This is a small qualitative study drawing on memories of childhood. It examines social change in childhood related to war, migration, employment, policing, technology, popular culture and religion, and its influence on children and their diversity of childhood experience. This poster gives examples of the way the sensitizing concepts of social memory, space and time have informed the research.

**Background**

Halbwachs (1925/1992) distinguishes between different forms of memory, drawing attention to the ways personal memories and are chained through familial and other collective memories. These ‘social memories’ provide ‘social framework’ for the social memory of everyday. Each social encounter is therefore also an encounter with the past. My research explores the relationship between children’s experience and collective forms of memory related to family, community and nation.

‘… it was my grandmother that basically kept the family going… she worked in a factory… that made meat products. She used to look after the pigs… for years, she kept [two families] fed, by wearing wellies to work and stowing pounds of answers down her wellies, by sending them round her way… So when you think of the weight of them, and having to normally walk… Apapa.

This is a story of a ‘heroine’ committed to her family’s welfare. The memory shared with the child celebrates this, containing education about the potential to women to overcome the adversity. The undercurrent is hunger associated with the depression, the struggles against the owners of capital and the legitimation of law breaking in this situation. The politics informing the story is from working class struggle (Apapa’s mother’s family were socialists). In this way, Apapa’s experiences as a child are informed by a familial and collective past. This memory belongs to the family archive and is formative in her childhood, transmitting familial and collective past. The memory involves strong emotion at a personal level. In addition, it reveals the relationship with father, who encourages her participation, passing on familial memory to the British born girl this aspect of her Indian heritage. The tradition of giving to poor people is a collective memory of the better off to assist the poor. The requirement to bury children whether or not they are directly caught up in events. The central landscape children occupy and how they engage with these.

’remembering being flashed… in a bus queue… I was 14 or 15 maybe. Allowed to go to town on my own on the bus… I was instructed in the middle of a bus queue, and there’s this guy with a Mac behind me, playing with himself when I turned round, and you just think you’re imagining things, or you think it’s your fault. It was probably years before I told anyone…’

My research explores the familial and other collective memories. Lefebvre (1991) argues that places are historically produced from interaction. Children’s movement between public and private spheres has changed over time. Places may encourage entry for some and deter others. Children actively engage with the landscapes they occupy. These convey social memories of times past. Combining Halbwachs’ approach to memory with this approach enables lines of research enquiry to be drawn from personal experiences to the landscapes children occupy and how they engage with these.

‘I had Boy George and Ali ‘m’… with all the scarves and the capes and the lace was hanging off, and I was… covered in dirt… I became a bit of a ‘New Romantic’…’ With all the lace was hanging off, and I was... dressed in dirt… became a bit of a ‘New Romantic’…

The secular attack remains unarticulated for many years. The racial attack has to be acted on because of Lara’s physical injuries, yet no family can understand the sexual attack ‘… or you think it’s your fault’. Lara is more resilient than Julie, who couldn’t stop fighting with her mum used to always say to us, ‘Don’t think it’s your fault’. Lara is more resilient than Julie, who couldn’t stop fighting with her. The choice of gender fluidity in fashion reflects Rachel’s sexuality at 15 associated with her thoughtfulness in dressing. To consider how the family and the fashion is captivating. She selects this clothing with reference to her own feelings, peers and cultural signals. Her negotiation of clothing intersects with social ideas about respectability from interconnected systems related to gender, class, race and religion. The global popular culture industries have presented fashion options. Out of this Rachel carves space and weaves time for herself.

Temporal influences in childhood (Adam 1995) involve the bodily times of development, times of the household, school, industry and environment. Childhood is a time of complex transition. Our sense of time involves ‘…memories in the present of the past, expectations and desires in the present of the future’ (Jaques 1987/1990. 22). Children’s everyday lives are complex, temporal engagements that weaves time and carving space for themselves.

‘We had a leaving do at the end of primary school… ’Girls will be wearing skirts and dresses, boys must wear smart trousers’… I sort of think, I’m not going… My mother had battled with me prior to that, to send me to children’s parties, in the party frocks, the last one of which I came home with it rolled up under my arm, I’d been up a tree the whole time – with little kids! And all the lace was hanging off, and I was covered in dirt… became a bit of a “New Romantic”… With all the scarves and the capes look, that was an identity. That was quite fluid, the wear, that was something I became quite aware of, so you had boy George and Ali ‘m’ and you didn’t know whether they were male or female, and that was like, wow, that’s really interesting, I like that chatcher.

Children engage with selective social memory

Lefebvre (1991) argues that places are historically produced from interaction. Children’s movement between public and private spheres has changed over time. Places may encourage entry for some and deter others. Children actively engage with the landscapes they occupy.

Children navigate social landscapes

Children’s experience may remain silent, insufficiently informing social memory. Firstly, children have little power to be heard, important experiences remain unarticulated. Second, experiences may be trivialised in ways that suit particular interests. Third, there may be insufficient social frameworks for them to understand and describe what is happening. Fourth, social arrangements may be taken for granted, a naturalised part of childhood. There are ‘fossils’ and ‘clichés’ in the social memory.

Children encounter silence in the social memory

Children’s movement between public and private spheres has changed over time. Places may encourage entry for some and deter others. Children actively engage with the landscapes they occupy. These convey social memories of times past. Combining Halbwachs’ approach to memory with this approach enables lines of research enquiry to be drawn from personal experiences to the landscapes children occupy and how they engage with these.

Children weave time and carve space for themselves

It is important to acknowledge that the accounts of childhood discussed in this research have been filtered in different ways. Firstly, the respondents selected memories from childhood that were filtered through their respondents’ selective memories. Second, the respondents remembered remembered when grounded in collective memories from further past. Third, academic debates about childhood informed the way the researcher constructed the research.

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**Selected references**


