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# Conference edition

Papers drawn from the international  
Children and Childhoods Conference  
held at UCS—July 2015



# Welcome



**Richard Lister** Provost, UCS

Welcome to this fifth edition of the Childhood Remixed publication, our online journal promoting the interdisciplinary study of children and childhoods.

Childhood Remixed has been brought to you by colleagues in the The Unit for the Study of Childhood and Youth, part of iSEED, the Institute for Social, Educational and Enterprise Development.

The publication follows the hugely successful international Children and Childhoods conference at UCS last year. The biennial event welcomed over 90 delegates from around the world. Prestigious key note speakers, Professor Kirsten Stalker from the University of Strathclyde and Professor Ann Phoenix from the Thomas Coram Research Unit, University of London opened each day of the conference with their talks on contextualising disabled childhoods and childhood wellbeing.

This edition of Childhood Remixed is made up of contributions from presenters who attended the Children and Childhoods conference and therefore offers a befitting eclectic mix of interdisciplinarity.

University Campus Suffolk is at an exciting time in its development. In October 2015 we achieved Taught Degree Awarding Powers, a significant step in our journey towards independence which we hope to achieve this year. Our scholarly and research activity will continue to grow and become ever more central as we develop as an independent university. I am delighted to support publications such as Childhood Remixed which underpin and demonstrate our commitment to high quality, relevant and leading edge scholarly activity.

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Continued on next page...

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**Associate Professor Subasi Baybuga, Nurse Abdulmenaf Kilinc  
and Nurse Selman Coskun**

Mugla Sitki Kocman University School of Health Sciences

## The opinions of university students related to street children

### **Abstract**

The study was conducted at Mugla Sitki Kocman University (n:151) in April 2013. 55.6 % of the participants were aged between 22 -24. Out of the total participants, 56.3 % were females and 5.3 % were from East Anatolia Region. 78.0% of them met street children and declared that street children were shining shoes, using glue and etc. When they faced these street children, 47.3% felt pity and 4.2 % had a fearful reaction. 46.2 % of the participants had communication with street children, 53.3% thought that the society had preconceived ideas about them. They declared that street children had some core issues such as lack of housing (54.3%), lack of nutrition (3.3%) and education (10.6%). Participants reported that the street children had health problems, including communicable diseases (54.0%), chronic diseases (9.3%), and disrupted mental health (22.0%). 53.0 % of the participants expressed that providing services for this group was not sufficient, and suggested that they should be taken under the protection of the government (57.4 %), should be educated adequately (25.2 %) and given advisory support regarding vocational and career opportunities according to their abilities and skills (17.4 %), also more than half of the participants (66.2 %) wanted to get involved in activities for helping street children.

**Keywords:** Street Children, University students, Opinions

### **Introduction**

Currently, the increasing number of street children is one of the most important, social and global problems all over the world. Although the exact number of street children is not known (Sharma and Joshi, 2013, p.137), some organisations produce local estimates of the total number of street children in different regions of the world (Thaba, Ghatane and Rimal, 2009, p.273). The Asia-Pacific region is home to nearly half of the world's children, including large numbers of street children (Udin et al., 2014, p.1151). It is estimated that up to 120 or 150 million children live on

the streets all throughout the world (roughly 30 million in Africa, 30 million in Asia and 60 million in South America) (Mandalazi and Umar, 2013, p.1; Subarna, 2014, p.63). For example, India alone is home to the world's largest population of street children (Sharma and Joshi, 2013, p.137), estimated to be 18 million. Also, there are about 445,226 street children in Bangladesh at present and the number is continuously rising (Udin et al., 2014, p.1151). In Turkey, although the studies have been limited for revealing number of the street children, (Günes ve Kalaycı, 2004, p.5) number of street children have increased, at least 42,000 children are estimated to be living or working on the streets. The data related to exact number of street children is not available. UNICEF (2002, p.89) defined the street children into three classifications: candidates for the street, children on the street, and children of the street. Children on the street are those with a tendency of working on the streets during the day and returning to a home at night. These are children who work and maintain fairly regular relationships with their families. Children of the street are those who live on the streets without any functional family support. They have no home to return to, and often do not have any family protection or supervision (Ennew, 2003, p.15), also the streets are where they eat, sleep, play and make friends (Njoroge et al., 2013, p.217).

Majority of street children come from poor families, hunger, running-away from home, torture by step-mother/father, unemployment, rural to urban migration, rapid urbanization, war, political instability, natural calamities, family breakdown and violence including physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and also uncontrolled population increase and unequal distribution of income, deprivation from education were the main reasons that caused them to leave their families (Thaba, Ghatane and Rimal, 2009, p.273; Eme et al. 2009, p.11; Kocadas, 2011, p. 51; Gebrehiwet et al. 2014, p.11; Udin et al. 2014, p. 1151).

These factors are interrelated, affecting children's experiences of family life and their social, economic, and psychological coping strategies, both on the street and at home (Abdellah, 2015, p.820). These children are usually devoid from basic human and all sort of child rights and have inadequate access to food, clothings, accommodation, education, social facilities and services (Rafi, 2012, p.194; Udin et al. 2014, p.1151; Subarna, 2014, p. 64). Mandaliza (2013, p.1). Most of the street children are living in various kinds of health risks, specially high degree of exposure to sexual abuse, suffering from victims of drug addiction, general exploitation, criminal acts, physical violence, verbal abuse, and monetary extortion by peers and adults, including parents, other relatives, police, and sex work clients (Rafi, 2012, p.194; Woan, 2013, p.316). As street children have no inadequately protection and supervision by responsible adults for living on the street (UNICEF, 2002, p.89; Islam, Debroy and Sarma, 2014, p.233 ), they grow up without companionship, love and protection, having no access

to education or medical services, losing all dignity and becoming an adult before even having been a child (Mandaliza (2013, p.1).

As a result, street children are a highly vulnerable group among the risk groups in the society, and cope with various situations due to their life-style and stigmatation by society. They are most often viewed as delinquents, criminals, drug addicts, and simply the rubbish of society. As it is shown above situations lead to self-exclusion from society, there is no provision of services for street children.

It is known that today's children are the future of society, for creating the world of tomorrow. Therefore, all sectors of society should take the necessary steps so that we can build a better future of society. Community involvement and contribution is very important to provide services for the street children. University students constitute an important part of the society. They are participants to work and perform various activities in the society. It is thought that the present study is valuable in that it shows opinions of university students towards street children and encourages them to join in empowering street children.

### **The aim of the study**

The descriptive study was carried out to research the opinions of university students related to street children.

### **Materials and methods**

This study was conducted in Mugla Sitki Kocman University, which is located in the western part of Turkey. 151 university students participated in the study. A questionnaire form was used for collecting data and this was done in person at the university campus in April 2013. Questionnaire form included a total of 25 questions. A pilot study was conducted by the authors on 10 university students. Before data collection the subjects were informed the aim of the study and written consent was obtained from each participant. The filling of the questionnaire usually took about 10 minutes. Obtained data were evaluated by frequency and percentages by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows (16.0). Demographic characteristics of participants were evaluated as independent variables, also opinions towards to street children as dependent variables in the study.

### **Results**

The findings showed that 29.7% were educated in Education Faculty and 25.8% in Nursing. 55.6 % were ages between 22 -24, 56.3 % were female. 99.3% were unmarried, 77.5% had nuclear family, 89.3 percent had security system, 16.6% were from South Anatolia Region (Table1). 77.5% of participants met street children, while selling something (paper, tissues, water and bag )(68.0%), shining shoes (17.0%), using glue (10.2%), respectively. Participants described street children as they had poor family



relationships (18.1 % ), non-parents (3.5 %), orphan (58.3%), living on the street (18.1%), forced to work on the street (2.0%) in the table 2. Not included in table 2, respondents stated that street children work on the street such as selling tissues, water, napkins; 57.4%, cleaning car glass during heavy traffic on the streets; 8.1%, begging; 20.9%, drug dealing; 2.7%, snatching 5.4%, and also at the same percent street children (5.4%) shoe shiners, garbage collectors, drug courier 5.4% respectively.

As shown table 2, while subjects faced street children; they felt pity (52.1%), feared (4.2%), and also communicated with street children (46.2%). Some of them (41.0%) had difficulties in communicating with street children, some reasons expressed for these difficulties: excessive anxiety and angry (45.7%), language problems (5.0%), embarrassed (16.9%), a few of them (5.0%) did not want to talk to street children.

53.3% of participants thought that the community preconceived towards to street children. 18.7% of them thought that society saw them as useless and they excluded by society (1.3 percent). Subjects declared that street children had problems as housing (54.3%), lack of nutrition (3.3%), lack of education (10.6%), lack of interest and family love (27.8%), and had difficulties about friendships and other relations, they faced exclusion from society, were exposed to violence and forced to commit crime 4.0 % (Table 2).

Participants indicated that children had health problems as communicable diseases (54.0%), chronic diseases (9.3%), growth retardation (12.0%) disrupted mental health (22.0%), also nutrition problems and lack of hygiene (2.7%) in table 2. 25.7 % of them did not know what kind of providing services for the street children and 53.3 % expressed that providing services for this group were not sufficient (Table 2). Not included in the table 2, they reported some reasons for this view such as lack of public institutions (40.6%), lack of education because of preconceived ideas about the street children (31.7%) and lack of providing services 27.7%, respectively. And, participant stated that professional team composed of public institutions and organizations (50.0%), pedagogue and child development (24.7%), vocational training institutions, social workers and security forces for providing services for street children. Their expressions suggested that street children should be; taken under the protection by government (57.4 %), educated (25.2 %) and advised about professional opportunities according to their abilities (17.4 %). More than half of the participants (66.2 %) wanted to get involved in activities for the street children (Table 2).

## Discussion

There is limited literature available on opinions of society or university students related to street children. We thought that this study's results are

valuable for gaining knowledge and close some gap about this topic.

In the present study, 77.5 % of participants met street children, while selling something 68.3 %, shining shoes 17.0 %, using glue 10.2% and sleeping, begging etc.).

Subarna (2014, p. 63) and Gebrehiwet et al. (2014, p. 11) reported street children as drug addicts and about seventy percent of them were having preference to sniff in group, also around 80.9% were substance abusers (Islam, Debroy and Sarma (2014, p.235), respectively. Sharma and Joshi (2013, p.140) point that children abuse substances for a number of reasons, from curiosity, recreation to cope with stress as personal factors, however drug abuse and addiction lead to a complex set of social, medical and economic problems. Ribeiro and Ciampone (2001, p.47) indicated that drug use lead to cause physical, mental damage, and hamper children's social relations.

In the present study, about half of participants connected to street children (46.2%), but they had some difficulties related to communication with them. It was thought that students do not get in touch with street children, undoubtedly have a prejudice against this group. As a result, that view may have lead to stigmatization of street children and their exclusion from society. This approach can be seen to negatively affect participation of university students to perform activities for these children.

In the present study, 53.3% of participants thought that the community had preconceived notions about street children and 18.7% saw them as useless and excluded by society (1.3%).

Stigmatizing attitudes in society towards street children are seen common. Aker, Dünder and Peksen (2007, p. 90) reported that media seems to use a trend to stigmatise and delectate street children as delinquents, addict drugs or AIDS virus carriers. These views are a major cause of society's perception of the street children becoming worse. Also, most of the adults think of the street children as a social scourge (Aker, Dünder and Peksen, 2007, p.88 ). When labeled, the identity and characteristics of the labeled person are considered no longer important. Society perceives labeled individuals independent from real behaviors and identity, and also set their attitudes according to these conditions (Aker, Dünder and Peksen, 2007, p.84-85). There are common views of society about the street children as being branded as thieves, not having moral values, drug addicts, without any good feelings, and prostitution (as they have no other choice) (Ribeiro and Ciampone, 2001, p.47). Meanwhile, street children are seen as "vagrants", "illegal vendors" or "truants" by both the law and the general public (UNICEF, 2002, p.102), Bilgin (2012, p.82 ) indicated that street children had faced a lot of problems in the street and experienced negative perception by society. In the UNICEF Report (2002, p.97) street children were questioned as to what they felt were the general public's opinions about them as "street children". More than a third (35.1%) felt that the

general public disliked them, 28% mentioned they were seen as hooligans and that they should be forcefully removed from streets, while 24.9% reported that the general public was very supportive (UNICEF, 2002, p.97). 57% children on the street are victims of violence by the police and 36.7% by common citizens (Ribeiro, 2008, p.90). All of mentioned above and continuous exposure to harsh environmental conditions and the nature of their life-style threatens their mental, physical, social and spiritual health (Thaba, Ghatane and Rimal, 2009, p.272), and leads to feel aggression towards other people and has negative effects on the street children's physical and mental development.

Participants described that street children had poor family relationships (18.1%), non-parents (3.5%), and orphan (58.3%) in the study. These underlying factors can be some causes pushing children onto the streets. When children start to live on the street, they have no available protection and supervision by adults. These situations threaten children's health conditions and lives.

Participants in the present study declared that street children were work as selling tissues, water, napkins, cleaning car glass during heavy traffic on the streets, begging, snatching, shining shoes, garbage collectors, drug dealing and drug courier, respectively. Street children work in informal economies as vendors, parking attendants, street performers, garbage collectors and recyclers, shoe shiners, sex workers, or petty thieves (Woan, 2013, p.316). Similarly, the study conducted by Ribeiro and Chimpo (2014, p.44) revealed that children work collecting the waste papers, cleaning cars and shoe shiners. They face risks that depend on their working activities as traffic accidents and various types of abuse (verbal and physical) due to working on heavy traffic and crowded streets.

More than half of the participants (66.2 %) wanted to take place in activities for the street children, but others did not (33.8%). Young people during their university experience should be made aware of social responsibility, including participation. Awareness is not only gained educational institutions, but also local authorities and civil initiatives (Özer, 2011, p.43). Thus, students should be encouraged and prepared to participate in planned educational programs for street children.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the research findings university students are being made aware of street children having difficulties and they want to establish relationships with them and want to take part in activities for the street children. Currently, it can be recommended that university students should be encouraged to provide services and activities for the street children. On a regular basis, interviews, seminars, home visits and educational activities should be undertaken. In addition to that, the media should work on programs for facilitating awareness of the issues street children face

and to encourage the society to make a positive impact. Topics related to vulnerable groups especially street children should be put in education curriculum. Furthermore, comprehensive and analytic research on opinions of society on street children should be done on larger participation.

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**Table 1:Socio demographic characteristics of participants (n:151)**

Characteristics	n	%
<b>Faculty/Department</b>		
Nursing	39	25.8
Education	45	29.7
Engineering	13	7.0
Science	16	10.5
Other (Physiotherapy, Literature, Sports, others etc.)	38	27.0
<b>Age</b>		
19-21	55	36.4
22-24	84	55.6
25 and over	12	
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	85	56.3
Male	66	43.7
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	1	0.7
Unmarried	150	99.3
<b>Status of Social Security</b>		
Yes	134	89.3
No	17	10.7
<b>Types of Family</b>		
Nuclear	117	77.5
Extended family	32	21.1
Other (Broken Family and dead mother and father )	2	1.4
<b>Coming from region</b>		
Aegean Sea	32	21.1
Mediterranean Sea	38	25.2
Black Sea	6	4.0
East Anatolia	8	5.3
South East Anatolia	25	16.6
Marmara	23	15.2
Central Anatolia	19	12.6

Continued on next page...



**Table 2: Participants' Opinions About Street Children, providing Services, Difficulties and Health Problems**

	n	%
<b>Definition of street children (n:144)</b>		
Poorly family relationship	26	18.1
Non-parents	5	3.5
Orphan	84	58.3
Living on the street	26	18.1
Forced work on the street	3	2.0
<b>Status meeting to street children</b>		
Yes	117	77.5
No	34	22.5
<b>Place of meeting to street children (n:117)*</b>		
Selling something	80	68.3
Shining shoes	20	17.0
Using Glue	12	10.2
Other (sleeping, begging etc.)	7	5.9
<b>First feelings when meeting with street Children (n:117)*</b>		
Disappointment	12	10.2
Pity	61	52.1
Worried	40	34.1
Feared	5	4.2
Other (Curiosity, guiltiness, empathy, etc).	11	9.4
<b>Communication with street children (n:145)</b>		
Yes	67	46.2
No	78	53.8
<b>Communicational difficulties with street children (n:146)</b>		
Yes	59	41.0
No	87	59.0
<b>Reason of Difficulties (n:59)</b>		
Excessive anxiety and angry	27	45.7
Self-conscious	18	30.5
Shaming	10	16.9
Language problem	3	5.0
Other (fear, did not to talk etc.)	3	5.0
<b>Opinions on providing services for street children (n:148)</b>		
Unknown	38	25.7
Sufficient	31	21.0
Not sufficient	79	53.3
<b>Opinions on society's perceptions about street children (n:150)</b>		
Preconceived		
No given work	80	53.3
Seen useless	40	26.7
Exclusion from society	28	18.7
	2	1.3
<b>Suggestions about required services for street children (n:115)</b>		
It should be put under government	66	57.4
It should be educated adequately	29	25.2
It should be guidanced according to professional skills	20	17.4

Continued on next page...

<b>Opinions about problems of street children (n:151)</b>		
Housing	82	54.3
Lack of nutrition	5	3.3
Lack of education	16	10.6
Lack of interest and family love	42	27.8
Other (Difficulties in relationships with peers, expose to violence and commit to crime etc.)	6	4.0
<b>Opinion about having health problems of street children (n:150)</b>		
Communicable diseases		
Chronic diseases	81	54.0
Growth retardation	14	9.3
Disrupted of mental health	18	12.0
Others (malnutrition, lack of hygiene etc.)	33	22.0
	4	2.7
<b>Opinion about taking in activities for street children n:146)</b>		
Yes	98	66.2
No	48	33.8

\* Participants had given more answers.



**Dianne Belcher-Hackett**

Student, BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies, University Campus Suffolk

## Dissertation poster

**Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to discover the possible correlation between pre-school children's television programmes; the main choice of media for children (Gutnick et al. 2011), and the promotion of the ever increasing internet usage in 5 and under age group children (Ofcom, 2014 p.7) by the use of oral, visual and written means. The data collected could be used to advice policy guidance for compulsory e-safety guidance in pre-school establishments and not just limited to schools (Ofsted, 2014). A quantitative content analysis research design was implemented in order to discover the frequencies in which the internet was referred to by the means of verbal and non-verbal communication. The analysis took place on the week beginning 9th February 2015 for five days Monday – Friday. The time was selected due to being the most popular for children to be participating in television viewing (Ofcom, 2003 p.15). The pre-school child's channel CBeebies was chosen due to its popularity in the selected age group (BARB, 2014 online).

Five main themes were discovered throughout the analysis, the main over-arching finding being that the majority of internet based references occurred in the morning time slot with a significantly reduced amount occurring in the evening. A reference to the internet was 3 times more likely to appear in the morning than in the evening, appearing on average every 9 minutes 40 seconds. However, if the results are split between the actual programmes shown and the presenter time results are dramatically different. An internet reference by the presenter is 2 and a half more times more likely to appear in the presenter time than in an actual programme, demonstrating that the presenter uses verbal and non-verbal communication regarding the internet every 4 minutes 26 seconds compared to every 11 minutes 48 seconds made be programmes. Although this is a small scale research project and a larger scale project would be advantageous in order to make more valid conclusions (Bell, 1999 p.58), the findings have formed a number of useful themes and began to prove that television may have an influence in internet usage in pre-school children and compulsory e-safety guidance in pre-school would be advantageous.

Internet usage is greatly increasing in the 5 and under age group with more than one in ten children aged 3-4 years old now owning their own internet-ready device (Ofcom, 2014 p.7). To what extent could pre-school children's television be described as promoting this increase, using verbal and non-verbal communication?

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### Background

The 5 and under age group have increasing access to the internet, yet little research exists for this age group. Society has generated a moral panic in the contemporary world with a particularly fear of online safety (Livingstone, 2003 p.6). Young children access the internet through a number of devices (Ofcom, 2014 p.7) and internet activity has grown dramatically over the past 10 years (European Commission 2008). This research project examines to what extent pre-school children's television promotes this usage by referring to the internet by means of verbal and non-verbal communication.



### Methodology

- Quantitative content analysis selected as it enabled the studies objectives to be best analysed and recorded
- Independent variable data collection for the selected television channel (CBeebies) took place over one week between 7-9am and 5-7pm.
- A coding frame was developed and marked when any of the identified themes were mentioned. This coding frame contained very detailed information as to where each internet reference took place

### Objectives

- To use content analysis to discover the extent of television reinforcing internet by the use of verbal and non-verbal communication.
- To provide a quantitative analysis of the number of internet references contained within the channel CBeebies, designed for pre-school children.
- To discover any over-arching themes in the content analysed.
- To investigate how findings could advise policy changes in compulsory e-safety guidance in pre-school settings.



### Findings

- More occurrence's in morning than evening – overall 44.4% of programmes included a reference, 3 times more likely to occur in the morning than the afternoon
- Type of reference more child orientated by using verbal prompts and device presence compared to written web sites which could be described as more adult focussed
- Internet is multi-faceted (Livingstone, 2003 p.158) demonstrated by the presence of 5 types of devices found during the analysis.
- Devices more likely to be in use rather than passive/in the background. Findings showed 89% of devices were in use compared to 11% passive/not used when recorded
- More presenter references made than programme occurrence's. Overall, references occur every 9 minutes and 40 seconds.
- Occurrence's are more than twice as likely to appear in the presenter time than during programme content



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### Picture

- World Picture: <http://www.dofeve.org/uploads/6/1/7/9/617942/5533045.jpg?578>
- Aristocrat: <http://calcentrist.org/aristocrat.jpg>
- Hysteria: <http://img2.timeinc.net/health/images/gallery/living/hysteria-women-history-400x400.jpg>
- Why: [http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_ilVgx1VRxIY/SILhx4tSQLI/AAAAAAAAAJg/oQez9hPkuFI/s400/5-why-with-girl.png](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_ilVgx1VRxIY/SILhx4tSQLI/AAAAAAAAAJg/oQez9hPkuFI/s400/5-why-with-girl.png)
- Protecting the Tradition: <https://specs12.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/culture-elements-red-chart-2.jpg?w=300&h=225>
- Child Abuse: <https://62e528761d0685343e1c-f3d1b99a743ffa4142d9d7f1978d9686.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/files/25432/article/width668/75gh3tk3-1371058614.jpg>
- Cultural Relativism: [http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-M\\_ukPLnKs1o/T2eR51rU6eI/AAAAAAAAAU/XD6b\\_nSAzLI/s320/untitled-1.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-M_ukPLnKs1o/T2eR51rU6eI/AAAAAAAAAU/XD6b_nSAzLI/s320/untitled-1.jpg)
- Moral Relativism: <https://conversationsonthefringe.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/moral-relativism.jpg>
- Ethical Relativism: [http://www.drewsmarketingminute.com/images/2011/11/bigstock\\_Question\\_mark\\_symbol\\_dice\\_roll\\_18529607.jpg](http://www.drewsmarketingminute.com/images/2011/11/bigstock_Question_mark_symbol_dice_roll_18529607.jpg)





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## Anti-racist Brazilian child education: learning from children perspectives

### **Abstract**

On one hand, this study takes into account the historical moment of tackling racism in Brazil, translated into affirmative action policies, most notably through the Law 10.639/03; and on the other hand, it presents a methodological discussion on research with children emphasizing the assumption of children's views. The general objective is to understand how children comprehend the knowledge of African and African- Brazilian culture in school. The theoretical perspectives adopted are Cultural Studies, Postcolonial and South Epistemologies Studies, the Sociology of Childhood, and the Historical-Cultural Psychology. This work is an ethnographic case study carried out in a private school in kindergarten and elementary school in the fifth biggest city in Brazil. The corpus consisted of field diaries and video recordings of the activities performed by children as well as transcribed interviews (of families and school staff). The maintenance and dynamics of child social groups were based on previous cohabitation, gender, and presence or absence of disability. The black ethnic-racial identity was taken at first by children as a control strategy in the peer group (a black girl was discriminated), and that strategy was neutralized by the school. The significance of African and African-Brazilian history and culture is marked by heterogeneous discourses and selective invisibility, organizing itself in a performative and paradoxical way. The placements of children ranged between approximation / identification / recognition and rejection / cancellation of ethnicity / black / African race, flanked by greater identification with indigenous and European / white, reproducing interpretively the paradoxes perceived in how African culture is transmitted in school and in Brazilian society.

### **Key-Words**

Anti-racist education, Brazilian Children, Sociology of Childhood.

**Introduction**

This paper summarizes the findings of Rocha's thesis (2015) that deals with the perspective of childhood cultures in the context of early childhood education, during the process of teaching African and African-Brazilian history and culture (Law 10.639/03). The guiding question was: how do contemporary children, who experience the uprooting and the obliteration of their ethnic-racial belonging, understand the knowledge of African and African-Brazilian history and culture mediated by the school? It aimed to understand, in general, how they interpret such knowledge in school. Specifically, we discussed the role of the early childhood school as a mediator of knowledge about African and African- Brazilian history and culture; we debated the flow of meanings attributed by children to ethnic-racial relations in school and discussed their ethnic-racial relations experience in the school context, from the perspective of childhood cultures. Thus, we focused on racial-ethnic identities, from the children's point of view, when inserted in affirmative pedagogical practices of African and African-Brazilian history and culture.

**Context of the Study**

Education as a scene of knowledge and power legitimacy brings into play the desirable development and acceptable actors of human development, in personal and collective terms. The construction of identities, their metamorphosis and maintenance, have a privileged place at school. As it is understood in the Law 10.639/03, schools are important mediators of knowledge about African and African-Brazilian history and culture. This is a law that recognizes the racist heritage in the structure of Brazilian society and the need of a political commitment in order to educate on how to combat it. How does the school get to fulfil this role? What teaching strategies are used to cope with this task? How do children engage in these strategies?

The discursive place of blackness in Brazil is paradoxical. As race and ethnicity are social constructions, Brazilians sometimes reject identification with their black roots, especially as body aesthetics, or celebrate the presence of African culture in Brazil's history and daily life. "Brown" is widely used as a racial classification category by the Brazilian population and institutions. This is a good example of this paradox, as it reveals the deletion of the black race / ethnicity, and the impossibility of identification with the white race / ethnicity. "Brown" is a category without racial-ethnic identification, built as a result of unsuccessful efforts toward a whitening of the Brazilian people, through European immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century. The reconnection with Africa in terms of its epistemology is therefore strategic, as the Law 10.639/03 considers, by expanding the understanding that this continent, as well as an archaeological cradle of humanity, is also a source of knowledge such as music, mathematics and philosophy.

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework consisted of a matrix made of Sociology of childhood (Corsaro, 2011; James et al., 1998), Epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2010), Postcolonial Studies (Fanon, 2008; Quijano, 2010) and Cultural Studies (Hall, 2006). From the sociology of childhood, we have the understanding of childhood as historical and social time and children as subjects and agents (James et al., 1998), able to co-create culture in relative autonomy with the adult world (Corsaro, 2011). Adults and children are positioned by issues of class and race/ethnicity, constructed as hierarchical and unidirectional positions, in which the younger would be submitted to the older, by their vulnerability at birth. Santos's (2010) Epistemologies of the South contributed to the understanding of the construction of binary terms (black/white, north/south, culture/nature) and how they survived, even after the decline of colonial societies. Thinking like those authors made us better prepared to understand how children, even in submission situations, can produce knowledge denouncing the world's current crisis in its ways of understanding. Postcolonial studies (Quijano, 2010) provided a reflection on the colonial relations that are still part of the globalized life and educational relations. They also established efforts to break away from the living legacies of colonialism. Identity, through Cultural Studies (Hall, 2006) is perceived as a social construction that is negotiated in relation, marked by the maintenance of racism.

The broader cultural social and historical context, which comprises school, children and families, is highlighted by the dispute over the discourses about the black and African issues in Brazil. The paradoxes of this context are:

- a) the fact that Brazil, even with an extremely fluid perception of race / ethnicity and not presenting a defined "color line", also features several hierarchies based on race/ethnicity, as for example, school racial bullying, preference for white phenotype as a synonym for beauty;
- b) the abysmal social indicators of wealth, education and violence, placing white men as privileged and black women as impaired, coexisting with the racial democracy ideology—that claims the existence of equal conditions, denying prejudice;
- c) the selective visibility of Africa as an exotic ethnicity allied to positive affirmation of Brazilian identity as black, stay side by side with the continuity of a silencing about the whiteness and its privileges.

### **Literature review**

In Brazil, Cavalleiro (2011), in a seminal work on racism at school, breaks the silence on the situation of ethnic-racial relations in childhood education. While she herself considered her search as one more in the set of information about black people's experience in Brazil, her study has indeed become a reference for understanding the black child in kindergarten. As

a teacher of children aged between four and five years, the researcher noticed the existence of a negative identity in black children, and feelings of superiority in white children at this early age. She observed children, families and environment from three pre-school classes in a public school in São Paulo. She focused on verbal expression, nonverbal practices and pedagogical practices. The study, conducted in the mid-1990s, concluded that schools and families ignore the multi-ethnic character of the global society as well as racism in Brazilian society, remaining silent about prejudiced practices suffered in their daily life. Cavalleiro (2011, p.101) states: "It is therefore essential to draw up a work that promotes mutual respect, recognition of differences, that can talk about them without fear and without prejudice".

Gomes (2002) discussed links between the school and the black identity, based on the view that schools share values, beliefs and prejudices that are important in identity negotiation processes. The author argues that schools' approaches to contents in literature and history made ethnic-racial and gender issues invisible, contributing to the fragmentation of ethnic-racial identity of children and identifying racial difference as a disability. She highlighted the fact that the identity process is not restricted to the private sphere, and to emphasize this fact, she brings to the relational context the black identity issue at the school. This approach, in addition, brings white people to an ethnic-racial experience in a multi-ethnic culture.

Costa, Colaço and Costa (2007) tell us about the emblematic report of a teacher, challenged by a student who complains of a colleague that had referenced skin colour as a racial insult. Initially, the teacher seeks to protect the child, bringing her close and then, when the situation is repeated, encourages children to adopt an affirmative attitude, claiming that she is, indeed, black. This procedure is an example of how the child who practiced racial bullying was subtly not questioned, since the teacher only dialogued with the one that was complaining. This leads us to think about the difficulties of tackling racism, which is always the burden of the one that is, already, being harmed; in this case, the black child.

### **The aims and objectives of the study**

The main question was: how do children, set in a culture strongly marked by rootlessness and the obliteration of the ethnic-racial belonging, interpret ethno-racial identities transmitted in the school context of an early childhood education tackling racism? As hypotheses:

- a) The meanings attributed by the children in their interpretive reproduction (Corsaro, 2011) of the African and African-Brazilian history and culture, is a reposition of the constituent interracial conflicts of Brazilian society, which also are present at the school;
- b) These meanings are constructed as paradoxes in which children articulate the ambiguities of a broader cultural experience, marked

by racism and tensioned by equality values recommended by the pedagogical school intervention and the interracial interaction with their peers, where inequalities tend to reappear.

### **Methodology**

This study was a school ethnography with children (Corsaro, 2011), conducted in a private school with recognized work in the field. It is located at Fortaleza, the fifth biggest city in Brazil and the main city of Ceará, in the north-east of the country. The researcher observed twenty-two children between six and eight years, of a kindergarten and first year group, between August 2012 and August 2013. This group seems to be quite homogeneous regarding age and social classes, differing from race, gender (eleven boys and eleven girls) and the presence or absence of disability (one boy with Down Syndrome and one boy with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). Race and ethnicity, as social constructions, were in a process of constant negotiation, and several different identifications were established by children throughout the study. This way, it is not possible to have an answer about how many were white or black. At first two children (a boy and a girl) were identified by teachers as black, but this is not the main question. Interviews were conducted with parents, staff and management, reinforcing the fact that they did not feel capable or comfortable to classify themselves or the children, and this is what is to be analyzed. The recordings were made from field diaries, video recordings and photographs and are shortly summarized below.

### **Analysis**

We recall that “routines, not individuals will be analyzed” (Corsaro, 2011, p. 128). A specific objective of this study was the recognition and understanding of diverse voices at school and also the flow of meanings attributed by children to ethnic-racial relations in schools’ rites. We selected the voices below:

- a) equality and celebration of differences
- b) absence of black people in Ceará
- c) the celebration and affirmation of African culture manifestations.

Ceará is known as the first state to abolish slavery, in 1884, but, paradoxically, its traditional historiography stated that black population was not significant in Ceará. This has been tackled by researchers such as Ratts (2009), whose toponymic survey found African influences in various locations from Ceará, like Mocambo, Quilombo, among others. In the same direction, Santos and Cunha Júnior (2010) ask:

*One of the strong conceptual problems persisting in the approaches to African descents in Ceará’s culture is related to the limitation of the ideas of biological race and social race. Black and white people are*



*seen as separate and fixed phenotypes groups, ideological forms. In this way miscegenation is seen as dissolution of the black group. So they do not transform this into another group, but simply disappear. It is also be confused the cultural, social and economic history with the biological perception of race and miscegenation. So, the denial of African descent in their historical aspects is wrongly done based on the dissolution of the black as a concept of mestizaje. However the same conceptual operation is not repeated with the white ones or with what is considered as European culture.*

Such voices paradoxically wish to maintain white privilege as invisible along with the subordinate place of the black population while coexisting with the demand for more equal relations between whites and blacks. To this end, they denounce privileges in history but deny their maintenance. This dialogized heteroglossia (Faraco, 2011), in which the discourses on race/ethnicity appear wrapped in disagreements, constraints, controversies, ambiguities and paradoxes, is not random. As we learned from children, the black race/ethnicity is organized through Selective Invisibility.

The Selective Invisibility consists of discourses that address negative representations to black people and make invisible positive representations about them, operating in reverse compared to whites. Thus, the response of children to the pleas made by the school to transmit knowledge about African and African-Brazilian history and culture appeared subtly, marked by strangeness, silences, deletions and denials regarding the black race / ethnicity as in children's discourses below:

*[...] teacher asked:—What does Africans enjoy doing ? Hugo quickly answered:—They enjoy being slaves!*

*Teacher reformulated the question, showing surprise:—Do they enjoy being slaves? Facing the new challenge of the teacher Hugo remade the answer:—No! They like to be free.*

*(Rocha, 2015, p.217)*

As for the experiences of ethno-racial relations in schools from the perspective of peer cultures, a case of discrimination occurred against a black girl, and she denounced those who did it. The school and the children involved discussed it, breaking the silence. However, families, at first, tried to silence her complaint because they understood prejudice as part of a normal development. Since they took it as an interpretive reproduction of children's daily lives, they engaged in discussion. The children who practiced discrimination could realize, with the pedagogical intervention, that racial criteria would not be accepted as a form of peer group adjustment in school culture.

The school stimulates the perception of ethnic/racial difference through the recognition and celebration of differences as a paradigm of

equality and respect. However, children showed us that a presupposed and abstract equality is not sufficient to question historical and current inequalities. Nevertheless, valuing equality, respect and peaceful coexistence between children can inhibit expressions of prejudice and discrimination.

### Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that in claiming children as subjects able to critique and to act, the school needs to consider relevant their understanding of the world. Supporting black children, given the structural racism, requires more than merely referring to a right equal footing. It means to question the whiteness as the only epistemic knowledge/power reference, ethics and aesthetics. This won't harm white children; on the contrary, it will make them understand that they are also racially and ethnically located in a discursive field that is trapped in an imaginary standard. At the same time that they are privileged, they also face an ideal form of identity that can imprison them.

Finally, we find that, by asking what children know about each other, we are led to know what we actually know of ourselves as a society. Although deeply silenced we can feel more and more the constraints and myopia that this imposes on us. Uncomfortable as it is, maybe we can do more to recognize racism and to combat its effects.

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## Promoting mental wellbeing in the move from primary to secondary education

The research reported on here was concerned with children considered to be at risk of disengaging with education on transition to secondary school. The research was commissioned by the Cambridgeshire Children's Trust to try and understand the underlying issues for these children. Mental wellbeing is increasingly being seen as the business of schools with programmes that emphasise wellbeing and competence rather than illness (Weare and Markham, 2005).

The concept of 'wellbeing' encompasses both physical and mental health. We can think of 'mental fitness' in a similar way to 'physical fitness', both contributing to wellbeing. Health promotion specialists are increasingly aware that health related behaviours are shaped and constrained by a range of social and community contexts, and that the ways in which individuals relate to wider social networks and communities have important effects on health and well-being. Neighbourhoods where people know each other and trust each other and where they have a say in the way the community is run can be a powerful support in coping with the day to day stresses of life which affect health (Morrow, 1999).

### **The case for promoting mental fitness**

- Promotion of child mental wellbeing has been especially important in UK policy. There is specific concern about children who are at risk or who are disadvantaged and whether promotion of wellbeing at a young age could change and improve their trajectories to achieve better outcomes at later points in their lives. A key part of children's social networks and communities is their school. The transition from primary to secondary school is a time when children can become disengaged from education and there is recognition that vulnerable young people may benefit from transitional programmes to support the move to the new school environment. Educational success enhances life opportunities and we already know that: educational disadvantage becomes entrenched by age 11.
- early education is not just about literacy and numeracy but also about developing children's social and emotional skills.

Continued on next page...

- the intergenerational cycle of poverty condemns children to a life without the chance to succeed.  
(Allen and Smith, 2009) *not sure how the 3 different affects link or are relevant to the move from primary to secondary ed?*

Wellbeing may be one of the mediators for successful outcomes. Allen and Smith (2009) focus on the need to intervene as early as possible in a child's life to break the circle of disadvantage and underachievement to help each child achieve their full potential. Their report emphasizes the importance of working with parents and families to address the cultural and material elements of a child's home life which impact upon later attainment. The evidence points to the possibility that remedial action at 11 years of age is often too late to make a substantial difference to the child in question, whereas intervention far earlier in childhood will be the most effective. We also know that poor mental health at 16 is a significant determinant for poor mental health outcomes into adulthood (Case Fertig & Paxson, 2005).

The case for promoting mental fitness can be developed, but how do we know which children and young people need such interventions and what would be the best interventions? Early intervention is a difficult concept since if it is universally offered, it is expensive and includes many people who do not need it, but it is unpopular to target early interventions for children.

The rationale for intervention in terms of mental health would include that:

- Children with poorer health have lower educational attainment, poorer health and lower social status as adults;
- Physical health is not as strongly associated with poor outcomes as mental health

The concept of intervention suggests that something needs to change. For example, if a child is behaving badly in school then an intervention could help by working with the child to develop better coping skills to help the child understand why the behaviour is not allowed, helping the child to change their current behaviour.

#### *Designing interventions*

Poor educational achievement is highlighted in the literature as a risk factor for becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) as adults. Factors which can be linked to poor educational attainment include negative experiences at school, lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, and persistent truancy. The community of school seems a promising area for intervening to promote mental wellbeing although it is hard to separate out the contribution of mental wellbeing to educational outcomes. Should a public health approach be taken (as in vaccination programmes) where



all children are offered school based interventions? This is an appealing approach as it does not label children in the way that a more targeted or focussed intervention would. Merry and Spence (2007) found no evidence that universal interventions worked as a promising prevention in schools to reduce depression. This finding is disappointing as using schools as a way to promote mental wellbeing is a promising model and cost effective model.

The transition to secondary school is a moment when poor engagement in education can be consolidated. It is often commented on that teachers can identify children who may have difficulty, and this study was designed to examine the mental wellbeing of children about whom teachers were concerned. These children were offered a summer activity programme to help their move to secondary school.

While popular, there are mixed findings concerning the effectiveness of activity projects:

- It is very difficult to evidence effectiveness for activity programmes on the emotional and social wellbeing of 'at risk' youth ;
- It is also very hard to show that early intervention of any sort improves outcomes for students and young people.

(Lubans, Plotnikoff, and Lubans, 2012)

Targeted interventions focus on children identified to be 'at risk'. A child who has more than one characteristic which can be argued to be risky becomes more likely to suffer harm and the risk of potential harm becomes greater (Bynner, 2001).

#### *Interventions to prepare children for secondary school*

Several summer school projects have aimed to help children transition between primary and secondary school, but while the results are promising the research suffers from being small in scale with fairly minimal outcomes. Rock Up, an Australia project was very small in scale with no control group, but does show how work can be done with children 'at risk' to improve their transition (Carmen et al, 2011). The project worked with 13 children, age ten years, and identified by teachers as being at risk of disengaging from formal education as they started secondary school. The children either had individual time with a support worker or group activities to facilitate the transition and promote wellbeing for the children. The support workers also worked with parents to help them learn skills to support their child with the transition. Whilst the sample is small, the results are interesting. The students reported feeling more confident and less worried about the transition. Parents also said that their children seemed to get a lot out of the intervention and that they enjoyed it. The qualitative data collected showed that there was improvement from pre-intervention

to post-intervention. The reported benefits were not sustained on follow up. However, sustainability is a common problem in early intervention programs and the benefits the children felt and the findings should not be dismissed due to lack of sustainability. It could be argued that self-report about confidence and concerns about the transition is a biased measure and this is why in the study described below we have used a standardised measure of wellbeing.

Martin et al. (2013) surveyed 21,065 students who went to summer schools or who were in comparison schools. The majority of the data collected centred on whether the children enjoyed the summer school and whether they felt more prepared for their secondary school. The vast majority of schools and children considered the summer school a success and found them enjoyable. Students did say they felt more prepared for the transition and less worried about attending, but it is unclear whether the children actually had a smoother transition because of the summer school, even though the children thought they would. The study found that, of those invited, more girls than boys took part in the summer school, also that those from an Asian background were less likely to attend if invited. Whilst 83% of those who were invited did attend the summer school it is important to remember that some children who were identified as being from disadvantaged backgrounds did not attend. The children who do not attend universal programmes may well be those who could potentially benefit most.

Another summer school aimed to make sure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds did not experience a reduction of numeracy and literacy skills over the summer. The summer school consisted of numeracy and literacy classes in the morning and activities in the afternoon. There were no significant differences between the intervention group and control data and both groups experienced a loss in skills in numeracy and literacy over the summer (Siddiqui et al, 2014). Whilst 'summer loss' is common for children, the results are disappointing. This study is a good example of how early interventions aren't guaranteed positive results simply because the funding and execution was implemented. It is very hard to design a universal programme that is likely to articulate with the participants needs.

### **A Transitions Project for Children Identified by Teachers**

The project was concerned with children considered to be at risk of disengaging with education on transition to secondary school. The children were identified by teachers and the research was designed to look at their mental wellbeing (age 10–11 years), just prior to a summer transitions project and their transition to secondary school, and then again at the end of their first year at secondary school. The project examined whether the children identified had mental health vulnerability and whether the summer

transition project and first year in secondary school impacted on this.

10 primary schools were involved in the study, feeding into 2 comprehensive secondary schools. For each child that the teachers were concerned about (n=48), the teachers completed a Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) and identified the reasons for their concern. The SDQ is a validated instrument measuring mental wellbeing. Following this the students were offered transitions projects over the school summer holidays and then repeat SDQ's were completed by the students tutors at the end of their first year at secondary school. Ethical approval was granted by Anglia Ruskin Ethics Committee and consent was sought from all parents whose children were identified as in need of additional support in the transition. For a full report on the project see Akister, 2014.

### *Findings*

At the beginning of the project, the SDQ scores indicate mental health problems for 48% of the children about whom the teachers were concerned. Additionally, there were significant correlations between the teachers' reasons for concern and the subscales of the SDQ: high SDQ scores for emotional distress correlated with teachers concerns about anxiety, behaviour and attendance; high SDQ scores for behaviour difficulties and Hyperactivity correlated with teacher concerns about behaviour (Fishers Exact Test,  $p < 0.05$ ; see Akister, 2014).

The change in the overall stress scores (from 48% to 13%) and emotional distress scores (from 40% to 15%) pre- and post-summer activity project suggest effectiveness for the project, specifically in the domain of self-confidence and self-esteem known to be important for educational attainment.

For some of the children, behavioural difficulties and hyperactivity are the major reasons for concern. There was little change in the subscales of the SDQ relating to behaviour: hyperactivity (from 42% to 41%); behavioural difficulties (from 23% to 18%).

These results indicate that teachers are accurately identifying children who are vulnerable in the transition to secondary school. This project supports the approach of targeting activity projects on specific needs, as the wellbeing of those children with emotional distress is greatly improved, and maintained over a 12 month period, whereas for those children with behavioural difficulties, no significant improvement is sustained. It is interesting that the measure of wellbeing gives such a clear indication for the success of the project and this suggests that the design of the project which aimed at improving self-confidence and peer relationships is effective. That such a project is not successful at improving behaviour means that we should not place all the children who are of concern in the same project. A project aimed at helping with transition will have mixed results if those with mental health problems are included with those with

behavioural problems. Specific projects targeted at behaviour are needed in addition to those promoting self-confidence.

## **Conclusion**

### *Overall*

- The SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) scores for Overall Stress suggests improved wellbeing for 35% of the students in the study one year after they began secondary school;
- Teachers are accurate in their concerns for vulnerable children approaching the transition to secondary school. There is good correlation between teachers concerns about self-esteem and anxiety with the SDQ scores for emotional symptoms.

### *Emotional Symptoms—Internalising Behaviour*

- The transitional Project had a positive impact on student's emotional distress and self-confidence;
- The subscale where there is most improvement in the high category is Emotional Distress (35%).

### *Behavioural Symptoms—Externalising behaviour*

- There is no change in SDQ scores for behavioural difficulties;
- There is no change in hyperactivity.

The mental wellbeing of young people is a major factor in the educational outcomes they are able to achieve and in their life opportunities. Early intervention projects are very attractive as we can identify children with difficulties quite early in the educational process, but the evidence to support universal 'one-size-fits-all' interventions is very mixed. Our research suggests that teachers are accurate in identifying young people with poor mental wellbeing and that this includes two main groups: those with emotional distress (internalising) and those with behavioural difficulties (externalising). If targeted 'early intervention' approaches are taken focussing either on internalising or externalising expressions of distress, we suggest that the outcomes will be much more positive than in those projects where everyone is offered the same universal early intervention.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Mixed age grouping and the emotional development of two-year-olds

### **Abstract**

This action research project investigates the impact of mixed age grouping on the emotional development of two-year-olds, in light of the UK government initiative to create more funded places for two-year-olds in Early Years settings. Children's emotional development, as indicated through observations related to Laever's scales of wellbeing and involvement, was studied in relation to changes made in the emotional environment of a preschool setting. It was found that children's strong relationships and high quality interactions with staff were the most significant factors in supporting their emotional development. This finding builds on the existing research literature which has highlighted that mixed age grouping benefits younger children cognitively, but there is a risk that it may impact negatively on children's emotional development. It shows ways in which young children's emotional development can be supported to make mixed age grouping a positive and beneficial experience for them.

### **Introduction**

Since Field (2010) and Allen (2011), there has been a strong focus on early intervention. New government initiatives supporting early intervention, supported by Field (2010: 38-40), highlighted how vitally important the early years are to children's future life chances, and that an individual's life chances begin to be determined as early as pregnancy. Field also pointed out the economic benefits of early intervention, as investing in disadvantaged young children at an early age would improve their outcomes and cause them to require less investment later in life. Allen (2011: xii-xiv) builds on this, stating that an absence of appropriate support for children in their earliest years is causing many of the costly and damaging social problems in our society, and that intervening at a later stage is often more costly and less effective. One element of the UK government's response to these reports has been to create a new entitlement to free early education for two-year-olds, building on

Continued on next page...

the existing entitlement for three- and four-year-olds. As a result, from September 2013, around 130,000 new funded places were created for the most economically disadvantaged two-year-olds, deemed as those who qualify for free school meals or who are looked after children, from the term following their second birthday (Children and Young Persons England, 2012). Local authorities also had the ability to offer places to children not meeting these criteria at their own discretion (DfE, 2012). From September 2014 the number of places available was extended to around 260,000. Although this is not a stipulation of the policy, many of these places for two-year-olds were expected to be made available in preschool settings, creating more mixed age grouping in settings that have previously catered primarily for three- and four-year-olds.

Mixed age grouping has already been occurring to an extent in Early Years settings in the UK, however Nutbrown and Page (2008: 91-92) draw attention to a situation where many settings which in the past operated as preschools or playgroups have lowered the age group to admit children from two years old in order to make their setting more sustainable and remain financially viable, as many children in England start school the term after their fourth birthday, even though the statutory age to start school is the term after their fifth birthday. They suggest that in some of these settings not enough thought has been given to the differentiation of organization, curriculum and environment necessary for these younger children. This raises questions as to the impact of such mixed age grouping on the cognitive and emotional development of these younger children, in particular their emotional development, and the potential dangers of widening such mixed age grouping without due care being given to the needs of the youngest children. It is for this reason that this research project aimed to investigate the impact of mixed age grouping (namely having toddlers and pre-school age children in the same Early Years setting) on the emotional development of two-year-olds.

### **Theoretical framework**

In order to be able to discuss the emotional development of the children in the setting, Laever's model of Experiential Education (Laever, 1994) and its focus on indicators of emotional security in terms of wellbeing and involvement will be employed as a theoretical framework. This model is used as a way of measuring children's emotional development through observation of how at ease they are (wellbeing) and how involved they are (involvement) in a setting at any given time. The scale consists of five levels with level 1, low wellbeing and involvement and level 5, high wellbeing and involvement. 'Wellbeing' refers to the level to which children "feel at ease, act spontaneously, show vitality and self-confidence" (Laevers, 2011: 1). 'Involvement' is indicated by concentration, focus, interest and fascination. It is limited in that that observation can only tell us so much—we can never

truly know how the children are feeling, however Laever's model and its associated scale is generally accepted as a useful indicator. In terms of emotional development, it is a way of measuring patterns in children's behaviour and noting progress or changes, and what this may indicate about how they are feeling. The child-focused nature of this model makes it particularly appropriate as it focuses on the process the children are going through, rather than the outcomes (Pascal, Bertram and Ramsden, 1997: 41).

### **Literature review**

#### **Mixed age groupings in the Early Years**

There is a range of studies that have either specifically investigated the effects of mixed age grouping, or looked at its impact as part of a wider study. In the Quality of Childcare Settings in the Millenium Cohort Study (QCSMCS), Mathers et al. (2007) found a better quality of interactions when older children were present in a room, with a negative impact on the quality of provision when younger children were in the room. They suggest that this could be due to the demands of the younger children and an associated dumbing down of provision. Unlike Mathers et al., the NNI Research Team (2007) in their National Evaluation of Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative (NENNI) found higher quality in the mixed age groups, where younger children were more challenged as there was a higher level of language, communication, and interaction. However, the NENNI did also find that mixed age groups could have a negative impact on younger children's behaviour, and so they concluded that mixed age rooms might enhance children's cognitive ability at the price of emotional security. Mathers et al. (2007) also found this, stating that mixed age grouping supports younger children's cognitive development, but possibly at the expense of their emotional development. If these concerns are to be effectively addressed, a setting must pay very close attention to the emotional needs and environment of younger children. Clare (2012: 64) recommends family grouping, in which all the children are in the same room, as she states that the younger children benefit from the presence of the older children, who engage them in play. She references Vygotsky to reinforce her position, highlighting the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978: 84-91). In addition, she highlights the point that mixed age grouping gives children the opportunity to experience care similar to that which they would get at home, enabling children of all ages to enjoy social time together, like in a family (Clare, 2012: 69).

It would appear that the literature around the benefits and risks of mixed age grouping is inconclusive, with some focusing on benefits and others highlighting risks. As such, this is a key area for further research.

### **Planning for the emotional environment**

Bradford (2012), in her discussion of environments for children under three, suggests that we need a more holistic understanding of what constitutes an appropriate environment for these children. This requires us to look at the child's wider environment, both within and beyond the early years setting, and also to view developmentally appropriate care as constituting part of the environment. It is important to acknowledge that babies and children under three are not the same as their older peers – they have unique characteristics, behave in particular ways, and have specialised needs. In particular, babies and children under three thrive on consistency. Bearing this in mind, they should also be given regularity, predictability and constancy of relationships, and this is where the key person approach is invaluable. This is particularly important because 'quality' of the environment should include not only the physical environment, but also the emotional environment in which children are brought up (Bradford, 2012: 15). This includes creating sound partnerships between parents and practitioners, and giving careful consideration to the transition from home to school.

Jarman's Communication Friendly Spaces Approach (Jarman, 2009) highlights the importance of quiet, calm, reflective space, and opportunities to snuggle in as key features of an appropriate environment for under-threes. In particular, bright over-stimulating rooms and too much artificial light are discouraged. Lindon (2012: 9) also highlights that settings that are full of movement and sound can be overwhelming for very young children. This has implications for settings extending their pre-school provision to include two-year-olds, as they may need to change how they have previously approached the noise levels within their setting. However this realisation could also have a positive impact for older children, as reducing unnecessary noise levels can have a positive impact on attention and listening across the age range. This in turn would help to support all children's language development.

### **Conclusion**

Key messages arising from the literature are that younger children need an environment that is secure and stable, with strong attachments. The overarching idea is that mixed age grouping benefits younger children cognitively, but there is the risk that it may impact negatively on children's emotional development. Further work needs to be done on how to prevent this negative impact, and this is the purpose of this study.

### **Methodology**

This research project was based in a community playgroup that is situated in the middle of an area of economic disadvantage in south east England, which caters for children aged 2-4 on a part time basis (term time mornings

only). The research looks at the policy of this setting of integrating two-year-olds into the preschool, with the aim of investigating the impact of a mixed age group (children aged 2-4) on the emotional development of the two-year-olds present and to find the answers to the following three research questions: how do the two-year-olds access the environment compared to their older peers?; how well do the two-year-olds integrate and settle into the environment?; and how does mixed age grouping impact on two-year-olds' emotional development? The methodology used was action research, with the data collection methods being structured and unstructured observations of the children; my own reflections; semi-structured interviews with members of staff that were key people of two-year-olds in the setting; and the analysis of existing data regarding the two-year-olds. Two changes were made in the setting, one at a time, to investigate their impact on children's emotional development, namely: the introduction of a sheltered corner through the use of a play house; and the introduction of dog baskets for the children to sit in as they play to give greater containment. These changes were identified in line with Elizabeth Jarman's Communication Friendly Spaces Approach (Jarman, 2009: 8). The two-year-old children were observed both before and after the changes to see what effect the changes had on their emotional security. These observations took the form of time sampling, in which two-minute observations were made of each individual child at three intervals across the same session. Children's emotional development was assessed in these observations through scoring along Laever's wellbeing and involvement scale. In addition to this, questionnaires were also sent to managers of other settings that catered for two-year-olds, to compare experiences.

### **Ethical considerations**

As the two-year-old children were directly involved in the research, the issue arose of what role they should play in consenting to this. Given the young age and stage of development of the children involved, who were all aged between 24 and 30 months, consent was gained from their parents on behalf of the children. The manager and staff of the setting were informed of the nature of the research, along with the parents of all children in the setting. Consent was gained from all parents as older children would also be involved through their presence in observations. Permission was sought before accessing any of the documents to be analysed. As children's records are confidential, they were only accessed by those who have access to them as part of their role in the setting. No children were identified through the analysis of their records. In order to protect all participants and respect confidentiality and data protection, there has been no reference to names or settings in the research.

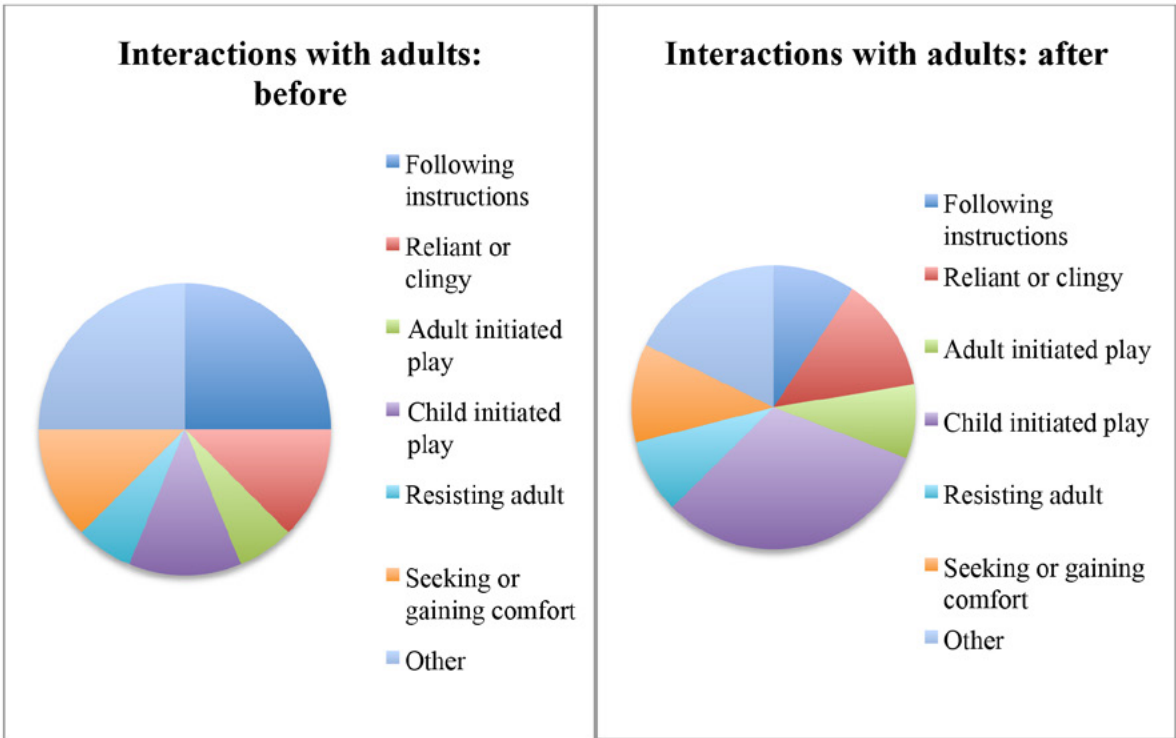
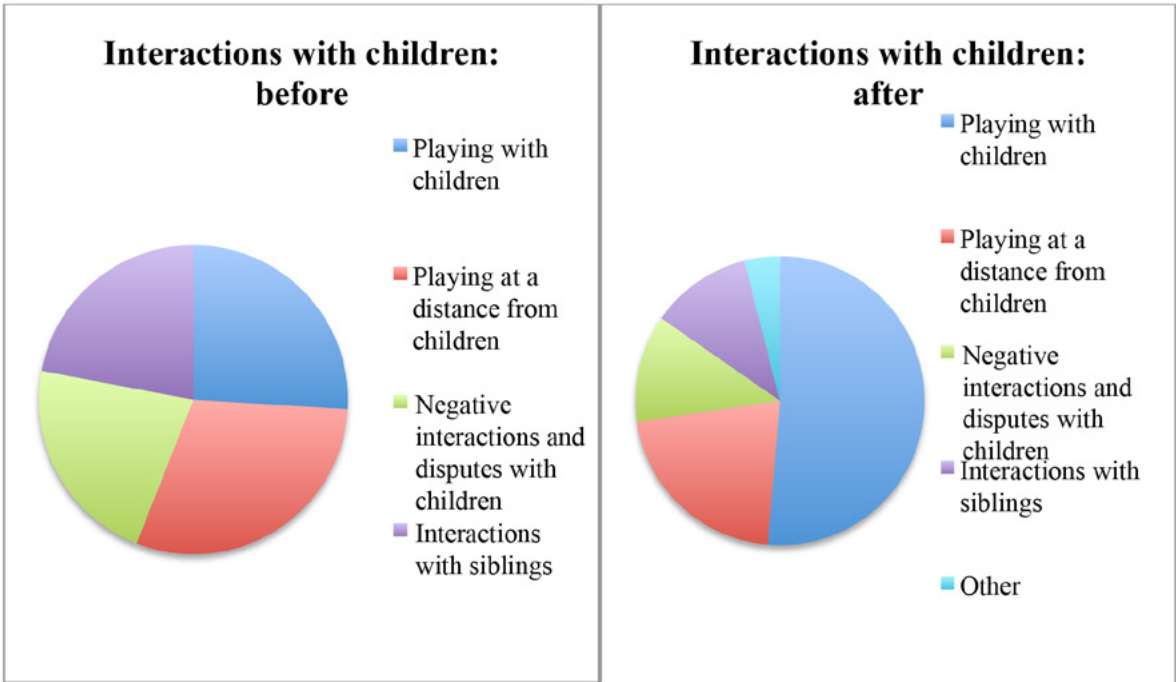


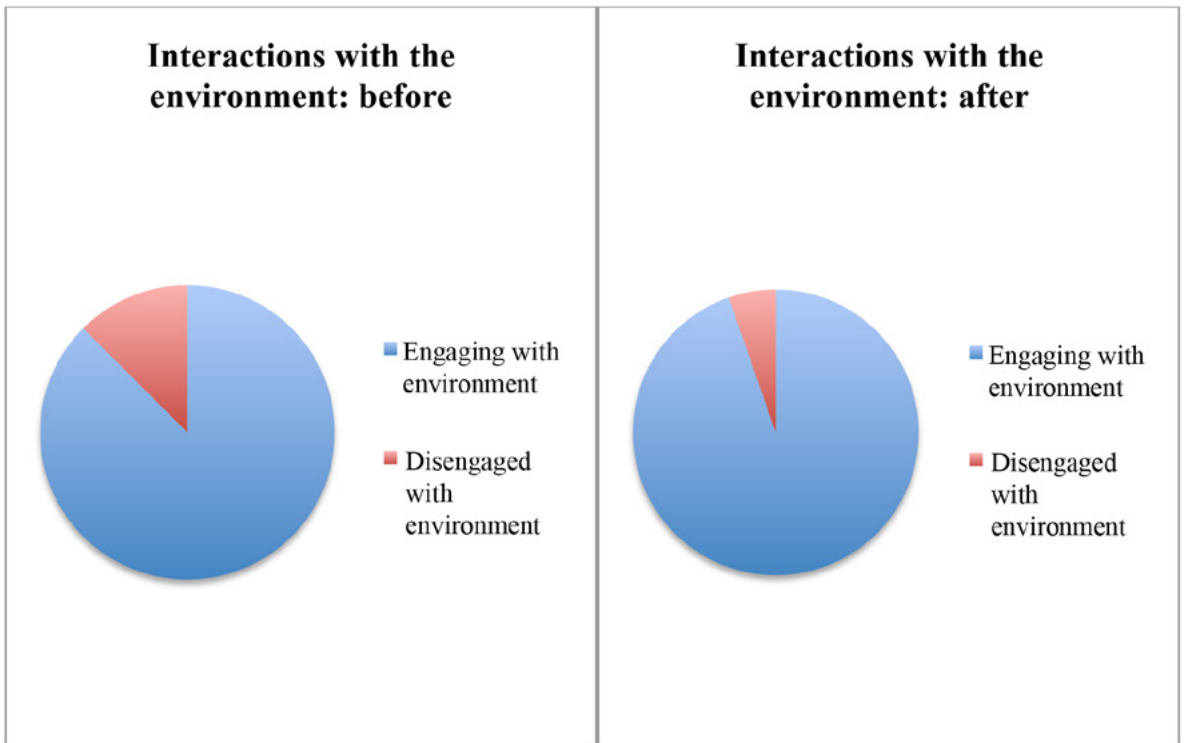
### **Findings and Discussion**

The observations carried out indicated that the two-year-olds did not make use of the additional opportunities provided to support their emotional environment through containment and smaller spaces (the play house and dog baskets) in the way that the literature suggested that they would. In fact it was often the older children that used these spaces, either to carry out activities that they did not want the adults to see, or to meet the needs of individual insecurities that some of those children had. This is in line with Lindon's (2012: 10) research, which indicates that two-year-olds do not need a different set of resources from older children, but rather they benefit from having access to the same resources as older children and are able to learn to use them simply and in slightly different ways.

Interestingly, although the two-year-olds did not make much use of the provisions made through the research to support their emotional environment, their wellbeing and involvement scores did still improve over the time period studied. This can be seen in the following thematic representation of the observations, along with the wellbeing and involvement scores which were drawn from these observations.

The key themes that arose from the observations were: the two-year-old children's interactions with other children, their interactions with adults, and their interactions with the environment. The data gathered can be represented as follows:





Wellbeing and involvement scores (drawn from observations):

	Before		After	
	Wellbeing	Involvement	Wellbeing	Involvement
<b>Child 1</b>	2	2	4	4
<b>Child 2</b>	4	4	4	4
<b>Child 3</b>	4	4	5	5
<b>Child 4</b>	3	2	4	4
<b>Child 5</b>	4	2	5	5

### **How do the two-year-olds access the environment compared to their older peers?**

The findings of this study found that the two-year-olds accessed the environment in a very similar way to their older peers. The findings also indicate that the small spaces and containment are indeed useful for providing a secure space for less secure children, but that contrary to expectations the less secure children in the setting were not the younger ones. The question that arises from this is what is the setting providing for these children that enables them to feel so secure? As confirmed by the ITERS-R survey carried out in the setting, a key feature of the provision in this setting is the interactions. The manager has made a conscious decision to operate with consistently low ratios of adults to children (usually 1:3 even for the older children) so that staff are more able to interact with the children. This is in line with the idea put forward by Bronfenbrenner (1979: 202) that such low ratios are significant as they enable the high quality interactions that are so crucial to the positive development of young children, and without which children in daycare settings may in fact regress. In terms of the progress shown in the two-year-olds' wellbeing and involvement across the project, it could be that they benefitted indirectly from the way in which the changes to the environment supported the less secure older children.

### **How well do the two-year-olds integrate and settle into the environment?**

Overall the two-year-olds appeared to settle very quickly into the setting. Child 1 took the longest to settle, and displayed a significant degree of clinginess to adults for much of the study, however by the end of the research project she also appeared significantly more settled and confident in the environment. It must be taken into account here that most two-year-olds in the setting in which the action research was carried out have a family member in the setting with them, whether that be a sibling, a cousin or a parent. This was indicated in the findings, where the two-year-olds who were most confident seemed to also be those who had more siblings in the setting. However, the findings also indicated cases where two-year-olds who were less secure did still have family members in the setting, suggesting that the correlation between the presence of siblings and an increased wellbeing in the environment may not be so direct. It must also be acknowledged that this setting is part time, which children only attend for three hours in the morning each day. Goddard Blythe (2008: 224) suggests that the amount of time spent in day care can have a significant impact on children's emotional development, and so these shorter sessions must be taken into account here.

### **How does mixed age grouping impact on two-year-olds' emotional development?**

Children in our setting appeared very confident and settled, and in most cases not intimidated by the older children. Those children who did score slightly lower on their wellbeing and involvement in the indications of emotional stability observations at the beginning of the study made progress across the course of the project. This was found to be primarily the result of high levels of adult input and interactions which facilitated these children's social development. In contrast with Montessori's idea of the environment as the third teacher (Montessori, 1912), it would appear that here we have the teacher as the third environment, as it is the interactions with adults, facilitated by the importance given by management to maintaining low staff:child ratios, that provide the secure environment that enables the children to thrive, and more significantly that enables those with lower emotional development to make such good progress.

### **Conclusion**

In terms of the impact of mixed age grouping on the emotional development of two-year-olds, the overwhelming conclusion of this research project points to the importance of secure and positive interactions between adults and children. Despite the warnings in the literature about the potential risk that mixed age grouping could pose to younger children's emotional development, the children in the setting at which the action research was carried out all displayed secure emotional development, as indicated through their wellbeing and involvement, with those who had been less secure at the start making strong progress over the time period in which they were studied. Contrary to the expectations I had at the beginning of the project, the factor that enabled such positive development came primarily from the children's strong relationships and interactions with staff, rather than from factors in the physical environment. The findings of this study suggest that it is in fact low child:adult ratios and high quality practitioner-child interactions that support young children's emotional development, and that are therefore the key to enabling two-year-olds to develop to their full potential in a mixed age setting. It must be taken into account that these findings are specific to the setting in which the research was carried out, and may not be transferable to other settings, although early indications suggest that other settings who responded to the questionnaires were also finding the ratio of adults to children and the quality of interactions to be significant factors. Further research is needed to investigate this.



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## Navigating through language and intergenerational relationships—second generation Bangladeshi women and their parents

### **Abstract**

This paper examines some of the types of relationships particular young women of Bangladeshi Muslim heritage have with their immigrant parents, to whom I refer to as the first generation, the languages spoken with them and the meanings and emotions associated with this. It looks at how language is understood by young women from educated family backgrounds, and how language might also have the potential for these young women to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and identities.

### **Keywords**

British-Bangladeshi, Dialogue, Intergeneration, Language, Parents

### **Understanding Speaking Voices**

In describing both the perception of and potential for intergenerational conflicts among British Asians, Brah writes that

the argument is presented along the lines that young Asians growing up in Britain internalise 'Western' values which are at variance with the 'traditional' world of their parents, youth comes into conflict with the parental generation. Undoubtedly, the potential for conflict may well be there, especially when the early years of parents and their children are separated not only in time, but also by country, so that the two age groups are exposed to differing cultural and political influences during their formative years. (1996:42)

However, as Seidler (2000) has explored, if parents harbour troubled or painful histories, though such histories may be silenced and unspoken, children can often 'feel' these histories through tensions within the family. The complex feelings that came out of moving from one place, and leaving

behind one's life to settle in another for our parents of first generation (I have used the term first generation to refer to immigrant parents who have settled in London in order to make their lives; they are parents to the second generation, some of whose voices are heard in this paper) can be felt in our own generation.

Through the establishment of dialogue, differences and potential tensions between generations and different communities have the possibility to be resolved. Moreover, it could be, as Brah has argued, that dialogue between generations within the family helps 'the psychic investments in emotionally charged bonds with family and relations' (1996:43).

Dialogue through movement becomes crucial. Movement between cultural historical spaces is continuous, as is the language interchange as people travel between such spaces constantly. This opens up a space for adaptation, where people can, for example, alter behaviour in order to fit in with the wider community and culture, (Matsumoto, Yoo and LeRoux, 2009; Burke, 2009). Bengali and English can cross over into each other's spaces where different cultural histories come to be represented. An example of this and where different cultural histories have the potentiality to become 'merged' into each other's spaces through language, is when the young woman mixes the two languages she speaks to form a new hybrid version (and will be examined below). This is reminiscent of Anwar's argument that young women are now somehow creating a new culture that is an amalgamation of the 'old' and the 'new' (1998:192) and points to a verbal amalgamation of British inflections as well as the residual traditions of the South Asian diaspora, giving rise to what Harris (2006) has termed 'Brasian'. Indeed, as Spreckels and Kotthoff (2009) have argued, identity is constituted through intercultural encounters, thus making relationships crucial in understanding a sense of self.

### **Finding Narratives**

This paper contains narratives that are taken from a wider study, which show a certain part of London and how the Bangladeshi community that reside within it is changing. It has been conducted within the boundaries of the M25, in the specific areas of Wood Green, Woodford, Ilford and Gants' Hill. According to an independent study conducted by the Communities Department of the British Government in 2009, London is home to 142,931 Bangladeshi Muslims. This population constitute 23.5% of the total Muslim population, and make up the largest concentration of Muslim Bangladeshis in the UK.

The research from which this paper arises is qualitative in nature, using one-to-one semi-structured in-depth interviews to gather data. Interviews were conducted between 2006 and 2011, where twenty young women were interviewed, all of whom are daughters of first generation

Bangladeshi migrant parents. I have employed a 'narratological' method to understand the interviews. As Plummer argues, 'narrative structures enable our respondents to speak, and the multitude of fragmenting experiences that constitute our lives come to be patterned into some seeming sense of order' (2001:185). These interviews are critical in understanding how such women understand themselves in relation to the various relationships she forms and maintains.

### Voicing Experiences

This section will examine the experiences of intergenerational dialogue of my respondents by listening to their voices. The extract below speaks of the restrictions placed upon Sujata when she was growing up, and the loyalties she had with non-Bangladeshi friends. Sujata is, at the time of interview, twenty-seven years old, the only daughter and is a qualified dentist. She lives in Woodford with her family, who originate from the Khulna district of Bangladesh. The extract voices a difficulty in the relationship with her first generation parents, particularly with her mother, which she later overcame.

Sujata:

Sujata: When I was younger, I had a lot of issues with that... [being British and Bengali at the same time]... when I was a teenager... I had a lot of pressure from my mum and dad... I wasn't allowed this, I wasn't allowed that... and when you're growing up...

Shamea: You weren't allowed...?

Sujata: Erm... 12 to 14, I had some white friends... they were my best friends, come 14, they're going out, meeting boys and I'm not allowed to do that, I don't want to do that

Shamea: Mm

Sujata: ...and they're all white boys anyway... and I wasn't ready and I wasn't interested... but their whole culture became different [my emphasis]... 14 year old girls and I wasn't allowed out with them... and my mum [my italics] was... first child... she was very Bengali... didn't know what to do... can't do this, can't do that... [and] I live in a very English area...

Sujata's account suggests that familial histories can affect a young woman's choice of friends. How this changes over time and space will also help shape her concept of Bangladeshi culture. For instance, this particular account suggests there can be difficulty in navigating between differing cultural contexts if the young woman feels a lot of pressure from her parents, on the one hand, but, on the other, lives in, as Sujata puts it, 'a very English area' and feels loyalties to 'best' friends who do not share similar cultural histories. Indeed, Anthias's argument that spaces affect feelings

and the experiences of belonging is pertinent here. She writes that 'social place has resonances with stability of the self, or with feelings of being part of a larger whole and with the emotional and social bonds that are tied to such places' (2006:21). It is difficult, as Sujata emphasizes, if there are further restrictions imposed. Now that she is older, however, and looks back in hindsight, she explains that her friends were going out to meet boys, something that she did not want to do. This changed the status of the friendships she had with her 'white' friends.

Sujata, in the extract above, describes her first generation mother as being confused in bringing up a daughter in an unfamiliar place. The difference in cultural histories is distinct, and this appears to be difficult for her mother, especially in relation to how her daughter should be brought up.

This relationship between mother and daughter can be seen through the medium of language, which the next section will explore. It explores the merging of cultures through language, and thus will further explore the relationship between generations, especially when one belongs to differing cultural histories more so than the other, as has been seen in the above.

### **Intertwining Languages and the Emergence of 'Benglish'**

This section will explore how it can be that English and Bengali have the potential to be joined together and creating a new space, in order to bridge the two cultural histories carried by my respondents. It will also try to explore what this means for the young woman who joins them as she traverses between them. This is understood by looking specifically at the ways they merge Bengali and English in speaking with their parents. I argue that it is precisely through the new and emergent forms of languages in an expression of self that emphasizes Bhabha's (1994) notion of a sense of transformation through cultural heritage.

This section will begin by considering Sujata's account of how she uses language to communicate with the generation of her parents. The extract begins with a question about how she defines her identity.

Sujata:

Shamea: You're more British than Bengali?

Sujata: It's really hard to decide... it's very hard to... yeah, I would say I'm more British than Bengali because I think in English... my reactions are in English, my thought processes are in English... but I have a very dominant Bengali cultural side inside me

Shamea: ...is that influenced inside the home?

Sujata: ...from my parents, I suppose

Shamea: Do you speak Bengali at home?

Sujata: Yeah... but I speak in English as well... to my parents I speak in Bengali... to communicate

- Shamea: ...so why do you speak to your parents in Bengali and... who do you speak English with?
- Sujata: ...yeah... I speak to my brother in English... solely in English and my parents in Bengali if it's a serious conversation... if it's a serious, serious conversation
- Shamea: How do you define a serious conversation?
- Sujata: ...if we talk about something, a topic or something that I really want them to understand... then... obviously they're very well spoken in both languages, but my parents as most Bengali parents... Bangla... I can really get my point across to them... if I was saying the same thing in English, I don't know how much of what I was saying would be absorbed... but if I was speaking in Bengali, I know that I have got their attention one hundred per cent and I realise that that's the best way to speak with my parents or any Bengali parent... I would speak in Bengali

It emerges that Sujata has been very influenced by her parents in establishing a sense of self. Language can be viewed as a means of navigating between these cultures—it becomes a form of 'cultural adaptive transformation' (Liu, 2010:129). For instance, Bengali is used to get her point across to parents of first generation; it is a means of getting attention from a generation who have transferred their histories onto the next generation. At the same time, it connotes a sense of 'power' by translating certain views across to a generation who might not listen if the language does not belong to their histories. Indeed, this might be important as Sujata points out interestingly that she speaks to her brother only in English.

Language can prove a strong factor in moving between differing cultures. Sometimes, language can lead to a merging between cultures. Indeed, one such interviewee has named this new hybrid language 'Benglish'. Lamia is, at the time of this interview, twenty-three years old, the only daughter, indeed, the only child and lives with her parents in Wood Green. Her family originate from the district of Rajshahi in Bangladesh.

- Lamia:
- Shamea: ...can you speak Bengali?
- Lamia: Well I can actually speak Bengali fluently... um... I did a G.C.S.E. in Bengali as well... and um... when I'm at home I speak in Bengali... occasionally with my dad... I sometimes speak in what I call Benglish... [laughs]
- Shamea: Benglish? What's that?
- Lamia: ...it's like a bit of Bengali and a bit of English here and there... [laughs]... but yeah... I speak almost always I speak in Bengali with my parents but if there are certain words in Bengali that I might not know in Bengali and then I might use the English



and then I say do you understand... and they're like... yeah, we get that... [laughs]... when I say I'm fluent, I am fluent but there are obviously certain words, certain complex words which I probably don't know as well or maybe I can't pronounce well enough so I don't want to try 'coz I'm too scared...

Shamea: ...you're too scared? Why are you scared?

Lamia: yeah, I'm too scared to pronounce it in front of my parents 'coz they might say oh you're so silly, you don't even know what that is or something like that... but...

Shamea: ...but they've taught you this Bengali culture in the first place... so why would they make fun of you if that's the case...?

Lamia: ...I dunno! I just have this feeling that they would just be like, oh silly girl... but I do try sometimes... with certain words I'll try... and if it's wrong then it's wrong

Shamea: ...but where do you think this feeling comes from...?

Lamia: ...sometimes I think that my parents are very proud of the fact that I can speak Bengali better than many other people's children and so therefore in my head I think I'm supposed to set a standard... and if I don't set a standard... and if I go a bit outside that standard, I think they might judge me... but I'm sure they don't... but that's just my theory... [in comparison to her cousins, which she speaks about later in the interview]

For Lamia, Bengali and English are merged together forming a new variant of lived histories, which have been passed down to her from her parents. She has taken from these histories and re-invented to accommodate her British histories also (see, for example, Puwar, 2004 and Kalra et al.). I argue that the cultural histories that give rise to her sense of self are merged through the merging of these two languages. However, it is when she gets stuck in the pronunciation of certain words that this gives rise to a fear that she will be mocked by her parents if she does not live up to their sense of pride. It might be argued then, because of this feeling of having to live up to a certain expectation, her parents hold a sort of power over her, because it is they who have passed the Bengali language, and its associated histories, on to her.

### **We Speakers of the Bengali Language?**

Sometimes it can be difficult for first generation parents in a different space from the one that they have been brought up in to understand their new environment, as Chatterjee (1990) argues, especially if they do not understand the language of this new space. Some first generation parents, for this reason, used to learn and converse in English through and with their children, so that parents could find suitable jobs to provide for their families. This also took them away from work in factories and restaurants

for instance. Perhaps as a result, many children with whom this happened, grew up communicating in English, where Bengali became secondary. For many parents it was taken for granted that the children would learn Bengali at some point anyway, although this was not always the case for all families. Indeed, citing the work of Hoffman, Treacher argues,

language... evokes and produces membranes of connections and associations which bind one person to another and to the community... to lose a language which evokes attachments is also a loss of a living connection; it is not that the new language is empty but it does not have the same resonances and it requires effort to connect the sounds to interiority and to relationships with others. (2000: 98)

I argue that being able to speak both Bengali and English is what 'bridges' both cultural histories—through certain second generation young woman. It is a way of linking and understanding histories. This can be seen through particular relationships the young woman has, for example, with her parents.

#### Conclusion:

In this paper, I have examined some of the ways in which certain young women of second generation manoeuvre through and between the cultural histories that they carry. Changes have occurred in inter-generational relationships over time and such relationships are not static and fixed in time. However, I have also emphasized that those spaces become intermixed and intertwined through the constant interchange of people and languages moving through them. I have argued that rules applying to different spaces are learnt through experience and interaction with parents. Conversely, as the parents are the conduit through which the young woman learns their language and culture, if she is unable to pronounce certain words in front of them, it might give her a sense of unease. Moreover, sometimes, the daughter is able to 'invent' a new language, where both histories become merged together, at the same time. This can be an important means through which she is able to manoeuvre through differing historical cultures and to speak from her differing positionalities within them.

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## Children in literature: the voice of the subaltern?

*Every adult, whether he is a follower or a leader, a member of a mass or of an elite, was once a child. A sense of smallness forms a substratum in his mind, ineradicably. His triumphs will be measured against this smallness, his defeats will substantiate it.*

Erik Erikson

In discussions surrounding subalternity, theorists have predominantly focussed upon the notion of difference based upon binary models of gender, race, colonialism or a North/South divide. However, until recently, little critical attention has been paid to children, in spite of the fact that they are unquestionably subordinate in terms of social, political and economic power, and this lack of representation is symbolic of this status, because inevitably '[p]ower is related to representation: which representations have cognitive authority or can secure hegemony, which do not have authority or are not hegemonic' (Beverley, 1999, p. 1). Although there are many representations of children as characters within literature, there are very few attempts to give the child itself a 'voice', primarily because 'the very ideologies that shape our perceptions of [children] pre-determine that we view them as not having agency or consequence in ideology – they are helpless, they are innocent, they are too ignorant to represent themselves' (Honeyman, 2005, p. ii). This highlights a problem that is yet to find a resolution within subaltern studies; how does an author (who is inevitably part of the so-called intellectual elite) effectively represent a subordinated subject? This paper will explore strategies that have been used to overcome the difficulties of representing children in literature, through an examination of the literary 'construction' of the child from the Victorian era through to the present day.

The analytical boundaries between child characters within adult literature and children's literature are ill-defined, and the genre of children's literature itself is highly contested (Cadden, 2010), partly due to the fact that both the producers and consumers are adults<sup>1</sup>. Although the intended audience is children, the message of the literature is definitively based around the agendas of the adults, and so the voice of the child itself

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<sup>1</sup> Cadden's chapter summarises the main debates and schools of thought within the genre.

could be perceived as non-existent. There is also the issue of crossover literature, where the readership either changes over time from the originally intended one, or where literature is marketed as accessible to all ages (Beckett, 2009). The representation of child characters in purportedly adult literature has been explored very little, which can be seen as a reflection of their subordinate status within society, but rather than being side-lined, they merit analysis just as any other literary character, 'both as a formal construct, made out of words and images and having a fully textual existence, and as a set of effects which are modelled on the form of the human person' (Frow, 2014, p. vi) that is constructed and manipulated according to the agenda of the author. Therefore, the choice of representing a child deliberately evokes certain themes that should be explored to attain a fuller understanding of attempts to represent the 'voiceless'.

Within fiction written for adults, children are predominantly portrayed as secondary or marginal characters, a fact which is telling in and of itself, but there are some examples of child protagonists, which will be examined here. This may be because of the perceived necessity that the reader should be able to empathise to some extent with the protagonist, and the assumption that children are not sophisticated enough to feel an affinity with, as they have different life experiences<sup>2</sup>. Childhood is a stage of life that adult readers believe that they have moved on from, an inferior developmental phase, and so child characters can be perceived as simplistic with little knowledge of the world, or as Kincaid states, 'the child' in Victorian literature was 'everything the sophisticated adult was not, everything the rational man of the Enlightenment was not' (Kincaid, 1994, p. 15). The popularity of some notable examples of child protagonists speaks to the possibilities that representations of children could have within literature. One of the most canonical authors to represent children in this role is Charles Dickens, whose novels *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist* have child characters as the protagonist. Obviously, there is a plethora of criticism on Dickens' work, and there are several ways of perceiving how childhood and children are represented in the novels. Bodenheimer argues that:

So far I have spoken of Dickensian children primarily as victims of adult exploitation, and it is easy enough to draw a general conclusion that they function in the novels as means to reveal and condemn

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<sup>2</sup> [A] condition for empathy is that the phenomenological quality of experience is the same for the empathizer and the protagonist. It is important for any analysis of empathy that it be able to account for this similarity of experience. Though it is not sufficient for empathy that the empathizer and protagonist have similar experiences, it is commonly thought that some similarity of experience is necessary for empathy [...] That is, the phenomenology of the experience is supposed to be at least somewhat similar, and the more similar the experience, the greater the empathy. (Feagin, 1996, pp. 100-101)

adult power, viciousness, sadism or indifference. In the service of that accusation, children are designed to evoke in the reader a heady mixture of identification, sympathy, nostalgia, humour, pathos, fear and outrage [...] For Dickens, however, the experience of childhood is something more complicated than simple victimhood, something that readers over the years have expressed in terms of discomfort like “uncanny,” “perverse,” “gnomish” or “monstrous.” That something can be addressed through the problematics of knowledge. (Bodenheimer, 2015, p. 16)

One of the best examples of this problematisation of knowledge can be found in the character of Pip in *Great Expectations*, where:

... narrator and child overtly share the first-person pronoun [and] the overlapping of their experience and knowledge is more complex in terms of both axes – identification/disassociation and subjective immediacy/narrative distancing [...] may elucidate issues of narrator-character relations in general as well as some of the ways in which a child’s understanding may be depicted in fiction. (Galbraith, 1994, pp. 123-4)

By making the child a narrator in a purportedly adult novel, Dickens is subverting the traditional position of trust that the reader bestows upon the narrator, particularly in the realist novels of the period<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, many representations of childhood are understood as a binary reaction to the notion of adulthood as having been corrupted, predominantly by socio-cultural influences, where children remain ‘innocent’ until tainted by such forces. This discourse of childhood almost certainly originated from Enlightenment thinking, as prior to this the notion of childhood as a separate stage of life was not really considered legitimate; children were either invisible or seen as smaller versions of adults (Ariès, 2005).

Contemporary representations of children within adult literature remain ‘centered around the notion of childhood innocence’ (Cohen, 2007, p. 7)<sup>4</sup>, with children often representing the possibility of hope and new

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<sup>3</sup> The notion that “first-person” (or “homodiegetic”) fiction is “focalized through the narrator” ought to present a significant problem, but in practice, it doesn’t. It ought to present a problem, because in homodiegetic works the narrator-as narrator knows more than the narrator-as-character. In particular, the narrator knows what he has learned since the time when the story he’s relating took place. Pip the man narrating knows more than Pip the boy experiencing the story. (Shaw, 1995, p. 113)

<sup>4</sup> There numerous examples of representations that feature children in the latter half of the twentieth century – some of the most prominent are Gunter Grass’ *The Tin Drum* (1959), Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) and Roddy Doyle’s *Paddy Clarke Ha-Ha-Ha* (1993).



beginnings, particularly in postcolonial fiction, where '[t]he child becomes the image of disempowerment, as also the means of seeking restitution of power in conjunction with the idea of the nation' (Bharat, 2003, p. 9). This demonstrates an important shift from the associations made with previous child characters, who were predominantly portrayed in children's literature until later in the twentieth century, when they became 'the "realistic" modern child who is psychologically interesting and thus capable of being subjected to the consideration of the literary artist' (Bharat, 2003, p. 4). The innocence of pre- and early twentieth century representations was imbued with justification for the continuation and dominance of colonialism: 'Childhood is as the place where an older form of culture is preserved (nature or oral tradition), but the effect of this in turn is that the same form of culture is infantilised. At this level, children's fiction has a set of long established links with the colonialism which identified the new world with the infantile state of man' (Rose, 1984, p. 50). This rational approach is emblematic of the perception that children were impressionable, and in need of teaching and discipline in order to develop into successful members of society (clearly mirrored in the attitude of the colonisers towards native peoples in many instances). As attitudes have changed throughout the twentieth century, both in regards to attitudes towards children and the postcolonial turn within theoretical analysis, the emergence can be seen of representations of children as rational entities. Literary representations of children from the twentieth century and into the new one have reflected this, as widespread global recognition of the child's experience as an individual has begun to be acknowledged. However, it does appear that children do often have a specific role to play, particularly in postcolonial narratives, as '[t]he fiction writer, who deploys childhood, is enlisting the agency of the child in making an untainted, unbiased inquiry into the contemporary situation' (Bharat, 2003, p. 12). Child characters are thus utilised in an attempt by the author to apparently critique the construction of society, and subsequently national identity, without overt bias, perhaps in order to reinforce their message (if even a supposedly neutral child can see it, it must be true). There was a proliferation of literature about children and Bildungsromane around the time that many former colonies achieved independence, reflecting a new hope for the construction of a national identity. Within contemporary Western literature, the child character does not have this resonance or association with national identity but is used to critique, again apparently without bias, the flawed world of the adult problems within contemporary society in order to 'to make a statement about how, as the individual matures, the innocent and fabulous world of childhood slowly changes and becomes corrupted [and] to give the reader a perspective on the adult world seen through the child-narrator's eyes' (Tatum, 1973, p. 188). Within contemporary representations there is more recognition and allowance for the individuality of children than in the

colonial period:

The space of childhood is a space of hybridity, possibility and, most importantly, resistance. The precarious passage from childhood to adulthood figures as a hybrid interstice, what Bhabha terms as “the inter - the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space - that carries the burden of a culture”. In this hybrid space, the child, figured as not yet a (civilized) adult, becomes initiated to relations of power, social discourse and their embodied practices. However, in many ways the child is constantly negotiating, questioning or even resisting these cultural constructions, even by virtue of its own constructedness. As David Rudd explains, “[T]he constructed child, as tabula rasa - an empty being on which society attempts to inscribe a particular identity - becomes in that very process, the constructive child and sameness is disruptive”. (Hron, 2008)

Although Hron above raises the possibility of the ‘agency’ of the child, thereby implying that it can have a voice to some extent, this can be over-emphasised, particularly when it the actual language of children is considered. The representation of a child, and the intention of giving it a ‘voice’, raises numerous problems for an author. The first of these is linguistic; in literature aimed at adults, the reproduction of the exact speech of a child may seem oversimplified and ‘childish’. There are examples of this in literature, but very few, and Jacqueline Rose uses an example by Dickens, arguing that it ‘is an infantilising of the narrative voice, but paradoxically it means that children’s writing has grown up - to the point where there is as small a gap as possible between the narrator and the protagonist of the story’ (Rose, 1984, p. 83). This is, however, one of scarce exceptions. McHale points out that:

[T]he literary representation of linguistic reality is as much conditioned by the structure of the repertoire as the representation of any other order of reality, if not more so. Just as the literary child’s appearance, behaviour, psychology, and so forth, are to a large extent ready-mades, pieced together from prefabricated units available in the literary repertoire, so too is the language literary children speak [...] the sub-repertoire used [...] actually has an independent existence outside of literary representation, not in “reality” as such – not, that is, in the language that real children really speak – but rather in the layperson’s image or stereotype of children’s language. (McHale, 1994, p. 204)

The linguistic variables are vast when it comes to representing children, as there are many aspects to consider, including age, rate of development, among many others. Just as there is no one ‘typical’ child, there is no

singular method for representing the voice of the child, although there are some linguistic features that can be used to indicate this voice, including kin names, specifically child-oriented lexis and idioms (grownup, to do a picture) and the breathless, run-on quality of sentences, all of which form a 'baby-talk' that does not reflect children's actual language but how adults believe they speak (McHale, 1994). This myriad of variables means that in the majority of cases of literary representations of children, and in particular as narrators, authors resort to using an adult narrator reflecting on their experience as a child. One of the most famous of these is Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which is a prime example of the fluid boundaries between adult and children's literature, where:

Lee uses the possibilities of the remembering adult narrator, who has the distance of both time and maturity from the events, but at strategic moments she limits the insight of the narrator to what she, as a child, might have understood. So, for example, the narrator is able to recount, with the full scope of adult discourse and perspective, the story of Boo's forced reclusion [...] In no way can this summarizing voice be attributed to the child Scout; the narrator therefore establishes herself as a potential guide to our understanding and interpretation of events that go beyond the awareness of her childhood self. (Murray, 2010, p. 78)

By replacing the voice of the child with the voice of an adult, an author is either consciously or unconsciously legitimising the perspective that a child is not an authoritative enough source to be trusted. This reflects colonial assumptions about the inability of children to either articulate (narrate their story) or be able to even interpret the occurrences correctly without the intervention of an authoritative adult, implying that '[t]hey cannot represent themselves, they must be represented' (Marx, 1963, p. 124). This means that in order to be read and understood by an adult audience, the voice of the child must be articulated by an adult narrator, who aims to 'translate' into a comprehensible language and, in turn, legitimise the voice of the child: 'the 'child' has no 'voice' within the hierarchies of [...] society, because 'adults' [...] create that voice' (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1994, p. 187). These attempts at translation result in a situation where the author deliberately does not mimetically reproduce a child's articulations, and attributes to him a high level of mental linguistic capability, while attempting to maintain the feelings and thoughts intended to portray this constructed childish essence of his character. This raises the question of what exactly an author intends when representing a child, and to what extent, as Hron argues, they are constructive rather than constructed, as they appear to be gaining political and social agency, which is not reflected in the literary sphere. This is exactly why Spivak discusses the problems of the signifier 'representation' in relation to Deleuze's statement that '[t]here is no more representation;

there's nothing but action', stating that '[t]wo series of representation are being run together: representation as 'speaking for', as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation', as in art or philosophy' (Spivak, 1994, p. 70). By 'translating' the voice of the child it appears that they are not 'speaking for' them, merely 're-presenting', which could be perceived as continuing form of colonisation in Rose's terminology, and so, although the portrayal of child characters certainly makes them more visible, it continues to be through the dominant perspective of the adult.

There is no doubt that the child is a subaltern subject, as '[t]he border between the child and the adult is necessarily controlled by the latter, but not necessarily in the interest of that other self whom the adult has effaced or transcended' (Goodenough, et al., 1994, p. 2). However, its under-representation may be due to the fact that children are not considered to be 'different' or 'Other', compared to other subjects traditionally considered subaltern based on gender, race or ethnicity, as all adults have developed from children themselves. Therefore, one final possibility to consider is that perhaps every author feels that they have the authority and ability to represent children as they have all experienced childhood, in spite of the fact they have now finished with this transitional phase and are now in the dominant status of adulthood. Although since the 1970s social attitudes towards children (in the Western world at least) have shifted towards 'an emphasis on the development of the individual and on the sacredness of her or his experience' (Cunningham, 2012, p. 224), in literature children remain a homogenous entity, that are represented either through the voice of an adult or using a generalised, stereotypical 'baby-talk', and it will only be with the formulation of appropriate methods to represent the individuality of children that their subaltern status within literature will change. Spivak's words are perhaps particularly applicable in this case; as childhood is a universal experience, the barriers may be able to be overcome:

Outside (though not completely so) the circuit of the international division of labor, there are people whose consciousness we cannot grasp if we close off our benevolence by constructing a homogenous Other referring only to our own place in the seat of the Same or the Self... To confront them is not to represent (vertreten) them but to learn to represent (darstellen) ourselves. (Spivak, 1994, p. 84)

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## Parental leave: Bad for breastfeeding?

### **Abstract**

The latest UK parental leave reform introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014 could have an unintended impact on breastfeeding outcomes. The revised provision of up to 50 weeks shared leave was introduced in April 2015, with a view to encouraging parents to share infant care responsibilities more equally. This paper explores issues with definitions, policy shifts leading to the incremental change in entitlement and the potential for cascading policy failure.

### **Introduction**

This paper considers how and why recent UK parental leave reform may be negative in the context of breastfeeding. It does not presume to explain the complex impact that parental leave reform may have on parents or infants. Indeed, ongoing research by the author looking at the wider picture is exploring how more flexible shared parental leave may shape infant feeding choices. This paper however explicitly centres upon breastfeeding as an outcome. Breastfeeding outcomes can be described in terms of both prevalence and duration, for example exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and then breastfeeding for two years or beyond as recommended by health professionals (World Health Organization & UNICEF, 2003).

Outlining boundaries and framing the discussion is important due to the sensitive nature of the topic. For a subset of families, breastfeeding is not an option (Feeg, 2001). Some mothers/infants cannot or mothers explicitly decide (or are advised) not to attempt to breastfeed and therefore in these circumstances breastfeeding will not be an infant feeding outcome (regardless of any other factors). These families are not the subject of this paper, the focus is limited to those who perceive breastfeeding as a feasible choice.

### **Definitions**

Before moving forward, it is essential to note that using terminology such as breastfeeding and parental leave is not straightforward. A significant limitation of the breastfeeding research discourse and to some extent parental leave literature is the notable lack of attention given by studies

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to clearly and coherently defining the key topics under discussion. Noel-Weiss et al. (2012) highlight somewhat fluid definitions and persistent calls within the literature for consistent application of the term breastfeeding. The debate surrounding breastfeeding definitions is detailed in articles by Labbok, Belsey and Coffin (1997), Renfrew et al. (2007), Thulier (2010), Hector (2011), Labbok and Starling (2012), as well as Noel-Weiss et al. (2012). Jurisdictional variance in definitions and provision of parental leave is well documented by Moss (2015) in the annual International Review of Leave Policies and Research. Nevertheless, research frequently treats parental leave as a homogeneous term and rarely offers explanation of the definitions used. Consequently, how both terms can be defined and understood will be explored further in the following sections.

### **Breastfeeding**

Breastfeeding is complex in that it can be described and classified in relation to substance exclusivity (what an infant is being fed) and/or mode of feeding (how an infant is fed). Two of the most frequently used (notably substance based) definitions diverge. The Interagency Group for Action on Breastfeeding (IAGB) schema definitions suggests that exclusive breastfeeding should be limited to infants where “no other liquid or solid is given” (Labbok & Krasovec, 1990, p. 227). However, the World Health Organization (WHO) (1991) indicator definitions permit medicine, vitamin drops/syrups and more recently Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) (World Health Organization, 2008) within the exclusive breastfeeding classification.

Both the IAGB and WHO definitions were developed in the context of measuring breastfeeding (Labbok and Krasovec, 1990; World Health Organization, 1991). This is significant as it has led to additional complexity with regards to infants fed breast milk by modes other than nursing directly (Hector, 2011). Researchers are tasked with interpreting the IAGB (Labbok and Krasovec, 1990) and/or WHO (World Health Organization, 1991) definitions by making assumptions and determining how infants fed expressed breast milk via a bottle, cup, spoon, syringe or other aid/supportive feeding device (e.g. nasogastric tube) are accounted for. Applying the WHO (1991) definitions for example, if no other substances are fed infants may be legitimately counted in both the exclusive breastfed and bottle fed categories.

Studies such as the UK Infant Feeding Survey (McAndrew et al., 2012b) reporting using the WHO (1991) substance based definitions, frequently cluster both infants fed expressed breast milk and infants fed breast milk by nursing directly as exclusive breastfeeding. However, Li et al. (2012), Strong and Lee (2012) and Gibbs and Forste (2013) amongst others suggest that mode of feeding may introduce some of the risks associated with bottle feeding. They argue that mode is an important factor in relation to health outcomes such as obesity in later childhood.

Not all studies purporting to use the IAGB (Labbok and Krasovec, 1990) and/or WHO (1991; 2008) definitions explicitly document which category infants fed expressed breast milk fall into (see for example Haider et al., 2010). Moreover, where studies do outline definitions the application in practice is not necessarily consistent. Contrast for example, Jessri et al. (2013, p. 7) and Ogbo, Agho and Page (2015, p. 2) both citing the World Health Organization (2008) indicators as the source of the definitions utilised. The interpretations are valid in the context of the WHO (2008) indicators but do not facilitate cross study comparison, particularly if examining infants fed expressed breast milk.

Collectively this has wider consequences for the discourse. For example, Briere et al. (2014) highlight the impact of definition inconsistency upon literature review and meta-analysis outputs. Supporting this, research by Cattaneo, Davanzo and Ronfani (2000) examined the reliability of country level data in Italy and found that imprecision and/or researcher interpretation of definitions led to an inaccurate picture of breastfeeding prevalence and duration rates. In the context of infants fed expressed breast milk, the significance of definitional discord may be compounded given the increasing prevalence of this mode of infant feeding (Geraghty, Sucharew and Rasmussen, 2013; Johnson et al., 2013).

With the ongoing debate and research literature limitations in mind, it is evident that definitions need to be specific and unambiguous, thus for the purposes of this paper the discussion of breastfeeding and breastfeeding as an outcome will be limited to infants nursing directly at the breast. The term breast milk fed will be used to describe infants who receive at least some of their breast milk via another mode (e.g. bottle fed expressed breast milk).

#### Parental leave

Similarly, understanding of what is meant by parental leave needs to be clearly outlined. Statutory definitions of parental leave vary by jurisdiction and continue to evolve (Moss and Deven, 1999; Moss, 2015). In the UK context, definitions are generally derived from policy and are taken forward via statutory processes (primary legislation, statutory instruments etc.). The revisionist nature of provisions and coupled with external edicts has led to a dual definition and somewhat unique entitlement milieu in the UK.

Of note, newborn related parental leave is distinct from parental leave provision during the course of childhood. This wider entitlement of 18 weeks of unpaid parental leave to be taken before a child reaches 18 years old, is the result of a European Union (EU) level directive enacted in the UK as the Parental Leave (EU Directive) Regulations SI 2013 No. 283. Baird and O'Brien (2015) propose that the disjointedness of a "twin track" UK "policy architecture" is the fallout from political contention over EU mandates (p. 211).

The latest UK led reform of parental leave in the form of the Children and Families Act 2014, moved away from gender based (maternity and paternity) provision for the parents of newborn infants to more gender neutral flexible shared leave. The act which came into force in April 2015 is a departure from the historic position of the “law prescribing roles for each parent” (Mitchell, 2015, p. 128). Negotiated within the constraints of a coalition government the policy intent was to lessen the gender pay gap rather than introduce ambiguity with the term parental leave (BIS, 2011).

Therefore, within this paper leave will have a narrow definition as the time away from an occupation associated with the birth or adoption of a newborn infant, incorporating maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave entitlements.

### **Policy shift**

The twentieth century saw a transformation in attitudes towards gender in the UK. Prior to the 1970’s women were generally expected to leave formal paid work upon marriage or in any event upon becoming pregnant (see Briar, 1997). There has been a steady increase since in women engaged formal paid employment with rights equivalent to their male counterparts and a rise in the number of dual earner households with young children (Scott, 2008). Scott (2008) notes a persistent pressure upon mothers to be engaged in paid work. Linked to this is the onus upon employed mothers who retain the role of principle carer to create and use more flexibility in their work arrangements to accommodate child related responsibilities (Singley and Hynes, 2005). MacLeavy (2011) highlights that women’s dual roles can leave them particularly vulnerable to the results of policy reform.

The development of parental leave provision in the UK has been incremental and fragmented reflecting a step change in policy. Maternity leave, initially in the form of the right to return to work within 29 weeks was introduced by the Employment Protection Act 1975. The act also granted mothers 6 weeks maternity pay at 90% of weekly pay, a provision which remains in place to this day. Statutory paternity and adoption entitlement came much later as part of the Employment Act 2002. As noted above, current UK shared parental leave provision was instituted by the Children and Families Act 2014. The entitlement is in effect a bolt-on to the prevailing gendered leave provisions and both parents are required to explicitly opt in to taking parental leave and out of maternity, paternity or adoption leave.

Where parents elect to take flexible shared parental leave, following a minimum 2 weeks compulsory maternity leave and 2 weeks (optional) paternity leave, parents will then be able to share the remaining 50 weeks leave between them. Thus leave that was previously dedicated maternity leave for the purposes of recovery from childbirth, establishing breastfeeding and coping with fatigue can now be transferred away from the individual arguably in some respects in most need (McGovern et al.,

2006). Shared parental leave could see mothers in the future returning to work much earlier, particularly in families where they are the higher earner or in a more secure position in the current austere economic climate. The discourse has not yet considered the policy shift, nor has research examined whether it will limit breastfeeding.

### **Breastfeeding outcomes**

Policy can shape behaviour over both the short and long term. For example, McAndrew et al. (2012b) highlight that an increase in the length of UK statutory maternity pay to 39 weeks, as a result of the Statutory Maternity Pay, Social Security (Maternity Allowance) and Social Security (Overlapping Benefits) (Amendment) Regulations 2006, meant that “mothers returned to work later in 2010 than in 2005” (p. 154). Whilst the government suggest that initial take up of shared parental leave could be as little as 2 to 8%, this fails to recognise longer term attitudinal shifts along the lines of those noted above (BIS, 2013, p. 4). Moreover, O’Brien, Koslowski and Daly (2015) highlight that there are no official contemporary statistics as the government do not record or systematically report upon leave take up. Additionally, whilst data on infant feeding outcomes has historically been recorded as part of the quinquennial Infant Feeding Survey series, the government has withdrawn support for the ninth survey due to take place during 2015 (La Leche League GB, 2015). Thus determining the impact of the parental leave reform on breastfeeding will be difficult to evidence.

Whilst there are limitations (as discussed previously) to the way the Infant Feeding Survey series records breastfeeding based upon the WHO (1991) indicator definitions, it is nevertheless the most robust data available. Unfortunately no detail is available from the series on the prevalence of breastfeeding (infants who nurse directly) as the infants are grouped with those who are expressed breast milk fed. Within the study the exclusively breast milk fed infants are referred to as ‘exclusively breastfed’ and breast milk fed infants are described as ‘breastfed’ (McAndrew et al., 2012b). The last Infant Feeding Survey in 2010 highlighted that the UK-wide prevalence of infants ‘exclusively breastfed’ at birth was 69% and this fell to 23% at 6 weeks (McAndrew et al., 2012b, p. 31).

Whilst 6% of mothers who ‘breastfed’ (i.e. fed infants any breast milk at all via any mode) overall suggested that returning to work or college was a reason for breastfeeding cessation, this increased to 20% of mothers who ‘breastfed’ for six to nine months (McAndrew et al., 2012b, p. 111). This suggests that issues related to leave may come to the fore when breastfeeding is established once early practical and social hurdles have been negotiated. A potential consequence of leave reform prompting mothers’ early return to the workforce may be a negative impact on already modest duration rates. Only 23% of nine month old infants received any breast milk at all in 2010 (McAndrew et al., 2012a). This is despite the fact

the government policy recommends that breast milk “should continue to be an important part of babies’ diet for the first year of life” (Department of Health, 2003, p. 2).

### **Breastfeeding post leave**

The likelihood of continuing breastfeeding upon return to an occupation outside of the home/away from the infant is in part contingent upon the age at which leave is curtailed. Older infants who breastfeed less frequently and are well underway with the transition to solid foodstuffs can more readily adapt (Angeletti, 2009). However, few mothers in the UK find work and breastfeeding compatible despite the right to request facilities to support breastfeeding and/or breast milk feeding. The Infant Feeding Survey in 2010 reported that only 8% of working mothers indicated that they were provided with facilities to breastfeed at work (McAndrew et al., 2012b, p. 156). Nevertheless, 19% stated that that return to work had affected how their infant was fed, with 56% of these mothers suggesting that they had stopped or limited breastfeeding (McAndrew et al., 2012b, p. 156-157).

Bryder (2009) and Kramer (2010) highlight that Infant feeding practices have an impact on both infant morbidity and mortality, particularly where sanitation is limited. A UNICEF evidence review led by Mary Renfrew in 2012 highlighted that “over £17 million could be gained annually by avoiding the costs of healthcare associated with four acute diseases” typically associated with non-breastfed infants (Renfrew et al., 2012, p. 11). Moreover, three cases of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome annually could be avoided by an increase in infants being exclusively breastfed (Renfrew et al., 2012, p. 12). Whilst short duration maternity leave is only one of the numerous barriers to successful breastfeeding (including practical difficulties, health issues, poor and conflicting advice) the impact of leave provision should not be undervalued.

The flexible format of shared parental leave does offer scope for both parents to take leave (albeit low paid) at the same time (BIS, 2011). This may limit the effect of the policy reform on breastfeeding initiation as fathers have the opportunity to be present to support the establishment of breastfeeding (Sherriff, Hall and Panton, 2014). However, at the other end of spectrum the more leave fathers/partners take the less remains to maintain breastfeeding post six months and as noted above, duration rates in the UK are modest.

If more mothers are returning to an occupation outside of the home and increasingly sustain breastfeeding through nursing breaks or prolong breast milk feeding via expressing breast milk during the hours away from their infant, this will eventually normalise these practices. Yet, despite moves to increase workplace facilities for example, for many mothers continuing breastfeeding for any more than a short period post leave remains unattainable (Kosmala-Anderson and Wallace, 2006). Clearly there

will always be workplaces where it is not possible support breastfeeding due to the work environment. Furthermore, the UK does not have a culture where infants at work or regular, frequent and (for some) lengthy breaks are accepted (Brown, 2015).

### Conclusion

Thus in the present climate, the recent UK parental leave reform introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014 could have an unintended impact on breastfeeding outcomes. In short, shared parental leave may be bad for breastfeeding. In particular, the consequence of the reform exerting further pressure upon mothers to curtail their maternity leave warrants further attention.

Ideally, to reduce the likelihood of cascading policy failure and support breastfeeding, encourage active parent-infant bonding whilst promoting appropriate child development, equal provision of twelve months paid leave dedicated to each parent in the form of maternity, paternity or adoption leave can be envisaged as optimal. The term parental leave could then be reserved for the unpaid leave (currently 18 weeks) available to parents throughout childhood (Parental Leave (EU Directive) Regulations SI 2013 No. 283).

Whilst this represents an enhancement of provision, simplified rules and standardised entitlement may reduce administrative and potentially recruitment overheads for business and give parents much needed clarity in the terminology used. Nevertheless, the risk of any parity of leave (even in its current form) is that gender based discrimination and the gender pay gap may simply evolve into discrimination against those of child bearing age and a family pay gap where both parents and therefore their children suffer financially in the long term.

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## Determination of teachers' attitudes and behaviors toward child abuse

**Abstract**

This study was aimed to determine the teachers' attitudes and behaviours related to child abuse and neglect and to increase their awareness. Questionnaires prepared by researchers were used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of 21 questions to determine teachers' attitudes and behaviors toward child abuse. The research was conducted with 173 teachers working in primary schools up to Directorate of National Education in Mugla province in Turkey.

As a result, it was determined that 19.7% of teachers encountered child abuse. It was stated that 70.5 % of them had knowledge about International Child Rights Convention and 89% of them would report to the relevant authorities if they presented with child abuse. It was determined that 100% of them had a protective attitude and behaviour toward children and 87.3 % of them said beating should not be used as an educational tool. 79.85% of teachers understood that whilst it is a legal requirement to report the child abuse and neglect, 87.9% of them stated that the most important profession to protect children exposed to child abuse was Social Services Expertise.

**Key Words** Abuse, neglect, child, teacher

**1. Introduction**

Progress and development of a society can only be possible with physically, spiritually and socially healthy development of children who are the future of societies. In this context, when examining the definition of child abuse and neglect the World Health Organization (WHO) defined child abuse as "Behaviors unwittingly or intentionally made by an adult and negatively affect the child's health, his physical development and psychological development". Child neglect is defined as physical, emotional, moral and social inhibition of child's development and are the result of neglecting basic needs of a child like nutrition, clothing, sheltering, education, health

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and love by particularly by parents, dependents and other adults (1). There are four main categories of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect (2). As mentioned in the definition above, abuse and neglect is a major social problem that negatively affect the child's whole development. Protection from "all forms of physical and mental violence" of children while in the care of their parents or others is taken part in Convention on Child Rights of which our country is part (3).

Although the concept of child abuse and neglect can be found in various resources since the beginning of written history, our attention could be drawn to the subject in last century (4). According to the figures from 29 countries in the world, the approximate average rate of child abuse is 16.3/1000. WHO reports that each year 31000 children under age of 15 lost their lives because of this and child abuse incidences globally 40/1,000 (5,6).

25% of children aged 7-18 living in Turkey are exposed to child neglect, 43% of them are exposed to physical abuse, 51% of them are exposed to emotional abuse and 3% of them are exposed to sexual abuse (7). According to another study, emotional abuse scores the highest with 78% of rate has the first place in Turkey (6). Even though some research is being carried out regarding sexual abuse in Turkey, official figures do not reflect this. In the achieved study, it was determined that girls' rate exposure to sexual abuse was 85% and boys' rate was 15%. According to 2010 data, lawsuits related to Crimes against Sexual Immunity; it was noteworthy that 1052 boys and 48 girls aged 12-15, 2129 boys and 71 girls aged 15-18 were defendant (8).

When the subject is viewed from another dimension; it is often located in written and visual media news that teachers apply physical punishment styles against students in schools (9). In addition, girls aged 7-14 are mostly exposed to physical abuse by their mother, father, teacher, friend and big sisters/brothers. Boys had suffered from physical abuse respectively by their friend, teacher, father, big sister/brother and unfamiliar person (7). Besides emotional abuse forms that teachers expose students to are; yelling to students, giving names, not to give right to speak, putting some students continually in the back row, ignoring some students, standing students on one foot labelling students with negative expressions like "lazy, etc." (9). Girls aged 7-14 stated that they were mostly exposed to emotional abuse by their friend, teacher, father and mother. Boys at this age stated that they were mostly exposed to emotional abuse respectively by their teachers, friends and fathers (7). Students that are exposed to these behaviors develop negative attitudes to school and lesson, suffer psychologically and physically (9).

As a result, everyone who is responsible for child care and training has an important role in supporting children to grow up as a healthy person. Accordingly, it is thought that either to prevent child abuse and neglect or in terms of intervention to the situation in early period with

interdisciplinary cooperation raising awareness of teachers regarding evaluating of their and their colleagues' attitudes and behaviours is important.

## **2. Method**

This descriptive study was carried out in Mugla province, Turkey between February- April 2014 to measure knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of the teachers' about child abuse and neglect. The research population consisted of teachers working in 40 primary schools in Mugla province. 173 teachers from 16 schools were included in the research by using stratification random sampling method in sample selection. "Questionnaire on Determination Attitudes and Behaviours of Teachers Working in Primary Schools toward Child Abuse" generated by scanning the literature by researchers was used to collect data. This form consists of 21 questions. Data obtained in the research was evaluated applying number and percentage test in SPSS 21.0 software.

Written permission was taken from Mugla Provincial Directorate of National Education before research; verbal consents were taken by explaining the purpose of the study to the teachers before applying the questionnaire; the research was conducted in the frame of ethical rules.

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### 3. Results

**Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of teachers**

Characteristics	Number (n=173)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
24-45	96	55,5
46-67	76	43,9
68-88	1	0,6
Total	173	100
<b>Gender</b>		
Man	80	46,2
Woman	93	53,8
Total	173	100
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	29	16,8
Married	144	83,2
Total	173	100
<b>Having Child</b>		
Yes	144	83,2
No	29	16,8
Total	173	100
<b>Duration of the profession</b>		
1-15	60	34,7
16-30	101	58,4
31-47	11	6,9
<b>Status of Enjoying Profession</b>		
Yes	167	96,5
No	1	0,6
Sometimes	5	2,9
Total	173	100

55.5% of teachers were in the 24–45 age range and 53.8% of them were women. 83.2% of the teachers were married and 83.2% of them had children. The majority of teachers had worked in the profession for between 16–30 years. 96,5% of the teachers participated in the research reported that they loved their profession.

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**Table 2: Teachers' attitudes and behaviors toward children**

Characteristics	Number (n=173)	Percentage (%)
<b>Democratic</b>		
No	19	11,0
Yes	154	89,0
Total	173	100
<b>Strict</b>		
No	124	71,7
Yes	49	28,3
Total	173	100
<b>Protective</b>		
Yes	173	100
No	0	0,0
Total	173	100
<b>Unconcerned</b>		
Yes	109	63,0
No	64	37,0
Total	173	100
<b>Full of love</b>		
Yes	138	79,8
No	35	20,2
Total	173	100
<b>Like Friend</b>		
Yes	104	60,1
No	69	39,9
Total	173	100

It was stated that all teachers were in attitude of protective toward their students, 89% were democratic, 79,8% were full of love, 71,7% were strict, 63% were unconcerned; 60,1% were like a friend with their students.

**Tabl3 3: Teachers' status meeting with child abuse**

Meeting with Child Abuse	Number(n=173)	Percentage (%)
Yes	34	19,7
No	139	80,3
Total	173	100

80.3% of teachers had not met with any kind of child abuse.

**Table 4: Teachers' report status of child abuse to relevant state agency**

Status	Number(n=173)	Percentage(%)
<b>I wouldn't complain to relevant places if my colleague beat the child</b>		
I agree	29	16,8
I don't agree	84	48,5
I don't know	60	34,7
Total	173	100
<b>Events experienced in the institution should be handled within the institution first.</b>		
I agree	136	78,6
I don't agree	37	21,4
Total	173	100
<b>Violence living in the family- especially between children and parents- should immediately reported to the judicial authorities.</b>		
Yes	67	38,7
It should be decided according to the size of violence	94	54,4
No	12	6,9
Total	173	100
<b>I complain to the relevant authorities when I confront with child abuse</b>		
Yes	154	89,0
No	19	11,0
Total	173	100
<b>I wouldn't complain/intervene when I face with child abuse</b>		
Yes	7	3,0
No	177	97,0
Total	173	100
<b>It is a legal obligation to report child abuse and neglect</b>		
Yes	138	79,8
No	5	2,9
Not sure	30	17,3
Total	173	100

48.5% of teachers said they would complain report their colleague if they witnessed child abuse. 78% of them thought that child abuse experienced in institution should be handled within the institution. 38.7% of teachers agreed that authorities should be notified of incidents of violence in the family where there were concerns for the child's safety whereas 54.4% of them suggested that minor incidents happened in the family should be handled in the family and 6.9% of them suggested that all problems should be handled within the family. It was stated that 89% of teachers would complain to the relevant authorities in the event of encountering child abuse, and 97% of them would complain/intervene. 79.8% of teachers stated it is a legal obligation to report child abuse and neglect, 2.9% of them stated it is not a legal obligation.

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**Table 5: Teachers' idea that the person responsible for the sexual abuse**

Status	Number(n=173)	Percentage(%)
<b>I believe the child when they said that they have sexually abused by family members (parents, sister, brother, relatives)</b>		
I agree	12	6,9
I don't agree	140	80,9
I don't know	21	12,2
Total	173	100
<b>In sexual abuse cases, the abusers are elderly or foreign men and street punk.</b>		
I agree	34	19,7
I don't agree	139	80.3
Total	173	100

80.9% of teachers stated that they would believe the child who said s/he was abused by family members. 19.7% of teachers thought that sexual abuse cases were generally performed by elderly, foreign men and street punks.

**Table 6: The necessity of beating in child's disciplinary education**

The necessity of beating	number(n=173)	Percentage(%)
Not necessary	151	87,3
Necessary	22	12,7
Total	173	100

87.3% of teachers thought that beating should not be used as an educational tool. 12.7% of them thought it was necessary; 4.6% of these teachers thought that beating was necessary for the child to understand who has control, 8.1% of them thought that some children deserved to be beaten.

**Table 7: Teachers' knowledge status about International Children's Rights Convention**

Teachers' knowledge status	Number(n=173)	Percentage(%)
I know the convention, I own the information about content.	122	70,5
I only know the name, I do not know its contents.	44	25,5
I don't know the convention.	7	4.0
Total	173	100

70.5% of teachers stated that they have knowledge about International Children's Rights Convention.

**Table 8: Important professions seen by teachers in protection of children exposed to child abuse**

Occupational Groups	Number(n=173)*	Percentage (%)
Social Services Expertise	152	87,9
Policemen	107	61,8
Doctors	60	34,7
Teachers	119	68,8
Nurses	37	21,4
Judiciary	91	52,6

\*Subjects gave multiple answers.

The majority of teachers (87.9%) thought Social Services had the best occupation and expertise to deal with child abuse, this was followed by teachers (68.8%) with 61.8% being the police, 52.6% judiciary, 34.7% doctors and the lowest expertise of child abuse expertise (21,4%) being in the nursing occupation .

**Table 9: The events that are evaluated in the context of child abuse**

Status	Yes		No		I don't know	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Inadequate health care or delaying treatment	131	75,7	19	11,0	23	13,3
Leaving the child hungry	157	90,8	11	6,4	5	2,9
Child pornography	173	100	0	0,0	0	0,0
Prostitution	172	99,4	1	0,6	0	0,0
Watching the child secretly while dressing	164	94,8	5	2,9	4	2,3
Sexual touching	170	98,3	2	1,2	1	0,6
Scolding	68	39,3	91	52,6	14	8,1
Insulting	127	73,4	27	15,6	19	11,0
Underestimation	120	69,4	37	21,4	16	9,2
Treating the child with beating	84	48,6	62	35,8	27	15,6
Child marriage	160	92,5	7	4,0	6	3,5
Slapping	125	73,2	34	19,7	14	8,1
To address the child with insulting names like stupid, idiot	142	82,1	16	9,2	15	8,7
To be employed of the child suitable to his age in order to nurture him	82	47,4	76	43,9	15	8,7
Failure to meet the basic needs of the child	139	80,3	24	13,9	10	5,8
Saying words to the child builds self-confidence	140	80,9	16	9,2	17	9,8
Carry out scientific experiments on children	165	95,4	3	1,7	5	2,9
Making children begging on the streets	168	97,1	2	1,2	3	1,7
Standing of the child on one foot on the board	93	53,8	64	37,8	14	9,2
Taunting the child's mistake continuously	116	67,1	33	19,1	24	13,9
Girls taken out of the school early or never sent to school	160	92,5	4	2,3	9	5,2
Children's starting school late because of working, leaving school early	145	83,8	16	9,2	12	6,9

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The main causes for child abuse were cited as follows: 100% agreed that child pornography was the main cause, 99.4% being prostitution, 98.3% sexual touching; 97.1% begging children on the streets; 95.4% carrying out scientific experiments on children; 94.8% watching child secretly while dressing; 92.5% of them girls taken out of the school or never sent to school; 92.5% child marriage; 90.8% of them leaving the child hungry were the scope of child abuse cases.

#### **4. Discussion**

This study clearly emphasises that teachers' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors in relation to abuse and neglect are changing. For example, the study of Education and Science Workers' Union "Child, Violence and Crime" in 2006 demonstrated that one of every four teachers resorted to violence, 40 of every hundred children were faced violence (10). Whilst in this study, 87.3% of the teachers that participated in the research thought that beating should not be used as an educational tool although 12.7% of them thought that beating was necessary with 4.6% of these teachers thought that beating was necessary for the child to understand who has control. Worryingly, 8.1% of them still believed that some children deserved to be beaten. On a positive note however, it was considered that teaching is an important occupation group to prevent and determine abuse and neglect.

In a research conducted in eight provinces in Turkey in 2010, it was found that the rate of child abuse was 33% with the rate of slapping, ear and hair pulling being 25% and beating with stick, 14% (9). In this research, it was stated that 39.3% of teachers scold the children, 73.2% admitted to slapping the children, 48.6% of beat the children and 53.8% of them made the child stand on one foot on the board as methods of punishment. In the study of Mahiroglu and Buluç (2003), it was observed that secondary school students participating in the research were exposed to physical abuse of the teachers. It was expressed in the research that rate of girl students exposed to physical abuse was 21.4% and rate of boy students was 64.7% (9). However, whilst not underestimating the extent of abuse within school, all of the teachers were protective toward students: 89% of them were democratic; 79.8% of them were full of love, 71.7% of them were strict, 63% of them showed unconcerned attitude and 60.1% of them were like friends with their students.

#### **5. Conclusions and recommendations**

In conclusion, this study found that there are a combination of positive and negative findings in teachers' attitudes and behaviors toward child abuse and neglect. The teachers (whilst understanding the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and are keen to report abuse of the children in the domestic arena), they do not apply it within the classroom and use physical punishment to chastise the children.

Accordingly, the recommendations are as follows

1. Training programs and seminars about the causes and concerns relating to child abuse should be compulsory to increase awareness of teachers. Recording and reporting processes and upholding children's rights against abuse and neglect, understanding signs and symptoms of abuse, domestic abuse (incest), general characteristics of abusers, disciplinary methods and the evaluation of risks posed should be given a place in these trainings.
2. Active use of interdisciplinary collaboration in the prevention of child abuse and neglect,
3. Further comprehensive and analytical studies on a larger sample on this subject are recommended

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## Acknowledgement of birth country in picture storybooks about Chinese girls adopted by US families

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this content analysis study was to examine whether acknowledgement of China (as adoptees' birth country) was evident in children's picture storybooks. Acknowledgement matters because it can be salient to children's binational/bicultural identity. The authors identified 38 books (containing 40 stories) that portrayed Chinese girls adopted by US families. Across the books, the results revealed an acknowledgement process that linked China to adoptees' personal identification. This theme had some consistencies with psychological research on actual adoptive families. Suggestions for potential value/utilization of such books are offered.

### **Acknowledgement of birth country in picture storybooks about Chinese girls adopted by US families**

According to US Office of Immigration Statistics (USOIS,; 2011), US families most frequently adopt children from China. Indeed, nearly one third of all children internationally adopted in 2010 were from China. Approximately 75% of the Chinese adoptees were girls (USOIS, 2011). Given the prevalence of Chinese-US adoptive families, it seems worthwhile to consider elements of biracial/binational identity. As noted by Yuval-Davis (2012), individuals' daily experiences are influenced by factors such as gender, ethnicity, and lifecycle stage. Given the racial/ethnic differences between US adoptive parents (who are typically Caucasian/Euro-American) and their daughters, it is likely that all family members will face social inquiries/reactions (Docan-Morgan, 2011; Kubo, 2010; Louie, 2009). Thus, parents are encouraged to address the differences directly with the adopted daughters.

Parents can serve as protectors when they are with their children, but are also advised to prepare children for interactions in parent-absent environments (e.g., day care, school). Thus, parents can educate girls about the (a) existence of their birth country and (b) its meaning as part of their

identities (Evans, 2008; Gill, 2012; Louie, 2009). According to Song (2004), books are one of the most common resources on which parents rely to provide a cultural education for their adopted children. In this context, this study addressed the following research question: *Are acknowledgements of China (as birth country) evident in US children's picture storybooks about adoption?*

The Early storybooks might be particularly salient for children who (a) lack memories of their pre-adoption lives and (b) don't have access to biographical records (e.g., birthparents' information). These conditions are common for Chinese-born girls adopted by US families. According to the US Department of State (2014), most of these girls are younger than two years at the time of adoption. Interviews with pre-teen/adolescent adoptees revealed that they have little memory of their experiences in China (Fuchs, 2014). Given governmental restrictions (e.g., one-child policy), birthparents aren't safe to openly place their children for adoption (Grice, 2005; Johnson, Banghan, & Liyao, 1998). Thus, their children often enter the child welfare system anonymously (Andrew, 2007) and little/no information about birthfamilies (including their sense of Chinese identity) is known.

In the absence of birthfamily/country memories, adoptive families can turn to children's literature as a resource. Similar to other media (Magalhaes & Rossie, 2014), children can be exposed to stories and claim them as part of their identities/experiences (Jue-Steuck, 2011). For example, a customer reviewer wrote (in reference to Vanita Wasson's 1939 book *The Chosen Baby*), that she "was adopted 60 years ago. I remember this book. I would recommend it to anyone with an adopted child under the age of 5 or 6; it's a primitive reader, with lots of pictures. My mother recently died, and among her effects was this book - which she wanted to go to my sister, who is also adopted" (Customer Review, 2014). This comment is consistent with prior research, which has shown that stories are important to adopted children (Kranstuber & Kellas, 2011; Ponte, Wang & Fan, 2010).

According to Yuval-Davis (2012), a sense of belongingness (as part of identity) is developed via daily or routine practices. These practices can occur in the home among family members and help individuals to understand their social location (e.g., awareness of status tied to race/ethnicity, sex, social class). It is possible that children's literature might be a means of helping Chinese-born adopted girls to understand their social location (e.g., Grice, 2005). Indeed, Jue-Steuck (2011) stated that adoptees (a) can remember the adoptive stories read to them in early childhood and (b) carry these stories into adulthood as part of their identities. Given this potential impact on early identity, it seems worthwhile to examine the issues/themes represented within such books (Fitzpatrick & Kostina-Ritchey, 2013).

**Book selection/critical analysis process**

In order to be included in this study, each book had to meet several criteria. More specifically, each book (a) had to specify the birth country as China, (b) published after 1995, (c) printed in English and (d) had to be written for a preschool-kindergarten audience. [This criterion did not focus on children's reading level, but rather the age-appropriateness of a book which parents can read with children.] A sample of 38 books was identified. Two books had dual stories, so the sample contained a total of 40 stories (see Table 1).

The authors utilized a directional coding approach. In contrast to a grounded theory approach, directional coding entails a content analysis in which researcher search for pre-determined thematic topics/messages (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The topics are identified from sources such as empirical, clinical or theoretical articles. In this study, the researchers did not simply conduct a keyword search (e.g., "China"). Rather, the authors analyzed the discussions of birth country within the context of each story. This approach is consistent with prior studies on children's books (Fitzpatrick & Kostina-Ritchey, 2013; Kokkola, 2011).

**Acknowledgement of birth country**

The content analysis revealed that birth country was addressed in the adoptive storybooks. Some books had links that were relatively brief and direct. For example, Jean MacLeod's *At Home in this World—A China Adoption Story* contained the phrase "I was born in China" (no page number [n.p.]). In Lily, Keri Campbell wrote, "I was born in China. I lived in an orphanage" (n.p.). Deb Capone's *Dumplings are Delicious* added a clear limit to the birth country by noting the family status change: "I lived in China until I was adopted" (p. 3). The wording "until I was adopted" highlights the geographic shift to the US after adoption. This shift was addressed more directly in Rose Lewis' *Orange Peel's Pockets*: "Once there was a little girl nicknamed Orange Peel. She was born in China and now lived in America" (n.p.).

Consistent with research on adopted girls (Ponte, et al., 2010), some stories portrayed that these daughters did not remember their birth country. Rather, their knowledge of living in China is based on information provided by adoptive parents. For example, Carol Peacock's *Mommy Far, Mommy Near—An Adoption Story* focused on a young girl's growing awareness that she has a birth mother (far) and adoptive mother (near). As this awareness emerges, the daughter revisits some mementos from the adoptive family creation. One memento is a photo album: "I don't remember about being born. Mommy made me a photo book about how I was adopted from China when I was a baby" (n.p.). Similarly, Craig Shermin's *Families are Forever* contained the phrase, "I was born far, far away—in a place called China. I don't remember much, because I was small." (p. 7). The lack of recall



was best articulated in Jean MacLeod's *At Home in this World—A China Adoption Story*: "Sometimes my friends will ask me questions about things I can't answer: I don't remember anything clearly about my first year on the other side of the ocean—all I have are memories of many different feelings, and sometimes what I feel I can't explain." (n.p.).

This lack of recall is not limited to adopted infants/toddlers. Many children have few clear memories from their earliest years. However, this does create a situation in which adoptive parents have greater responsibility for explaining a child's (a) pre-adoptive life in China and (b) arrival in the US (Gill, 2012; Kranstuber & Kellas, 2011). Prior research has indicated that some adoptive parents have difficulty addressing topics such as birthparents, biethnic/binational identity and children's sense of belongingness (Docan-Morgan, 2011; Kubo, 2010; Louie, 2009; Song, 2004). In this context, books might be a valuable resource to begin conversations or elucidate issues for children (e.g., Beck, 2009; Kokkola, 2011).

For example, the books provide models of phrases that young children can learn and use in interactions with others such as peers and teachers. The phrases are short, but informative (e.g., "I lived in China until I was adopted"). Given the brevity of some conversations among preschoolers (Hay, 2006), this might be sufficient information for some encounters. The phrasings within these adoptive storybooks are consistent with the identification of empowerment in other children's literature (Beck, 2009). The phrasings also align with empowerment principles for adopted children to manage how they discuss their former (birth) and current family circumstances (Kranstuber & Kellas, 2011).

In addition, these phrases can serve as building blocks for bicultural/binational identity. Within the stories, none of the adopted girls were portrayed as receiving any reactions of shock or rejection after making such statements. Rather, the birth country statements were treated in a matter-of-fact manner. This casualness can be a means of reducing the sense of 'otherness' that has been historically seen in books about children from ethnically underrepresented groups (Beck, 2009). The personal identification can also help build a connectedness to other Chinese/Chinese-American individuals. Although some US adoptive families don't live among large Chinese-American populations, the books can be one way of introducing connections (to birth country) for their daughters. This premise fits with place attachment principles in community psychology (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001). These findings are consistent with prior analysis that emphasized the importance of home countries and racial/ethnic identity in children's literature (Grice, 2005; Kokkola, 2011).



**Potential value/relevance of books**

Not all early childhood professionals are directly involved in transnational adoption, but many professionals can facilitate adoption support. The use of storybooks in classrooms, community centers and public events can be part of broader efforts to reduce stigma and enhance family adjustment (e.g., Song, 2004). One way for childhood professionals to support adoptive families is to create welcoming environments, such as bibliotherapeutic reading spaces (Duncan, 2010). Parallel to other service providers (e.g., Price, 2013), professionals might (a) engage in home visits with post-adoptive families and (b) use books in the family growth process.

It should also be noted that storybooks can be of interest to families/young children not engaged in adoption. Early books can influence children's perceptions of their own families, other families and general society (Ayres, 2004; Beasley-Murray, 2013). So, it is important that a variety of family structures (divorced, single parent, biological, adoptive) be represented in children's literature. Professionals' use/recommendations of books align with other efforts to promote children's humanitarian values, such as social justice (Richards, 2012) and inclusiveness (Dawson, 2013).

In addition, it might be possible for childhood professionals to build collaborations with members of Chinese/Chinese-American communities. For example, community members can be invited to give their feedback about the books' cultural accuracy. Such invitations could reduce the sense of marginalization often experienced by children from underrepresented or disenfranchised groups (e.g., Beck, 2009; Boggis, 2012). In addition, these members can recommend other resources to supplement books. It is possible for childhood professionals and community members to create shared events such as public readings in Lunar New Year Celebrations. Some professionals might also foster the generation of new stories over time.

In sum, this study's purpose was to examine whether birth country was addressed in storybooks about Chinese girls adopted by US families. This analysis revealed that (a) China was frequently identified and (b) linked to adopted girls' self-identification. Although birth country acknowledgement might seem trivial, its potential value should not be dismissed. Consistent with prior literature on belonging and identity (e.g., Gill, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2012), transnationally adoptees' self-awareness is fluid and influenced by social location experiences (Evans, 2008; Fuchs, 2014; Ponte et al. 2010). Adoptive parents can serve a significant guiding role as adoptees navigate through issues such as birth country relevance. Storybooks can be a valuable tool in this navigation process. Childhood professionals have unique expertise to guide families in selecting books and understanding the textual messages.

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## Social work practitioners' perceptions of interprofessional collaboration influences in safeguarding children and young people

### **Abstract**

Research, child death enquiries and serious case reviews (SCR) routinely identify the recurring failures of interprofessional collaboration in the safeguarding of children and young people. The key consideration, notwithstanding the existing knowledge and understanding and the progress made in safeguarding children, is that it is not always clear what influences the success or failure of a collaborative approach. Whilst the need for systemic understanding of collaboration is acknowledged, there is still a lack of conceptual clarity about what constitutes successful collaboration and why it appears so difficult to achieve. Because of the diverse composition of those involved in the collaboration; ranging from children and young people, their parents or carers to different professionals, it is important to explore the diverse perspectives regarding what influences contribute to the success or failure of this approach. Given the social workers' lead role, in particular, their perceptions and insights into this process are critical to contributing, not only to practitioner knowledge, but also to effective collaboration as whole.

**Key words** service user, collaboration, safeguarding, children and young people

### **Introduction**

One of the most enduring debates in the UK over the last few decades concerns how and why vulnerable children have continued to suffer neglect and abuse, in some cases with fatal consequences, despite the perceived big strides that have been made to safeguard them (McLaughlin, 2013; Munro and Hubbard, 2011). From the deaths of Dennis O'Neill in 1945, and Maria Colwell in 1973 all cases of child death or serious neglect or abuse, have attracted more or less similar criticism, concerning the

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failure of professionals to work together. Serious case reviews and child death inquiries identify the key elements which may have contributed to the failures in an individual case. Arguing for a less vindictive but more supportive child protection approach, Featherstone, Morris and White (2013, p.14) advocated for a new paradigm shift and the need to, “emphasise families’ capabilities rather than their deficits and workers’ abilities to cheer on change and encourage hope”. However, relying only on the traditional systematic, step by step, identification and isolation of reasons for failure in individual cases without exploring their wider impact on collaboration and systemic relationships could be missing an important piece of the jigsaw about this approach. Citing the ubiquitous political ideological influences on current social welfare provision, Featherstone, Broadhurst and Holt (2012, p.629) questioned how professionals can think systematically as recommended by Munro (2011) without considering the impact of economic austerity cuts on the ability to keep children safe.

Research has investigated how professionals and service users work collaboratively when safeguarding vulnerable children, including system wide collaborative influences (Smith and Mogro-Wilson, 2007; Frost and Robinson, 2007); specific individual collaborative influences or subsystems such as information sharing (Theakstone-Owen, 2010); working with complexity, conflict and uncertainty (Darlington, Feeney and Rixon, 2004); relationships with involuntary service users, violence, emotions, emotional intelligence and other psycho-social issues (Littechild, 2005) and the place for professional values and interprofessional dialogue (Wilmot, 1995). Atkinson, Jones and Lamont, (2007) found evidence of agreement between most studies that key influences on multiagency collaboration are the working relationships, multi-agency processes, availability of resources and effective management and governance. However the systemic nature and interrelationship between these influences is not clear.

The study reported on here explored what social workers consider to be key influences to successful interprofessional collaboration when professionals and service users work together to safeguard children and young people, as well as the nature of the relationships between these influences. Practitioners’ perceptions are key to practitioner knowledge, which is the knowledge acquired from social workers’ practice, education and training, supervision, attending team meetings and case conferences and comparing notes (Pawson et al, 2003). Practice wisdom by lead professionals is an integral part of social work knowledge and is therefore key to interprofessional collaboration in safeguarding children and young people (Mathews and Crawford, 2011). This is the knowledge that Trevithick, (2008) called practice knowledge while O’Sullivan, (2010) described it as experiential knowledge. The need to investigate such knowledge in order to contribute to improving collaborative working from the perceptions and insights of experienced practitioners was one of the key drivers to this study.



### Methodology and Samples

The study drew from a systemic conceptual proposition that there is systemic relationship between the various influences that social workers consider to be key successful interprofessional collaboration in safeguarding children and young people (see Figure 1). A constructivist interpretive research design was adopted using semi-structured interviews with 16 social workers, who had case holding responsibilities for child protection, while 20 safeguarding meetings were directly observed using qualitative non-participant observation. The observation guide, adopted for the qualitative observations, was a hybrid combination of the multiagency health check survey toolkit (Huxham and Vangen, 2005) and Wilder Foundation collaboration influences inventory (Mattessich, Murray-Close and Monsey, 2001). The choice of the methodology was determined in order to see what the collaborative influences in safeguarding children are, and also to try and understand the nature of the relationships between these collaborative influences. The main objective for combining two qualitative methods was for the observation findings to complement and enrich the findings from the interview findings.

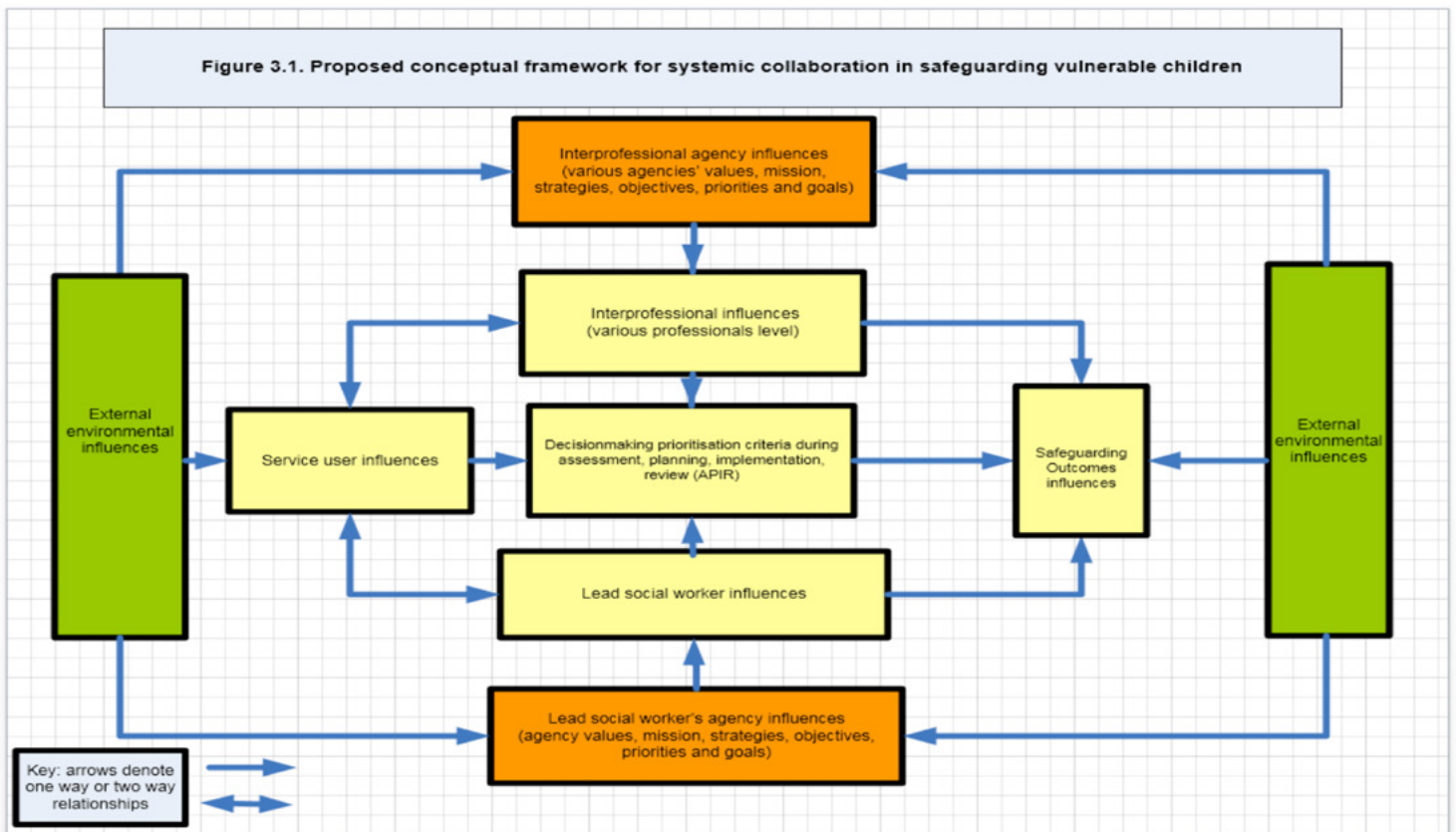


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework for systemic collaboration in safeguarding children and young people

Throughout the study, from conception to completion, I was constantly aware of the subjectivity that I could bring with me as an experienced practitioner, social work academic and passionate former child protection chairperson. Being mindful of how these various attributes could shape the study and its outcomes formed the basis of my reflections and reflexivity throughout the study. As Peshkin (1988, p.17) admonished in his seminal work, "subjectivity is inevitable... researchers should systematically seek out their subjectivity, not retrospectively when the data have been collected and the analysis is complete, but while their research is actively in progress". Likewise, Savage (2007, p.193) described paying particular attention to your subjectivity as being "meaningfully attentive" while Bradbury-Jones (2007, p.1) underscored the need to explore your subjectivity in order to enhance "rigour" and "trustworthiness" about your study. In order to explore, pay attention to, and systematically seek out, my subjectivity in this study I therefore reflected on myself mainly, from three angles as the Experienced practitioner I, the Social work academic I, as well as the Passionate former child protection chairperson I, in line with Peshkin's model of reflection (Peshkin, 1988).

### **Findings**

From a descriptive interpretive thematic analysis (Bazeley, 2013, p.195) of the qualitative interviews four key themes emerged:

- relationships influences;
- organisational influences;
- external influences;
- decision-making prioritisation influences.

Within these four themes, the relationship influences were associated with the majority of subthemes that were identified, which suggests a central role for relationships in collaborative work. There are also overlaps or recurrence of the influences within broad themes. These overlapping influences support the systemic nature of these influences. According to Ryan and Bernard (2003) following the discovery of themes and subthemes, the researchers should build hierarchies of themes and link themes with theoretical models. Relationship influences are composed of three main elements, namely, interprofessional relationships, the lead social worker relationships and service user relationships. On the other hand, organisational influences include the same elements at the organisational level: interprofessional organisational influences, lead social worker organisational influences and service user organisational influences. The remaining two superordinate themes relate to the external environmental influences and decision-making prioritisation influences. Noteworthy too, a number of sub-themes emerged from the main themes which recurred within and across the main and superordinate themes. For example, while

strong working relationships between professionals, lead social worker and service users were cited as enablers to interprofessional collaboration, different perspectives to risk thresholds and eligibility criteria alongside mistrust, undermining each other and power differentials were described as a barriers to these relationships. As one particular participant (SW16) observed 'other professionals have their own thresholds' which can make good relationships difficult to achieve.

Further evidence from interviews also showed that communication and information sharing in interprofessional relationship can be enabled by honesty, transparency, continuous dialogue, valuing each other's perspectives, use of appropriate language, task focus and timeliness, while on the other hand, attitudes, lack of information and communication breakdown, language barriers can be barriers to communication and information sharing. In the words of the participants what is important is, 'being open and honest' (SW15) or 'working together in an open and in a transparent manner' (SW15).

Similarly, the importance of having a clear and shared vision in interprofessional relationships was affirmed during interviews, with research participants citing barriers such as lack of knowledge, joint training and understanding and ignorance about safeguarding as well as collusion and focus on self instead of child. One participant (SW06) described the absence of a clear and shared vision due to, 'not seeing the bigger picture', while another participant (SW09) attributed it to, 'professionals who don't have an understanding of child protection'. Ultimately, participants felt that having a clear task focus, knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding as well as what constitutes risk would engender a clear and shared vision in interprofessional relationships.

Participants also observed that safeguarding children and young people, 'for other professionals it's a secondary function' (SW11), with one participant (SW08) asserting that, 'most important thing is for professionals to understand each other's role'. Having a shared responsibility, expertise and understanding of each other's roles were identified as critical to interprofessional relationships. However, participants also acknowledged that there were barriers to role clarity such as poor attendance, lack of reports, inaction, non-engagement by professionals, as well as competing professional and agency priorities. As already indicated above, other barriers and enablers to relationships, however, may be due to lead social worker and service user relationships influences.

The influence of lead social worker role on relationships between professionals and service users was also recognised by participants being a coordinative, facilitative and supportive role. According to participant SW12, the lead social worker is the, 'kind of be the glue that binds everyone' and therefore this role and that of other professionals should be clear. However, the professional rapport and a shared perspective can mitigate power

differentials, lack of task focus and commitment by other professionals which can be barriers to the lead social worker role. As participants observed about other professionals, 'they feel maybe they have got a greater power' (SW04) or they may, 'have different perspectives and see things differently' (SW06).

As with other professionals the barriers to the lead social workers' role clarity include lack of shared responsibility, training, experience, unclear expectations, role conflict and avoidance. Participant SW02 felt that lead social workers spend, 'a lot of time doing the mundane chores', while Participant SW15 felt sometimes lead social workers are, 'just thrown in the deep end of the pool'. To enable lead social worker' role clarity participants suggested joint training, closer working, and treating lead social worker as a motivator, overseer, gatekeeper and coordinative role.

Communication and information sharing for the lead social worker with other professionals, according to research participants can be inhibited by communication breakdown, lack of timely information sharing, responses, inadequate and incomplete information as well as misinformation by service users. For such communication between lead social worker with other professionals to improve participants felt there that there is a need for openness and transparency, availability of information as well as 'sharing of information in a timely manner' as Participant SW08 put it.

Unsurprisingly perhaps was that participants also identified frequent changes to the lead social worker as a barrier to interprofessional relationships, alongside service user aversion and information gaps. Participant SW13 for example described experiences where changes to lead social workers happened so quickly even before service users 'had enough information from that worker'.

Participants also observed that on other occasions, difficulties in interprofessional relationships are due to service user aggression, different agenda, confidentiality, collusion and non-engagement with 'aggressive people coming to the meeting' (SW02) or the relationships between professionals and service users, 'sometimes it can feel a bit collusive' (SW06). Direct work, inclusive dialogue, listening to service users or as participant SW13 put it 'paying attention to what they're saying' could improve these relationships with service users. While some participants felt that some professionals can have a fear of antagonising relationships with service users, one participant (SW10) in particular argued, 'I think there is sometimes an emotional resistance to some element of a case'.

According to participants service user relationships with professionals can be inhibited by a number of barriers such as perceived intrusion, professionals' enmeshment and collusive behaviour with service users. Participant SW02 observed that, 'some professionals are over friendly, they become too involved'. Other barriers may include

professionals' fear of antagonising relationships with service users, language barriers as well as values and cultural differences. Too much focus on mothers at the exclusion of fathers can also be a factor. Negative media portrayal of professionals was also cited as another factor, alongside unfulfilled promises and unrealistic expectations, disguised compliance, manipulative behaviour and institutionalised involvement with social care. To overcome barriers to service user relationships with professionals, participants felt that there is a need to challenge service users openly, involve service users in decision-making, and empower service users by giving them a sense of ownership of the whole process as well as appropriate use of professional power.

As with professionals, service user communication and information sharing can be inhibited by use of jargon, communication failures by agencies, professionals not returning calls and using inappropriate communication skills. To overcome these barriers to service user communication and information sharing participants felt that service users should be prevented from playing professionals off each other and information should be shared freely. In order to engender good service user communication and information sharing in interprofessional relationships, professionals also need to acquire relevant training in knowledge, skills and experience for professionals.

Service user relationships like professionals and lead social worker relationships are also influenced by role clarity. They need knowledge and understanding of their roles, goals and expectations in relation to their engagement and participation according to participants. However, specific barriers for service users knowledge and understanding of their role may range from their lack of motivation to change, learning disabilities and low literacy levels, lack of acknowledgement, complexity of issues, social stigma, misconceptions and negative image due to media portrayal, experience of social care, personality clashes, service users' different circumstances, mistrust, habituation, despondency and dependence, to loyalty to family. Role clarity for service users cannot be achieved, according to Participant SW07, 'if they can't acknowledge what the concerns are', yet in other instances, 'obviously there's stigma with social services', as Participant SW03 put it. Service user role clarity, together with a clear vision, goals and expectations, good service user communication and information sharing as well as shared focus and ownership of the safeguarding process, as in lead social worker and professional relationship influences are therefore key to collaborative working.

The aim of the direct non participant observations was to complement and enrich the interview findings. During direct observations there was clear evidence of collaboration influence mainly in the following interprofessional, lead social workers and service user areas:

- Clear vision, shared focus and compatible aims
- Open communication, sharing of information
- Role clarity
- Ability to stay focussed
- Evidence of trust and respect for each other and appropriate use of professional power and status
- Evidence of the service user voice but mainly mothers and not fathers
- Lead social worker's leadership style
- Impact of external environmental factors (e.g. economic austerity measures).
- Evidence of collaborative advantage (i.e., evidence that good outcomes are due to collaboration).

On the other hand, there was limited evidence of the influence of the following factors:

- Evidence of non-judgemental attitude during meetings
- Evidence of non-use of professional jargon and inappropriate language
- Clarity of decision-making prioritisation criteria

The findings from observations thematic findings from the interview data were triangulated with using the triangulation protocol with a convergence coding scheme in order to examine any agreement, partial agreement, silence, or dissonance between the interview and observation findings. The direct observations showed convergence, hence complementarity to the interview findings concerning the systemic nature of the relationship between these influences in line with the proposed conceptual framework of this study. The observed influences on collaboration and the themes which emerged from participant interviews support the concept of a systemic relationship between collaboration influences that were identified and explored in this study.

### **An emerging conceptual model for collaboration**

The systemic relationship between these collaboration influences can be expressed through a visual conceptual model. A conceptual model helps integrate, illustrate and communicate the relationships and interactions between the main elements of the systems and influences that constitute collaboration for safeguarding vulnerable children, making it easier to understand the phenomenon being investigated (Dawson, 2004).

Relationship influences are predominant and central to collaboration and can be located at three different levels, namely; interprofessional relationship influences, lead social worker relationship influences and service user relationships influences. Within these levels are a large number of elements which act as barriers and enablers to collaborative working including: interprofessional organisational influences, lead social worker



organisational influences and service user organisational influences. The proposed conceptual model for collaboration emerging from this study's findings is characterised by a systemic relationship (see Figure 3).

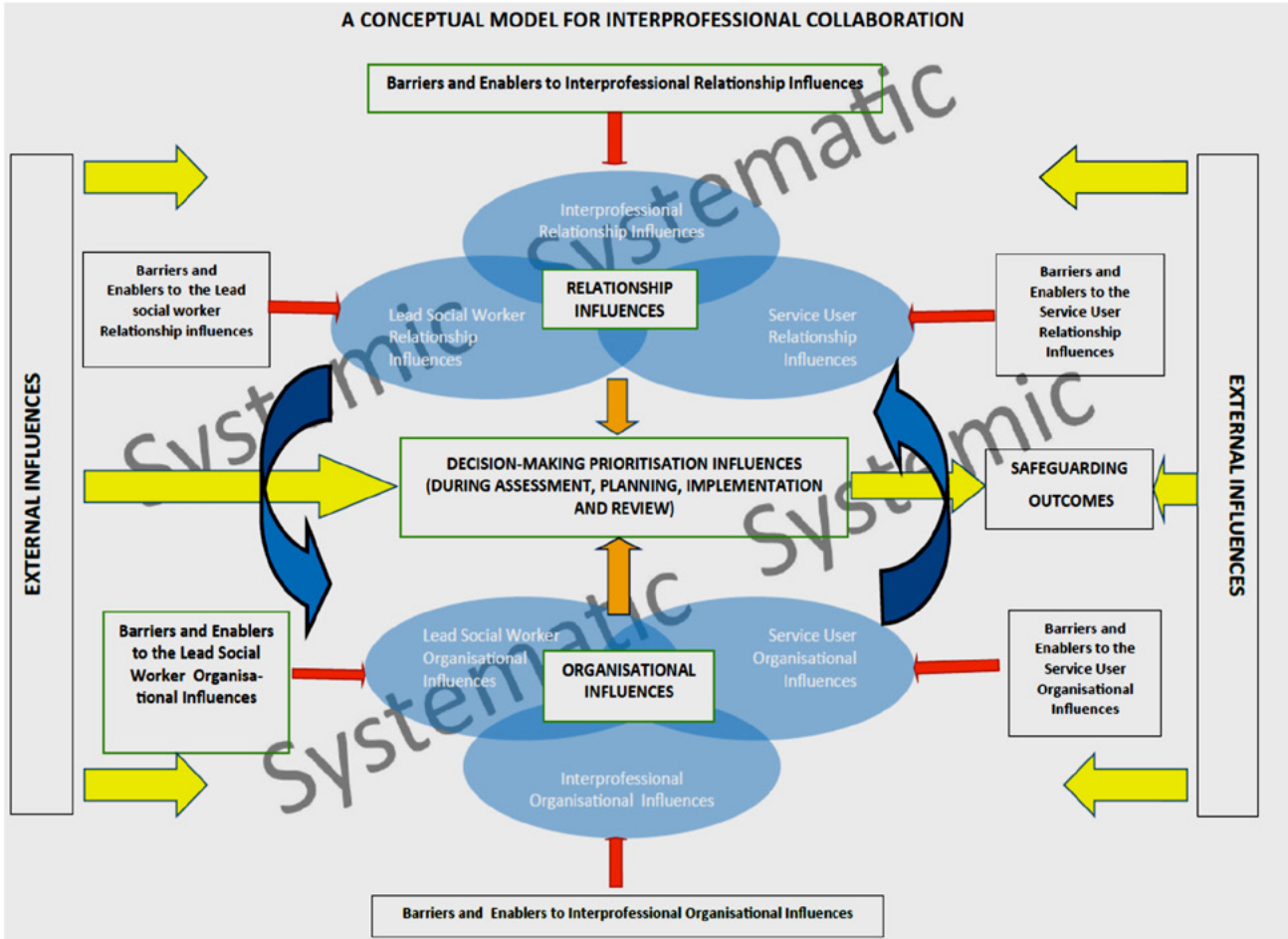


Figure 3: A conceptual model for collaboration

There were other surprising, contrasting and contradictory findings including overlaps between external and internal influences; the disparities in professionals' knowledge of what to do and not knowing how to do it as well as the observation that conflict can be both a negative and positive thing. Rather than use a clear decision-making prioritisation criteria, professionals often rely of multiple intuitive and professional judgement criteria as they go about performing their work in a street level bureaucratic fashion. Key to these findings is that in addition to systematically identifying the enabling and disabling influences to interprofessional collaboration it is crucial to be aware of and understanding multi-level systemic nature of the relationships between the various influences as illustrated in Figure 3.

Continued on next page...

## Discussion

There are a number of limitations to this study that need to be considered. Firstly, this is a small scale study which means the findings from the study, despite offering in-depth insights, cannot be generalised. However failure to generalise findings does not render such results less important but means further research will be needed to confirm the proposed conceptual model (see Figure 3).

Secondly, as already alluded to above in this chapter, participants in this study were qualified social workers with case holding responsibilities for child protection cases. Crucially, perceptual views held by these practitioners may not necessarily always be in line with reality yet, they may still have far reaching influences on how the perceiver may go about with their involvement during collaboration. While views from and perceptions by social work professionals are obviously important in terms of contribution to the improvement of collaboration, the perspectives from non-social work professionals, as well as service users could have enriched the study.

As illustrated in the conceptual model of collaboration (Figure 3) while the systemic relationship between the various collaboration influences is the thesis advanced and supported by evidence from this study there is need for the synthesis between systematic identification of collaboration influences and understanding of their systemic relationships. Often when these two concepts are used to describe interprofessional collaboration they are made to appear as if they mean the same thing or are the antithesis of each other, yet as evidence in this study has shown, they can be complementary.

The findings from observations may have been influenced by observer subjectivity because they relied exclusively on the researcher's observations and judgement. Nevertheless, the complementary value of the observation findings is valuable and supports the proposed model of collaboration. The adoption of Peshkins model for reflection as the Experienced practitioner I, the Social work academic I, the Passionate former child protection chairperson I, throughout the study contributed immensely to the reduction of subjectivity, while adding to rigour, trustworthiness and credibility to research design and findings of this study.

## Conclusions

It is critical to have clear knowledge and understanding of what factors social workers perceive as key influences are involved when professionals and service users try to work collaboratively. There are differing perspectives regarding the effectiveness of collaboration in safeguarding children. These vary from those who believe the approach is a panacea, to those who argue that the approach has failed to keep children safe. The key finding from this study is that there are four key influences to collaborative

working between professionals and families, namely, relationship influences; organisational influences; external influences; and decision-making prioritisation criteria influences. The relationship influences operate through three different axis: the interprofessional relationship, the lead social worker relationship and the service user relationships influences. Within these axis there are specific influences which act as barriers and enablers to collaborative working, further reinforcing the location of relationship influences at the heart of collaboration. The emerging systemic conceptual model which based on the systematic identification of collaboration influences this study tries to improve conceptual clarity concerning the theoretical basis for collaborative working. The key argument emanating from this new evidence is that contrary to the recurrent findings by serious case reviews and child death inquiries, the tendency to cite only one or two influences as the reason for failure for the collaborative effort may be tenuous and misleading.

*Key recommendations for policy, practice, training and further research:*

1. Develop and nurture positive relationship between professionals, lead social workers and service users,
2. Analyse, identify and manage internal organisational influences that impact on collaboration between professionals.
3. Analyse, identify and manage external environmental (ecological) influences.
4. Allow professionals to use some reasonable degree of discretion based on intuition and professional judgement and other pragmatic considerations.
5. Use the conceptual model to identify collaboration influences and understand their systemic relationships.
6. Further research is recommended in the following areas:
  - Explore the views of non-social work professionals as well as service users regarding the same question.
  - Explore the application of decision prioritisation tools in decision making during collaboration.

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## Editor's Publications

The following publications have been written or contributed to by members of staff from the Division of Childhood, Youth and Education at UCS.

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