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Childhood Narratives: Adult Reflections on Encounters with Difference in Everyday Spaces

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Abstract

Research on children and young people commonly focuses on the present experiences of childhood. Yet Philo (2003) has argued that we might also access the ‘worlds’ of children and childhood through the memories or recollections of adults, given that we have all been children once. In response, this paper explores the narratives of adults reflecting on their childhood experiences and in particular, on the formation of their attitudes towards difference. The paper offers a means of understanding how adults reflect on their childhood encounters with difference, how their attitudes towards difference are developed over time and the extent to which these childhood narratives are carried into adult lives. This is not to suggest that early experiences are deterministic. Rather, individuals can reflect on their own lives and encounters and choose to change or react to wider social relations in new ways such that they produce and embody new dispositions.

Keywords: children, adult identities, family, difference, encounters.

Introduction

Contemporary research into the lives of children and young people often focuses on the present experiences of childhood since there is little funding for longitudinal research (see Aitken 1994; Valentine 1999; Gallacher and Gallagher 2008; Wyness 2013). Responding to this, and calls to attempt ‘viewing reality through the eyes of both children and adults’, some

attention has been paid to the question of whether or not adult researchers can adopt strategies allowing them 'to stand in the place of the child' (James 1990, 283). Philo (2003) offers theoretical reflections on how adult researchers access, process and represent the 'worlds' of children and childhood. Chronologically all adults have at an earlier time of their lives *been children*. We have all 'been there' in one way or another, creating the potential for some small measure of empathy- some sense of recognition, sharing and mutual understanding, even if slight- with the children whom we encounter in our adult lives. This is not to deny the enormous variability in the childhoods once experienced by adults, as shaped by the contingencies of time, space, gender, class, ethnicity and countless more factors, and in no way is it to reject the crucial gains of scholars who 'have challenged essentialist understandings of "the child" by arguing that childhood is constructed in different ways in different times and places' (Holloway and Valentine 2000, 9).

Philo (2003) suggests that we might assess past experiences of childhood by reflecting on our own experiences. Despite adults not being able to reflect on childhood through the lens of a child, adults can remember and interpret their memories of childhood and the role of socialisation in shaping attitudes and values. Indeed, the past provides us with information about who we are (Brewer 1986; Fivush 1988; Neisser 1988). Memories of the past are constructed through specific forms of social interactions and/or cultural frameworks that lead to the formation of an autobiographical narrative (Fivush and Haden 2003, vii). As adults the way in which we share our memories with others modulates how we think about our experiences, and ultimately ourselves (Pasupathi 2001). Many childhood scholars successfully frame and analyse adult memories of childhood in this way. For instance, Rhodes (2013) uses prisoners' memory narratives of their childhoods to make claims about their adult understandings of trauma and willingness to take part in prison rehabilitation

programs. Also, the work of anthropologists Kim (2010) and Yngvesson (2010) on adult adoptee narratives of their childhoods regularly discuss the theoretical value of using adult memories of childhood to tell us something about how global processes of adoption shaped their child understandings of kinship, self, family and citizenship.

However, it is important to acknowledge that childhood memories are what adults currently recall from their childhood (see Jones 2003, 2008, 2012; Brooks 2006). This means that these memories are not necessarily true or accurate. In a number of studies into memory creation some adults describe a false event as an autobiographical memory (Ceci et al. 1994; Loftus and Pickrell 1995; Hyman and Pentland 1996), both accidentally, because they actually believe the event took place, and intentionally in order to create a different narrative. These memories are not lived or experienced geographies. Rather, they arise from how adults reframe selected aspects of their childhoods in a manner that is refracted through adult frames of meaning and reference. The extent to which that childhood bears any relation to anything real is impossible to determine, and of course will vary from adult to adult, and possibly from one retelling to another (Jones 2003; Nairn and Kraftl 2016). As such, in the last few years, scholars of childhood concede the specific, and limited, value of using adult memories of childhood as evidence of idealized forms of childhood, representations, and/or imaginations of cultural norms, values, or symbols.

In response, this paper explores the narratives of adults reflecting on their childhood experiences and how these shaped their attitudes towards difference. We adopt Philo's (2003) idea of looking backwards but our own experiences are not used. Instead, we use the experiences and memories of adult respondents reflecting on their childhoods. In this way, the paper investigates the memories of key encounters and individuals that people recall as

shaping their attitudes and lives. In doing so, this the paper contributes to the field of childhood studies through its focus on adult memories of childhood. More broadly it contributes to the sub- field of the geography of encounters with a focus on contact zones and the creation of difference. For instance the central argument of this paper is supported by Wilson (2016) who explicitly draws out many of the assumptions about how encounters with difference may be occasions of surprise with longer-term implications for the people concerned. At the same time, Wilson (2016) questions the embodied, affective dimensions of encounters with difference, different to the 'sociological patterns of difference' pursued by the likes of Valentine (2008) who effectively criticises what she sees as a desocialised encounters-type perspective.

The paper has links to theories elsewhere in human geography. Psychoanalytic geographies (see Kingsbury and Pile 2014), centre on a deep interest in how young children acquire a strong sense of themselves as a fundamental basis for everything that they can become as adults. In the Kristeva model, most notably adopted in geography by Sibley (1988; 1995) and Wilton (1998) the child's early encounters with bodily residues which they are taught are dirty and must be spatially removed, create a psychodynamic pattern in which the child learns to code many forms of encountered difference as threatening and needing to be spatially pushed away. In other psychoanalytic theories, this learning from encounters with difference, continuing as the child grows into adulthood, set the interior psychodynamic compass for an individual's subsequent dealings with difference. In a similar way, Aitken and Herman (1997) use Winnicottian psychoanalysis as a theoretical basis for discussions about spaces and objects of early childhood and their potential relevance for children's development into adulthood.

This paper draws on material from the LiveDifference research project funded by the European Research Council. The research project explores the extent and nature of everyday encounters with ‘difference’, by collecting original data in the UK. The themes of difference were operationalised and defined by the research participants themselves. They were explored through interviews with thirty-two respondents who were interviewed on three occasions (96 interviews). Each case is comprised of a life story interview, a semi-structured interview about attitudes towards difference and an interview reflecting on the emerging findings. The life story interview is critical to this paper as through it adult respondents recounted their memories of their first recognition of, and first encounter with, difference. The research participants include those from a range of social backgrounds (in terms of socio-economic status, occupation, gender, ethnicity, religious/belief, sexual orientation and (dis)ability); whose personal circumstances and lifestyles afford them a range of opportunities for/experiences of encountering ‘difference’. The data was analysed using Nvivo. All of the quotations included in this paper are verbatim. Details of the specific locations are withheld and pseudonyms have been assigned to protect the anonymity of those who participated in the study.

Significance of Socialization in Childhood: Remembered Family Values

The family is the site where our personhood is cultivated and the lens through which our pasts, presents and futures are often interpreted, acted upon and imagined (Valentine and Hughes 2012). Through the family we implicitly absorb values and are socialized by these particular values in ways which have the potential to shape the adults that we become. Allport’s (1954) theory on the nature of prejudice, argues that children acquire their social attitudes about difference from their parents. According to Allport, pre-adolescent prejudice

is an imitation of parents' views (1954, 297). Children's attitudes are directly influenced in by their parents or, more likely, they simply observe and imitate labels and their associated emotions.

The transmission of attitudes towards difference are often fostered through memories of interest and interaction, influenced by family members. Indeed, there is a growing body of work on the role of family in shaping memory (see Reese and Farrant 2003; Haden 2003). For instance, according to Haden (2003) parent-child interchanges during events can serve to focus attention on salient aspects of an activity and provide information about it, in turn, affecting children's sense making and remembering of personal experiences. This remembering can occur in both childhood and adult life.

In this way, within our research, adult respondents reported memories of encounters in childhood which involved family members. Despite some of these encounters being fleeting, the memories of them often persisted into adulthood. This suggests the importance of childhood memories in adult life (Neisser and Fivush 1994; Fivush and Haden 2003), and particularly the role of family in shaping these memories (Reese and Farrant 2003; Haden 2003). For instance, for Andrea, a White-British woman in her early 40s, seeing homeless people in a city centre caused her mother to express a negative reaction towards them, which Andrea absorbed and has remembered into her adult life. This illustrates a common situation amongst the respondents who often recalled that in childhood they were accepting of their familial prejudices and rarely challenged them.

I remember walking around with my mum... I'd gone to the market with me mum and there were these - I assume they were homeless guys sat in the corner,

drinking. My mum literally grabbed me hand and pulled me away from them - as if like, I were going to catch something, sort of thing. They'd be chuntering away to themselves. She was like, no we don't talk to them, stay away. It was like, right, okay (Andrea, 40-44, White-British).

In contrast to memories of such fleeting encounters, there were cases where everyday practices within the family shaped the values of individuals. Often this could be attributed to daily routines, spatial proximity and emotional closeness to family members (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). Critical to the formation of attitudes and values in the lives of children in this way is the influence of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990) - internalized dispositions that are the product of socialization. This critique was adopted by Sayer (2005), observing that individuals have instant moral responses towards others/situations prior to reflection. While the notion of dispositions acknowledges that early experiences are influential and that once acquired dispositions might shape future actions, this concept is not deterministic. Instead, it recognizes that individuals can reflect on their own lives and choose to react to wider social relations in new ways such that they produce new dispositions (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). Examples of *habitus* in this paper are often brought about by situations of 'throwntogetherness' (Massey 2005) and highlight Lefebvre's (1974) idea that space is socially produced.

Helen is in her late 30s and is White-British. She demonstrates the significance of *habitus* and banal observations in shaping attitudes of children, not only from their parents, but in this case, grandparents. Here, racist values were transmitted within the family. Helen stresses how she remembers the routine nature of being exposed to these views.

I remember staying at my nana and granddad's house. Me and my brother were in the attic room and we'd been woken up to some of the neighbours fighting. I remember saying to my brother, oh look at that boy's hair over there isn't it funny. Because it was an afro... Then we got more concerned that the police had turned up because somebody was trying to get in the door and kicking the door in. But then my granddad came up and made us come away from the window. He said the coloureds were always causing trouble. He'd always make comments about coloureds when we were at his house (Helen, 35-39, White-British).

Familial influence on attitudes and values is not only evidenced through incidental transmissions. Respondents also recounted deliberate attempts to instill attitudes, particularly through the use of discipline. Edward is in his late 50s, is of British descent and is atheist. He describes his memories of being brought up by a family with anti-racist values and with respect for all religions. Everyday practices and routine within the family strongly shaped his attitudes towards difference in childhood.

In my house I made some racist remarks and my father was very angry with me... and he told me not to speak like that. I can't remember the actual words, but he was dead against any racist remarks. To some extent my mum was, because we had a few black friends... And if I said anything negative about Muslims or any other religious people I got told off for that. (Edward, 55-59, British-Asian).

Returning to Helen also demonstrates the use of deliberate behavior within the family to influence attitudes. She recounts how her parent's tried to influence her attitudes towards

sexuality during her childhood. She explains how she was punished for using the word 'lesbian'.

I remember being in a car and there was mum and dad and me and a friend of mine... I'd seen another girl in the fish and chip shop, and something was said about this girl between me and my friend, and I said oh yes, she's a lesbian. And I got a complete roasting and grounded for a week for saying lesbian... I watched a thing last week actually about Victorians and their values and the way they ran the family - and kind of thinking about it my dad was quite Victorian (Helen, 35-39, White-British).

This account illustrates that Helen's parents deemed her use of the word 'lesbian' to be unacceptable and conveyed their attitudes about this towards her. Through her comments about her father's 'Victorian' values, she suggests that she does not necessarily agree with his attitudes but through routine and everyday practices was 'taught' not to discuss these issues in public or with her parents. Such practices illustrate the importance of everyday multiculturalism and the daily negotiation of difference and intercultural relations (Amin 2002; Wise and Velayutham 2009).

In this section we have explored the influence of family values on the formation of childhood attitudes towards difference. This is achieved through adults reflecting on their childhood given the importance of family in shaping memory (Reese and Farrant 2003; Haden 2003). Drawing on Bourdieu's (1990) concept of *habitus*, this family influence might be understood as a routine orientation to the world produced through embodied experiences of everyday life in the family. Many of the respondents recognize that there was an implicit transmission of

values through their childhood family lives, in terms of how their parents, and other significant family members, related to each other, and to other people. As such, the respondents narrate these dispositions as a product of their everyday family lives and encounters. Whilst some of these encounters were fleeting and others were developed through habitual practices, both types of encounter were recalled by respondents illustrating the importance of childhood memories in adulthood. In this way, our research demonstrates how attitudes are transmitted in private space and how learning and remembering of such attitudes takes place. This has been of interest to scholars who have focused on encounters with difference in public space and how this shapes people's attitudes (Wilson 2011). However, this section of the paper suggests that it is now necessary to move beyond the public space to the private.

Learning about Difference through Difference

In addition to learning about difference in childhood through interactions with sameness in the family, respondents also reflected on learning about difference through encounters with those different from themselves. Such attitudes towards difference were often developed through interactions and a sense of 'closeness' with peers at school or in their neighbourhoods.

Many respondents narrated memories of forming positive attitudes towards difference in childhood. In these cases, respondents often spoke of their memories of their first encounter with difference in childhood along the lines of race, ethnicity and religion. Those of another 'race' or religion were regularly viewed as the exotic 'other' (Said 1978). Whilst this might be seen as a form of othering or prejudice, nevertheless, respondents remembered these

experiences in a positive way. Claire is a White-British woman in her early 30s who recalled being drawn towards different races and religions in both her neighborhood and school. For Claire, the difference of others is an appealing quality due to a sense of curiosity.

I loved being around things which were different. And I remember going into the odd newsagent, and being owned by Indian families and really wanting to be in that environment... I've always been drawn to different cultures... I don't really remember kind of going 'Oh I want to be your friend because you're Indian' or 'I want to be your friend because your parents are from Guyana' or anything like that. But I do remember at lunchtime because we had set school meals and there was a Muslim girl on the table which I sat on because you had to have your same set table and I always remember being quite drawn as to what she would and wouldn't eat (Claire, 30-34, White-British).

Claire also recalls how through attending a nursery attached to her mother's workplace she saw Indian doctors and interacted with their children who also attended the nursery. She was attracted to the 'exotic other' in a very visual way, but also through the different smells which they provided. Such smells, perhaps coming from Asian cuisine, reflect the romanticization of foreign food and the other (Fischler 1998; Lupton 1996; Jackson 2015). In this way, cultural/national identities are constituted and renegotiated in everyday, banal bodily practices.

I went to a nursery which was attached to the hospital which my mum worked at. So there'd often be a lot of Indian doctors coming through and they had accommodation on the hospital grounds and they also had children who went to the nursery. And I remember going to this really exotic house in the grounds and

the smells and everything being different. And I can remember this house still now and this family, Indian family and I can remember that I always was drawn to things which I saw as exotic or being abroad and so I probably was quite drawn to that family for that reason. (Claire, 30-34, White-British).

Claire's experience exemplifies the state of 'reverie' as discussed by Philo (2003). Reverie is slightly distanced from the more cognitively-attuned state of memory and is rooted in sensations that transport the adult back to a childhood moment, prompted by sights, smells, sounds and 'feels' of place and circumstance. There are some other mentions of these affective atmospheres elsewhere in the paper: sensations of hair, hesitations about drinking from a cup and repulsion at dribble. This highlights how the memories being analysed in the paper possess rather different qualities: most come across as fairly well-cognised – cognitively-processed – reflections. For instance, these might be about parental prejudices or affinities, such as what they said, did, taught and instructed. Whereas others are more vague, hazy recollections of instances, materials, textures and atmospheres.

Positive memories of religion in childhood were also recounted by respondents. Encounters with Muslims and Hindus were often cited by Christians and atheists. Edward is of British-Asian descent and is atheist. However, despite this he still recalls positive experiences with a variety of religions in his childhood. For Edward, these positive encounters which shaped his attitudes took place in the neighbourhood. This contradicts the work of Lancee and Dronkers (2011) who claim that religious diversity negatively affects the quality of contact inter-ethnic trust between neighbours. Edward also illustrates that children often do not see race, religion or other categories of difference in the same way as adults (Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001; Apfelbaum et al. 2008).

The Hindus used to have their festival of Diwali, which was the little lights they used to light up. The boy who lived across the road always had to go to the mosque every whatever, they had to pray five times a day or something like that. He played with us and it never got in the way, nor did race (Edward, 55-59, British-Asian).

Class differences were also noted in childhood, often producing positive attitudes towards difference. Jane, now in her late 50s, who self-identified as middle-class discussed a childhood friend from her neighbourhood whom she labeled as working-class. Jane was aware of their different family incomes and quality of housing but this did not get in the way of their friendship. In a similar way to Edward playing with children of other religions, Jane's childhood interactions with children from a different social class were unified through school and during play. In this way, she developed a sense of 'closeness' to someone different from herself. This suggests meaningful encounters in childhood occur through shared activities such as play (cf. Askins and Pain 2011)

There was a girl that lived on my street when we were going to school, Christine. Now when you say difference, she was British, but her family were a lot poorer than we were. Even if you went into her house, they never had anything. Her clothes were not as nice as mine, but that didn't stop us becoming friends. She was my best friend, but I do remember my grandparents talking about - their surname was Daleys. If something went missing around it would have been Daleys. [Edit] I think everyone knew they were poorer. The house, cleanliness, left a lot to be desired. It was one of the houses that if you went in and her

grandma had asked if you wanted a drink, at that time I would have felt I don't want a drink out of your cup. So it was that kind of a difference.... But from my friendship with her, that didn't make any difference. We just got on and did what we wanted to do, you know, growing up, playing out (Jane, 55-59, White-British).

This section has demonstrated that learning about difference through encounters with difference involves contact with individuals from a different group. This contact is usually positive and often occurs at the sites of the school and the neighborhood. Valentine and Sadgrove (2012, 2060) explain that “[S]uch encounters are not just about spatial proximity producing a tolerance or understanding of ‘difference’. Rather, they are accounts of ‘closeness’ or intimacy, which are relations that make something or someone known”. In this way the sites of the school and the neighbourhood form contact zones for meaningful contact (Askins and Pain 2011) in childhood to take place.

Being different

In addition to an awareness of difference in childhood, there was also a sense of being different amongst the respondents themselves. Ineta, migrated from Eastern Europe to Germany shortly after she was born and then to the UK when she was ten years old. Now in her 40s, she discussed her sense of being different from other children during her childhood in Germany because her accent distinguished her as a migrant.

The Germans - I mean they're very clever people and we had lots and lots of friends. But as a mentality they have this- sometimes they're not very nice to people who weren't born there. It made itself felt. We were different and sometimes - I wouldn't say we were ostracized but we were conscious, yeah,

because we spoke differently... They didn't care where we came from, it was just that we were different. I remember sometimes when I was little I heard people say oh you speak funny (Ineta, 40-44, other white background).

There was also further evidence of respondents experiencing racism during childhood. This particularly occurred at school, which for many of our respondents is a key site of encountering difference (cf. Connolly 2002). Carol, a British-Caribbean woman in her 50s, illustrates this.

There wasn't many black families then, there were like one or two black families here. But it were okay, got the usual racial thing but as you get older you know, you're not right bothered. But when I was young ...It [school] were mainly white but ... it was okay til I got to the senior school. Kids don't notice any colour or owt like that when you're young... But when I started senior school, that's when it hit. The usual name-calling and ... just name-calling. I used to go up to the headmaster's office crying and that you know but ... I always thought why I were black, you know what I mean ... Oh aye; black bastard, nigger, they used to say stick your lips on there ... they used to stick your lips onto the window, and all that sort of thing. Or wire hen because our hair were afro ... (Carol, 50-54, Black British-Caribbean)

Robert is a White-British man in his 50s. He spoke of his memories of being different in childhood along the lines of class. This was made visible due to his family's failure to afford suitable clothing. Through aesthetic criteria Robert was judged by others', including his

teacher, evoking notions of distaste, and disgust (cf. Skeggs 2004; Lawler 2005; Valentine and Harris 2014).

By the time I got to secondary school... I had an old pair of shoes which were elasticated, and the elastic was well-worn. We couldn't afford some new ones, and I got the cane for slurring my feet, which was a little bit - I thought that was very unfair, something that I couldn't help (Robert, 60-64, White-British).

Jane, also recalled a sense of being different at school due to her appearance. In this case, this was due to living in a different area from her classmates, which caused them to be 'more streetwise' and to wear different makeup and hairstyles. As a result Jane felt like an outsider. In this way, she described a strong sense of dis-identification with other girls of her age (Valentine and Sporton 2009).

Maybe at secondary school, and of course that brings to mind maybe I did feel a bit out of it at secondary school because again, something you've just said, there were other girls came into that school from an area called [location removed] and these girls were a bit more street wise than me. So they used to be coming in with makeup and all trendy hair styles, that wasn't an area that I visited. So maybe that made me feel a little bit different, or maybe feel that I wasn't part of that group (Jane, 55-59, White-British).

As these respondents found, the expectation or pressure to fit in creates a sense of discomfort, a sense of being different and a sense of being out of place. Furthermore, the experience of

being different impacted on these interviewees' attitudes towards other marginal or vulnerable groups in adult life. Such respondents displayed tolerant attitudes towards these groups perhaps due to a feeling of empathy.

Translating Childhood Attitudes into Adult Life

After considering memories of attitudes towards difference in childhood, it is also important to explore if and how these translate into adult life to ascertain how childhood experiences shape the adult that we become. The respondents suggest that their childhoods' were influential, identifying themselves as having obtained values from their upbringings that have shaped their future actions. For instance, in the research there were cases where positive attitudes towards difference were described as being founded in childhood and has also carried forward into adult life. Josie, a White-British woman in her late 50s, reflected on the 'exotic' nature of other races during her time at school. However, whilst this is intended in a positive manner and reflects an openness to difference, her choice of language might be read in more negative way as an exoticization of difference (cf. Guerin 2005).

I do remember, I was about five, there would be the odd child who'd come to school. I remember there was a black girl came to the school and it was the first time I'd seen somebody who was black. She was just blacker than black, sort of like blue black. I could just not take my eyes of her. She just seemed so absolutely wonderful and exotic. That was really my first experience of seeing somebody totally different from me and the people around me (Josie, 55-59, White-British).

For Josie, this openness towards different races is still present in adulthood. She recalled a situation from her adult life in which she witnessed racist behaviour. Whilst Josie did not

actively challenge this racist incident her feelings generated by it demonstrate how her positive attitude towards different races, which she recalls from her childhood, are replicated in her adult life, through her sympathy with a victim of racism and believes that racism is unacceptable.

Interviewee: I remember walking round the market and there was a black girl in front of me also with a baby in a pushchair who was crying. A group of youths just walked past and started abusing this woman and the child. I thought should I say anything? But this girl, she didn't say anything and I thought she looked so dignified compared to these horrible little rats who were being so unpleasant. She was obviously used to it which was a horrible thing.

Interviewer: You didn't intervene?

Interviewee: I didn't. They'd walked past. I felt useless but I suppose I felt I should have stood up for her or something.

Interviewer: And that did actually make you stop and think?

Interviewee: Yes, because as I said, that was the first time I'd actually encountered immediate kind of racism like that. It was quite a shock (Josie, 55-59, White-British).

Despite evidence of positive attitudes towards difference formed in childhood being carried through into adult life, responses were not all of a positive nature and there were also cases of prejudiced childhood attitudes being translated into adult life. For instance, Dorothy, a retired woman in her 80s, described her memory of an encounter with a lesbian in her childhood and explains her adult attitude towards lesbians in a similar way. As such, her attitudes formed in childhood had been transmitted into her adult life.

There was a shop and there was a girl there that used to dress in boy's clothes; very short hair and we were always told not to have anything to do with her because she was different. I never knew how different she was at the time, but she might have been a lesbian. But you were just told not to go near them... And this doesn't bother me so much about gay men, but lesbian women I find upsetting... I certainly don't agree with lesbians getting married. I don't agree with like Elton John bringing up a baby, because I think in a home you need a woman and you need a man... So this business of them getting married I think it's stupid (Dorothy, 80-84, White-British).

Other respondents displayed a more complex trajectory of attitudes. Interestingly, Claire who was earlier discussed for her positive attitude towards ethnic minorities in her childhood discussed her experiences of disability in a negative manner. This demonstrates that whilst an individual can be tolerant of one type of social difference this is not necessarily applied to all minorities or different groups.

And then there was a boy called Colin at school who was quite albino looking but he also used to dribble all the time... I didn't want to sit next to him. I always got sat next to him and I really didn't want to sit next to him. Which isn't very nice looking back as an adult (laughs) but as a child I really thought he wasn't very nice (Claire, 30-34, White-British).

At a young age, Claire's ignorance meant that she was afraid of this particular boy with a disability. However, this is not to suggest that such early experiences and memories are deterministic and necessarily orientate future actions. Since attitudes are not static, they can be changed with experience. Change of attitudes can be a result of an individual experience or a wider societal events or transformations. Attitudes can be put on continuum from purely memory-based evaluations, to – if less prior knowledge or experience is gathered – attitudes that are constructed from currently accessible information (Bohner and Dickel 2011). As such, individuals can reflect on their childhood lives and encounters and choose to change their attitudes. Claire describes how a 'fateful moment' (Giddens 1991), which is a time when events come together in such a way to influence an individual's attitudes, changed her perception of disability. This occurred through an encounter in adult life with a person with disabilities and illustrates the significance of fleeting encounter.

I was on a bus... and in the section where you can have pushchairs there was a man in a wheelchair - there was a man in a wheelchair and a pushchair so there was no room for anyone else in that section, so a woman got on the bus with her pushchair and child in it and started having a go at the disabled man, telling him that she had priority over him for the space on the bus... and he had to get off the bus because it was not for disabled people. It was horrific. She was swearing at him and he started swearing back at her and then she got in a strop. The bus driver didn't get involved, but as I was getting off the bus I said to the bloke, something like good for you (Claire, 30-34, White-British).

However, Claire's account is not a simple linear narrative of transformation from holding prejudiced views towards people with disabilities to a more progressive disposition. Attitude

change does not lead to disappearance of old attitudes towards a group/person, but “people can simultaneously hold two different attitudes toward a given object in the same context, one attitude implicit or habitual, the other explicit” (Azjen 2001, 29). Claire’s father became disabled and this has reignited her previous negativity towards people with disabilities, articulated through her feelings of ‘pity’ for them and an acknowledgement that she has long held this view.

Interviewee: My dad had a stroke last year and he is now disabled and I've had no relationship with him for 10 years and now I speak to him and his wife and I do feel pity. Actually he's just as cantankerous and horrible as he has ever been, although the nature of our relationship has changed. I do feel pity for disabled people. I think that is pity and I think it's really wrong because it's not treating someone equally, but I know that I do it.

Interviewer: You do feel it's problematic?

Interviewee: Well, it is really. Because it's not putting people on an equal footing. Actually, disability affects people in different ways and they might be really proud of who they are and what they do and if it's a disability which has come along later on in life they might see it as positive and yet I look at them with pity. That really does bother me.

Interviewer: Where does the pity come from?

Interviewee: I think it has always been there. It's almost like this feeling sorry for people for not having everything and actually they might have more than I have. I'm not talking about material things; I'm talking about quality of life (Claire, 30-34, White-British).

This suggests that in some cases the translation of childhood attitudes and values into adult life is highly complex. Although they may be modified by ‘fateful moments’ (Giddens 1991) they may never be fully transformed, indicating that childhood values and memories play an important part in influencing the adult that we become.

Reflections on Childhood Narratives: Time and memories of encounters

This paper has explored the narratives of adults reflecting on their childhood memories of their encounters with, and attitudes towards, difference. It highlights the role of *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990) in developing a moral disposition which influences children’s attitudes towards those different from themselves. This is a “set of dispositions related to particular practices which are not necessarily cognitive or instrumental and which may lead to regularities of patterns of ‘common sense’ behaviour across time or generations” (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012, 2059). In this way, *habitus* is usually instilled in children through the family with their values replicated through certain incidents in a routine environment. These experiences act to transmit values from one family member to another. As such, children learn about difference from those who are the same as themselves and who are emotionally and physically close in proximity. Following Sayer (2005) and Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) we acknowledge that *habitus* might include ethical dispositions that produce moral emotions which are embodied in everyday practices involving relations with others. In addition to the transmission of attitudes and values through everyday practices, there was also evidence of this transmission occurring through fleeting encounters which were still present in the memory of respondents. These encounters, whether fleeting or everyday, can produce attitudes which are both prejudiced and tolerant. As such, the paper supports the importance

of family and the home as a site of intervention to transform prejudiced attitudes and the importance of these attitudes as they can prevail into adulthood.

Adults also reflected on childhood memories of learning about difference through encounters with those who are socially different from themselves. Such encounters usually took place in the neighbourhood or the school. In cases where positive attitudes were formed this was often achieved through becoming friends with someone from a different religious, ethnic, or class group. As well as learning about difference, respondents from minority groups also reported feeling a sense of being different themselves in childhood, leading to them feeling 'out of place' (Cresswell 1996). This indicates the significance of integration in childhood, perhaps achieved through mixed schools along the lines of religion (Hemming 2011), race, class, gender and disability.

Assessing the values held by adults in relation to the attitudes which they developed in childhood suggests that a complex process is taking place. Positive and negative attitudes formed in childhood are often translated into adult life. However, in some cases they may be changed by 'fateful moments' (Giddens 1991) and they may never be fully transformed.

It must be acknowledged that whilst the role memory is of critical importance in the development of attitudes and values, the memories recounted here are not necessarily true or accurate. Participants may have, whether intentionally or not, reconstructed memories of their childhood (Loftus and Pickrell 1995; Hyman and Pentland 1996). As such, the premise of the paper is not to suggest that early experiences are deterministic. Rather, individuals can reflect on their own lives and encounters and choose to change or react to wider social relations in new ways such that they produce and embody new dispositions. What the paper also asserts

is that when developing the capacity to live with difference, it is not enough to understand the present. The role of memory and the past needs to be considered to explore the roots of attitudes and the sites in which these are developed. The past and attitudes towards difference formed during childhood matter as they are there in memory, even if the extent to which individuals act on these encounters and attitudes in adulthood is based on a complex set of circumstances.

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