Linking the past to the future: An exploration of the educational experiences of children who have lived with domestic abuse

Dr Sarah Chestnutt
Linking The Past To The Future: The Educational Experiences Of Children Who Have Lived With Domestic Abuse

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Aims for Today

- Raise awareness about the impact of domestic violence (DV)
- Consider the role of psychology in understanding domestic violence
- Outline my doctoral research
- Share reflections from my research journey
What Is Domestic Violence?

“All 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 sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; emotional.”

(HM Government, 2013, Domestic violence and abuse: new definition)
Context

- Personal
- Theoretical
- Historical
- Socio-political

ADAPTED “CYCLE OF VIOLENCE” (WALKER, 1979)
Rationale

Children live and experience domestic violence and do so “with all of their senses. They hear it, see it and experience the aftermath” (Överlien & Hydén, 2009, p. 480).
Quiz
• What percent of men in England and Wales experienced DV between 2016-17?

• 1.2%
• 4.3%
• 9.3%

• Office for National Statistics (2017)
How many CYP under 18 years old will have experienced DVA at some point in their childhood?

- 1 in 7
- 1 in 20
- 1 in 10

- Radford et al (2011)
For those children who are ‘children in need’, what percentage were reported to have experienced DVA?

- 23%
- 11%
\* 50%

DfE (2016)
• How many people in England and Wales were killed as a result of DVA in a two year period (2014-16)?

• 54
• 216
• 453
• Office for National Statistics (2017)
How many incidents of DVA did the police respond to between April 2015 and March 2016 in the South West?

- 37,000
- 14,000
- 400,000

Office for National Statistics (2016)
• What ratio of CYP who witness DVA are in the same or next room as their parents?

• 3 out of 10
• 7 out of 10
• 9 out of 10
• Webster, Coombe and Stacey (2002)
• DV impacts on children’s:
  • Social, emotional and mental health (Thompson & Trice-Black, 2012)
  • Cognition and learning (Harold, Aitken, & Shelton, 2007)
  • Communication and interaction (Buckley, Holt & Whelan, 2007)
  • Sensory and physical development (Stanley & Humphreys, 2014)

• Interacting factors include:
  • Social deprivation (Osofsky, 2003)
  • Alcohol and drugs (Finney, 2004)
  • Long term (Artz et al., 2014)
Evidence-based support:
• Person-centred (Holt, Buckley & Whelan 2008)
• Collaborative (Ofsted, 2017)
• Systemic (Refuge, 2009)
• Targeted (Thompson & Trice-Black, 2012)
• Multi-agency response (Clarke & Wydall, 2015)

Ellis (2012) suggested that knowing a child well was found to be key in noticing differences in children and thus effectively safeguarding them.
Theory

Research

Practice

Theory
Methodology

• Interpretative
• Visual arts-based
• Soft Systems methodology *(Checkland, 1989, 2000)*
• Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
• Thematic analysis
• Ethical considerations
Aims and Research Questions

To explore the lived experience of children in educational settings who have experienced DV

• How do children describe their educational experiences through words and visual processes?
• What do children express is important to them for their education?
• To what extent are visual arts-based methods effective in describing children’s experiences of education?
To explore the implications for adults working with children who have experienced DV in educational settings

- What are the views of teachers about the impact of domestic abuse on children’s experience of education?
- To what extent do teachers feel that hearing about the views of children who have experienced domestic abuse will change their practice in teaching children affected by domestic abuse?
- In what ways is soft systems methodology an effective method of eliciting teacher perspectives?
Research Design

Phase 1: CYP's experiences of education

Phase 2: Teacher's perceptions of CYP
Phase 1
- Rapport building
- Map drawing
- Photographs
- Photobook

Phase 2
- SSM
- Focus group
Visual Arts-based Methodology
“seeing the world through the eyes of a child means literally getting down to the eye level and realizing the difference that scale makes in a person’s view of the world.”

(Clark & Moss, 2011, p.271)
Initial Emergent Themes
A rich picture about rich pictures

Themes
1. 
2. 
3.
**Problem** situation:
In school support for children who have experienced domestic abuse.

**Customers:** children and families

**Actors:** All members of staff
- external agencies
- children, families

**Transformation:** To have a system in place to support all victims of DV

**Weltanschauung:** more openly discussed

**Owners:** Government
- policy makers
- staff
- families

**Environments:**
- funding
- the area
- adult/teen abuse
- unemployment/Chavs

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**What to do? (P)**

To improve our system to support all victims of DV

**How to do it? (Q)**

- Having a more broad base of professionals involved to support victims
- We need to support children/victims to be more open to deal with issues

**Why do it? (R)**

A system to do (P)

**Do (P) by (Q) in order to (R)**

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1. Communicate information to all class-based staff on a need to know basis.
2. Training - systems currently in school
- "DV mentors"
3. Effective induction of new staff.
4. Re-deployment of members of staff - give time to deal with situations
5. Embedding the process - errors
6. Create more links with charities
7. Improving links with parents

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**Model**

Monitor

- Adult - adult
- Child - child
- Teen - teen

Review

- Performance
- Evaluating

Success
- Self learning
- Goals
- Challenges
Analysis

- **IPA** (Smith & Osborn, 2008)
  - Looking for themes in the first case
  - Connecting the themes
  - continuing the analysis with other cases
  - Writing up

- **Thematic analysis** (Braun & Clark, 2006)
  - Familiarise self with the data
  - Generating initial codes within the data
  - Searching for themes
  - Reviewing themes
  - Defining and naming themes
  - Producing the report
Results

Children's experiences of education

What is important about school?
- Playing
- Being outside
- Learning through play
- Places in school
- Formal learning
- Learning through dance
- Resources
- Practical problems

The research project

What is important to me?
- Identity
- Sharing about yourself
- Being part of the school
- Linking the past to the future
- Memories
- The future

What is important for me?
- Feeling safe
- Emotional support
- Safety
- Adults in school
- Relationships
- Family
- Peers
Figure 6: Thematic map of global and superordinate themes
Oliver: I did get star of the week when my old teacher was here.
Sarah: Did you?
Oliver: I like her a lot.
Sarah: Yeah.
Oliver: And, um, she's Miss ___.
Sarah: OK.
Oliver: And she said I had a good imagination.

Harry: It means, um, your learning skills, your reading skills, your writing skills and stuff like that so when you're older you can get a good job.
Sarah: Yeah.
Harry: So you can get loads of money, get a new job, get a nice job, get a nice house and stuff.

Jack: It's bas- it's kinda for like children who are like depressed and sad.
Sarah: Ok right.
Jack: And people go here with Miss ____ to do fun stuff.

George: Um, they used to have a ____ [city] thing up there.
Sarah: Did they? Up there?
George: Um, it was here.
Sarah: Yea.
George: I would've liked to take a picture of that because I come, I moved from ____ [city] to here.
Sarah: Yea.
George: But they haven't got that anymore.
Jack: So, so people can see this, they can kind of really think that this is an enjoyable place to play in .... So like they can play football and whatever they want up here .... So they can look at it and they want to join this school and stuff.
Lily profile

Within Lily’s sessions a central thread running throughout was that of peers and friendships. The social interactions seemed important to her experience of school and education. She talked about having good friends who could look out for her and who she could play with and have fun. There was an awareness of distinct gender groups for Lily. She many times mentioned that “boys do this” or “girls do that”.

Although Lily had recently begun attending the school she appeared to know all the parts well. In her map and taking pictures Lily tried to draw the whole picture and the main parts of the school. There was a sense of identity within her role as being part of the year 6 group. This was associated with being responsible and taking up roles in school. For example Lily seemed proud of her role as a mediator.

The outdoor areas were a focus for Lily, particularly the field and the play areas. She described each area as being designated to different year groups. Perhaps again linked to a sense of identity associated with each year group. There were clear areas which Lily perceived to be “allowed” or “not allowed”, and the rules associated with these areas. Adults and teachers in school were seen as making the rules in terms of providing permission. Alongside, adults were also seen as keeping children safe through their actions, for example, of observing at play-times.

Lily saw the school as a big space. She often described places as being “massive” or “really big”. Perhaps having a sense of space was seen as a positive.

There were various aspects of safety which were present for Lily. She seemed aware of the dangers of the playground based on a previous incident. Lily also mentioned some areas where she felt safe to be out of the way of harm, but she also noted places she liked to hide. Perhaps for Lily there were places of physical safety and also places of emotional safety, where she could go to calm.
Figure 10: Thematic map of global and organising themes
A huge section of our children, the teaching and learning, quality first teaching it, no going to hit them is it? ... cause they’re thinking so and so beat my mum and dad black and blue last night or I got locked in my bedroom or whoever threw me down the stairs last night. Yea and now you’re completing the themed adversial

playground as though it were second nature, it doesn’t stop, I think, I still need to be reassured in some form that you are doing the right thing. Cause you have a tendency to overcompensate.... you’re constantly being hit on a daily basis, it doesn’t stop, I think, I still need to be reassured in some form that you are doing the right thing, you have a tendency to overcompensate because some bugger else has got a big stick and was something that was the most important norm” (L2).
Shared themes

- Play
- Learning
- Place making
- Adults in school
- School
- Emotional literacy
- Safety
- Silence
- Friendships
- Parents
- Linking the past to the future
- The visual
- Positive lens
Educational Psychologists’ are well placed to...
Practice

• **Individual**
  - Therapeutic play experiences (Dodd, 2009)
  - Allow parental reflection on experiences using PCP or CBT to reframe thinking (Cort & Cline, 2017)
  - Highlight successes and protective factors (Zimmerman, 2013)
  - Use children’s views to inform support and provision planning (Kelly & Gray, 2000)
  - Identify and use methods to help children formulate their thoughts and feelings (Davie, Upton & Varma, 1996; Heath, 2015)
  - Ensure children are central to the evaluative process (Veigh, 2017)
  - Help schools identify children who may be experiencing the impact of being exposed to DV (Robinson, Myhill & Wire, 2017)
• Group
  • Early intervention is key (Ofsted, 2017)
  • Promote positive parent-child relationships (Dodd, 2009)
  • Interventions based on: healthy relationships, emotional literacy, positive interaction, resiliency building, safety (Babcock LDP, 2015)
  • Interventions with parent and child (Holt, Kirwan & Ngo, 2015)
  • Facilitating parenting programmes (Cort & Cline, 2017)
  • Develop individualised programmes of support for perpetrators and early intervention (Guy, Feinstein & Griffths, 2014)
**Practice**

- **Systems**
  - Raising awareness of the impact of DV on parents and their children (Sterne & Poole, 2010)
  - “mak[e] the invisibility of domestic violence visible” (Gallagher, 2014)
  - Support schools to understand DV and the reasons behind children’s behaviour (Buckley, Holt & Whelan, 2007)
  - Consultation with schools and families (Ellis, 2012)
  - Foster communication between school, family and other agencies
  - Support schools to provide nurture, security and predictability (Clarke & Wydall, 2015)
  - Support practitioners to recognise and respond to DV (Robinson et al., 2017)
  - Signposting
Appendix U: Resource for EPs

Resource for EPs when supporting children affected by DV

Resource for EPs

**Individual**
- Therapeutic play experiences (Dodd, 2009)
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“symbols can be the bridge between the past and the future which makes the present tolerable” (Rolston, 2010, p.300).
Challenges
STRIVE FOR progress NOT perfection

Supports
Only the beginning...
“Self doubt and fear of failure are simply reflections of the complexity of the task, not reflections on the individual confronting the task. The issue for writing is rarely one of the ability to write.....it is the task itself that is hard, complex and frustratingly difficult to coordinate and manage” (Cantwell, 2006, p183).
References
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