though there were some other specific need for Mum but nothing showed up on her past history
>
> (lines 72-76)

Undoubtedly, mum had experienced extremely abusive relationships, which will have affected her in many, many ways. However, positioning mum as vulnerable and non-agentic makes it a very difficult to move beyond conceiving of, or understanding May as anything but an objectified extension of mum.

In the end, it appears that May's mum was capable of shaping and determining a new direction for both herself and her children. Ayaana conveyed the message that mum, despite her horrific experiences, really did love her children. This, it seems, was the catalyst for change. For example:

> (A): Mum genuinely loved her children but she just got involved with the wrong people and she wasn't learning by her mistakes and social care really didn't want to remove the children because they could see her commitment to them and that

she wanted, what she wanted for the children, she knew she'd got to keep them safe but wasn't able to, she didn't know how to do it...

(lines 120-124)

(A): I think in some cases the child or the children would have been removed but Social Care took a huge consideration into the fact that Mum really did love her children and they wanted to do more with Mum

(lines 233-235)

So ultimately, Social Care did not remove May and her brother from their mum – perhaps demonstrating a greater recognition of agency in Kat, than that which Ayaana afforded her.

Summary

- Within this chapter I have analysed individual stories told by SPs, considering how children are characterised in relation to their DA experience. I have explored whether there is any recognition of agency by considering the discursive construction of both the children and adults within these stories.

- In the following chapter, I consider points of commonality and disparity between all three stories, looking for expressions of resilience and agency and how this may be constructed or diminished, discursively. I move on to consider the implications of this research for Educational Psychologists.

Chapter 5 – Final Discussion

Overview

In this chapter, I reflect upon points of convergence and divergence between all three stories, drawing upon the literature to explicitly address my research questions (Gilligan, 2006). I also frame my thinking within the psychological theory offered by Gergen (2009), theory relating to resilience (Rutter 2012; Ungar 2011; Masten 2011), positioning (Davies & Harre, 1990) and agency (Valentine, 2011, Callaghan, 2015, Evang & Overlien, 2015) - using this to consider the enhancement of embedded relationships within schools.

Telling Stories - Agency, Positioning and Resilience

During the telling of a story, and indeed for me reading and analysing the stories, what needs to be borne in mind is the dynamic, shifting, sense making nature of any conversation between two people. How we 'position' ourselves and others shapes the direction of these conversations, their potential and indeed the outcomes of them also. What we see within the stories told by SPs are attempts to navigate their way through a range of subject positions, trying to make meaning from their experiences. Thinking specifically about the concept of agency - where SPs position children or indeed adults, gives some insight into how they understand that notion of 'agency' and resilience.

All three SPs - perhaps because of the way they 'told their story' and where they discursively positioned themselves and their characters, shared specific examples from memory of particular behaviours or conversations. Having established positions at the outset, it seemed that story characters needed to behave accordingly. For example, in positioning Joe and his family as largely non-agentic, the examples drawn upon by Carolyn, needed to fit a set of characteristics: not only for Joe, but for Claire (Joe's mum), grandad and indeed herself (as the SP).

When Sara positioned Rachel as partially agentic, she then told her story in such a way, as to allow the listener insight into behaviours and conversations which reflected this (she was discursively positioned as "**brave**" (line 126) and emotionally well regulated "**you could have a great conversation with her**" (line 306). Likewise, with Stevie - Rachel's brother - he was discursively positioned as a "**child in crisis**" (line 492) and "**chaotic**" (line 82), examples of behaviours were given which bolstered this notion (he climbed up trees, threw his new shoes in a bin and sat in the bin himself, reflecting his sense of low self-worth).

Perhaps when Joe attempted to express a sense of agency (such as when he opened a conversation about going to Centre Parcs) it proved challenging for Carolyn to incorporate this within the position she had assigned him or indeed, herself. The capacity to do this requires a high level of reflection and reflexivity and a willingness to acknowledge complexity and cotradiction within relationships. It perhaps requires an acknowledgment that, as human beings we are seldom ever, all one thing or another. However, having the psychological, professional or emotional capacity to do this, is very challenging; especially within professional roles which are emotionally demanding, such as those held by the SPs in this study.

When reading Carolyn's story, I was struck by the way she had positioned her main characters with limited agency and low levels of resilience. At the same time I was sympathetic, to what I perceived, as her own rather diminished sense of professional agency and resilience. On completion of my analysis, I couldn't help but wonder about the emotional and professional toll of supporting children and their families through a DA experience. The sharing of their stories with her, over a number of years and in such intimate, intricate and upsetting details, calls for emotional containment for the SP also. It is a role which necessitates good systems of regular, professional support. Receiving this, through channels such as clinical supervision and continuing professional development, where attention is given to wellbeing, has the potential to empower individuals (professionally and personally), bolster their resilience and enable them to access support from the systems around them (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Arguably, it may

have helped Carolyn perceive the agency and resilience of the children and families differently as well as her own professional sense of agency.

Research Question 1

What characterises the stories told by SP about children in school with an experience of DA?

According to classifications given by Mc Adams & Mc Clean (2013), I began by reflecting on the genre of each story. There appeared to be two broad types of story told by SPs around children's experience of DA. A story of despair and tragedy where SPs positioned children and their families with limited agential capacity and low levels of resilience: the other story of despair and hope, or redemption (McLean, 2008). The latter, appeared to be marked by the bad things, eventually, turning good; by agency being summoned from both their own resilience and from the environmental support available to them (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

All three stories appeared to draw upon the 'intergenerational transmission of violence' theory (Bandura, 1977; Kalmus, 1984) to explain the presence of DA. Carolyn discussed the way in which Joe communicated with his mum, explaining that Joe "**called her slag and he would often call her that, it was, you know, so we are presuming that, that he's heard that from Dad**" (lines 108-110). Joe was also described as having a way of communicating with women in general and this too was attributed to the way in which his dad had modelled communication with mum: "**I think that Joe's attitude to women I think is a result of that**" (lines 114-115). Ayaana also spoke about how DA appeared to have found its way through the generations, she commented: "**I think Mum's experienced as a younger woman domestic violence with her Mum and partner and I think she was also abused**" (lines 209-210). Sara likewise made reference to Rachel's mum explaining how she appeared to know no alternative to DA – "**it were entrenched in life, when, I think, urm, to the point that I think she witnessed it when she was a child as well**" (lines 534-535).

Reference to the intergenerational transmission of violence has been critiqued by Women's Aid as unhelpful in explaining a phenomena beset by complexity (WA, 2018). It has also been critiqued by Widom & Wilson (2015) as presenting a linear explanation for an issue with a multiplicity of contributing factors. The statistical evidence base used to strengthen the intergenerational theory has also come under recent critique, as being too far reaching in its claims (Smith Marek et al, 2015). Perhaps this is a theory which sits more comfortably alongside characters who have been discursively positioned as lacking in agency and resilience, since it assumes relatively passive engagement and unquestioning assimilation of behaviours.

I was struck by the relatively sparse mention of 'attachment' within the stories (Bowlby, 2012) – perhaps expecting to see more of this: attachment theory seems to be on the more 'accessed' psychological theories adopted by schools. Ayaana made no mention of attachment specifically within her story, although I do think that poor attachment was alluded to within this statement about May: "**she had a glazed look when I first met her and, urm, was quite unresponsive to, to surroundings**" (lines 11-12). Ayaana had noted that May was "**going to need, lots of nurture**" – the implication being that this had not taken place through strong attachment relationships. Carolyn, spoke about attachment explicitly and positively, in relation to Grandad's care of Joe: "**being with Grandad is making a lot, a lot, of difference, urm, in he's more settled, he's got more of a secure attachment his needs are being met**" (lines 347-349). This was an occasion when Grandad was attributed with agency and recognised for positively shaping the direction of Joe's life. However, when Joe was with his parents "**his needs weren't being met**" (line 349), by implication, there was poor attachment. Sara spoke of Stevie as having "**Lots of attachment issues we felt, urm, we felt that Mum didn't have the same bond with him as she had with the other two**" (lines 53-54). Bowlby (2012) describes the development of a positive 'internal working model' in relationships where there is secure attachment: if attachment is disrupted, however, then what is thought to develop is an internal working model in which the self and others are perceived negatively (Bowlby, 2012). Sara describes how Stevie spoke about wanting to "**kill himself**" (line 519) and as having very little sense of value for himself - "**so he put himself in the bin and, and this is the, the types of behaviour that Stevie would, would display**"

(lines 512-513). DA seemed to be attributed to disrupting effective attachment, leading to poor outcomes for the children (Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007; Dodd, 2009).

In terms of descriptions about educational experience, Sara gave a clear picture of this, portraying a range of responses. Stevie, for example, was depicted as hyper-vigilant, with poor concentration and limited attention, which according to McGee (2000) is not atypical. He also engaged in potentially self-harming behaviours – climbing trees, scaling walls and talking of harming himself – Hanmer & Itszin, 2013 claim such behaviours can be more prevalent with CYP who have experienced DA. Whereas, Stevie's brother and sister largely abided by school norms and did not stand out as any different to their peers. Byrne & Taylor (2007) discuss children who have a DA experience reacting in a number of ways at school: being quiet and withdrawn or the opposite, loud and aggressive. School exclusion can be explained as the result of self-destructive behaviours within school or expressions of limited impulse control (Byrne & Taylor, 2007).

There was a use of disempowering discourse used by all three SPs – some more widely than others. This served to convey a sense of deficit, damage or pathology. Words such as 'victim', 'vulnerable', 'damaged' and 'trauma' were pervasive and seemed fitting with the dominant discourse around children with a DA experience, which discursively positions them as powerless (Callaghan et al, 2015). Positioning theory enables us to reflect upon the function and effects of such language within context and alludes to the kinds of thinking which may be present. It enables us to critique character identity, aware of how this can be constructed (or alternatively diminished) based upon the discursive use of language.

All three stories made reference to children "**witnessing**" DA (Katz, 2015; Callaghan, & Alexander, 2015) and whilst I began this research thinking that I might find a clear link between use of the term 'witnessing' and agentic capacity, I have come to understand a more complicated picture. Witnessing fits with a discursive construction of character with limited agency or resilience since it builds upon a notion of being oppressed within an experience, rather than resisting it in some way. To 'witness' implies to observe

aloofly, without little emotional connection; to somehow stand aside from the experience. SPs refer to children 'witnessing' DA, thus positioning them as not 'actively' engaged with that experience. However, tensions arise when we see that Sara and to a lesser extent, Ayaana, position children as agentic within their story. So - although some of the discourse used denied agency, the ways in which SPs went on to describe the behaviours of the children within their story, afforded them agency - without naming it as such.

In her study of 30 UK mothers and their children, Katz (2016) argues that there is a **"lag in thinking in research of children's experiences of domestic violence"** (p.2). For her particular study, this was between an understanding of coercion and control for women and the impact of this on CYP. Katz points out that much of the focus for research with CYP and DA, is still very much focused on, what she calls **"the physical incident model"** (p.2) and not the impact of coercions and control upon the lives of CYP. It appears that there is still a 'lag' in thinking generally between women and CYP, whereby the DA experience of CYP is still perceived as subsidiary to that of their adult mothers. Perhaps this 'lag' is likewise applicable to the notion of CYP 'witnessing' DA and perhaps both issues relate to the notion of CYP not being understood as agentic. My own thinking is that the use of language is similarly lagging behind, whereby there is beginning to be an understanding of how a particular word choice positions CYP within the field of research, but this has yet to reach professional practice within schools (Katz, 2016).

Part of this complication rests with individual understanding of the word "witness": is it used, for example, because that's how most people talk about children, DA and what they may/may not have 'seen'. When SPs use the term "witness", or "exposed to" DA, is there necessarily an understanding that the word denies agency? For example, when talking about Stevie's mum, Sara uses the term **"I think she witnessed it when she was a child"** (line 535). Sara later talks about a relationship between bullying and DA, saying **"a lot of children that bully have, it's what, they have witnessed"** (line 571). Again, here she talks about different responses which individual children have to DA, but uses the term in doing so: **"all three of those children were from the same family, they witnessed the same things"** (line 203). Similarly, Ayaana speaks of May having **"been witness to some**

of this" (lines 53-36) and later stating that May had been **"a witness to it all"** (line 158). Surprisingly, it is Carolyn who mentions the term only once, stating **"Joe has witnessed a lot of sexual intimidation"** (line 110).

Awareness of the potential detrimental effects of a DA experience on differing areas of child development were most limited within Carolyn and Ayaana 's stories (Mc Gee, 2000; Mullender et al, 2002; Hester et al, 2007). Ayaana described a little girl of age 4 attending their school who was **"she… was quite unresponsive to, to surroundings"** (line 12). Pre-school children are thought to more likely withdraw from their environment, in response to their DA experience (Hornor, 2005). Ayaana was aware that May's behaviour was not typical for a child of her age, but showed no awareness of any specific developmental indicators. Carolyn spoke about Joe being **"5, you know, so that the trauma and damage if you like hadn't really manifested itself by then"** (lines 63-63), showing very little awareness of the possible developmental implications of a DA experience.

Research Question 2

Do School Professionals recognise or position children as agentic within their experience of domestic abuse?

In terms of both the 'liberal model of agency' (Eickelkamp, 2011) and the 'social model of agency' (Valentine, 2011) both examples of human agency can be identified within these stories. I argue here, that the stories told by School Professionals, and their discursive positioning of children (and adults) in relation to agency, adds credibility to the more recent, qualitative literature regarding CYP and DA. SPs shared incredibly powerful anecdotes, which variously positioned children (between the ages of 4-10) in ways which reflected SPs own recognition or understanding of agency.

The stories told about both Joe and Stevie could be located within the 'social model', since their actions could be deemed to be lacking in rational thought and perceived of as self-destructive. Indeed, Sara herself states that Stevie's behaviour, within the context of school, could very easily be seen as digressive, defiant or 'naughty'. However,

another way of viewing this is by understanding their choice making, their decisions – their *agency* – as being enacted and expressed through their behaviours. Both boys defied social norms and acted in ways which were resistant of the power structures in school. Their behaviours displayed in school, could be understood as a direct response to the oppressive social environment experienced at home. According to Valentine (2011), exercising choice or agency is not always performed in conventional ways, particularly by CYP with an experience of trauma.

Rachel, on the other hand, appears to display very rational thinking, choice making and strategic thinking. She is able to use her agency positively and constructively to bring about her desired outcomes and in a way which abides by social norms (Valentine, 2011). This can also be understood as what Kucyzynski et al (1999) describe as a 'bi-lateral model of parent-child interaction': that is, Rachel's position of power and clear intention in her relationship with her mum, is recognised.

A very clear and powerful example of children's agency, was depicted by their willingness to share or 'disclose' information to adults outside of their family. We see Rachel telling Sara about Jono's violence towards her mum. This was described by Sara as very challenging for Rachel and appears to be a decision that was not made lightly by her. She is aware of how her mum will be angry at her for talking: despite this, she makes and stands by her autonomous decision to disclose (even in the presence of mum) (Valentine, 2011). Similarly, this navigation of complex adult relationships and the sharing/withholding of information is also present with May and Ayaana. May understood that there was a risk of being separated from her mummy by saying certain things to adults, but also understood that in order to keep herself and her mummy safe, there were some things which she needed to say. Ayaana talks about May's 'resilience' in coming to school, in having the capacity to talk about what had happened and by reflecting upon and acting in ways which prioritised safety. Whilst I recognise that agency can exist without the presence of resilience, perhaps this makes the point that the two concepts can be interestingly, intertwined. This example between Ayaana and May, demonstrates children's use of rational and perceptive thinking being employed strategically, to bring about positive outcomes: or the shaping of the children's own

destiny (Valentine, 2011). Both children showed great competence in ensuring self-preservation, in knowing how to use the SPs to bring about change for themselves and their families.

A comparatively diverse depiction of agentic experiences were described within these stories. There was an extensive representation of both Joe and his family as non-agentic throughout Carolyn's story. Claire, Joe's mum was portrayed as lacking agency in her choice of partner, both parents lacked agency in holding onto their family - keeping it intact and the heavy reliance on use of state or institutional language by Carolyn, seemed to represent a power in their lives, greater than which they themselves, were apparently able to yield. Joe's experiences at school were largely understood to be non-agentic and his future seemed predicted to follow suit (it was surmised that he may well end up in the criminal justice system).

Further along this spectrum was Sara, who positioned Rachel and her siblings, within a family where there had initially been agentic capacity (prior to the DA experience, mum had been credited for her 'good parenting'). Within their experiences at school, Sara was able to praise the children for their ability to attend school and function pretty much within school expectations, despite their experiences at home (Stevie was an exception to this). I was struck by Sara's recognition of the strength that this took from the children: she speaks of how the children **"came to school every day and they functioned in class and they, and they functioned well"** (lines 605-606). She continued **"how did they do that? That would have bowled over some adults"** (lines 606-607). These are children positioned as strong, powerful and determined. Rachel's ability to defy her mum's wishes (in making a disclosure to Sara) in order to secure the safety of her family (both mum and her siblings) was described as an extremely moving experience for Sara. Towards the end of her story, Sara recognise mum's ability to determine her own destiny (by leaving her abusive partner and attending Refuge) and that of her children as an act of resistance and courage. Sara seemed to more readily recognise agency in its many forms.

Ayaana, seems to inhabit a space closer to the middle ground, since she often speaks of mum's 'vulnerability', even locating this within a medical paradigm at one point, looking

for "**assessments**" (line 72) of her "**mental health**" (line 73) to see if there were "**issues through nature**" (line 73) that might account for this. In terms of May's school experiences, these are initially understood to be characterised by passivity, with words such as "**glazed**" (line 11) and "**unresponsive**" (line 12) used to communicate this: but Ayaana also spoke of how May was able to navigate complex relationships with adults, choosing what to say and what to withhold, and when. Again, May's mum was seen to 'come good' in the end, finding the strength to uproot herself and her children and move to another city for safety.

Perhaps unsurprising, given the role of the SP as family support worker, I was intrigued to note the extent to which perceptions of the children were tied very closely to those of their family. Almost as though it was difficult to see the child as an individual. With Carolyn, I noted my own response during our conversation: how could a child who was agentic, with aspects of strength, resistance and self-determination emerge from the image being worked up by Carolyn. This would have been the antithesis of what she conveyed through her story. In the case of Sara, there was less clarity of association: mum was spoken about as able to parent well initially and in the end, she made the right decision. For Ayaana, there was an almost mirroring experience, whereby both mum and May were initially 'vulnerable' but both eventually overcame their difficulties, exerting a sense of responsibility and choice for the future.

Possibly linked to this idea, was the talk of 'experts': recognising the children as experts of their own DA experience, is one means of affording them agency. Carolyn was not able to do this: attempts by Joe to talk about his feelings or his experiences were denied, spoken of as "**lies**" (line 254) or as an example of his social and emotional incompetence "**he finds it very difficult to express things**" (line 253). Carolyn made most reference to 'experts' within her story. Sara, did on the other hand, respond to Rachel as though she was an expert of her own story, her own experience: she listened and responded respectfully to this, helping and supporting her to generate the desired action from her sharing of information.

Interestingly, though beyond the scope of this study, I have reflected since on the SPs own sense of agency within their professional role. I concluded that Carolyn felt a sense

of futility and frustration about the levels of progress that she (and perhaps the whole school community) had made with Joe. I questioned the extent to which she herself felt agentic about her role in supporting Joe. The phrase **"that was the start really, the start of the process"** (line 110) resonated with me also – suggestive that she may have felt more detached, less connected emotionally to her role with Joe, more involved with a 'process' than a person and I wondered what implications this may have had on her sense of agency.

Sara and Ayaana, on the contrary, seemed to recognise agency in others but also seemed to position themselves as agentic within their own professional roles at school. Sara, as noted elsewhere within this thesis, was training for a counselling qualification outside of her school role. Ayaana, worked as one half of a pair of SPs. Both Sara and Ayaana , therefore appeared less isolated within their roles – Sara by having support for her emotional needs within her links to supervision from external training and Ayaana , perhaps receiving informal supervision from her colleague. I was curious as to what influence personal/professional sense of agency had upon a recognition of agency in the children.

Implications for Educational Psychologists

EP Provision of Training for Schools to Extend an Understanding of Children's Agentic Capacity and Discursive Positioning

Whether or not and to what extent SPs recognised agentic capacity within the children they supported, was a key area of interest within this research. The concept of recognising and naming agency seems one that is present largely within the academic field but not within school practice. Whilst none of the SPs used the term 'agency' there were many clear depictions and examples given of children acting with agency. Drawing attention to this and naming it, would go a long way towards helping SPs recognise children as capable of exerting their own agency: even in emotionally charged contexts, such as those of DA.

Similarly, there is a need for greater understanding of the disempowering effect of discourse (for example referring to 'witnessing', being 'exposed' to and being a 'victim' of DA. Greater understanding of discursive positioning would support a strengths based approach to working with children.

Offer of Supervision for SPs who Support Children with a DA Experience

The stories reflected a variability of SP response, regarding where they positioned the children and their families, in terms of agentic capacity. Reflecting on what may have accounted for this difference, I looked to relationships within which the SP themselves were embedded. Sara, was training to be a therapist and in relation to this, spoke about how significant it was for her to learn about herself and how that contributed greatly to her role in school. This suggests a level of reflexivity and reflection on her behalf – attributes which would support a recognition of one's own agency but also the agency of others. Ayana worked as part of a pair of SPs within her school and Carolyn appeared relatively isolated in her role. I noted within my analysis the inevitable 'emotional labour' involved with supporting CYP and their families through traumatic and difficult experiences, which DA often entails (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). It seems that having space for SP reflexivity/reflectivity, containment and emotion coaching, through access to EP supervision is crucial for their own good practice and well within the realms of EPs to offer such support.

Training for Schools on Recognising the Complexity of Children's DA Experience and the Need for an Equally Complex Response

DA is a complex phenomenon, widely recognised as such and verified from this research also (Ali & Naylor, 2013). A nuanced response to it, reflects a grasping of the complexities involved. Single stories of DA disempower CYP and do not reflect their experiences (Adichie, 2009). Stories told must, of necessity, be multi-storied, incorporating a systemic and relational response, which allows for the CYP to be situated within a network of experiences and people who can support and build a 'tapestry of experiences' (Gergen, 2009). Whilst I do not refute the painfulness, hurt and long-lasting impact of DA, for *some* CYP, or disagree with a need to hear and address this, there is an equally important need to broaden the lens. Whilst a child may

be struggling in one place with one person, perhaps elsewhere s/he is excelling: this story needs to be told also. Other stories which serve to disrupt potentially harming stories, allow CYP an element of control in re-storying their own lives. A sense of control is magnified for CYP who are denied this through a DA experience: this is often characterised by male *control* of women and their children.

A Role for EPs in Supporting SPs to Disrupt Dominant Stories of Deficit

EPs are in a fortunate position to initiate conversations of challenge and repair to what are often definitive, reductionist single stories of CYP with an experience of DA (Billington, 2012). Certainly, these stories told of the complexity of DA, highlighting a need for all professionals working with CYP to look beyond any form of myopic perspective, looking to relationships around the children as potential sources of struggle (Gergen, 2009). EPs can encourage the telling of a different story, or **"reframing [the] story in ways that empower"** CYP, or emphasise points of commonality with other CYP, rather than difference (Kiesinger, 2002:95). Hiles & Cermak argue that making even small edits to the stories that are told can have significant impact on individual lives, for **"[i]t follows that we have the power to renegotiate our identity by altering these stories"** (2008:149). Within our practice we hold consultations with CYP directly, SPs, parents/carers and within multi-agency contexts. We also deliver training. We therefore have a broad audience within which to discursively construct stories, which position CYP and their families differently. We are well place to help establish an alternative or counter story.

Training in Relation to the Effects of a Domestic Abuse Experience

Within my research there appeared gaps in understanding of how a DA experience might potentially effect CYP. There appeared a gap in understanding regarding developmental impact (Gewirtz & Edleson (2007). There also appeared to be little understanding regarding the chronicity of DA (Becker & McCloskey, 2002). Given the ever changing, fast paced nature of research and new legislation within this area, issues such as the impact of coercion and control, for example, needs to be addressed within schools (Katz, 2016).

<u>Final Reflections</u>

It feels that it is **"the business of feminists"** (Nelson, 1995:38) to draw attention to the presence of DA in the lives of children in our schools and hopefully, this research has taken a small step in doing this. Promoting social justice for all our children, so that they grow and develop into citizens and human beings who can make the most of their school opportunities is likewise, fundamental. There are often dominant stories told about children in schools, which emphasise their difference and fail to recognise their agency in responding to overwhelming experiences of DA. Perhaps changing conversations (with a recognition of what is already present in children: their resilience and agency) can be a contributing role for Educational Psychologists.

Gergen (2009) might encourage us to think of these differences relationally, considering whether the child is reflected as a 'relational' or 'bounded' being. If 'relational', then s/he is embedded within a complex web of multiple complex relationships, which recognises a capacity for these to positively shape their future direction. On the contrary, if considered as 'bounded' then much of the child's experience is to be located at the level of self, largely isolated from the influence of relationships and reliant upon individual characteristics to shape future direction.

Of course, these stories also contributed towards an understanding of whether SPs perceived children as capable of exerting agency within their experience of DA. This was reflected by the ways in which they positioned the CYP – as brave, resistant, protective, decisive and navigating of adult relationships in order to bring about their desired outcome. Where this was attributed, then I argue that SPs enabled agentic capacity. Whereas, if children are positioned as powerless, damaged, dysregulated emotionally and socially incompetent, then their agency is effectively curtailed. Importantly, whether agency is perceived as enabled or curtailed has implications for the ways in which SPs support children with a DA experience, as well as the way that EPs work with SPs.

<u>Recommendations For Future Research</u>

The use of group research with CYP to explore their own understanding, perceptions and recognition of their own agency using a storied approach. This could be done within a developmental perspective, using creative means, such as collage, puppets or art/craft (Reissman, 2008) to support story telling (see for example Phillips & Bunda, 2018). The capacity to tell their own story would enable the CYP to be recognised as the expert of that story, rather than the adults around them.

Individual conversations with CYP to explore their own understanding of agentic capacity and how this is used within all areas of their lives (i.e. both in and out of school). Use of IPA as a methodology.

Focus groups with education staff (Head Teachers, Teachers/TAs/Learning Mentors) would be helpful in gaining an understanding of how DA is conceptualised in specific relation to CYP and not adults: viewing CYP as having a DA experience of similar or equal gravity to that of adults.

A thematic analysis of how Class Teachers understand children's agentic capacity within the classroom. How does this effect CYPs academic attainment and can we relate this to a sense of agency within the DA experience? Work with EPs would also be relevant, in exploring their own recognition of agentic capacity for these CYP and ways in which they can attempt to promote this.

Collaborative work with specialist external agencies who support CYP with their experience of DA. The focus here could be on exploring and sharing good practice and a common understanding of key concepts (such as agency) but also ensuring that the work completed by external agencies, builds upon that of schools and vice versa.

A mixed methods study exploring educational outcomes for children with a DA experience, from school entry to exit. How do CYP understand the support given around their DA experience and has this enabled them academically? Finally, an exploration of

how SPs themselves understand and experience agency within their own role and the impact of this on empowering CYP with a sense of agency.

Strengths and Limitations of this Study

Strengths:

- I was able to hear rich, detailed, complex stories, where I established a good level of rapport and trust. I facilitated SPs in foregrounding their own story, with my agenda kept within the background.
- I explored the notions of DA and agency which are both underdeveloped (within Education and Educational Psychology) and contributed toward a growing body of research. I Introduced the notion of discursive positioning and related this varying levels of agency recognition. I also explored the concept of SPs agentic capacity.
- My research has a pragmatic, applied contribution to make in schools but it is also of relevance to the third sector – where I volunteer as a Trustee.
- CYP have a right to have their voices heard (UN, 1989 & SEN CoP, 2015). I believe that my research contributes towards a social justice agenda by enabling better informed adults to work more effectively in supporting CYP with a DA experience.
- This research supports to a feminist agenda, contributing to an 'unfinished revolution' in bringing about equality of outcomes for women and their children.
- Through the use of ongoing reflections throughout the thesis, access to transcripts and analysis, I hope to have achieved a good level of transparency.
- A sense of credibility and transparency was achieved through the use of conversation quotes taken from transcripts, a sample of a full transcript, of an analysed transcript and the guiding structure used for this were provided as appendices. These were used to evidence my own interpretation (included in Appendix 8, 9 & 10)
- I have achieved a more 'holistic' understanding of the stories told, by prioritising a methodology which maintained a sense of conversational flow and context.

- My use of a VCRM – has foregrounded voice and relationship, showing how this can be embedded within supportive, nurturing and empowering relationships with CYP (Gergen, 2009).

<u>Limitations</u>:

- Whilst time was limited for this study, it would have been insightful to make a follow-up visit with the SPs, to share and explore my own perspective of their stories and hear their response.
- I came away with things I wish I'd asked – a re-visit would allow this. I would like to explore access to emotional support for SP – this is emotionally challenging work.
- I did not hear the child's story. This would have opened up my thinking and been very insightful in terms of agency.
- During my analysis, I became more aware of how physical environment and context shapes, or influences the telling of stories – perhaps outside of school, a different story may have been told. Bruner (2004) speaks of how 'place' may elucidate and determine the stories that are told.
- Stories are told with an audience in mind, could an alternative method to storying have worked more effectively?

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Appendix 1 – Sheffield University Ethics Approval Letter

The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Lynne Kaye
Registration number: 150107749
School of Education
Programme: Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology

Dear Lynne

PROJECT TITLE: Exploring professional responses to working with children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse.
APPLICATION: Reference Number 013390

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 12/05/2017 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 013390 (dated 06/05/2017).
- Participant information sheet 1029206 version 2 (06/05/2017).
- Participant information sheet 1029207 version 1 (31/03/2017).
- Participant consent form 1030455 version 1 (06/05/2017).
- Participant consent form 1029212 version 1 (31/03/2017).

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

David Hyatt
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

<u>Participant Information Sheet For School Professionals.</u>

<u>Research Project Title:</u>

Exploring School Professional's Views And Experiences Of Supporting Children And Young People Living With Domestic Abuse.

<u>Invitation to participate.</u>

This is an invite to take part in a research project exploring the above topic. Before agreeing, it is important that you understand what is involved. This information sheet gives further details about the aim of the project, its duration, your role and my responsibilities. After having read this, if there are any further questions, do not hesitate to contact me on the email address and telephone number provided at the end of this sheet. Thank you very much for your time.

<u>What are the aims of this research project?</u>

National government statistics tell us that those women and children who experience domestic abuse, are significantly affected. Due to the secrecy and stigma often attached to domestic abuse, we suspect that the knowledge we currently have, is not the full picture. Surprisingly, very little research has been carried out which explores the experience of children and young people in schools: either directly with children and young people or through research with the adults who support them.

The aim of my research is to add to a small but growing interest in this field. My research aims to explore the views and experiences of School Professionals who are typically responsible for addressing some of the school based needs of children and young people, affected by domestic abuse. Domestic abuse creates a range of differing responses. It is my intention to greater understand these, in

order to support schools in providing timely, relevant and appropriate help for children and young people.

Who is the researcher?

My name is Lynne Kaye and I am a second year trainee Educational Psychologist, studying at Sheffield University for a three-year Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology. I am currently on placement at XXXXXXX Educational Psychology Service, where I work three days per week, alongside academic training at the University. My research project will be written up as a thesis, which is one element of my doctoral qualification.

Prior to entering Educational Psychology training, I worked as a Primary School Teacher for fifteen years.

Why have I been selected?

I have chosen to focus on School Professionals, such as Pastoral Leaders/Family support workers, as they often work together with, for example, Class Teachers, SENDCos, Safeguarding Managers, in response to a child or young person in school, who is experiencing domestic abuse. Collectively, concerns are often related to learning, social and emotional health and wellbeing, behaviour or communication/social interaction. There is often a collective view about how to best support these children and young people in schools, at both an individual and whole school level.

Is involvement optional?

Yes. It is your choice whether to contribute towards this research. If you do agree, it is advisable to hold onto this information sheet for future reference. You will also be asked to complete a written consent form, which both you and I will hold copies of until the research is finalised by the University. It is your right to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.

What is my role if I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to take part in this research, we will have a one-to-one conversation lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. This will be based in a quiet room at your school, preferably at the end of the school day, to ensure the conversation is confidential and uninterrupted. I will use a very loose guide to conversation – there is no list of questions, just conversation around the topic area.

The focus of our conversation will be around your understanding and experiences of supporting children and young people at school, who have lived with/living with domestic abuse. With your permission, this conversation will be voice recorded for the later purpose of interpretation and analysis. Again, with your permission, I will take brief notes during our conversation to aid later recall.

What happens after our conversation?
Your data will be treated with complete confidentiality and stored on a password protected, encrypted device. All contributions will be anonymised, as well as the location and identity details of your school. On completion of my degree, all voice recorded and written data will be destroyed (approximately, summer 2018).

Are there any known/foreseen drawbacks/risks to taking part in this research?
If you have personal experience of domestic abuse, as either a child or an adult, this research may potentially, cause a degree of anxiety or discomfort. Should this situation arise, I will signpost you to relevant local and national support agencies. Within the Local Authority, I am aware that all employees have access to a free, confidential counselling service. Within my capacity as an Educational Psychologist (EP), I am also able to put you in contact with the designated EP for your school, who may be able to provide supervision around work based issues of DA.

Are there any known/foreseen advantages to taking part in this research?

Long term, this research will be useful in supporting School Professionals, SENDCos in schools, the practice of Educational Psychologists and ultimately, in promoting the wellbeing of those children and young people in schools, who experience DA.

How will my data be used?

Your anonymised data will be used to address the research project aims and objectives and contribute to the main body of my thesis. The findings may later be published in a relevant peer reviewed journal, or used for future training or reports. With your agreement, anonymised transcripts will be held for use by future researchers, aiming to build upon current available research. On completion, my research findings will be shared with you.

Who to contact if I am unhappy about any stage of this research project?

Research Supervisor: anthony.williams@sheffield.ac.uk

Address: School of Education

University of Sheffield

388 Glossop Road

Sheffield

S10 3JA.

Telephone: 0114-2222000

If you remain unhappy, then your concerns can be escalated to:

David Hyatt: d.hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk or telephone: 2228126

Once again, thank you for your interest and time and I look forward to meeting with you.

Lynne Kaye

Lynne.kaye@sheffield.ac.uk or Lynne.Kaye@XXXXXXX.gov.uk

Tel: 01010 010101

Letter to Head Teacher.

Dear….

Re: Proposed research project 'Exploring School Professional's Views And Experiences Of Supporting Children And Young People Living With Domestic Abuse'.

My name is Lynne Kaye and I am a second year trainee Educational Psychologist, here in the borough of XXXXX. I currently work under the supervision of Dr XXXXX.

I am writing to explain my research project – which is in part fulfilment of my doctoral degree – and to gain your consent for working with the School Professional, identified at your school.

I have attached the Participant Information Sheet which I provide to School Professionals. This details the project aims, time commitment, confidentiality/anonymity, more information about me and the use of all information that is gathered.

I have attached my email address but will call you in one week to ensure that you are happy for me to work with the School Professional in your school.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I very much appreciate your support in addressing a significant area of social, emotional and mental health/wellbeing within your school.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Kaye (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Appendix 4 – Consent Form

Ethics – School Professionals Consent Form.

Consent Form	
School Professionals views and experiences of supporting Children and Young People living with Domestic Abuse.	
I have read and understood the **Participation Information Sheet** for the above titled research project. I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand my participation is voluntary. I understand that I am able to withdraw my consent at any time, without giving a reason. I understand that the data will be accessed by the lead researcher and her supervisor	Signed: Date:
I give my **consent** to be interviewed for this research project. I give my consent for the data to be used in future research.	Signed: Date:
Researcher's Name.	Signed: Date:
Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.	

Appendix 5 – Participant Risk Assessment 1

Participant Risk Assessment for Adults Not Considered as Vulnerable.

Potential Risk	Risk Ranking (Likelihood & Impact)	Risk Management Plan – Measure in Place	Who	When
School Professional may be emotionally affected by the content of the conversation, in direct relation <u>to their support for a pupil at school.</u>	<u>Likelihood = low</u>	This is a voluntary research project and participants have the right to withdraw at any point, without giving reason.	SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL	During interview.
	<u>Impact = low</u>	Supervision will a qualified Educational Psychologist colleague will be offered.	SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL	During interview
		Should any SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL express emotional distress during the interview, I will signpost to relevant support agencies, including XXXX's employee free counselling service, Women's Aid helpline, National Domestic Violence Helpline, XXXXXX helpline.	SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL	During interview
		Should the SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL disclose domestic abuse in their own home – signposting to local police and social care team.	SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL	During interview

		My information letter to school will make it explicit where the boundaries of confidentiality lie. My duty to disclose any information where any known adult/child is at risk of harm.	SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL	During interview

Appendix 6 – Participant Risk Assessment 2

Participant Risk Assessment for Adults Not Considered as Vulnerable.

Potential Risk	Risk Ranking (Likelihood & Impact)	Risk Management Plan – Measure in Place	Who	When
SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL may be emotionally affected by the content of the conversation, due to <u>their own personal life experience</u>.	<u>Likelihood = low</u>	**This is a voluntary research project and participants have the right to withdraw at any point, without giving reason.**	**SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL**	**During interview.**
	<u>Impact = low</u>	**It will be made clear prior to interviewing, that SCHOOL PROFESSIONALs are asked to contribute their thoughts and experiences in direct relation to their job role (as SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL) and not in relation to their personal experiences outside of this.**	**SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL**	**During interview**
		Should any SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL express emotional distress during the interview, I will signpost to relevant support agencies, including XXXX's employee free counselling service, Women's Aid helpline, National Domestic Violence	**SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL**	**During interview**

		Helpline, XXXXXXXX helpline.	SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL	During interview
		Should the SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL disclose domestic abuse in their own home – signposting to local police and social care team.	**SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL**	**During interview**
		My information letter to school will make it explicit where the boundaries of confidentiality lie. My duty to disclose any information where any known adult/child is at risk of harm.		

Appendix 7 – Conversation Schedule

<u>Conversation Schedule</u>

This was used very loosely and I attempted to begin the conversation by asking a question that allowed for more factual information to be given:

> So – if you could just start at the beginning, tell me how you became involved with this child?
>
> What was your Professional role in supporting the child?
>
> What was the point of your involvement, when did you become involved?

This 'broke the ice' and allowed the SP to lead the story. My role was to try and guide this and pick up on words/phrases of interest and re-visit these, asking for more clarity. For example:

> You mentioned that when s/he was 'in the moment' they 'can't regulate' - tell me more about that?
>
> You said that you 'mentored' them – what does that look like, what would you do?

I also attempted to use active listening techniques, so using phrases given to me, such as 'you've done all that you can' and repeating this. So, where are you now – given that you feel 'you've done all that you can'?

I strived to enable the SP to tell *their* story but would use open questions/phrases to encourage the story, such as:

> Can you tell me more about those?
>
> What do you think s/he needs?

I attempted to refer to the conversation as a story and so towards the end, I used the phrase:

> So where did it end?

1 Appendix 8 - Example Raw Transcript - Carolyn

2 <u>Conversation with CAROLYN (lasting 43mins:02secs)</u>

3 KEY:

4 xxxxxx = unclear speech

5 …………= pause in speech

6 *Italics*= speech emphasis

7

8 <u>LK: So if you could just start off really at the beginning of how you became *involved* with</u>

9 <u>this child?</u>

10 <u>CAROLYN</u>: So, I work in the Inclusion Team urm, so with Claire who is the SENDCo and

11 also work with the Learning Mentors. So my role… mostly is to support the parent,

12 obviously Claire does the SEN requirements. Urm, I support the parent, look at

13 behaviour of the child, social, emotional err and behavioural development and then I

14 would work with the Learning Mentors, and I usually set the programs, if you like, we

15 look at what the requirement is urm, and I usually do that in conjunction with, Ed-Psych

16 have looked at it, looked at things before, and behaviour support, so we who look at

17 what the child needs so I usually do it consultation with somebody else, if possible.

18 <u>CAROLYN</u>: Urm, so the child first came to our attention because his attendance was

19 *really, really* low, urm he was away more than he was here and that was in F1. Urm, so

20 he is sort of flagged but obviously very little you can do cause it's not statutory

21 attendance.

22 <u>CAROLYN</u>: So then as he came into F2 urm because he'd been out of school very, you

23 know, for a, hitting and missing *his* behaviours were very difficult because he wasn't

24 used to being in a class, his language was poor, urm and he, he would often call people

25 names like paedophile and inappropriate names, *older boys* so we sort of, so he was in

26 F2 when we *really* became, we became aware of him on our radar. Now, at that

27 time…eh, which we wouldn't necessarily have known because he wasn't statutory,

28 really statutorily, involved with us, at that time Mum would have been pregnant.

29 CAROLYN: Urm, Mum and Dad, so... Mum was much younger than Dad, urm I think

30 there would have been about... 9 years err and Mum had met Dad when she was 15.

31 So, I, in my opinion, is almost like a *grooming* situation in a way urm and he'd met Mum

32 when she was 15 urm, and they were both habitual alcohol users and she had fallen

33 pregnant and... because of the way they had presented in hospital, because there were

34 issues of alcohol use (although they weren't on social care prior to it, urm then they

35 went onto) they ended up removing the baby from the hospital because Joe's little

36 sister had medical issues, she had hydrocephalus and what have you. So they

37 judged...so at that point, the social care assessment was done on the *parents*, they

38 judged, that their parenting was good enough for Joe but not be good enough, wouldn't

39 be good enough for Stella and her medical needs, so Stella was removed. So, by this

40 time we were... sort of becoming aware urm, like I say, of Joe through Joe's behaviours,

41 urm then in... 2011

42 LK: So what year was he then?

43 CAROLYN: He would have been...., urm... 5, would have been 5, urm and so as a result

44 of, so as a result, although they said that the parenting was good enough, he went onto

45 a supervision order, urm, so that then meant that school would, became involved

46 because we would become part of the core group, urr, for this.

47 CAROLYN: Urm, so the family's issues were, urm, habitual alcohol use, domestic

48 violence urm... and neglect of, urm the child in regard to health and supervision. So

49 from June 2012, urm, so Joe would have been 5, yeh, 5, we became involved, school

50 involved, so I became involved as the part of the core group and then *part of plan* was

51 that I supported parents for different issues.

52 LK: OK – just pop that over there in case....

53 CAROLYN: OK, yeh....Urm.... so, so, from our point of view in school, at that time Joe's,

54 you know, he, we were managing his behaviours, you know, we had a clear behavioural

55 ladder, he was, you know, he, he, because *he was 5*, you know, so the, the trauma and

56 damage, if you like, hadn't really manifested itself by then, it, it, you know, it was the

57 start really, it was the start of the process I would say.

58 <u>LK: So, you said when he was in reception he was calling other children paedophiles?</u>

59 <u>CAROLYN</u>: Yeah... some of his language was sexually inappropriate urm and so we
60 monitored him.

61 <u>LK: OK</u>

62 <u>CAROLYN:</u> Urm, I did work with parents about... there, there were a lot of parenting
63 issues, including lack supervision, behaviour boundaries and praise and sanctions,
64 so...I...you know, as, as it, he went on, as the, as the years went on, he went into Year 1,
65 there were concerns about him, urm fighting, swearing, sexualised language and
66 behaviour and being disruptive in, in class and during break times. *Any...* unscheduled
67 time, he just could be off the scale. Urm, so by the time he was in Year 2, still being
68 involved with the family, still om supervision order, he.... was displayin some sexualised
69 behaviour, mimicking urm actions, laid on top of a girl in the playground, in the infants
70 urm and we, we referred him to, urm Step-Up Project for Joe, but unfortunately they
71 wouldn't take him, cos he was 7 and they don't usually take em that young. Urm, so
72 they, sent us some things we could do, uh, you know, they emailed us some activities
73 he could do, but they were very limited because the activities were for older children.
74 Urm, so again, we, we carried on really... just monitoring him, working with him. By this
75 point, we'd put him with a Learning Mentor.

76 <u>LK: Ok. So thinking specifically, kind of, around domestic violence side of things, how do</u>
77 <u>you think that was, urm... what was your experience of working with him around *that* age</u>
78 <u>at Year 2?</u>

79 <u>CAROLYN</u>: I think for Joe we never... from his parents point of view, they could be
80 physical, I think that, urm they could both be physical. I think Mum had her nose
81 broken... she did hit Dad with something, so, you know, it were, it was a, sometimes it
82 was mutual

83 <u>LK: Both of them?</u>

84 <u>CAROLYN</u>: Mutual, yeah, urm but I think from Joe's point of view we, we, we assumed,
85 not assumed but we sort of ascertained, of different things that... urm Mum said, not
86 Dad cause unfortunately Dad, dad died, urm in 2009, I think Dad died, urm, yeh 2009,

87 I'd have to check that but I am sure, yeah, in July 2009 Dad died. Urm, and the, there

88 was a lot of, cause, he… because Claire were only 15, she never really knew anybody

89 else and he completely controlled her, urm and I think he would do that sexually, he

90 always thought that she was having affairs, he always thought that when she went out

91 the house, she was going to sleep with somebody. I think he intimidated sexually, urm,

92 I think he…were quite open in front of Joe about intimidating her sexually and about

93 calling her names. Because Joe, what, what happened was that, then, not as much _now_

94 he is with Grandad, but certainly by the time he 6/7 he was Mum a whore and a

95 prostitute and a slut and he would often call her that, it was, you know… so we

96 presuming that, that he's heard that from Dad.   Urm, so I think Joe has witnessed a lot

97 of sort of _sexual intimidation_ of Mum from Dad.

98 LK: And emotional

99 CAROLYN: And yeah emotional, I mean that, and that the, you know, emotional abuse I

100 think that, Joe's urm… attitude to women, I think is a result of that and, and, I think he's

101 so traumatised by the fact that he, you know, from Joe's point of view, everybody he

102 loves, _leaves or dies_, so you know, his sister were taken, his Dad died, Mum

103 subsequently met another partner, had another baby and that's just been removed.

104 Urm, he were taken from Mum because Mum chose the boyfriend, really, over Joe,

105 urm….and now he lives with Grandad, so you know, he's, he's, it's such, it's such a, is

106 the emotional damage to him, is such that he, he finds it very difficult to, to regulate

107 any of his behaviours. And you can sit, and you can do work with him. I've done sexual

108 behaviour work, I actually went on the SEAL training on Friday and I shall be doing some

109 of the activities on there with him, cos it will be perfect for Joe but he, he just, he can't

110 regulate, he'll tell you _all the right answers,_ if you sit down and do activities with him,

111 he can tell you exactly what he should be doing, but when it comes to being in the

112 moment, he, he doesn't, he won't, _so_ even now, urm on Monday, he came to school on

113 Monday and Grandad had said they'd had a bad morning, so Grandad, he'd called

114 Grandad a fat, he'd called him a fat bastard, he said he hoped he died, he hopes he dies

115 of cancer, and he can't… because… but actually then he can be very loving, so… you

116 know….he, he just, I think the emotional harm that he's suffered through that very

117 destructive relationship, between Mum and Dad. And then of course Mum met

118 someone, within weeks. And so, you know that controlling, you know, that con

119 controlling, urm type of relationship continued. Cos Claire went from one controlling

120 relationship, straight to another one. Which is xxx

121 CAROLYN: So, urm, we've done, with Joe in school, we've, he has one to one support at

122 unstructured times, just because, like I say, he cannot regulate his behaviour, he can't

123 make the right decision, cause he doesn't, he doesn't just see that at all, you know?

124 Urm and he has _daily_ bonding through play, slash theraplay. So, he has daily bonding

125 through play _every_ lunchtime, urm and he has one to one support, he has mentor time,

126 urm with a learning mentor, urm…..he's, there's a referral into the Step-Up project

127 _again_, which is third time lucky cos they've actually accepted the referral

128 LK: OK

129 CAROLYN: And what we're looking at for Joe _now_, is we're just gathering evidence for an

130 EHC plan

131 LK: OK

132 CAROLYN: Because we feel as though, an, and Grandad, you know, is, is in agreement

133 and Mum, urm because we have, he's on child in need currently now, but has been on

134 child in need for the last two years and he, well, he went to looked after, then he went

135 into…anyway… but, and they're and they're in agreement that he can't, he wouldn't be

136 able to function at, urm, a Comp urm…. and so we're looking at, urm, a SEMH school,

137 out of area, so we're hoping the EHC plan _goes through_ so that we can look at that.

138 LK: OK

139 CAROLYN: So we've, we're trying to get that in and done.

140 LK: So, I'll get to meet him.

141 CAROLYN: Sorry?

142 LK: I might get to meet him…yes? Yeh?

143 CAROLYN: Yeah, yeah, so that's what we're looking at currently.

144 LK: OK. So, urm when it comes to being 'in the moment', you said, he can't?

145 <u>CAROLYN:</u> No…

146 <u>LK: Tell me a bit more about that</u>

147 <u>CAROLYN</u>: I think… yesterday… I spoke to his one to one and she said they'd had had a

148 great day. On Monday, so on Monday he came… and Grandad were upset because he'd

149 called her names, all this, that and t'other, but _then_ he'd, on Monday he'd had a really

150 good day at school, and he got Star of the Day, so _at the end of the day_, Grandad and

151 him came round to me and said, ah, you know, I've got star, I, I sort of said, fantastic,

152 here let me give you a sticker, da da dah, which, which we try to do for a quick, quick

153 (clicking fingers) reward. _So_, I said to him on Monday, you know what, if you can come

154 in the morning and Grandad can say to me, that you've had a good morning and you

155 haven't called him names, you haven't told him you want him to die or anything like

156 that, gi ya another sticker first off, straight off the bat, and whoa, you know. So he did,

157 he came, he came to breakfast club, as it happened an I were in breakfast club, he had a

158 good day, gave him a sticker and so I spoke to his one to one, urm just after dinnertime,

159 and she said he'd been brilliant, _up to the last five minutes_ and _the last five minutes_ he

160 was, ah…. I don't know, she said lairy, you know, shouting and singing inappropriate

161 things an… just acting, just acting out really

162 <u>LK: Yeah…</u>

163 <u>CAROLYN:</u> And uh it was, it was, in fact it probably weren't even five minutes, it was just

164 two minutes and he wouldn't, it's was as though he can contain himself a little bit or he

165 can contain himself _a lot_ sometimes, but then he just…he just needs to….you know….ex,

166 express it, I don't know, or, or, you know ….. and so, whatever, you know, the bonding

167 through play a think has been very successful… for him to build a bond with the one to

168 one that does it. But unfortunately, sometimes, it breeds a familiarity _as well_….. that,

169 that, because he can't, he doesn't make the judgment between, what he can do at

170 school and what, you know, what's acceptable behaviour, so, you know, urm a few

171 weeks ago, with his one to one, he was demonstratin… what… somebody had _done to_

172 _him_ and he, he jumped on her back, you know, and almost sort of wrestled, you know,

173 so, so he'd…in that spilt second, (clicks fingers) he wouldn't have thought that, you

174 know, that would be anything wrong, anything wrong you know with that.

175 LK: Umm

176 CAROLYN: So, we've, *but again*. the learning mentor that week, after that incident, you

177 know, she did an activity with him, to talk about appropriate behaviours and what sort

178 of things…. and he can tell you *all the answers* but in the moment, he, he won't make

179 that judgement very often.

180 LK: Why do you think that is?

181 CAROLYN: I think we've, we've done Boxall Profiles on, on him before and I think

182 that…he's, I mean he's 10 now, he just turned 10 in December, and his, his social,

183 emotional, behavioural developmental *age,* and um I spoke to Tracey B, she self-

184 assessed it... was about three and a half, four, *so* …it's *that*, you know, that spontaneity,

185 that a, tot, that a small child would have, that doesn't, you know, I think, he thinks like a

186 very *young child* who, who, doesn't, doesn't, always make that judgement and can't,

187 you know, who's not sort of, clicking onto… the *social norms,* if you like, or the

188 boundaries within school

189 LK: Ummm

190 CAROLYN: You know, but again and that, and that, could be because of the way he

191 regards women and the way that…. the things that he's observed and seen when he

192 were living with parents.

193 LK: Urm, the Learning Mentor… what kind of things that… you would direct the Learning

194 Mentor?

195 CAROLYN: Yeah…so Joe has a, actually, we have, we, we, wrote, we wrote, urm…soryy,,,I

196 wrote, we wrote, and again, urm… a bonding through play, urm a specific, a specific

197 urm program for Joe, urm let me just, I can show you that, urm and so, the learning…let

198 me have a look, so the, the one to one person, urm she will do bonding through play,

199 five sessions, that's it, so for example, and we linked it to the Boxall Profile, so we

200 looked at what we wanted to achieve, we linked it to the weaknesses on the Boxall, urm

201 so we put those in, so it's a six week, it's a six week program that we just, you know it

202 goes back to week 1, so the one to one tends to *do that,* the learning mentor sessions

203 tends to be time to talk

204 <u>LK: Ok</u>

205 <u>CAROLYN</u>: Or play games or it might be directed... about, we've done a lot of feelings
206 work with Joe, identifying the feeling, thinking how the feeling, you know, if he's angry
207 or he's sad and how does that, how does that make him and then we have played things
208 feeling jenga, which has got the bricks, so that he can think of a feeling and then, think
209 of a time when he's felt that feeling.

210 <u>LK: Yeah</u>

211 <u>CAROLYN</u>: Urm, we've also, he's also had MAST sessions for bereavement and... urm...
212 yeah, counselling from that respect.

213 <u>LK: OK, So... where would you say he's at now?</u>

214 <u>CAROLYN</u>: He's had an awful lot of input and our, _honestly_, we, _I feel_ and you know, in,
215 in sort of chatting to everybody else, I feel that school have reached urm... the, the limit
216 of our expertise in, in, in being helpful to Joe, for, on a long term basis. I feel we _contain_
217 _him_, I think we give him what we need as, as much as we can. But, you know, he's been
218 to CAMHS, his CAMHs referral's open again but then, he's under the LAC team also,
219 urm...and they're putting some things in place but... you know, you know, a couple of
220 professionals have said that he needs psychotherapy and unfortunately there isn't any
221 psychotherapist at CAMHs currently, apparently. So, we, we feel as though we've
222 reached the limit of what we can do, we've, we've, thrown _everything_ at him, he, he's
223 had everything possibly in school. I mean, I've... you know, we, the sexual behaviour
224 urm, the sexual behaviour, the sexual behaviour aspect was brought up at child in need
225 and the social worker, you know, had said about doing, about doing, sexualised
226 behaviour work. Now, I will do that work with Joe myself, because I'm the only one
227 really, that would feel comfortable doing that, but, that, as I explained to the social
228 worker, I only feel comfortable doing that to a certain level because _I'm not a sexual_
229 _health worker,_ it's not my area of expertise, I can do very low level stuff which I have
230 and I will do, I'll, I'll use some of the Real Love Rocks resources and do that next week,
231 urm but we, we, we've, _done what we can_. I feel as though he's had everything that we
232 could urm offer.

233 LK: Where is he at *now* then, where would you say he's at?

234 CAROLYN: Urm....

235 LK: Given that you feel that you have *done* all that you can?

236 CAROLYN: I, in a real terms.... I wouldn't say.... that but we're any *further on* really
237 (laughs) I mean, you know, his, his delay, educationally, his delay's still 2 years in all
238 areas. So... there's been no real, I mean he is making progress, which you could say is a
239 positive, urm... and it makes you wonder if he didn't have all the input - where he would
240 be? I, I don't, feel that we have achieved anything, *long term* with Joe - at all. I think
241 that he and, and you know in the end, we, we knew his second little sister would be
242 removed, from Mum, so we expected a dip in his behaviour and that's probably
243 because of the support, because he's with Grandad now, as the dip wasn't as, urm bad,
244 if you like, as we thought it were going to be. So we, we can sort of *predict* some of, and
245 see deps in some of his behaviour and sort of pre-empt them. But, I think he's, he's just
246 *so damaged* that we, we just can't meet his needs - from schools point of view, to
247 actually un, unravel, we manage him, we contain, we manage him.

248 LK: Umm

249 CAROLYN: I don't think we're doin anything from a long term point of view, *at all*. Urm
250 and so, I, I just, his behaviour is up and down, it's inconsistent, some days he has good
251 days some days he doesn't. I mean he's, he's, you know, he's better in some ways but
252 that's only because we've upped our level of support.

253 LK: What does he need then, cos you've said , we've given what he needs as much as we
254 can?

255 CAROLYN: Well....I, I mean, I think he needs psychological, psychoth

256 LK: Ummmm

257 CAROLYN: Psychotherapy, (laughs) you know, I mean, I'm not in any way an expert, I
258 think he needs somebody to *un ravel it*, his, his thinking, he, he, you know. He's said
259 things over the period time, like, 'I don't have any feelings me, because they're no good,
260 it's no good to have feelings' or you know, and he, he finds it very difficult to express

261 things. He tells, _tells lots of lies_, his lies are always about what he'd like his life to be, you

262 know, that'd, what, his lies he'll say 'I've done this, I've have been to Centre Parcs' and

263 what's it's what he'd _like_ to do, you know, and or, you know, when he were younger, he

264 used to say he'd played for Chelsea, well _his Dad supported Chelsea_ and he wants to be

265 a footballer and so… you know… but I just feel as though he needs, he needs….more of

266 a _structured_….program that'll _delve_ more into… how the, the damage that he's suffered

267 and help him to, to come to terms with it an, and I understand, understand myself, and

268 I think that, I mean I'm not, I don't know…because I might be talking rubbish

269 LK: No you're not, you're not

270 CAROLYN: Well there you are

271 LK: You're making perfect sense to me.

272 CAROLYN: Really

273 LK: Yeah absolutely, yeah

274 CAROLYN: …and I think that maybe children have got to get to a certain point of

275 maturity, to be able to, be very….to be more receptive to things like psychotherapy and

276 psychiatric help. I'm sure, but I think that he, he needs to be, he needs to, to

277 _understand_ what's happened to him and to _process_ it properly and then to move on

278 from it and thinks that what, that what I feel he needs.

279 LK: He needs, yeah

280 CAROLYN: And I think that we can't address that, because we not psychotherapists so

281 it's like you know, we're not and we can't address that at all and I think that's what he

282 needs. I think he's, I think he's urm….an explosion waiting to happen - if he doesn't. And

283 almost, you know a factor which I haven't mentioned before, is that Dad, dad who died,

284 he's got a brother who has got quite a large family, that are very well known to services.

285 And his older cousin Jack, was known and _a lot_ of people in XX would have known him,

286 urm and he's very much held up, you know, his Grandad, will often say that 'you don't

287 want to end up like our Zac'. Well Zac went into _a secure unit_ he, he you know.

288 LK: Umm

289 CAROLYN: I were in a school the other day and I mentioned, well, we were looking at a

290 safeguarding system and I just happened to use the child who I am talking about's

291 profile and he went 'oh…xxxxx' and he knew, so, you know, they've, they've

292 experienced that. Joe knows you know, 'you don't want to end up like our Jack' you

293 know. It's almost like a pre programming in a way, but an anti- pre programming, you

294 know

295 LK: Yeah

296 CAROLYN: You don't want to end up like that *but actually* I'm…. because I'm saying that

297 to you, you might end up like that

298 LK: Yeah

299 CAROLYN: To me it's like a subconscious

300 LK: Yeah

301 CAROLYN: Almost like it's a subliminal labelling

302 LK: yeah

303 CAROLYN: Do you know what I mean?

304 LK: Yeah, yes I know what you're saying

305 CAROLYN: You know… so, I, I, I don't think *that helps*. But, yeah…you know yeah I just, I

306 just, feel as though, he, he needs help to, to process and to look *forward* and to…. be

307 able to recognise. He just don't seem, he can't, he *knows* what to say about feelings, he

308 *knows* when did you feel sad, oh 'I felt sad when…' and he can say, you know, but I

309 don't think he feels it, I think he just says it, *basically*, that's

310 LK: So there's some kind of disconnect?

311 CAROLYN: Yeah *definitely*

312 LK: Between the two

313 CAROLYN: Definitely he, he'll… he can say it but he doesn't actually feel it. Urm, an, an I

314 think that he is, he is, a potential, *a real potential* for criminality or, or… I don't you

315 know, sort of… carrying on in the same *pattern* that he's observed in the males, cos

316 actually he's only ever had two males in his life, who have both been controlling

317 <u>LK</u>: Yeah

318 <u>CAROLYN</u>: Urm…you know, controlling mum

319 <u>LK: Being *with Grandad*, is that making any difference to him?</u>

320 <u>CAROLYN</u>: I think it's been, I think being with Grandad is making a lot, a lot, of

321 difference, urm, in… he's more settled, he's got more of a secure attachment, his needs

322 are being met, his needs weren't being met, in, where he were before because of the

323 drug use and the fact that the mum and boyfriend were wrapped up in each other so

324 he, he were almost, ran wild. So he does, he's much more contained, urm I think that

325 the problem is with Grandad, is because she feels sorry for him (laughs) so… that, so

326 that, leads her to… maybe be - I mean, I've worked, I meet Grandad *every* week, I have a

327 session *every* week with Grandad. We talk about his urm, the issues we've had, he's

328 had in school and at home. We look at different aspects, boundaries, we've looked

329 bedtime routines, urm… we've looked at consistent reward and sanctions, urm and

330 sometimes Grandad will do it - but a lot of the time she feels sorry for him. You see his

331 Mum - he still has contact with Mum - Monday, Wednesday, Friday, you know, so…

332 that's can be a good thing but maybe sometimes a negative thing, urm but mostly I

333 would say its positive

334 <u>LK</u>: Yeah

335 <u>CAROLYN</u>: So….

336 <u>LK: You've mentioned that word "contained" quite a few times</u>

337 <u>CAROLYN</u>: Yeah, and I think that's what we do

338 <u>LK: It's interesting</u>

339 <u>CAROLYN</u>: Yeah… and I think we do, we do, it almost like as, as, as a school, we put our

340 arms around him and…. you know, sort of say to him, 'we've got ya, while you're here,

341 we've got ya' and you know, and I think that's what keeps him from… being totally off

342 the scale. Because I do think, that if we, if we weren't providing that one to one

343 support, from when he, he gets here really to breakfast club, he comes regular, then I

344 think that his behaviours would be off the scale, *I really do* you know, I mean, I mean

345 he's contained in class, they used, they having to update the strategies and the

346 techniques they use with him, all the time… you know, because he can be so disruptive

347 LK: Yeah

348 CAROLYN: You can't let him go out… because you don't know what he's goin to do, you

349 don't know what he's goin to say to other kids, you know, he's.. can be often sexually

350 inappropriate to girls

351 LK: So, does he spend playtimes and lunchtimes indoors, or does he go out?

352 CAROLYN: No, no, he can go out…but he has a one to one, and at lunchtime, at, at

353 playtime he tends, he has to play around the person on duty. At lunchtime he has the

354 one to one. She does bonding through play with him first off, then they get dinner and

355 he has a little, short period of time to play out

356 LK: So he is Year 5 at the minute

357 CAROLYN: Yeah, yeah, so we're looking at transition now for Year 6, as we speak, yeah

358 LK: Yeah 6 Teacher, have you got just one year 6 teacher?

359 CAROLYN: Yes, one year 6 but its urm there are 2 teachers of 4 days then a 1 day

360 LK: OK

361 CAROLYN: So we'll, you know and they know, they know, *everybody knows Joe* in school,

362 obviously they don't know close, closer details

363 LK: umm

364 CAROLYN: Urm but the year 6 teacher is on the SLT so, so I'll, she'll look at most of the

365 xxxx

366 LK: So will the class teachers know about domestic, about the background of domestic

367 violence, will they *know t*hat?

368 CAROLYN: They will, they will do, yeah, cause I will tell them that and give em a bit of

369 history to it, to him, yeah.

370 LK: In terms of your knowledge about domestic violence, do you have a policy in school,

371 and how do you kind of, find out about it, or what is your understanding of it?

372 CAROLYN: I mean, we have urm quite robust safeguarding policies, we don't have a

373 specific policy

374 LK: That's right

375 CAROLYN: But the domestic urm abuse bit actually, is written into our Safeguarding

376 Policy, so, I've just redone it, we've just redone it, so we have, we have got a section on

377 domestic abuse. I've also done, cause I do domestic abuse training, safeguarding

378 training, cause I'm safeguarding officer for JSHOT

379 LK: Ok for the whole

380 CAROLYN: The whole JSHOT, so and what I've done is, we have some training, urm, we…

381 so obviously staff have the 2 yearly safeguard, safeguarding training, but I also do a

382 safeguarding *update training* which involves CSE/FGM urm sexting and domestic abuse.

383 So, I actually do specific training on domestic abuse and spotting the signs, so that but

384 that's not, it's been done with some of the JSHOT, but here staff, have definitely had it

385 here, so we do train on that

386 LK: Ok – what time is it?

387 CAROLYN: Oh gosh, we're on schedule

388 LK: We're doing very well. Urm spotting the signs - what would they look like?

389 CAROLYN: What? The signs of, of…from my point of view, or the, from what a child

390 would understand?

391 LK: No a class teachers point of view, what would you kind of talk to them about looking

392 out for and?

393 CAROLYN: Urm… well, I think that, they would look at it in general, cos we have quite a

394 good system for early help and indicators for early help. So I think they'd look at the

395 indicators per se, rather than *just* for domestic abuse. So, it could be how the child's

396 presenting, if they're worried, you know, changing behaviours, changing, any change

397 in…in what they're saying and how they are, urm. I think they'd notice the parents,

398 cause they hand over parents up to year 4, 5, 6, they'd notice parents I think, they'd

399 look at obviously markin, bruising, urm. So, they'd look at the child, you know, they'd

400 look at the child but then look at the parents as well.

401 LK: OK. Is there anything I haven't asked you about, that you think is relevant for me to

402 know?

403 CAROLYN: Urm I don't

404 LK: Anything of interest?

405 CAROLYN: Urm no, not really. Interestingly, I urm, you know, talking about staff, when I

406 did the training on domestic abuse, cause I did the latest guidance on the coercive

407 control, I had *3 members of staff come* and said to me that they identified with that,

408 which is really quite interesting

409 LK: Which is really interesting

410 CAROLYN: Yeah

411 LK: Yeah isn't it, yeah

412 CAROLYN: 3 different members of staff approached me and said… 'oh my god, never

413 realised', you know, so…

414 LK: Yeah, I know, for… to do the research, I had to put it into university ethics first, for

415 them to, they were flagging that up to me saying 'well, what about if you're working

416 with…. staff members, that've, you know, may've, kind of experienced domestic abuse?

417 CAROLYN: Yeah, and I think that because people *assume* that domestic abuse, which is

418 well why they've changed the name from domestic violence haven't they? Cos

419 immediately you think physical and having a slap

420 LK: Yeah, yeah that's it

421 CAROLYN: You know, but actually, it's much worse, you know well, there's nothing

422 worse than being smacked, smacked about, because obviously, it's a physical threat, but

423 actually sometimes I think it's a much more _long term damage_ with emotional because,

424 because of the effect, you know, I mean I've worked, cause I deliver parenting, urm, I

425 deliver parenting course and I've had parents on, who've disclosed domestic urm abuse

426 and I had one parent who'd been in such a, such a tightly, tightly controlled

427 relationship, that the first 3 weeks she _stood at the door_, she, she _wanted to come_, to

428 the parenting, but she couldn't come in, because... you know he'd taken _every shred_ of

429 herself and her, her confidence and everything away, you know. So, the first few weeks

430 she stood at the door with her worker, and she wouldn't come in. Eventually, she came

431 in and she sat, she sat, I think it were the last week, she actually took her coat off, you

432 know, so, and I think that, that and that weren't, wasn't a physical, a physically violent,

433 it was just complete control and I think that, that, urm, I think that they're very

434 damaging whatever, whether its financial you know, but I think that the emotion, the

435 control, the coercive control often, has got all the elements of, of, you know, physical,

436 the financial, they're often controlled by finance

437 LK: I think as well that women are probably, aren't aware of it as well

438 CAROLYN: Exactly, exactly

439 LK: But don't realise until somebody kind of says, this is what it looks like and then they

440 think 'oh my god'

441 CAROLYN: Well that's what happened at the training because at the training, at, at the

442 training I did, put up the, urm, you know, put up the indicators for it and, it was like, 'oh

443 my god, that were me, that were me, and I never realised, that were me', urm so it was,

444 it was quite

445 LK: So, I guess your role is sign posting from there?

446 CAROLYN: Yeah, yeah and I do refer, I've just, I've actually done 2 referrals this last week

447 to X women's counselling services for domestic abuse, because 1 from here, for a case

448 that's just been opened and one from urm, the parenting course that I do, urm,,,,

449 LK: Cos I think that idea as well that it just happens in kind of working class families

450 CAROLYN: Yeah…

451 LK: Amongst poverty that's, I think that's where it's quite, more prevalent

452 CAROLYN: yeah…

453 LK: Because economic problems bring their own…. difficulties, don't they, in relationships
454 and families but I think that idea that, oh 'it doesn't happen to families like that'

455 CAROLYN: Yeah exactly

456 LK: It is beginning to be kind off

457 CAROLYN: Be passed by, yeah

458 LK: People are beginning to think, it's gone now

459 CAROLYN: It's not, yeah. So So I, so this is what I urm, you know, obviously that's signs of
460 domestic of abuse that, but but but this were the one that urm…

461 LK: Oh, operation encompass, yeah that's interesting isn't it?

462 CAROLYN: That's very good as well

463 LK: Yeah, yeah, it's not, it's not up and running in X yet?

464 CAROLYN: Yes it is, yeh, yeh I have, it's been maybe 12/18 months, urm but I ah, ah, ...
465 I think yeah, it must have been that one, I'm just trying to think, that the, the thing, the
466 thing that seemed to resonate was, you know, would've been, it would've this one you
467 know and that what's

468 LK: Domination, name calling

469 CAROLYN: And that's what, yeah, I mean honour based and forced marriage, people,
470 people see that, see that as a specific area, if you like, but you know, made to feel
471 frightened, been watched and checked up on, controlled environment so I think that's
472 what resonates, and what resonated with the staff that then approached me, so,

473 LK: Yeah, but yeah…

474 CAROLYN: And when I do the parenting, the parenting, it doesn't openly address
475 domestic abuse but it *alludes to it* through 2 of the sessions really about…physcial....

476 LK: It's interesting your role CAROLYN, isn't it?

477 CAROLYN: It is actually, I love it, yeah, yeah, I do, I love it, I love my job I have to say I
478 really do it's very…and it's a developing role. I mean, it's a developing really role, I
479 started off as parent support, well I started off as a TA and then trained to do parent
480 support work on X, when the other, urm, parent support advisors first trained in X but
481 weren't employed by the authority, I were employed by school which were great but
482 then it evolved and now I just, I'm the designated safeguarding lead here, but of course
483 our boss Jonathan, Jonathan Smith, he started the JSHOT and asked if I would do the
484 safeguarding lead on the JSHOT

485 LK: And so training as well

486 CAROLYN: So, that I yeah, I've started doin the training as well, so like next year I'll do
487 the training for the student teachers. So, urm yeah.

488 LK: Ah… so you'll train the student teachers… on?

489 CAROLYN: Safeguarding

490 LK: Ah Safeguarding, cause they don't get…this was an area that I was thinking about
491 researching, I think when they're training to be teachers, they don't any training around
492 domestic violence or abuse.

493 CAROLYN: Yeah, I know, I mean I haven't

494 LK: So it might be the first time that they get any input from you

495 CAROLYN: If I have chance, I will, I mean I've got 3 hours and they'll want me to do well,
496 I shall do the single agency safeguarding training, which would be the old level 2 and
497 PREVENT, they'll definitely want that done, but if I've time, I will, may just very quickly
498 try and cover

499 LK: Stick it in

500 CAROLYN: I know, I know I might do, I might have a look, I don't think it alludes to, I'm
501 not sure if, if not alludes but whether it looks at it

502 LK: Explicitly?

503 CAROLYN: Yeah, I'm not sure on that I can't remember, I don't, I don't think it will, cos

504 this is the, yeah… I'm sure it doesn't actually, because I think on the original slides, it

505 might of done but because now, we have do upgrade, updated training annually, I, I

506 thought, well we'll try, yeah, but it's not on here, I don't I think but I could always slip

507 slides in couldn't I?

508 LK: Yeah slip one in

509 CAROLYN: Slip it in, cos actually that's not a long, the domestic abuse bit is quite, it's

510 not, but you know it's not, you know you're talking about 3 slides, 4 slides

511 LK: Yeah you could do it in about 3 or 4 slides, couldn't you?

512 CAROLYN: Well that's that really, isn't it. How do we define it..

513 LK: Signs and how does it affect children? What does it say on that one? Children…

514 CAROLYN: It's from an NSPCC

515 LK: Is it?

516 CAROLYN: Yeah xxx behavioural problems xxx, which you know you can see all that can't

517 you?

518 LK: Urm,urm

519 CAROLYN: Urm, and I think, you know, _often_ what we've found, when there has been

520 some of that, is, is that attendance drops, especially as the children get older because

521 they don't want to leave Mum, they're protective, so don't want to come to school

522 LK: Urm, yeah, yeah want to make sure she is safe,

523 CAROLYN: Umm

524 LK: Yeah

525 Fine.

Conversation with Carolyn (43mins:02secs) TRANSCRIPT KEY: ---------- = unclear speech ……… = pause in speech _Italics=_ speech emphasis Colour Coding Key: Listening for the Plot Reflexive Listening Listening for Polyphonic Voices Listening for the 'I' – see I Poem Socio-cultural Context LK: So if you could just start off really at the beginning of how you became _involved_ with this child? CAROLYN: So, I work in the Inclusion Team urm, so with Claire who is the SENCO and also work with the two Learning Mentors. So my role… mostly is to support the parent, obviously Claire does the SEN requirements. Urm, I support the parent, look at behaviour of the child, social, emotional err and behavioural development and then I would work with the Learning Mentors, and I usually set the programs, if you like, we look at what the requirement is urm, and I usually do that in conjunction with, ed-psych have looked at it,	 **Role in school** **Position to parents** **Contextual Language** **Behaviour - identity** **Role – interventions** **Role – collaborative** **Our relationship – subjectivity**

looked at things before, and behaviour support, so we who look at what the child needs so I usually do it consultation with somebody else, if possible.

CAROLYN: Urm, so the child first came to our attention because his attendance was *really, really low*, urm he was away more than he was here and that was in F1. Urm, so he is sort of flagged but obviously very little you can do cause it's not statutory attendance.

CAROLYN: So then as he came into F2 urm because he'd been out of school very, you know, for a, hitting and missing *his* behaviours were very difficult because he wasn't used to being in a class, his language was poor, urm and he, he would often call people names like paedophile and inappropriate names, *older boys* so we sort of, so he was in F2 when we *really* became, we became aware of him on our radar. Now, at that time...eh, which we wouldn't necessarily have known because he wasn't statutory, really statutorily, involved with us, at that time Mum would have been pregnant.

CAROLYN: Urm, Mum and Dad, so... Mum was much younger than Dad, urm I think there would have been about... 16 years err and Mum had met Dad when she was 15. So, I, in my opinion, is almost like a *grooming* situation in a way urm and he'd met Mum when she was 15 urm, and they were both habitual drug users, they used

Voice of 'I' – Professional	
Role – monitor attendance	
Attendance – Indicative of 'other'	
Flagged – identity	
Institutional discourse	
Attendance – repetition.	
Separation from mum	
Behaviours – difficult – different	
Attendance – not in a class	
Other?	
SEN needs	
Connotations? Uneasy	
On our radar. Different. Distance	
Institutional discourse	
Positioning mum	
Mum's agency	
Cultural context	
Opinion – in Professional role	
Parents story	

amphetamine and cannabis urm and she had fallen pregnant and… because of the way they had presented in hospital, because there were issues of a habitual drug use (although they weren't on social care prior to it, urm then they went onto) they ended up removing the baby from the hospital because Joe's little sister had medical issues, she had like Hydrocephalus and what have you. So they judged…so at that point, the social care assessment was done on the *parents*, they judged, that their parenting was good enough for Joe but not be good enough, wouldn't be good enough for Stella and her medical needs, so Stella was removed. So, by this time we were… sort of becoming aware urm, like I say, of Joe through Joe's behaviours, urm then in… 2011

LK: So what year was he then?

CAROLYN: He would have been…., urm… 5, would have been 5, urm and so as a result of, so as a result, although they said that the parenting was good enough, he went onto a supervision order, urm, so that then meant that school would, became involved because we would become part of the core group, urr, for this.

CAROLYN: Urm, so the family's issues were, urm, habitual drug use, domestic violence urm… and neglect of, urm the child in regard to health and supervision. So from June 2012, urm, so Joe would

Margin annotations:

Agency – vulnerability

Institutional discourse

Removing' – distance

Judging – agency/powerless
Institutional discourse

Judge – repetition

Good *enough*

Removed – repetition

Behaviours – Joe's agency?
Plot – Story of Joe

Repitition

Institutional discourse

Institutional discourse

Story – issues

Institutional discourse

have been 5, yeh, 5, we became involved, school involved, so I became involved as the part of the core group and then *part of plan* was that I supported parents for different issues.

LK: OK – just pop that over there in case….

CAROLYN: OK, yeh….Urm…. so, so, from our point of view in school, at that time Joe's, you know, he, we were managing his behaviours, you know, we had a clear behavioural ladder, he was, you know, he, he, because *he was 5*, you know, so the, the trauma and damage, if you like, hadn't really manifested itself by then, it, it, you know, it was the start really, it was the start of the process I would say.

LK: So, you said when he was in reception he was calling other children paedophiles?

CAROLYN: Yeah… some of his language was sexually inappropriate urm and so we monitored him.

LK: OK

CAROLYN: Urm, I did work with parents about… there, there were a lot of parenting issues, including lack supervision, behaviour boundaries and praise and sanctions, so…I…you know, as, as it, he went on, as the, as the years went on, he went into Year 1, there were concerns about him, urm fighting, swearing, sexualised language and

	Institutional discourse
	Professional role
	Issues – repetition
	Behaviours
	Behaviourism – school discourse and procedures
	Language of deficit
	Agency
	Start of Joe's story in school
	A more subjective 'I'?
	Process – distancing
	Story
	Monitored – distancing
	Issues – agency

behaviour and being disruptive in, in class and during break times. *Any…* unscheduled time, he just could be off the scale. Urm, so by the time he was in Year 2, still being involved with the family, still on supervision order, he…. was displayin some sexualised behaviour, mimicking urm actions, laid on top of a girl in the playground, in the infants urm and we, we referred him to, urm Step-Up Project for Joe, but unfortunately they wouldn't take him, cos he was 7 and they don't usually take em that young. Urm, so they, sent us some things we could do, uh, you know, they emailed us some activities he could do, but they were very limited because the activities were for older children. Urm, so again, we, we carried on really… just monitoring him, working with him. By this point, we'd put him with a Learning Mentor.

LK: Ok. So thinking specifically, kind of, around domestic violence side of things, how do you think that was, urm… what was your experience of working with him around *that* age at Year 2?

CAROLYN: I think for Joe we never… from his parent's point of view, they could be physical, I think that, urm they could both be physical. I think Mum had her nose broken… she did hit Dad with something, so, you know, it were, it was a, sometimes it was mutual

LK: Both of them?

Annotations:

Behaviour
Unscheduled – monitoring

Off the scale – different, other.

Institutional discourse

Story of Joe

Infants – different

Usually – different

Institutional discourse
Aloof
Support of an adult – Joe's agency?
Containment – supporting Joe

Story - DA

Mum's agency

CAROLYN: Mutual, yeah, urm but I think from Joe's point of view we, we, we assumed, not assumed but we sort of ascertained, of different things that… urm Mum said, not Dad cause unfortunately Dad, dad died, urm in 2015, I think Dad died, urm, yeh 2015, I'd have to check that but I am sure, yeah, in February 2015 Dad died. Urm, and the, there was a lot of, cause, he… because Claire were only 15, she never really knew anybody else and he completely controlled her, urm and I think he would do that sexually, he always thought that she was having affairs, he always thought that when she went out the house, she was going to sleep with somebody. I think that, he used to, she used to come in, he used to make her take her knickers off, he'd smell her knickers to make sure that there hadn't been any sexual activity. I think he intimidated sexually, urm, I think he…were quite open in front of Joe about intimidating her sexually and about calling her names. Because Joe, what, what happened was that, then, not as much *now* he is with Grandad, but certainly by the time he 6/7 he was Mum a whore and a prostitute and a slut and he would often call her that, it was, you know… so we presuming that, that he's heard that from Dad. Urm, so I think Joe has witnessed a lot of sort of *sexual intimidation* of Mum from Dad.

LK: And emotional

Joe's perspective

Story – loss

Voice of I – uncertainty

Mum's agency
Story – of DA

Story – Coercion/control

Intensity of Carolyn's role – emotional

Cycle of violence

Witnessed – distance.
Experienced
Story

CAROLYN: And yeah emotional, I mean that, and that the, you know, emotional abuse I think that, Joe's urm… attitude to women, I think is a result of that and, and, I think he's so traumatised by the fact that he, you know, from Joe's point of view, everybody he loves, *leaves or dies*, so you know, his sister were taken, his Dad died, Mum subsequently met another partner, had another baby and that's just been removed. Urm, he were taken from Mum because Mum chose the boyfriend, really, over Joe, urm….and now he lives with Grandad, so you know, he's, he's, it's such, it's such a, is the emotional damage to him, is such that he, he finds it very difficult to, to regulate any of his behaviours. And you can sit, and you can do work with him. I've done sexual behaviour work, I actually went on Real Love Rocks, Train the Trainer training on Friday and I shall be doing some of the activities on there with him, cos it will be perfect for Joe but he, he just, he can't regulate, he'll tell you *all the right answers,* if you sit down and do activities with him, he can tell you exactly what he should be doing, but when it comes to being in the moment, he, he doesn't, he won't, *so* even now, urm on Monday, he came to school on Monday and Grandad had said they'd had a bad morning, so Grandad, he'd called Grandad a fat, he'd called her a fat bastard, he said he hoped she died, he hopes she dies of cancer, and he can't… because… but actually then he can be very loving, so… you know….he, he just, I think the emotional harm that he's suffered through that

Margin annotations:

Attitude – understanding?

Deficit language

Story of loss.
Rejection for Joe – good enough?

Removed – distance
Mum – choice – agency

Deficits
Reductive language

Reductive – 'behaviours'

Role – Interventions

But…falls short
Deficit

Frustration? Futility

Story – attachment

Praise for Joe

very destructive relationship, between Mum and Dad. And then of course Mum met someone, within weeks, and he, he actually, the new partner, was Dad's… somebody who Dad supplied with cannabis, so they had like a drugs link, if you like, and so, you know that controlling, you know, that con controlling, urm type of relationship continued. Cos Claire went from one controlling relationship, straight to another one. Which is xxx	**Deficit language Agency** **Mum's agency** **Mum's agency**
CAROLYN: So, urm, we've done, with Joe in school, we've, he has one to one support at unstructured times, just because, like I say, he cannot regulate his behaviour, he can't make the right decision, cause he doesn't, he doesn't just see that at all, you know? Urm and he has *daily* bonding through play, slash theraplay. So, he has daily bonding through play *every* lunchtime, urm and he has one to one support, he has mentor time, urm with a learning mentor, urm…..he's, there's a referral into Step-Up project *again*, which is third time lucky cos they've actually accepted the referral	**Story. Agency. Containment** **Decisions/choices – agency** **Daily – secured an adult. Agency** **Frustration** **Role – support** **Discourse – distance**
LK: OK	
CAROLYN: And what we're looking at for Joe *now*, is we're just gathering evidence for an EHC plan	
LK: OK	**SEN needs**

CAROLYN: Because we feel as though, an, and Grandad, you know, is, is in agreement and Mum, urm because we have, he's on <mark>child in need</mark> currently now, but has been on <mark>child in need</mark> for the <mark>last two years</mark> and he, well, he went to <mark>looked after</mark>, then he went into…anyway… but, and they're and they're in agreement that he can't, <mark>he wouldn't be able to function</mark> at, urm, a <mark>Comp</mark> urm…. and so we're looking at, urm, a <mark>SEMH school</mark>, out of area, so we're hoping the EHC plan *goes through* so that we can look at that. LK: OK CAROLYN: So we've, we're trying to get that in and done. LK: So, I'll get to meet him. CAROLYN: Sorry? LK: I might get to meet him…yes? Yeh? CAROLYN: Yeah, yeah, so that's what we're looking at currently. LK: OK. So, urm when it comes to being 'in the moment', you said, he can't? CAROLYN: No… LK: Tell me a bit more about that.	<mark>Institutional discourse</mark> <mark>Story – future</mark> <mark>Function – agency</mark>

CAROLYN: I think… yesterday… I spoke to his one to one and she said they'd had had a great day. On Monday, so on Monday he came… and Grandad were upset because he'd called her names, all this, that and t'other, but *then* he'd, on Monday he'd had a really good day at school, and he got Star of the Day, so *at the end of the day*, Grandad and him came round to me and said, ah, you know, I've got star, I, I sort of said, fantastic, here let me give you a sticker, da da dah, which, which we try to do for a quick, quick (clicking fingers) reward. *So*, I said to him on Monday, you know what, if you can come in the morning and Grandad can say to me, that you've had a good morning and you haven't called her names, you haven't told her you want her to die or anything like that, gi ya another sticker first off, straight off the bat, and whoa, you know. So he did, he came, he came to breakfast club, as it happened an I were in breakfast club, he had a good day, gave him a sticker and so I spoke to his one to one, urm just after dinnertime, and she said he'd been brilliant, *up to the last five minutes* and *the last five minutes* he was, ah…. I don't know, she said lairy, you know, shouting and singing inappropriate things an… just acting, just acting out really

LK: Yeah…

His – agency

Story – behaviour

Praise for Joe

More relational

Praise – pulled back

Disappointment

Behaviours – Joe. Defined by these.

CAROLYN: And uh it was, it was, in fact it probably weren't even five minutes, it was just two minutes and he wouldn't, it's was as though he can contain himself a little bit or he can contain himself *a lot* sometimes, but then he just...he just needs to....you know....ex, express it, I don't know, or, or, you know ..... and so, whatever, you know, the bonding through play a think has been very successful... for him to build a bond with the one to one that does it. But unfortunately, sometimes, it breeds a familiarity *as well*..... that, that, because he can't, he doesn't make the judgment between, what he can do at school and what, you know, what's acceptable behaviour, so, you know, urm a few weeks ago, with his one to one, he was demonstratin... what... somebody had *done to him* and he, he jumped on her back, you know, and almost sort of wrestled, you know, so, so he'd...in that spilt second, (clicks fingers) he wouldn't have thought that, you know, that would be anything wrong, anything wrong you know with that.

LK: Umm

CAROLYN: So, we've, *but again*. the learning mentor that week, after that incident, you know, she did an activity with him, to talk about appropriate behaviours and what sort of things.... and he can tell you *all the answers* but in the moment, he, he won't make that judgement very often.

LK: Why do you think that is?

Agency	
No recognition of own role in this	
Praise for Joe	
Pulled back	
Back to deficits	
Story – school, behaviour, 'acceptable'.	
Regulation – deficit.	
Frustration. **Role (emotional)**	
Story – school, acceptable & appropriate	
Agency – confused.	

CAROLYN: I think we've, we've done Boxall Profiles on, on him before and I think that…he's, I mean he's 10 now, he just turned 10 in April, and his, his social, emotional, behavioural developmental *age,* and um I spoke to Tracey B, she self-assessed it… was about three and a half, four, *so* …it's *that,* you know, that spontaneity, that a, tot, that a small child would have, that doesn't, you know, I think, he thinks like a very *young child* who, who, doesn't, doesn't, always make that judgement and can't, you know, who's not sort of, clicking onto… the *social norms,* if you like, or the boundaries within school

LK: Ummm

CAROLYN: You know, but again and that, and that, could be because of the way he regards women and the way that…. the things that he's observed and seen when he were living with parents.

LK: Urm, the Learning Mentor… what kind of things that… you would direct the Learning Mentor?

CAROLYN: Yeah…so Joe has a, actually, we have, we, we, wrote, we wrote, urm…sorry…I wrote, we wrote, and again, urm… a bonding through play, urm a specific, a specific urm program for Joe, urm let me just, I can show you that, urm and so, the learning…let me have a look, so the, the one to one person, urm she will do bonding through play, five

School discourse	
Boxall – to explain this? **Regulation** **Agency**	
Joe – different, other. **Story** **shaped by these**	
Not experienced. Distance	
Revision	

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sessions, that's it, so for example, and we linked it to the Boxall Profile, so we looked at what we wanted to achieve, we linked it to the weaknesses on the Boxall, urm so we put those in, so it's a six week, it's a six week program that we just, you know it goes back to week 1, so the one to one tends to *do that,* the learning mentor sessions tends to be time to talk

LK: Ok

CAROLYN: Or play games or it might be directed… about, we've done a lot of feelings work with Joe, identifying the feeling, thinking how the feeling, you know, if he's angry or he's sad and how does that, how does that make him and then we have played things feeling jenga, which has got the bricks, so that he can think of a feeling and then, think of a time when he's felt that feeling.

LK: Yeah

CAROLYN: Urm, we've also, he's also had MAST sessions for bereavement and… urm… yeah, counselling from that respect.

LK: OK, So… where would you say he's at now?

CAROLYN: He's had an awful lot of input and our, *honestly*, we, *I feel* and you know, in, in sort of chatting to everybody else, I feel that school have reached urm… the, the limit of our expertise in, in,

School discourse

Role – intervention

Story - support

Agency – Joe knows his feelings

Services
Role

6 week programs

Honestly – truth?
Uncomfortable/uneasy – everybody else too.

in being helpful to Joe, for, on a long term basis. I feel we *contain him*, I think we give him what we need as, as much as we can. But, you know, he's been to CAMHS, his CAMHs referral's open again but then, he's under the LAC team also, urm…and they're putting some things in place but… you know, you know, a couple of professionals have said that he needs psychotherapy and unfortunately there isn't any psychotherapist at CAMHs currently, apparently. So, we, we feel as though we've reached the limit of what we can do, we've, we've, thrown *everything* at him, he, he's had everything possibly in school. I mean, I've… you know, we, the sexual behaviour urm, the sexual behaviour, the sexual behaviour aspect was brought up at child in need and the social worker, you know, had said about doing, about doing, sexualised behaviour work. Now, I will do that work with Joe myself, because I'm the only one really, that would feel comfortable doing that, but, that, as I explained to the social worker, I only feel comfortable doing that to a certain level because *I'm not a sexual health worker,* it's not my area of expertise, I can do very low level stuff which I have and I will do, I'll, I'll use some of the Real Love Rocks resources and do that next week, urm but we, we, we've, *done what we can*. I feel as though he's had everything that we could urm offer.

LK: Where is he at *now* then, where would you say he's at?

Annotation
Feel - feelings
No positive seen in containing
Institutional discourse
Unease – professionals verification
Confidence
Everything – repetition
Sexual – repetition
Institutional discourse
Alone. Lonely in role? Isolated. Emotional labour
Expert
Role
Frustration. Futility?
Had – agency?

CAROLYN: Urm….

LK: Given that you feel that you have *done* all that you can?

CAROLYN: I, in a real terms…. I wouldn't say…. that but we're any *further on* really (laughs) I mean, you know, his, his delay, educationally, his delay's still 2 years in all areas. So… there's been no real, I mean he is making progress, which you could say is a positive, urm… and it makes you wonder if he didn't have all the input - where he would be? I, I don't, feel that we have achieved anything, *long term* with Joe - at all. I think that he and, and you know in the end, we, we knew his second little sister would be removed, from Mum, so we expected a dip in his behaviour and that's probably because of the support, because he's with Grandad now, as the dip wasn't as, urm bad, if you like, as we thought it were going to be. So we, we can sort of *predict* some of, and see dips in some of his behaviour and sort of pre-empt them. But, I think he's, he's just *so damaged* that we, we just can't meet his needs - from school's point of view, to actually un, unravel, we manage him, we contain, we manage him.

LK: Umm

CAROLYN: I don't think we're doin anything from a long term point of view, *at all*. Urm and so, I, I just,

Right column annotations:

Uncomfortable?
Story – SEN, not significant

Not a positive for Joe
Recognition of school's positive role?
Disappointment

Contained.
Support given to gran – unrecognised.

Deficit language
Disappointment/difference

Unravel – expert role?
Story – managing behaviour

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his behaviour is up and down, it's inconsistent, some days he has good days some days he doesn't. I mean he's, he's, you know, he's better in some ways but that's only because we've upped our level of support.

LK: What does he need then, cos you've said, we've given what he needs as much as we can?

CAROLYN: Well….I, I mean, I think he needs psychological, psychoth

 LK: Ummmm

CAROLYN: Psychotherapy, (laughs) you know, I mean, I'm not in any way an expert, I think he needs somebody to *un ravel it*, his, his thinking, he, he, you know. He's said things over the period time, like, 'I don't have any feelings me, because they're no good, it's no good to have feelings' or you know, and he, he finds it very difficult to express things. He tells, *tells lots of lies*, his lies are always about what he'd like his life to be, you know, that'd, what, his lies he'll say 'I've done this, I've have been to Centre Parcs' and what's it's what he'd *like* to do, you know, and or, you know, when he were younger, he used to say he'd played for Chelsea, well *his Dad supported Chelsea* and he wants to be a footballer and so… you know… but I just feel as though he needs, he needs….more of a *structured*….program that'll *delve* more into… how

	Complexity of role
	He is inconsistent – complexity. Nuance
	Praise – given and taken again
	I mean – clarity **Psycho professions – experts.**
	Uneasy?
	Expert role - difference
	Lies? **Difficult?** **Hope**
	Future – destiny. Agency
	Dissonance – connection to dad

the, the damage that he's suffered and help him to, to come to terms with it an, and I understand, understand myself, and I think that, I mean I'm not, I don't know…because I might be talking rubbish	**Deficit language**
	Story – ending
	Wavering
	Seeking reassurance
LK: No you're not, you're not	
CAROLYN: Well there you are	
LK: You're making perfect sense to me.	**Uncomfortable. Defiant?**
CAROLYN: Really	
LK: Yeah absolutely, yeah	**Unsure of what I'm thinking. Role of Ed Psych – my agenda**
CAROLYN: …and I think that maybe children have got to get to a certain point of maturity, to be able to, be very….to be more receptive to things like psychotherapy and psychiatric help. I'm sure, but I think that he, he needs to be, he needs to, to understand what's happened to him and to process it properly and then to move on from it and thinks that what, that what I feel he needs.	**Developmental** **Experts** **Behaviour – understands**
LK: He needs, yeah	**Role – about needs**
CAROLYN: And I think that we can't address that, because we not psychotherapists so it's like you know, we're not and we can't address that at all and I think that's what he needs. I think he's, I think he's urm….an explosion waiting to happen - if he	
	Interventions. LMentor. 1-2-1

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doesn't. And almost, you know a factor which I haven't mentioned before, is that Dad, dad who died, he's got a brother who has got quite a large family, ==that are very well known to services==. And his older cousin Jack, was known and *a lot* of people in XX ==would have== ==known him==, urm and he's very much held up, you know, his Grandad, will often say that 'you don't want to end up like our Zac'. Well Zac went into *==a secure unit==* he, he you know.

LK: Umm

CAROLYN: ==I were== in a school the other day ==and I mentioned,== well, we were looking at a safeguarding system and ==I just== happened to use the child who ==I am== talking about's profile and he went 'oh…xxxxx' and he knew, so, you know, they've, they've experienced that. Joe knows you know, 'you don't want to end up like our Jack' you know. It's almost ==like a pre-programming== in a way, but an anti- pre-programming, you know

LK: Yeah

CAROLYN: You don't want to end up like that *but actually* ==I'm==…. because ==I'm== saying that to you, you might end up like that

LK: Yeah

CAROLYN: To me it's like a subconscious

Story around this family.

Known – is Joe? Through family, behaviours?

Institutional discourse

Inter-generational

LK: Yeah

CAROLYN: Almost like it's a subliminal labelling

LK: yeah

CAROLYN: Do you know what I mean?

LK: Yeah, yes I know what you're saying

CAROLYN: You know… so, I, I, I don't think *that helps*. But, yeah…you know yeah I just, I just, feel as though, he, he needs help to, to process and to look *forward* and to…. be able to recognise. He just don't seem, he can't, he *knows* what to say about feelings, he *knows* when did you feel sad, oh 'I felt sad when…' and he can say, you know, but I don't think he feels it, I think he just says it, *basically*, that's

LK: So there's some kind of disconnect?

CAROLYN: Yeah *definitely*

LK: Between the two

CAROLYN: Definitely he, he'll… he can say it but he doesn't actually feel it. Urm, an, an I think that he is, he is, a potential, *a real potential* for criminality or, or… I don't you know, sort of… carrying on in the same *pattern* that he's observed in the males, cos

School role

Feelings – behaviour?

Dismissive

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actually he's only ever had two males in his life, who have both been controlling

LK: Yeah

CAROLYN: Urm...you know, controlling mum

LK: Being *with Grandad*, is that making any difference to him?

CAROLYN: I think it's been, I think being with Grandad is making a lot, a lot, of difference, urm, in... he's more settled, he's got more of a secure attachment, his needs are being met, his needs weren't being met, in, where he were before because of the drug use and the fact that the mum and boyfriend were wrapped up in each other so he, he were almost, ran wild. So he does, he's much more contained, urm I think that the problem is with Grandad, is because she feels sorry for him (laughs) so... that, so that, leads her to... maybe be - I mean, I've worked, I meet Grandad *every* week, I have a session *every* week with Grandad. We talk about his urm, the issues we've had, he's had in school and at home. We look at different aspects, boundaries, we've looked bedtime routines, urm... we've looked at consistent reward and sanctions, urm and sometimes Grandad will do it - but a lot of the time she feels sorry for him. You see his Mum - he still has contact with Mum - Monday, Wednesday, Friday, you know, so... that's can be a

Deviance. Hopelessness

Intergenerational

DA story

Positive – attachment. Containment.

Feral

Role
Repetition - every

Return of frustration

good thing but maybe sometimes a negative thing, urm but mostly I would say its positive	
LK: Yeah	
	Positive followed by negative
CAROLYN: So….	
LK: You've mentioned that word "contained" quite a few times	
CAROLYN: Yeah, and I think that's what we do	
LK: It's interesting	
CAROLYN: Yeah… and I think we do, we do, it almost like as, as, as a school, we put our arms around him and…. you know, sort of say to him, 'we've got ya, while you're here, we've got ya' and you know, and I think that's what keeps him from… being totally off the scale. Because I do think, that if we, if we weren't providing that one to one support, from when he, he gets here really to breakfast club, he comes regular, then I think that his behaviours would be off the scale, I really do you know, I mean, I mean he's contained in class, they used, they having to update the strategies and the techniques they use with him, all the time… you know, because he can be so disruptive	**Story – support. Contained** **Difference** **Repetition Contained – school role recognised?**
LK: Yeah	
CAROLYN: You can't let him go out… because you don't know what he's goin to do, you don't know	**Behaviour. Agency**

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what he's goin to say to other kids, you know, he's.. can be often sexually inappropriate to girls	**Play** **Isolated**
LK: So, does he spend playtimes and lunchtimes indoors, or does he go out?	
CAROLYN: No, no, he can go out…but he has a one to one, and at lunchtime, at, at playtime he tends, he has to play around the person on duty. At lunchtime he has the one to one. She does bonding through play with him first off, then they get dinner and he has a little, short period of time to play out	**Story change** **Absence of 'I'** **Role - Surveillance**
LK: So he is Year 5 at the minute	**Peers?**
CAROLYN: Yeah, yeah, so we're looking at transition now for Year 6, as we speak, yeah	
LK: Yeah 6 Teacher, have you got just one year 6 teacher?	**Story – moving on**
CAROLYN: Yes, one year 6 but its urm there are 2 teachers of 4 days then a 1 day	
LK: OK	
CAROLYN: So we'll, you know and they know, they know, *everybody knows Joe* in school, obviously they don't know close, closer details	
LK: umm	**Identity. Dignity** **How do we speak of children?**

CAROLYN: Urm but the year 6 teacher is on the SLT so, so I'll, she'll look at most of the xxxx	
LK: So will the class teachers know about domestic, about the background of domestic violence, will they *know t*hat?	
CAROLYN: They will, they will do, yeah, cause I will tell them that and give em a bit of history to it, to him, yeah.	
LK: In terms of your knowledge about domestic violence, do you have a policy in school, and how do you kind of, find out about it, or what is your understanding of it?	**What stories are told?**
CAROLYN: I mean, we have urm quite robust safeguarding policies, we don't have a specific policy	
LK: That's right	
CAROLYN: But the domestic urm abuse bit actually, is written into our Safeguarding Policy, so, I've just redone it, we've just redone it, so we have, we have got a section on domestic abuse. I've also done, cause I do domestic abuse training, safeguarding training, cause I'm safeguarding officer for JSHOT	
LK: Ok for the whole	

CAROLYN: The whole JSHOT, so and what I've done is, we have some training, urm, we... so obviously staff have the 2 yearly safeguard, safeguarding training, but I also do a safeguarding *update training* which involves CSE/FGM urm sexting and domestic abuse. So, I actually do specific training on domestic abuse and spotting the signs, so that but that's not, it's been done with some of the JSHOT, but here staff, have definitely had it here, so we do train on that	**Role**
LK: Ok – what time is it?	
CAROLYN: Oh gosh, we're on schedule	
LK: We're doing very well. Urm spotting the signs - what would they look like?	
CAROLYN: What? The signs of, of...from my point of view, or the, from what a child would understand?	
LK: No a class teachers point of view, what would you kind of talk to them about looking out for and?	
CAROLYN: Urm… well, I think that, they would look at it in general, cos we have quite a good system for early help and indicators for early help. So I think they'd look at the indicators per se, rather than *just* for domestic abuse. So, it could be how the child's presenting, if they're worried, you know, changing behaviours, changing, any change in…in what	**Systems and indicators** - school role. Distancing language.

they're saying and how they are, urm. I think they'd notice the parents, cause they hand over parents up to year 4, 5, 6, they'd notice parents I think, they'd look at obviously markin, bruising, urm. So, they'd look at the child, you know, they'd look at the child but then look at the parents as well.	**Identity**
LK: OK. Is there anything I haven't asked you about, that you think is relevant for me to know?	
CAROLYN: Urm I don't	
LK: Anything of interest?	
CAROLYN: Urm no, not really. Interestingly, I urm, you know, talking about staff, when I did the training on domestic abuse, cause I did the latest guidance on the coercive control, I had *3 members of staff come* and said to me that they identified with that, which is really quite interesting	
LK: Which is really interesting	
CAROLYN: Yeah	
LK: Yeah isn't it, yeah	
CAROLYN: 3 different members of staff approached me and said... 'oh my god, never realised', you know, so...	

LK: Yeah, I know, for… to do the research, I had to put it into university ethics first, for them to, they were flagging that up to me saying 'well, what about if you're working with…. staff members, that've, you know, may've, kind of experienced domestic abuse?	
CAROLYN: Yeah, and I think that because people *assume* that domestic abuse, which is well why they've changed the name from domestic violence haven't they? Cos immediately you think physical and having a slap	
LK: Yeah, yeah that's it	
CAROLYN: You know, but actually, it's much worse, you know well, there's nothing worse than being smacked, smacked about, because obviously, it's a physical threat, but actually sometimes I think it's a much more *long term damage* with emotional because, because of the effect, you know, I mean I've worked, cause I deliver parenting, urm, I deliver parenting course and I've had parents on, who've disclosed domestic urm abuse and I had one parent who'd been in such a, such a tightly, tightly controlled relationship, that the first 3 weeks she *stood at the door*, she, she *wanted to come*, to the parenting, but she couldn't come in, because… you know he'd taken *every shred* of herself and her, her confidence and everything away, you know. So, the first few weeks she stood at the door with her worker, and she wouldn't come in. Eventually, she	**Deficit**

came in and she sat, she sat, I think it were the last week, she actually took her coat off, you know, so, and I think that, that and that weren't, wasn't a physical, a physically violent, it was just complete control and I think that, that, urm, I think that they're very damaging whatever, whether its financial you know, but I think that the emotion, the control, the coercive control often, has got all the elements of, of, you know, physical, the financial, they're often controlled by finance

LK: I think as well that women are probably, aren't aware of it as well

CAROLYN: Exactly, exactly

LK: But don't realise until somebody kind of says, this is what it looks like and then they think 'oh my god'

CAROLYN: Well that's what happened at the training because at the training, at, at the training I did, put up the, urm, you know, put up the indicators for it and, it was like, 'oh my god, that were me, that were me, and I never realised, that were me', urm so it was, it was quite

LK: So, I guess your role is sign posting from there?

CAROLYN: Yeah, yeah and I do refer, I've just, I've actually done 2 referrals this last week to X women's counselling services for domestic abuse,

because 1 from here, for a case that's just been opened and one from urm, the parenting course that I do, urm…

LK: Cos I think that idea as well that it just happens in kind of working class families

CAROLYN: Yeah…

LK: Amongst poverty that's, I think that's where it's quite, more prevalent

CAROLYN: yeah…

LK: Because economic problems bring their own…. difficulties, don't they, in relationships and families but I think that idea that, oh 'it doesn't happen to families like that'

CAROLYN: Yeah exactly

LK: It is beginning to be kind off

CAROLYN: Be passed by, yeah

LK: People are beginning to think, it's gone now

CAROLYN: It's not, yeah. So So I, so this is what I urm, you know, obviously that's signs of domestic of abuse that, but but but this were the one that urm…

LK: Oh, operation encompass, yeah that's interesting isn't it?

CAROLYN: That's very good as well

LK: Yeah, yeah, it's not, it's not up and running in X yet?

CAROLYN: Yes it is, yeh, yeh I have, it's been maybe 12/18 months, urm but I ah, ah, ... I think yeah, it must have been that one, I'm just trying to think, that the, the thing, the thing that seemed to resonate was, you know, would've been, it would've this one you know and that what's

LK: Domination, name calling

CAROLYN: And that's what, yeah, I mean honour based and forced marriage, people, people see that, see that as a specific area, if you like, but you know, made to feel frightened, been watched and checked up on, controlled environment so I think that's what resonates, and what resonated with the staff that then approached me, so...

LK: Yeah, but yeah...

CAROLYN: And when I do the parenting, the parenting, it doesn't openly address domestic abuse but it *alludes to it* through 2 of the sessions really about...physical....

LK: It's interesting your role CAROLYN, isn't it?

CAROLYN: It is actually, I love it, yeah, yeah, I do, I love it, I love my job I have to say I really do it's very…and it's a developing role. I mean, it's a developing really role, I started off as parent support, well I started off as a TA and then trained to do parent support work on X, when the other, urm, parent support advisors first trained in X but weren't employed by the authority, I were employed by school which were great but then it evolved and now I just, I'm the designated safeguarding lead here, but of course our boss Jonathan, Jonathan Smith, he started the JSHOT and asked if I would do the safeguarding lead on the JSHOT

LK: And so training as well

CAROLYN: So, that I yeah, I've started doin the training as well, so like next year I'll do the training for the student teachers. So, urm yeah.

LK: Ah… so you'll train the student teachers… on?

CAROLYN: Safeguarding

LK: Ah Safeguarding, cause they don't get…this was an area that I was thinking about researching, I think when they're training to be teachers, they don't any training around domestic violence or abuse.

CAROLYN: Yeah, I know, I mean I haven't

LK: So it might be the first time that they get any input from you

CAROLYN: If I have chance, I will, I mean I've got 3 hours and they'll want me to do well, I shall do the single agency safeguarding training, which would be the old level 2 and PREVENT, they'll definitely want that done, but if I've time, I will, may just very quickly try and cover

LK: Stick it in

CAROLYN: I know, I know I might do, I might have a look, I don't think it alludes to, I'm not sure if, if not alludes but whether it looks at it

LK: Explicitly?

CAROLYN: Yeah, I'm not sure on that I can't remember, I don't, I don't think it will, cos this is the, yeah… I'm sure it doesn't actually, because I think on the original slides, it might of done but because now, we have do upgrade, updated training annually, I, I thought, well we'll try, yeah, but it's not on here, I don't I think but I could always slip slides in couldn't I?

LK: Yeah slip one in

CAROLYN: Slip it in, cos actually that's not a long, the domestic abuse bit is quite, it's not, but you know it's not, you know you're talking about 3 slides, 4 slides

LK: Yeah you could do it in about 3 or 4 slides, couldn't you?

CAROLYN: Well that's that really, isn't it? How do we define it?

LK: Signs and how does it affect children? What does it say on that one? Children…

CAROLYN: It's from an NSPCC

LK: Is it?

CAROLYN: Yeah xxx behavioural problems xxx, which you know you can see all that can't you?

LK: Urm,urm

CAROLYN: Urm, and I think, you know, *often* what we've found, when there has been some of that, is, is that attendance drops, especially as the children get older because they don't want to leave Mum, they're protective, so don't want to come to school
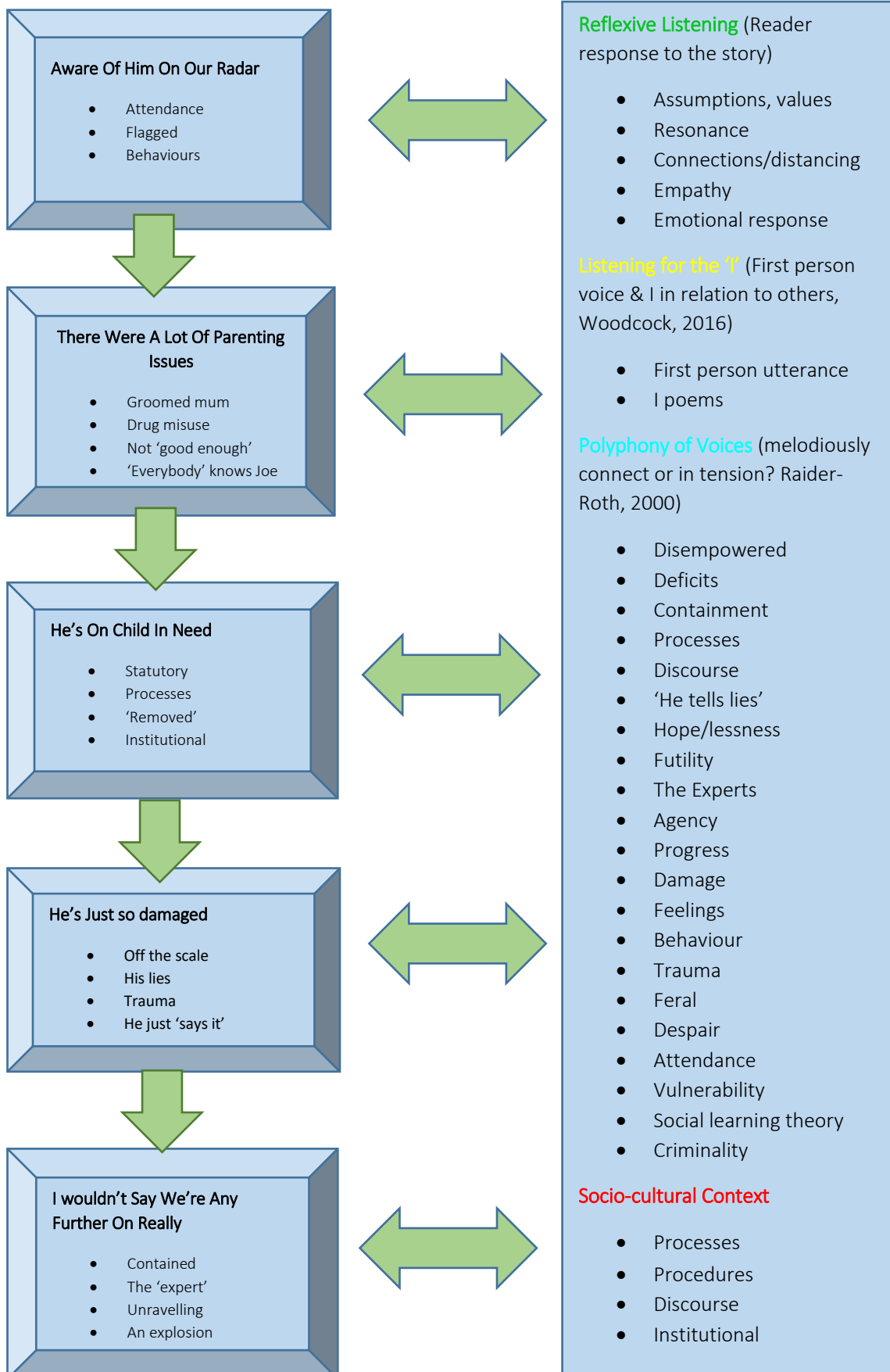
LK: Urm, yeah, yeah want to make sure she is safe

CAROLYN: Umm

LK: Yeah Fine.	

Appendix 10 – Composition of Analysis - Carolyn

Aware Of Him On Our Radar

- Attendance
- Flagged
- Behaviours

There Were A Lot Of Parenting Issues

- Groomed mum
- Drug misuse
- Not 'good enough'
- 'Everybody' knows Joe

He's On Child In Need

- Statutory
- Processes
- 'Removed'
- Institutional

He's Just so damaged

- Off the scale
- His lies
- Trauma
- He just 'says it'

I wouldn't Say We're Any Further On Really

- Contained
- The 'expert'
- Unravelling
- An explosion

Reflexive Listening (Reader response to the story)

- Assumptions, values
- Resonance
- Connections/distancing
- Empathy
- Emotional response

Listening for the 'I' (First person voice & I in relation to others, Woodcock, 2016)

- First person utterance
- I poems

Polyphony of Voices (melodiously connect or in tension? Raider-Roth, 2000)

- Disempowered
- Deficits
- Containment
- Processes
- Discourse
- 'He tells lies'
- Hope/lessness
- Futility
- The Experts
- Agency
- Progress
- Damage
- Feelings
- Behaviour
- Trauma
- Feral
- Despair
- Attendance
- Vulnerability
- Social learning theory
- Criminality

Socio-cultural Context

- Processes
- Procedures
- Discourse
- Institutional

Appendix 11 – Steps for Creating 'I Poems' (Debold, 1990, cited in Gilligan, 1993).

Step One	Reading of transcript, highlighting use of all first person 'I' statements, including the verb and other relevant text. You are determining what is important for participants' sense of 'self' here.
Step Two	Withdraw all highlighted 'I' phrases from the transcript, maintaining the correct sequence of their occurrence. Organise these into separate lines, just as you would see in a poem.
Step Three	Analyse the text to identify different 'voices' used by the participant Begin forming stanzas based on the different voices identified Give each voice it's title for ease of analysis and discussion.

I Poem - Carolyn (and Joe)

Key:

- The Professional Self
- The Relational/Connected Self
- The Emotionally Strained Self

I work in the Inclusion Team urm with Claire who is the SENDCo

I support the parent, look at the behaviour of the child, social and emotional development and behavioural development

I would work with the Learning Mentors

I usually… set the programs, if you like, we look at what the requirement is

I usually do that in conjunction with, Ed-Psych have looked at it, have looked at things before

I usually do it consultation with somebody else if possible.

I think there would have been about 9 years and Mum had met Dad when she was 15

I, in my opinion, is almost like a grooming situation in a way

I became involved as part of the core group

I supported the parents with different issues.

I did work with the parents about, there were lots of parenting issues including lack supervision, behaviour boundaries and praise and sanctions

I think for Joe we never

I think that they could both be physical

I think Mum had her nose broken, she did hit Dad with something,

I think from Joe's point of view we, we had not assumed, but we have sort of ascertained of different things

I think Dad died, umm, I would have to check that but I am sure, yeah, in February 2015 Dad died.

I think he would do that sexually, he always thought that she was having affairs,

I think he intimidated her sexually

I think was quite open in front of Joe about intimidating her sexually and about calling her names

I think Joe has witnessed a lot of sexual intimidation of Mum from Dad.

I mean that, and that the, you know, emotional abuse

I think that Joe's attitude to women I think is a result of that

I think he is so traumatised by the fact that he, you know, from Joe's point of view, everybody he loves, leaves or dies,

I actually went on SEAL training

I shall be doing some of the activities on there with him as it will be perfect for Joe

I think the emotional harm that he has suffered through that very destructive relationship between Mum and Dad

I think that yesterday I spoke to his one to one and she said that they had had a great day

I said that is fantastic will you let me give you a sticker, da da dah, which we try to do for a quick quick reward

I said to him on Monday you know what if you can come in the morning and Grandad can say to me that you've had a good morning and you haven't called him names

I spoke to his one to one just after dinnertime and she said he had been brilliant up to the last five minutes

I don't know, she said lairy, you know shouting and singing inappropriate things and just acting, just acting out really

I don't know express it or, you know

I mean, the bonding through play thing has been very successful for him to build a bond with the one to one that does it.

I think we've done, we've done Boxall profiles on him before

I mean is 10 now, he just turned 10 in December

I spoke to Martha, she self-assessed it, it was about 3.5/4 *so* it's that, that spontaneity, you know that spontaneity, that a, tot, that a small child would have

I think, he thinks like a very young child who, who, doesn't always make that judgement and can't, you know

I brought

I wrote a…

I, we feel, you know in sort of chatting to everybody else

I feel that school have reached…urm…the the limit of our expertise in, being helpful to Joe on a long term basis.

I feel we contain him.

I think we give him what we need as much as we can but..

I mean, I've… you know, we, the sexual behaviour urm, the sexual behaviour

I will do that work with Joe myself

I am the only one really that would feel comfortable doing that

I explained to the social worker

I only feel comfortable doing that to a certain level

I'm not a sexual health worker

I can do very low level stuff

I'll use some SEAL resources

I feel as though he's had everything that we could give.

I wouldn't say we are any further on really

I mean, you know, his his delay, educationally, his delay's still two years in all areas

I mean he is making progress,

I …don't… feel… that we have achieved anything long term with Joe

I think that he and you know in the end we knew his little sister would be removed from Mum

I think that he's just so damaged

I don't think,

I don't think we're doin anything from a long term point of view

I just…his behaviour is up and down

I mean, I mean, you know…

I mean I'm not in any way an expert,

I think he needs somebody to *unravel it*,

I just feel, it just feel as though he needs more of a structured program

I understand…

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I think that

I mean that I'm not….

I might be talking rubbish

I think that maybe some children have got to get to a certain point of maturity to be able to, be very, to be more receptive

I'm sure but I think that he needs to be, he needs to, to understand what's happened to him and to process it

I think that's what, that's what I feel he needs.

I think that we can't address that, because we're not psychotherapists

I think he's urm an explosion waiting to happen

which I haven't mentioned before is…

I went into a school the other day

I mentioned…

I… you know… so I, I don't think that helps

I just feel as though he, he needs help

I felt sad when…

I think he just says it, basically.

I think that he is, he's a potential, a real potential for… criminality

Stanzas

The Professional Self

I work in the Inclusion Team

I also work with the Learning Mentors

I support the parent

I would work with the Learning Mentors

I usually… set the programs

I became involved as the part of the core group

I supported parents for different issues.

I did work with the parents

I shall be doing some of the activities

I spoke to urm his one to one

I explained to the social worker

I can do very low level stuff

I mean he is making progress,

I mean I'm not in any way an expert

I went into a school the other day

The Relational Self

I, in my opinion, is almost like a grooming situation

I think for Joe we never

I think that they could both be physical

I think Mum had her nose broken

I think from Joe's point of view we had not assumed, but we have sort of ascertained of different things

I think he would do that sexually

I think he intimidated her sexually

I think was quite open in front of Joe

I think Joe has witnessed

I think that Joe's attitude to women

I think he he is so traumatised

I think the emotional harm that he has suffered

I said to him on Monday

I think has been very successful for him

I mean, he's 10 now

I think he thinks like a very young child

I, we feel, you know in sort of chatting to everybody else

I feel that school have reached...urm...the the limit of our expertise

I feel we contain him.

I think we give him what we need

I understand...

The Emotionally Strained Self – Frustration or Futility?

I'm the only one

I only feel comfortable doing that to a certain level

I'm not a sexual health worker

I feel as though he's had everything that we could give.

I wouldn't say we are any further on…

I …don't… feel… that we have achieved anything

I think that he and, and you know in the end,

I think that he's just so damaged

I don't think we're doin anything from a long term point of view

I just…his behaviour is up and down

I think he needs somebody to *unravel it*,

I just feel as though he needs, he needs, more of a structured program that will delve more into how the damage that he's suffered

I might be talking rubbish

I think that maybe some children have got to get to a certain point of maturity

I think that's what, that's what I feel he needs.

I think that we can't address that, because we're not psychotherapists

I think he's urm an explosion waiting to happen

I just feel as though he, he needs help

I think that he is, he's a potential, a real potential for… criminality