ADVERSITY: GENDER, POWER AND AGENCY

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**WHAT ARE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)? (ANDA AND FELLITI)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical abuse</th>
<th>Sexual abuse</th>
<th>Emotional abuse</th>
<th>Physical neglect</th>
<th>Emotional neglect</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother treated violently</td>
<td>Household substance abuse</td>
<td>Household mental illness</td>
<td>Single Parent home</td>
<td>Household member goes to prison</td>
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ACEs occur

Disrupted neural development

Cognitive, social & emotional impact

Adoption of risky behaviours

Disease, disability, social issues

Early death

THE ACES MODEL
WHAT IS THE VALUE OF ACES?

• Recognises the importance of trauma and adversity in children’s lives, health and mental health outcomes.

• Emphasises prevention
WHAT’S THE PROBLEM WITH ACES?

The measure
agency and capacity for recovery

Medicalisation and individualisation
Risk and consequences

Resilience, resistance, recovery
Obscures the material/spatia

Obscures meaning making
Inconsistent with a rights based approach to childhood
Neurological system is extremely plastic

Special windows of sensitivity very early

Hardwired for contact, exchange

Brain development as use-dependent
Impact of trauma on brain development as time dependent

Cortisol impact on developing brain
Impact on neurogenesis

How might abusive and controlling behaviour impact this?
ACES AND GENDER?

Growing up in a single parent household is an ACE
Most single parents are women

BUT

This model was developed in 1999
Control for poverty...
Five years later
Better than staying in conflict
EXAMPLE - ACES AND DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Gender analysis neutralised – failure to engage with an analytic of power in abusive dynamics

Emphasis on impact on victim and children

Implications for adult and child victims, and for perpetrators

The return of the amazing invisible perpetrator…!
THE VOICE OF THE CHILD?

http://www.healthscotland.scot/population-groups/children/adverse-childhood-experiences-aces/overview-of-aces
WHY IS THE MODEL GAINING POPULARITY NOW?

Certainty in uncertain times
Risk management
Early intervention
Troubled families / family assets
ADVERSITY IS NOT GENDER NEUTRAL...

Alcala (et al 2017) ACEs and risk of cancer

Girls’ childhood ACES were associated with higher odds of cancer.

Boys - only emotional abuse was associated increased risk

Zettler et al 2017 ACES and residential placement

ACEs significantly increased the odds of residential placement

Race played a significant role in predicting residential placement, intersected with gender

ACES were Stronger predictor for boys

Stronger predictor for black boys and girls (not for white girls)
DOES THE ‘PAIR OF ACES’ FIX THESE ISSUES?

The Pair of ACES

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

- Maternal Depression
- Physical & Emotional Neglect
- Emotional & Sexual Abuse
- Divorce
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Illness
- Domestic Violence
- Incarceration
- Homelessness

ADVERSE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTS

- Poverty
- Discrimination
- Violence
- Poor Housing Quality & Affordability
- Community Disruption
- Lack of Opportunity, Economic Mobility and Social Capital
What about POWER?
Exerted and resisted
Lucy: I’d always hesitate of what I would say...even if I said “Hello”, I’d always think before like, is he just going to shut me out? Is he going to respond in a nice way, or be angry or anything like that? I’d always think ahead of what I was saying.
I have worries about my daughter now he's taken me to court for contact. He's emotionally and psychologically abusive and treats women appallingly. He's not interested in our daughter it's all about control over me still. He's demonstrated that by reluctantly paying cms and her birthday was 3 weeks ago she was 2 he never even got her a card after kicking up a stink in court about being able to at the contact centre.
Is oxytocin an ‘inner teddy’?
DETERMINISM — CHILDREN AS PASSIVE RECIPIENTS OF INEVITABLE DAMAGE

Children who have lived with domestic abuse may experience depression, severe anxiety, poor concentration levels and focus. They may have difficulty learning and limited social skills, exhibit violent, risky or delinquent behaviour. #ACEs #traumainformed

Children’s agency, participation, voice?
The UK's most-deprived areas have higher levels of children in care
Rate of children in care per 10,000 children by UK nation

1 in 60 children in most deprived areas are in care.

1 in 660 in the wealthiest areas

Bywaters et al. 2017

Source: Child Welfare Inequalities Project
The person who forced me to expose myself to others when I was a child was less than 5 years older than me so apparently it doesn’t count as abuse, & I don’t know if my experiences count as emotional abuse because I don’t know what counts as “often or very often”. So my ACE score is 1, maybe 2 or 3? Definitely not above the “4 or more” cut off. But I’ve been totally batshit for years. So what does that make me? Unjustifiably fragile? Just a fuck up? Spoilt snowflake who can’t cope with the real world?

Epistemic injustices (Fricker)
Yes, he is traumatised. I asked for counselling and nothing’s available. I’m told government cutbacks are to blame. So, despite my limited financial resources, I’ve had to pay for some private therapy myself.

Yes all of my children are still deeply affected and eldest has PTSD from the dv. We all have hyper vigilance too. They struggle with emotions and many other things and are now all under a CIN plan but again they have no clue how to help them as apparently there are no specialists for children of dv with counselling under ten.
A TRAUMA FOCUSED APPROACH

The importance of emotion and relationship in context
Complexity of lived experience
Belonging
Meaning-making
Children’s rights — agency and capacity
Capacity for resistance and resilience, not just damage

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