

Title: Situating Children's Family Troubles: Poverty and serial migration

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Situating Children's Family Troubles: Poverty and serial migration

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This paper aims to contribute to understandings of how children experience family troubles. It considers how children's family troubles are socially situated and interlinked with the resources children and other family members have available and the societal contexts in which they live. Since this is an under researched area, the paper aims to understand how bringing together different sources of evidence can illuminate children's perspectives on everyday family troubles. The paper first introduces the issue of children's family troubles and then considers how children feel about their families when they experience two kinds of family troubles; produced by living in poverty, and as a result of rejoining their parents following a period of separation in the process of serial migration, where family members migrate consecutively, rather than together. These two issues have been selected as examples of family troubles that are globally common and under-researched from children's perspectives. In addressing these different forms of children's family troubles, the chapter illuminates commonalities and differences in how children make sense of family troubles in which they are situated, and how troubling ideas of 'family' may be part of such processes.

The mundanity of children's family troubles

Popular constructions of childhood frequently romanticise it as generally bathed in a rosy glow of happiness (Ribbens McCarthy and Gillies, 2018). Yet, work in the sociology of childhood, developmental psychology, family studies and feminist research has long identified ways in which childhood is marked by troubles. In addition, some childhoods and family relations are located within deeply troubled households (O'Dell, Brownlow and Bertilsdotter-Rosqvist, 2017). Feminist work has served to unpack household and family relations, showing that members are positioned differently in power relations, albeit in complex, variable and constantly shifting ways, which can be antagonistic (Oakley, 1972; Rosen and Twamley, 2018). Since children's lives are so much lived in their families, their troubles are generally played out in family contexts, even if not directly produced in families. Many troubles are an everyday part of family life (Ribbens McCarthy, Hooper and Gillies, 2013) and, while not pleasant, can contribute to 'steeling' effects, helping children to develop resilience (Rutter, 2012).

Equally, children can be troubled by experiences that most adults would fail to recognise as potentially having longlasting deleterious effects. For example, Waksler (1996) conducted a retrospective study of what she calls 'the little trials of childhood' and showed how things that adults dismiss, or fail to notice may have long-lasting impacts on children.

In a story about fear written by Rose, she describes her mother's statement, 'Don't worry. There is no such thing as a monster' not as a lesson that monsters don't exist; rather, in Rose's words,

I would wonder to myself about how she could be so stupid. I knew they were there and she didn't care. I cried myself to sleep for years. This was partly because I was so terrified and partly because Mommy didn't care (Waksler, 1996: 7, original layout).

The above retrospective account is unusual because little attention has been paid to the mundanity of children's family troubles, things that adults, including researchers, may often dismiss as unimportant. Rose's account alerts us to the fact that young children can have family troubles that place parents and children in different and contradictory positions and cause enduring pain, even if such troubles are relatively common and parents are not aware of them. It illustrates the differential power relationships that pertain in families and that children's family troubles are contingent on

family relational practices. In Rose's example, the trouble is not produced by the family's structural positioning. Yet, many family troubles are formed through families' sociostructural positioning in terms of social class, access to resources, racialisation, nation and gender.

While a great deal is known about the impact of adverse circumstances on children's lives and development (Evans, Li and Whipple, 2013; Farthing, 2016), children's perspectives on the ways in which they experience family troubles and the impact on them are less known (Andreasen et al., 2017: 7). As Ribbens McCarthy, Hooper and Gillies (2013: 1) suggest, 'troubles, conflict and painful experiences are common features of children's and young people's lives' across the globe. Material and cultural resources make a difference to how children and young people make sense of troubles in their lives.

Theoretical resources

This paper draws on children's accounts to consider how they construct family troubles contemporaneously and how adults looking back on childhoods retrospectively construct childhood family troubles. This section starts by briefly introducing the theoretical resources that underpin the paper: the psychosocial; intersectionality; and narrative (re)constructions of 'liveable lives'. It then considers social troubles played out in families and troubles with the families children 'live with' (Gillis, 2002). In order to understand children's family troubles, it is important simultaneously to consider children's personal circumstances and feelings as they are interlinked with the social contexts in which they live. Gulbrandsen (2012) theorises the process of children's development as about active meaning making where the past, present and anticipated future are interlinked in processes of (re)interpretation in different everyday social arenas.

A psychosocial approach is helpful since it treats the social as inextricably linked with subjective experience. Similarly, social and cultural worlds are shaped by psychological processes and intersubjective relations. Intersectionality conceptualises categories as always permeated by other categories, fluid, changing and imbued with power relations (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013). It thus fits with theorisations of identities as dynamic, and as continually in the process of being constructed in ways that can be unpredictable (because they are non-essentialist). According to narrative theory, identities are stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are, who they are not and what they can become in the future (Bruner, 2004). Narratives are most likely to be developed when lives are interrupted and so do not fit with normative or ideal patterns (Riessman, 2000, 2008). People who do not see themselves in the story of the culture also are not included as having 'liveable' or legible lives (Butler, 2004), but are instead constructed as having 'unbearable' lives. As a result, they have to make a great deal of effort to craft lives that are recognized as 'liveable'. Narrative analysis also gives insight into the culture, making it possible to analyse 'canonical narratives' about the way life ought to be lived in a particular time and place (Bruner, 1990) and the narrative identities that are normative for a generation (McAdams, 2006). Theoretical tools such as those described above can help with the understanding of the complexity of children's family troubles.

Bringing together contemporaneous and retrospective accounts of children's family troubles

The sections below first discuss findings from research on children and consumption before focussing on the retrospectively narrated experiences of adults who, as children, grew up in households that would be considered 'non-normative' by many. Together, these two issues illuminate how family troubles can have different impacts on how children feel within and about, their families. On the one hand, family troubles can be experienced by children as troubles that they face together with their parents and children can attempt to protect their parents from knowing how difficult they find a lack of economic resources by refusing to ask for resources or complain (Pugh, 2009). In the examples below of family troubles with consumption, the children's narratives

suggest that how they understand 'family' is not threatened by family troubles. In other words, family troubles are not necessarily associated with 'troubling families'. On the other hand, family troubles can be experienced as troubles that isolate particular children within their families and, sometimes, alienate them from their parents (as in the example of serial migration below).

The juxtaposing of children's contemporaneous accounts and adult retrospective narratives may seem at first sight both unwarranted and unlikely to yield valuable insights into children's family troubles because the two kinds of narratives are different in kind. Research and theorising on memory has illuminated the ways in which memory is (re)constructed, rather than having filmic qualities that allow it to be replayed at will (Loftus, Brockmeier, 2015). Children's narratives are contemporaneous with their troubles, while adult reconstructions are distanced in time and, arguably, less to be trusted as accurate. Furthermore, adult re-constructions are narrated from a position of greater independence from parents and greater experience of retrospection. In contrast, it can be argued that children living in difficult circumstances often do not have the necessary experience to recognise just how deleterious those circumstances are and their dependence on their parents may make them unwilling or unable to articulate family conflicts.

These differences could make adult retrospective accounts and childhood contemporaneous accounts incompatible. This paper, however, does not treat these two sources of evidence as equivalent or directly comparable. Instead, it draws on them as complementary sources for illuminating children's perspectives on family troubles. Studies that include repeated interviews on the same events or issues over time find that retellings vary depending on the adults' current circumstances and concerns (Josselson, 2009; Orellana and Phoenix, 2016). It is not, however, that the adult accounts fail to engage with important issues and feelings as time passes, but that what they highlight depends on the issues they are dealing with in their current lives ((Josselson, 2009). Issues identified as important remain available to narrative accounts, but their significance and the elements highlighted varies over time. From a review of the evidence available on adult retrospective reports of adverse childhood experiences, Hardt and Rutter (2004), conclude that 'the available evidence on abuse and neglect indicates that when abuse or neglect is retrospectively reported to have taken place, these positive reports are likely to be correct', but there is sometimes under-reporting of documented serious abuse or neglect in adult life and the details and meanings are more likely to have shifted over time. As Hardt and Rutter (2004) conclude, it is important to take seriously adult retrospective narratives while recognising their potential shortcomings. Adult retrospective accounts of childhood troubles are particularly important in cases where it may be unethical to explore troubles with children living through them, where caregivers may not want researchers to discuss particular issues with children or where adults, including researchers, may not understand what children themselves consider to be family troubles (Waksler, 1996).

If we consider children's contemporaneous accounts, there is research evidence that they sometimes produce critical accounts of their parents and are able to reflect on family troubles. This is evident in a UK ethnographic study of 10-12 year olds' informal talk in school conducted by Janet Maybin (2006). Some of the children talked about disagreements with their parents, danger and violence at home as well as secrets and lies. Equally, the burgeoning literature on children as language brokers (who interpret and translate for their parents and others) shows that children can be both highly understanding and supportive of their parents and simultaneously critical of aspects of their parents' practices (Orellana, 2009). This is not to downplay the importance of children's relatively less powerful position in families, but to recognise the complexity of their understanding of their family circumstances and their ability to narrate their stories.

In order to get a holistic picture of children's experiences of family troubles, it is, therefore, productive both to consider children's accounts and the retrospective accounts of adults looking back on family troubles. This paper brings together contemporaneous accounts from children with retrospective accounts from adults, recognising both the shortcomings of each of these methods, the value of the unique insights each facilitates and of bringing them together.

Psychosocial family troubles: Children's negotiation of consumption and scarce resources

One common source of children's family troubles is consumption. Children and young people judge each other on the basis of their clothes and music styles. This can cause difficulties in terms of 'fitting in' or 'sticking out' of their peer groups (Milner, 2004) and can contribute to family troubles, particularly for families living in poverty (Milner, 2016; Nairn and Spotswood, 2015). Troubles with consumption are produced societally and relate to the ways in which children and their families are positioned. Since families are differentiated in relation to the economic resources available to them, possibilities for consumption are sociostructural and intersectionally linked with children and parents' social positioning. At its extreme, that difference is starkly visible in the affluent countries of the Minority World (such as the UK and the US) where a sizeable minority of children are differentiated from their peers in experiencing food poverty (O'Connell Brannen and Knight, 2013). The interlinking of children's consumption and family troubles are, however, more far-reaching than consumption of food in that, for well over a century, consumption has been a signifier of status and central to the construction of identities (Veblen, 1899).

The children discussed below all lived in the Minority World and hence their expectations of what constitutes 'liveable lives' (Butler, 2004) or troubles, is produced in their material contexts (Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2013). As discussed above, a common reason for the production of narratives is when there is a mismatch between normative expectations and lives and practices that are not consonant with those expectations. It is, therefore, not surprising that narratives of troubled consumption constitute an important part of children's family troubles.

The examples presented in this section come from two 'fly-on-the-wall' documentaries. They are of white UK and US children living in poverty, selected because, while not produced by researchers, their extensive and intensive attention to children's own perspectives on living in poverty facilitate research understandings. The extracts have been analysed using narrative analysis.

In the first example, Courtney and Holly are 8-year-old UK friends speaking to the reporter in a bedroom without their parents present.

COURTNEY: Holly's family can afford nicer clothes than me because her family work and my family don't./.../ for like if something breaks down in our house, her dad can fix it and mine can't because he can't afford the money to get the council to fix stuff and that. If your family work you get more money in your house but if they don't you get less money in your house and my mum can't lend me the money when I become 21 or whatever or however older I become and then so I just wanna work and do whatever I want to do.

HOLLY: You never know when you get older you might be a richer--you never know

COURTNEY: I think that my future is going to have more of the bad things in it than a few good things 'cause her-- she is going to be richer when she grows up and I'll be poor. I'm just saying= (*Poor Kids BBC documentary, Tuesday 7 June 2011*)

In the example from the US documentary, siblings Kaylie (10 years) and Tyler (12 years) were living with their mother Barbara. The family trouble they describe resulted from the fact that their mother had lost her factory job, and unemployment benefit and food stamps were not sufficient for her to pay the rent and provide food. When the children's grandmother was no longer able to help them, they had several house moves and, at the time of recording, Kaylie was no longer attending school.

Kaylie: I really want to be in school. If you don't get a good education then you don't get much money, you don't get a good job, you end up sleeping at your mum's. You end up being behind a lot of rent and you get kicked out. You end up being homeless and then with

no food. /.../ We don't get three meals a day like breakfast, lunch and then dinner," When I feel hungry I feel sad and droopy/.../

Tyler : "Sometimes when we have cereal we don't have milk - we have to eat it dry. Sometimes we don't have cereal and we have milk. Sometimes when there's a cooking show on I get a little more hungry - I want to vanish into the screen and start eating the food." /.../

"For mowing other people's lawns, I got \$10 and I put in six of it for the gas, and gave the rest to my mum for some food."

(America's Poor Kids BBC Two documentary, Wednesday 6 March 2013)

Kaylie also explained that she contributes to the family economy by collecting cans along the railway track, getting 2-5 cents per can. Her clothes come from the Salvation Army shop and she understands that '60-cent shirts are allowed', but those costing \$2 are 'too much'.

In both examples above, the children are describing what clearly constitutes trouble for them. It is striking, however, that in both cases they see this as family troubles of poor housing, unemployment and food poverty, in which they are centrally involved. They attribute causality to their parent(s)' unemployment, which they link with their future life possibilities. In a comparable way to that identified by Skattebol et al., (2017) for Australian 11-17-year-olds, they individualise family poverty, implicitly accepting a common neoliberal discourse without blaming their parents for their family troubles. They link their possible future lives to their current circumstances and identify educational qualifications and employment as crucial if they are to avoid similar adulthoods to their parents'. The fact that the children are not simply passive in their response to their circumstances is demonstrated by Kaylie and Tyler's narratives of working to contribute to their family resources. What they consider they can do is, however, short term rather than part of longer-term solutions. There is research evidence that children learn early to use personal experience narratives to gain cognitive and emotional mastery over events and to plan what to do (Engel, 1995, 2005). From their review of the literature, Andreasen et al., (2017: 8) suggest that children living in poverty frequently protect their parents from demands for material goods and take responsibility for helping their parents.

It might be expected that the problems poverty brings may disrupt children's feelings of solidarity with their parents as they experience social exclusion from their peers and parents have to work long hours, which children do not like (Aronsson, 2012; Nairn et al., 2011). However, there is ample evidence that the troubles produced by poverty do not lead children to feel alienated from their parents. Tessa Ridge (2009, 2011) found that family poverty often produced contradictions with children's own needs and could put relationships with parents and other family members under pressure. However, children showed empathy and understanding about the financial pressures on their parents. Children also contributed to households, through care work.

While scarcity of economic resources and their effects is linked to intersections of age, gender, nation and social class, there are commonalities across racialised groups. In a landmark ethnographic study, Chin (2001) studied 10-year-old black children living in New Jersey, USA and found that, especially the girls, attempted to protect their parents from knowledge of the things they would have liked to have and knew that their parents could not afford. When Chin gave them \$10 to spend as they wished, many saved some to give to their parents and siblings. Also in the US, Luttrell (2012) found that black boys from families living in poverty contributed to their families by, for example, taking responsibility for their younger siblings. Allison Pugh found similar findings across ethnic groups in the US. In a UK, qualitative, longitudinal study of low-income family life, most of whom were white, where parents are employed, Tessa Ridge (2002, 2007) found that children in poor families understood the financial constraints on their parents. Ridge's findings fit with those from a UK mixed-methods study of predominantly white 12-18 year old young people, which found that children who 'pester' their parents were almost exclusively those who knew that their parents could not afford to buy them things. The exceptions were those who found it difficult to deal with lacking the

signifiers of style considered important in their peer group at school. A major finding was that consumption marks exclusion, inclusion and intersectional differences and can widen social divisions. (Croghan et al., 2006).

The following section considers children's family troubles that are also partly sociostructurally produced, but where children and their parents are more likely to be positioned antagonistically than empathically by the younger generation.

Troubles with the families children 'live with': Children's family troubles with serial migration

Gillis (2002) makes a distinction between the families we live by and the families we live with. In effect, societal constructions of how parenthood and childhood should be 'done' produce contradictory desires and practices in that 'families we live by' are those that are desired and imagined in contradistinction from the 'families we live with'. This mismatch can produce trouble in itself. This section considers troubles that arise from this disjunction.

Unlike the children discussed above who experience their family troubles as collective, the adults who narrate their childhoods below considered their family troubles isolating. This section considers the retrospective accounts of adults who, as children, were serial migrants, joining their parent(s) in the UK after initially having continued to live in the Caribbean when their parents migrated. As with the adults interviewed by Frances Waksler (1996), but unlike the children interviewed by television journalists above, this is a sample that would be difficult to find contemporaneously and interviews might well raise ethical difficulties by discussing troubles with children without providing possibilities of ameliorating them.

While transnational migration has long been studied, work on transnational families is little over a decade old. When feminist work disrupted gender blindness about transnational migration, 'transnational motherhood' came into view in new ways. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (2003) suggested that mothers who migrate in search of a better life for their families, leaving their children behind, work hard to improvise strategies for mothering at a distance. For 'transnational mothers', mothering and trying to ensure the best possible lives for their children, while forging new living circumstances in an unfamiliar country can be extremely difficult (Lutz, 2008). Mothers frequently take responsibility for managing 'global care chains' (a term coined by Rachel Parreñas and popularised by Hochschild, 2000) in ways that produce senses of liminality, ambiguity, openness and indeterminacy of identity; a sense of 'being here and there' (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 2003).

While 'mothersandchildren' are frequently thought of as united, their interests are also often viewed as in contestation (Rosen and Twamley 2018; Rosen, this issue). This is an important issue when considering children and serial migration. This section first briefly describes the study that informs the analyses presented here. The main part of this section considers how children (now adult) report that they remember what it was like to meet their mothers after the period of transnational separation and serial migration. The trouble they described is twofold; not having been treated as agents who should be consulted about where, and with whom, they should live, and difficulties with affective relations. This was a pervasive story from the adults who had been serial migrants. However, it was not the story told by all.

Transnational families

This section of the paper draws on accounts from an interview study of 53 adults who were serial migrants from the Caribbean (39 women and 14 men, all of whom are black), interviews with two mothers and three group discussions which were of mixed gender groups. The term 'serial migration' is used in the literature in two ways. It describes repeated migrations (e.g. Ossman, 2004) as well as migrations where family members (or sometimes friends) migrate in series, following each other, rather than migrating at the same time; a process that is also referred to as 'chain migration' (Werbner, 2015). It entails some degree of family reunification over time. In the study

reported here, 'serial migration' describes a situation where children followed their parents (or a parent, mostly a mother) who migrated first.

Since transnational families were (and remain) commonplace, the children and their families were not 'non-normative' in the countries in which they had been born. It is common for parents around the world to migrate in order to improve lives for themselves and their children, in their countries of origin and of settlement, and transnational separations are generally considered to be temporary (Olwig and Gullov, 2013). Parents (mothers in particular) work hard to maintain a sense of 'familyhood', collectivity and kinship when they migrate and continue to be central to the process of intergenerational 'care circulation' (Baldassar and Merla 2013).

The experiences of the adults reported here differ from those in contemporary 'global care chains' in that mothers and children are now able to be in frequent contact through Social Networking Sites. Parents and children, therefore, know what they each look and sound like and, mothers in particular, can check what their children are doing (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Lutz, 2008; Parreñas, 2005). This relatively new form of 'mediated co-presence' can be emotionally sustaining but can also generate resentment about parental surveillance from a distance (Madianou, 2016).

The following section considers adults' views of the experience and impact of the processes that lead to family reunions in childhood.

The contradictory impact of family troubles for children's family solidarity

There is evidence from north America that many children who have experienced serial migration to countries such as Canada and the USA feel a degree of unhappiness in childhood, sometimes have difficult relationships with their parents and attain poorly in education (Smith, Lalonde, & Johnson, 2004). The interviews with the adult children in the study reported here indicate that most found the processes associated with serial migration difficult and considered that it has had long-lasting consequences.

The notion that mothers and their children should develop strong, continuing attachments from the early months of children's lives, has become commonplace since the Second World War (Riley, 1983). Attachment has, therefore, become a key imaginary in family life in both academic and popular discourses in Minority World societies. Such notions are, thus, likely to be part of the stories adults living in the UK tell about their childhoods. For the participants in the study reported here, physical affection was generally taken as metonymic of attachment and satisfactory mother-child relations. The disruption of primary attachments that many experienced, first when their parents (particularly mothers) migrated and then when they left their beloved caregivers, may provide part of the explanation for differences between the children quoted above who were living in poverty and the serial migrants.

The length of children's separation from their parents (which is related to the age at which they migrated) was, not surprisingly, a major influence on how the adults in the study reported they had felt about joining their parents in the UK (cf. Menjivar and Abrego, 2009). This was coupled with the issue of whether children understood and felt involved in migration decisions and knew in advance why their parents were migrating (Carling, Menjivar, and Schmalzbauer, 2012; Foner and Dreby, 2011). Joseph was left in one Caribbean country with his great aunt when he was a few months old while his parents worked in another Caribbean country. They then went to the UK directly from the second country and he joined them in the UK at 13 years, taken by his father who arrived (unexpectedly) to collect him. He articulated a story of estrangement from his parents that resulted from the long separation and ignorance about what was planned for him or that he had a new baby brother in the UK.

JOSEPH: What you encounter is that umm, you mix with strangers; mother and father yeah, but you don't know these people. The kids that was born here (and that's my own experience), he know his mum and dad, so he can be very emotional to them, affectionate,

they are affectionate to him, he can hug them and things, you can't go there, because it's like meeting someone on the street and trying to jump and hold on to them – it just weren't there. So all that took time to break down. But it never actually was fully actually broken down. You get to the point where you feel a little more comfortable with the way you are, but not that umm. That it's the best that you know. Especially from my opinion, because that sort of behaviour, umm that's the sort of relationship that I had with my grand aunt – you know I could run and jump on her that sort of thing you know all the usual things that kids do...

As adults looking back on their childhoods, the experience of being taken or sent to live with 'strangers', without warning, could still be considered devastating in adulthood, particularly if the serial migrants felt that their beloved relatives with whom they had lived did not fight hard enough to keep them. This was the case for Barbara, below, who reported loving and being loved by the aunt with whom she had lived.

QUESTION: Looking back, how do you feel now about having been a serial migrant?

BARBARA: Yeah, yeah (very long pause) I don't know what to say about it, I don't know what to say about it really. I mean I can't see it being, I can't see migration being positive personally. I suppose it depends on what support systems, you know what support systems you've got. If there are no support systems in place then it can, I can see it being very very destructive. ...– It's difficult to see how it can be positive in that sort of way.

...On the other hand, now that I'm an adult (long pause). I suppose because now that I am an adult and I can understand the reasons why parents leave their kids if you like, but I think for children it can be devastating, if they're left in the dark, if they are not told why something is happening to them and they have to imagine what it is, it can be absolutely devastating.

Much of Barbara's account about the past was imbued with current pain. The extract above might be taken as evidence of a redemptive identity since adulthood has given her new ways of seeing her experience. However, she makes it clear that adult understanding does not mitigate its destructive consequences.

Psychosocial difficulties in parent-child relationship

The psychosocial family trouble described by Joseph and Barbara was voiced by many of the adults in the sample. Some of the sample considered that their carers (often their grandmothers) were the only mothers they needed at the time that they joined their parents (although one man said he had felt that his grandfather was the only parent he needed). This may partly explain why several appeared to feel more antipathy to their mothers than to their fathers if they were not happy in England. Many of the participants considered that long separations, and sometimes committed relationships with carers, had taken a toll on their relationships with their mothers. The following extracts below illustrate the difficulties some of the participants reported in being able to inhabit an identity as their mother's child.

LEROY: One of the things I didn't say, when I first came over here I struggled to accept my Mother as my Mother, I really did struggle because who, the person who actually brought me up was my Aunt and I'm still close to her. ...I don't think we really created that bond as much as I would say that I've got for my children because we were actually brought up together, even though I lived with her [mother] from the age of three to the age of 21... I think she feels guilty of that and I've told her that she shouldn't feel that, it's just me...I'm not sure whether or not that's indicative of other people who's been separated from their parents.

JUNE: And in actual fact I was very resentful towards my mother for maaany (.) many years (.) I actually refused to call her my mum...I would not call her mum (.) I did not call my

mother mum until I was in my twenties. (3) I would not- I just didn't call her anything (enunciated)

NANNY: I don't know how to talk to, I can't, I don't know what name to call her. And for the first few weeks I didn't call her anything. More than that, more than that, for the first couple of months. If I wanted to speak to her I'd physically position myself in front of her and say something, cos the word couldn't come out, mum could just not come out it had no meaning for me.

JULIA: So I don't think there's that bond like a mother and her daughter, with my mum and me, although there is a bond. It's not the same as myself and my son.

The reactions of grief and trauma produced by meeting their parents were reported by the sample sometimes to produce resentments in parents who considered that they had sacrificed a great deal to bring their children over to the UK.

ALISON: ...I came here and I used to cry so much that my mum use to say, 'Oh my god, she's bloody in that room crying again!' (laughing). But that's how I used to get through life you know, I used to just sit and cry and then I maybe would cry for an hour ... my mum and dad put it down to I was being selfish. Because they'd worked very hard to accumulate the funding to bring me over here and that was my ungratefulness you know. Shutting myself away from them, writing hundreds of letters to home, to the West Indies.

Reactions such as those above were reported further to estrange parents and children, particularly mothers and daughters. It would be over –simplistic to assume that the estrangement from their parents reported by many of the serial migration sample was because their parents produced trouble by being inadequate parents. One of the recurrent narratives from the participants was that their UK-born siblings did have good, sometimes warm, physical, relationships with their parents. The intersections of positioning in families as older Caribbean children and the sociostructural and relational landscapes they left and arrived at were inextricably linked with the family trouble children experienced.

Discussion

The two issues discussed above, children's experiences of living in poverty and adults looking back on childhood experiences of serial migration, constitute examples of the ways in which children negotiate family troubles. Both are situated relationally, socioeconomically and historically and their narrative accounts help to illuminate the ways in which they constitute themselves within the norms of personhood as intelligible subjects in the process of subjectification. They also show how children's family troubles may be interwoven with perspectives on 'troubling families', when their lived experiences fail to meet their expectations of what it means to be 'family', or - alternatively – when their experiences confirm their view of 'family' as a unit that seeks to pull together.

In the consumption example, poverty had an impact on how children are positioned within their peer groups. As Allison Pugh (2009) suggests from her three-year US ethnography, access to consumer culture is a key means of establishing status and acceptance and for children to demonstrate that they are sufficiently cared-for by parents in what she calls an 'economy of dignity'. The children quoted above, did not speak of family poverty as sociostructurally produced, but individualised it as a family affair. This is perhaps not surprising given that, within neoliberal contexts, problems are generally individualised, so that structural inequalities are constructed as matters of choice and ambition. In keeping with findings from other studies (e.g. Skattebol et al., 2017 in Australia), however, their narratives were sympathetic to their parents, with most wanting to protect them from knowledge of their desires and the ways in which they experienced the impact of poverty as family troubles. These findings fit with those on children facing other family troubles.

For example, children who have experienced bereavement often protect their parents from having to face their distress (Ribbens McCarthy 2006). Accounts from children such as those above illustrate the intricate interlinking of structure and emotions and the ways in which children attempt to craft liveable lives for themselves (and their parents) within their family contexts. The children and young people's narratives showed the intersections of resources, relationality, social context and generation.

As Freeman (2010) suggests, hindsight is part of the project of self-understanding and narrative is as central to hindsight as is memory. The narratives of many of the adults who had been serial migrants in childhood indicate that most retrospectively described reunification with their parents as disjunctive and emotionally attenuated in contrast with the emotionally warm relationships they often reported having had with carers in the Caribbean. It was common for the participants to explain lack of physical affection from their parents in intersectional ways as resulting from generational and cultural differences between themselves, their parents and sometimes new siblings as well as prolonged physical absence. Most of the participants expressed understanding of why their parents behaved as they did, and often admired their parents' economic achievements after coming to the UK and the opportunities that moving to the UK had given them. This did not mean, however, that they felt solidarity with their parents. Instead, their narratives indicated that they understood why their parents made the decisions they did and admired the hard work they engaged in to buy housing and support their families, but that they would not be prepared to make the same decisions. While there is evidence that children's understanding of the reasons for their parents' migration in advance of arrangements being made improves children's experiences of separation and reunification (Dreby, 2010; Smith, Lalonde and Johnson, 2004), the adults in this sample were serial migrants in a period where this was not recognised as important by their parents. It was, therefore, exceptional for them to be informed, which no doubt is part of the reason these adults reported a lack of solidarity with their parents as children.

An intersectional perspective, underpinned by feminist theory and an approach informed by the politics of childhood (Rosen and Twamley, 2018) is central to the understanding of children's family troubles in two ways. First, it contributes to literature showing how difference runs through family members' lives and positionality. Second, it serves to unsettle simple notions of children's 'best interests' and to disrupt binaries of romantic shared parent-child projects and idealised mother-child relationships that are common in contemporary Minority World cultures (Ribbens McCarthy, Hooper and Gillies, 2013). Overall, the narratives of children living in poverty and the retrospective narratives of adults looking back on their childhoods show how children's families are psychosocially situated; contingent on family relational practices, the attachments and separations that children experience, the resources children and other family members have available and the societal context. A major division is, however, whether children situate themselves within family troubles in solidarity with their parents, or consider themselves to have been subjected to family troubles that divide them from their parents.

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