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Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA): moving past the taboo and into the postcolonial

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ABSTRACT: This paper defines the practice of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) specifically, explaining the choice of words and giving accepted definitions, as well as offering a definition of its own, i.e. that CSA is the disempowering and overpowering of children through sexual means. The paper aims to give an overview of the societal factors contributing to how CSA is framed and received in mainstream society. Throughout this piece of writing the concept of a *taboo* is used as an analytical category. The paper aims at presenting a wide-ranging view of the practice of CSA, using the writer's main societal reference point, that of the Anglo world, specifically calling on examples from the United Kingdom (UK) to contextualise the argument. The discussion frames CSA as a taboo, illustrating this through historical inquiry, with a focus on the evolution of morality surrounding the sexuality of children and the nature of acceptable sexual relations during the period of childhood. A (CSA) survivor perspective is offered in the form of personal biographical confession, as well as survivor narratives that are explored more broadly, pointing to those that society deems acceptable, or not. A triangulation between the *taboo* nature of the practice, the *stigma* it generates and the effect it has on *childhood* is drawn up. The impending effects of shame in processing CSA are explored in respect to disclosure and rehabilitation for those disclosing, but also for those being disclosed to, and society at large. Finally, a nuanced postcolonial approach is proposed, whereby CSA is framed as an invasion or overpowering of a body in much the same way one nation-state invades, land-grabs or takes legislative and governmental control over another landmass during the process of colonisation.
KEYWORDS: childhood sexual abuse (CSA), taboo, childhood studies, history of childhood, postcolonial theory, othering, stigma

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a theoretical analysis of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) as a practice in society. It outlines, defines and contextualises CSA within a contemporary intellectual discourse. It considers but takes a step away from the psychological categorisation of the phenomenon and frames it multi-disciplinarily, through the disciplines of sociology, (human) geography and childhood studies. A historical context and background on its perception is offered, narrowed down through an Anglo-British context. This is thus not presenting a universal or even plural perception of CSA, but is using the cultural geographical space of the Anglo sphere as a compass to try to understand the dominant morals and values present in the discourse surrounding CSA.

This piece of writing explores the taboo nature of CSA, exploring why this topic is controversial and sensitive, by shedding light on the post-Enlightenment conceptualisation of *childhood* as we have come to know it today. The text is written with children's rights in mind, specifically guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), without focusing on the advocacy for rights in this context. The aim is to give an overview of the factors at play, drawing up a web of interconnectedness, rather than investigating each contributing factor in detail. A suggestion at reframing CSA from the perspective of the survivor is proposed, introducing a nuanced interpretation of postcolonial theory, as an invitation at further study of CSA through the lens of social science.

The foundation of my theoretical analysis is the idea that the practice of *childhood sexual abuse* (CSA) (Sanderson 2015; Cunnington 2019) is a social *taboo*. In the context of this paper, I wish to define CSA as the overpowering and disempowering of a child through sexual means. This can range from activity clearly defined as sexual contact, for example penetrative, manual or oral sex, to non-contact activity, for example producing pornographic imagery, and using derogatory or explicit sexual language. Such abuse can be perpetrated by adults or other children. It can be obvious or subtle. Its aim is to exercise power over another individual, overstepping their physical, mental or emotional boundaries, belittling and silencing them. It can be a one-off incident or something that reoccurs over a long period of time, with lead-up and grooming, intertwined within a wider relationship and context (Jud 2014; Andresen 2018).

In the English-speaking realm the two most widely used terms for this practice are *child sexual abuse* and *child sexual exploitation*, sometimes written together: *CSA/E* (UNICEF 2020), while the term *sexual violence* against children also exists (Our Voices 2021). When it comes to abuse in connection to (monetary) compensation CSE can be the most appropriate choice, as it nods to the financial exploitation of the child. Moreover, the term *trafficking* is widely applied, with its connection to child prostitution (Montgomery 2011), but also has other non-sexual meanings and connections, for example trafficking children for labour or organs (United Nations 2002). The choice of the word *childhood*, as opposed to child, in this piece of writing, is one of preference and also a reference to the wider discipline of *childhood studies*, putting the focus on abuse during the phase of childhood rather than against an individual child. This puts the practice into a sociological context, rather than an individual one, and makes it

accessible to adults, who all also had a childhood, even though they no longer identify as being children. Furthermore, the wide spectrum that the word *abuse* gives, as opposed to violence, communicates the nuanced nature of many different forms of overpowering and disempowering of others that the word violence does not encapsulate. Violence suggests that abuse is obvious and painful, easy to identify, which is not always the case with CSA. Unless coupled with physical abuse, CSA is best described as a *violation*, rather than violence (Cunnington 2021).

CSA AS TABOO

A dictionary definition of the word *taboo* is: "a prohibition imposed by social custom or as a protective measure" or "something that is not acceptable to say, mention, or do" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2021). This applies to CSA, as it is socially unacceptable, as well as illegal, thus making it very difficult to research, as it is almost impossible to observe and because participants may find it difficult to disclose and discuss, on account of its transgressive nature (Montgomery 2008). The nature of the practice as a taboo, and thus a practice that must take place in secret, contributes to the silence surrounding it and subsequently its maintenance.

Sexuality and sexual relations can be intimate, make someone feel vulnerable, and when coupled with abuse, can be accompanied by shame, embarrassment and inhibition to discuss it with others (Andresen 2018). Prudishness, politeness, and even religiousness may inhibit talking openly about sexual experience, whether consensual or not. Any sexual relations break through people's natural space boundaries and barriers, whether physical and mental (Russel 2013). Sexual abuse can be likened to trespassing or breaking and entering (McRobert 2009). One needs to feel safe enough to disclose such information. However, evidence shows that many children do disclose abuse but are not met with a helpful response from the adults who are meant to help them (Andresen, Pohling, & Schaumann 2021). Such negative reactions are also directly linked to CSA being a taboo, with society having no appropriate language surrounding the issue, leading to a hurdle when receiving information about abuse, as well as processing the practice at large.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

A simplified timeline, outlining legislation in the UK, can shed some light on the moral and social values that developed over time, regarding children being sexually active. At the end of the 19th century the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the Salvation Army spread awareness and concerns surrounding the prostitution of young working-class girls. This led to the age of consent being raised from 13 to 16. Public debate resurfaced in the early 20th century leading to the 1908 Punishment of Incest Act. This only included those who were biologically related, i.e. stepparents were exempt (Woodiwiss 2014). Once these prohibitions and laws were enforced, CSA became less socially acceptable and even though CSA was still very much a widespread practice, it was just better hidden (Kitzinger 2004). The fem-

inist movement of the 1970s and 80s led to a short-lived more nuanced position and approach to CSA, claiming that it is a social problem that needs a political solution or social change, and is not only about male power, but also women and children's resistance (Kelly 1988; Woodiwiss 2014). This approach never really gained momentum and by the late 21st century, society's approach towards CSA, specifically towards the victims/survivors of it, was the psychological approach or therapeutic culture (Woodiwiss 2009) which encourages one to examine themselves and look for individual causes to their problems in order to them find solutions, all from looking inward, giving external and environmental factors little to no significance (Woodiwiss 2014). This leads to the pathologicalisation of trauma experienced through external factors, indirectly giving the victim/survivor the responsibility or blame for their problems.

However, society's approach and perspective on CSA is affected by social change, especially that change produced through social movements, for example the 2017 #MeToo movement (Mangan 2021) which gave the survivor's voice a credibility it did not have before. This approach can be said to be more in line with the feminist nuanced approach proposed in the 1970s and 80s. The #MeToo movement led to the legal system in the USA taking action in high-profile cases like Jeffrey Epstein (Bryant 2020) and Harvey Weinstein (Mangan 2021), but also for employers, agents, entire social groups, to believe allegations and distance themselves from those accused of sexual harassment and abuse, as in the case of Kevin Spacey (Krishna 2021), leading to the so-called 'cancel culture'. This is a relatively new and divisive term, that is already in the dictionary, defined as: 'the practice or tendency of engaging in mass canceling as a way of expressing disapproval and exerting social pressure' (Mirriam-Webster 2021). The survivors who spoke up during the #MeToo movement were not all survivors of CSA, but of sexual assault and abuse also in their adult years. However, it was the movement itself that led to changes in legislation and society taking survivors' voices more seriously, which enabled the successful prosecution of Jeffrey Epstein, as the abuser and trafficker of teenage girls (Bryant 2020). Penalties differ when it comes to the prostitution of adults or children. In order to contextualise these legislative changes, I wish to look at the establishment of the concept of childhood in the next section.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHILDHOOD

The early changes to legislation in the UK coincide with the country's imperial heyday. This was a time of economic development, expansion and change for Great Britain. The child and thus the phase of childhood only became a philosophical concept in the 18th century, at the same time that race became a category of biological diversity and difference (Ashcroft 2001). Before the Europeans could go out of their home countries and conquer other lands, they needed to have some entity in their own countries to overpower, labelling as inferior, incapable and uncivilized. Thus, the concept of 'the child' was integral to imperialism, as Europe needed to invent the concept of a weaker, inferior being in its *own* society, in order to contextualize what it would then be doing to peoples in the so-called *new world* (Wallace 1994). The idea that growing, young,

'immature' people were fundamentally different from fully-grown, older, 'mature' people created two distinct categories: adulthood and *childhood.*

With territorial exploration and discovery came the concept of *primitivism*. This is defined as "simple and unsophisticated", showing "instinctive and unreasoning behaviour" (Oxford Dictionaries 2017). Characterised like the child, the 'savage' was seen as a being in desperate need to be helped and shown the way, by the Europeans. It was the cross-pollination of childhood and primitivism that came together as a strong legitimisation and defence of imperialism. If a group of people is *lacking* in some way then they are in *need*. The clear connection between infantility and primitivism created the need for growth, development and refining (Ashcroft 2001).

Simultaneously, the advancements from the invention of the printing press, the spreading of books and publications, created a higher demand for literacy, as well as separation between the literate and illiterate: the literate, educated adults and the illiterate, not yet educated children. This gap could only be filled with systematic education. Childhood became characterised by *learning* (Ariès 1962). Adulthood as a response became characterised by teaching. The adults put themselves in the position to educate and prepare children to be versed in their tools of communication. It must be noted that, there would have also been a high number of illiterate/uneducated adults who would have been perceived as/like children, inferior and uneducated. This can be illustrated through mainstream media, with films like *My Fair Lady* (Cukor 1964) where a working-class woman, presented as close to a hysterical child or a wild animal as possible, is transformed into a so-called *Lady* by an upper-class phonetics professor, who is also an expert in Indian dialects – a subtle imperial reference. Once the beast was tamed the professor fell in love with her, which is the moral of the story. The idea of transforming one's life and oneself from poor to rich, going from rags to riches, is an idea that took off in a former British colony, now known as the United States of America. It has been coined the *American dream* (Adams 1931), the concept of upward social mobility being at the heart of this dream.

The depiction of the colonised people as historically occupying a lower rung on the ladder leading to the higher, European civilisation, showed remarkable parallels with theories of child development that were emerging at the same time in Europe. (Nieuwenhuys 2013: 4-5).

Like they would have done to their own children, the colonisers also needed to enlighten and inform the colonised about what was acceptable and what was not, thus exercising and establishing their superiority, disseminating their values and dichotomising the adult (colonising) groups from the child (colonised) groups (Ashcroft 2001). This propagated the colonisers' culture and suppressed the colonised culture. The legitimisation of such actions stemmed from the belief that the colonised people were primitive and thus not fully formed, just like children as seen as 'becomings' and not 'beings' (Nieuwenhuys 2013).

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

There were two prominent ideas about children and childhood that gained traction in the 18th century in Europe. One of the concepts was developed by English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704). He believed that children were born as blank slates; empty and clean. The perception that there is an entity that is void, that is ready to be written on, printed on, links back to the connection to the printing press and education. This suggests that children are influenced by those around them and filled with knowledge through their environment. He used the Latin term *tabula rasa* (Locke 1689). This can be translated into the *Terra Nullius* idea, that land can be neutral and devoid of ownership and culture. The body of the sexually abused child can be framed as a virgin landscape for the adult to do with what they wish. The second main discourse was that of French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78). He believed children to be innocent and good, not neutral, blank and vacant but inherently pure of heart. This angelic heart could be corrupted and defiled by the outside world, however, and must be saved (Rousseau 1762).

Rousseau's idea may have been the more influential, as it is the one behind the predominant framing of children and childhood today. The main true belief surrounding children is that they are inherently *innocent* (Kehily & Montgomery 2003; McRobert 2019). This absolves children, at least under a certain age, of any social responsibility, be it criminal responsibility, the ability to consent to sexual activity and the ability to make any legal decision affecting their lives. Children are thus members of society with a lower status, fewer rights and less agency over their own lives, needing to depend on adults to not only thrive but to survive at all (Cook 2009). Rousseau's idea led to the establishment of a public discourse which has further led to the dominant public image of the child as weak, vulnerable, innocent and thus non-sexual (Piper 2000; McRobert 2020). This image served to advocate for social policies that protected or over-protected children, as the case may be.

The power imbalance that this creates is huge (Ennew 1986; McRobert 2019) and puts the child in a particularly problematic position in relation to the adults in their lives. The sexual abuse of adults thus differs vastly from the sexual abuse of children (by adults), not in the kinds of acts reported, but in the power dynamics between the perpetrator and the abused. The child has no legal status, even though it is globally recognised that children have rights, as seen by the widespread signing and ratification of the CRC (United Nations 1989). Even though the CRC does state that children should be treated based on their 'evolving capacities' (Article 5), legal systems often clump everyone under a certain age together in one legal space. They need a proxy, another adult, a middle man, someone to fight for them, or protect them. Those most vulnerable are those who have no adult supporting them to exercise their rights (Hallett 2016), as they are yet to become fully-fledged members of society.

INNOCENCE AND CHILDHOOD SEXUALITY

In the early 1900s, the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) stated that children have an innate sexuality and that it was part of a natural developmental

process, characterized by different phases, namely the oral stage, the anal stage, the phallic stage, followed by the latent stage and ending with the genital stage at puberty (Freud 1905/1962). However, Freud can be criticized for not considering children's intention when it comes to sexual activity in childhood (Kehily & Montgomery 2003). Even if children know that touching their genitalia gives them the sensation of pleasure, they may still be unaware of the act being 'sexual'. The adult meanings attributed to sexual activity may not be there, thus their ignorance would keep them innocent (ibid.). If innocence is based on ignorance then the protection endured by children is necessary for its maintenance (McRobert 2020).

This practice establishes a power imbalance between the informed and the uninformed, giving the adult perspective, or the *adult gaze*, an authority over the child's, leaving them as 'objects of concern' (Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers 1992: 168) and vulnerability (McRobert 2020). The adult gaze on the sexuality of the child, a form of sexuality that is seen and established as both innocent and illicit, can lead to fetishization (Schroeder 2008; Faulkner 2011; McRobert 2020). This is defined as an object that is full of contradictions, symbolising both strength and weakness, control and exoneration, eroticism and infantilism (Schroeder 2008). It is the purity of the children, socially constructed to protect them, that in turn eroticises them (Kincaid 1995), as it frames them as the *forbidden fruit,* charging their sexuality with a special allure.

A SURVIVOR PERSPECTIVE

As a survivor of CSA and an academic dealing with the theme in my writing and research, I feel it necessary to disclose my unique perspective and further elaborate on how exactly *I* understand the nature of CSA. As academics and researchers aiming at creating scientific knowledge and being as objective as possible, I believe it is also important to state the limitations of our own humanness, with our own feelings and core beliefs around the issues, as this can inform the way we are read and interpreted by others, or can shed a special light on what we wish to say. Our own biographical backgrounds and identities inform our work (Spyrou 2018), whether consciously or unconsciously.

I am a children's rights advocate who supports approaches that recognise children's own abilities to think for themselves, act in their own best interests, have original and profound thoughts about the world and have much greater capabilities than the majority of the adult population gives them credit for. I am thus not entirely convinced by the concept of *innocence* that has become synonymous with *childhood*. The risk associated with the innocence label is that children are generally framed as devoid of agency and responsibility over their actions, decisions and lives as a whole. This leads to a society perceiving children as less capable, stripping them of a sense of self-efficacy, opportunities to participate, and spaces in which they can develop their voice and be heard. Another possibility is that there has been a misunderstanding stemming from terms best used in the context of law enforcement. In strict legal terms, there is a person who is innocent (a crime victim) and a person who is guilty (a criminal/a

perpetrator). This terminology is based on the law, based on a guilty/innocent binary. The use of the words then bleeds over into the vernacular.

In this context, the colloquial victim with its largely derogatory connotation has been confused with the strictly legal distinction of the term victim (i.e. a crime victim as opposed to a criminal). (Reid 2018: 14)

A term aiming at exonerating a child of a burden in a legal sense has burdened them in a social sense. Ignorance and incapability go hand in hand with being framed as innocent, which can only harm the dignity of the child. So, what is it about the practice of CSA that makes it morally and ethically problematic, if we/I do not believe in the doctrine of childhood innocence/ignorance/inferiority and the concept of the forever damaged victim after abuse (Woodiwiss 2014)?

For me, a child's perceived innocence or lack thereof is in fact irrelevant to my interpretation of CSA and its negative effects on children. I see CSA as the dehumanisation of a child who was overpowered, humiliated, silenced or petrified into submission, whether through coercion or manipulation. I interpret it as the taking away of one's dignity. Through disrespecting them so deeply that they are left traumatised, either in the short or long-term. This trauma can lead to diverse and individual reactions, coping mechanisms and adaptations, with the traumatic memory primarily stored in the visceral body of the person (Van der Kolk 2014). This is irrespective of how one reacts to abuse. It is irrespective of how capable, smart or resilient the abused child is, the act of someone overpowering a child through sexual means violates all personal and bodily boundaries to the point where it is considered a crime. This can be perpetrated by an adult, an older child or a peer. The levels of power imbalance vary depending on the age gap (Maywald 2015) but sexual abuse also occurs amongst adults and thus the power imbalance is not the crux of why CSA is problematic. It is up to the survivor to identify as one, stating that what they experienced was abusive and a threat to their personal safety and dignity.

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL NARRATIVES

When considering contemporary notions of childhood, I would like to take a leap and link Rousseau's idea of innocence to the contemporary idea of vulnerability. If one takes the concept of vulnerability as an analytical category applied to childhood studies then one can identify which aspects of society make childhood especially vulnerable (Andresen 2014). In our contemporary conceptualisation of childhood, the phase is characterised by ideas surrounding development, learning, protection and (children's) rights (United Nations 1989). The fact that special rights are drawn up for children, once there were human rights already established (Cantwell 1992) indicates that these childhood privileges are indeed under threat and somehow endangered, needing added protection (Andresen 2014).

When talking about children's rights I would like to use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as my main tool. The CRC in itself is a non-legally binding but legally structured tool, aiming at being universal and thus inclusive to everyone under the age of 18 (United Nations 1989). It has been signed and ratified by

all countries, except the USA. The aim of ratification is to incorporate the articles into the States' constitution, thus making them legally binding. Each State has the right to have reservations regarding certain articles, that they are allowed to not assimilate into their legal systems. This treaty puts the child in the position of rights-holder, with the state and the adults involved in their lives as duty-bearers towards them. In other words, adults are held responsible for the conservation of children's rights. The contemporary so-called *rights-based approach* has come to replace the earlier charity-based model, or the so-called *needs-based approach* (see Boesen & Martin, 2007). Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including Save the Children, have been spreading awareness about this approach in the last decades (see Save the Children 2005). Rights-based approaches frame action as required and not optional. People have inalienable and automatic rights, just by being alive, and so are entitled to receive help when necessary. They are no longer seen as *deserving* the help as in the philanthropic model, but instead are *entitled* the help on account of their rights. Moreover, people are no longer framed as inactive benefactors, but instead as actively participating members of the cause (see McRobert 2020).

When it comes to CSA survivors telling their stories or identifying as someone whose rights to protection from (sexual) abuse, as stated by the CRC in Articles 19 & 34, were not afforded to them, we have to consider the overall context of this disclosure. When telling our stories, we draw on an already established narrative groundwork and connect ourselves to communal narratives, that are defined by the surrounding culture and time in history (Woodiwiss 2009; Spyrou 2018).

> Child victims of CSA are also confronted with a framework within which to make sense of their experiences that not only directs them to see themselves as helpless, passive and sexually innocent in order to avoid the risk of being held, or holding themselves, responsible for their abuse, but also tells them of ruined childhoods and lost innocence. (Woodiwiss 2014: 144)

The basic assertion of the contemporary CSA narrative is that childhood is a time of vulnerability, passivity, social impotence and sexual innocence (Woodiwiss 2014; Andresen 2014) that has been threatened or destroyed by the abuse. Thus, any child not identifying as innocent, passive, weak or damaged will be excluded from this (legitimate) CSA narrative. Survivors can be said to straddle the domain of innocence, in the sense of non-guilt, with the domain of agency and resilience. The correct ratio needs to exist between the two and once 'out' as a survivor, the experience is part of one's identity, in whatever way society chooses fit. This can have long-term consequences. The 'defilement' of the child's innocence at the time of abuse can create a permanent mark. Even after wounds heal, scars may remain. With taboo comes stigma.

STIGMA

I like to think about the long-term effects of CSA as a triangular dynamic, generated by the taboo nature of the practice. The taboo leads to those involved as stigmatised, which in turn leads to the children abused being perceived as children without a child-

hood, or 'out-of-place' (Conolly & Ennew 1996; Invernizzi 2017) in society. Stigmatisation can lead to the outsiders treating survivors badly or being completely disengaged from them, as the stigma evokes fear and anxiety (Reid 2018), which in turn isolates the survivor, not actively silencing them but instead ignoring them into invisibility. By avoiding the subject of CSA, society also *others* and dehumanises survivors of CSA, making them an *abject* of society (Kristeva 1982; Hodgetts & Ottilie 2014). Needless to say, this can have a negative effect on the survivor's coping and recovery, but also everyday life in general.

Going one step back, one can question why CSA is so hard to talk about for survivors, even confidentially. This could be, as already mentioned when discussing the intimate side of CSA, its connection to deep shame (Andresen 2018; Cunnington 2019). This means to describe the feeling beyond embarrassment and awkwardness surrounding a conversation topic. It is the crippling sense of shame surrounding the traumatic occurrence that happened to one, and what one did or did not do to stop it (Van der Kolk 2014). Shame can impede any recovery, and is the largest obstacle to getting help and recovering. Trauma therapies like eye movement desensitization reprocessing (EMDR) can have less of an impact on those who carry shame around their trauma and is less effective on those whose trauma was experienced in childhood, as opposed to in adulthood (ibid.) When one speaks of obstacles in getting help, one is not only referring to the survivors disclosing the abuse. Unfortunately, this is not the main issue, as research has found that children often disclose, but are met with disbelief, silence and insensitivity (Andresen et al. 2021).

REFRAMING CSA

Sexual abuse is inflicted upon bodies, but little is known about the effects of those traumas and modes of survival on the body itself. While scholarship on the effects of sexual abuse (Pasura et al. 2012; Sanderson 2010) has grown significantly in the past two decades and increasingly includes the voices of survivor experience (Montgomery 2001; Rubenson, Höjer, & Johansson 2005; Andresen et al. 2021), little scholarship exists on the embodiment of sexual abuse and thus the body as an archive of memory, as well as the body as a map, trailing tracks of sexual abuse. My proposed study through my PhD, furthers research into the geography and landscape of the body itself, as a landscape in its own right. Using the postcolonial theory (Said 1978/2003; Fanon 1952/2008) in my approach to this research, I draw a parallel between the colonised and the sexually abused, as well as the coloniser and the abuser, as the oppressed and overpowered parties. The culture, heritage, land and landscape of the colonised is exploited in the context of colonisation. Thus, I wish to put forth that in the process of sexual abuse, one's body, like the colonised person's land, is also invaded and transformed.

Looking specifically at my former definition of CSA as 'overpowering and disempowering of a child through sexual means', this can then apply to the overpowering and disempowering of a colonised land (macro level) or a colonial subject (micro level). Through the takeover of governance, the implementation of rules and the ex-

ploitation of the country's resources for their own gain, one can see a parallel between the exploitation of a child's body for the satisfaction or pleasure of the abuser with the exploitation of the colonised land at the profit of the coloniser. Exploitation can be likened to the act of penetrative sex, with for example, drilling the earth for oil or gas, or mining for precious materials. Non-contact activity can include the mobilisation and exploitation of people as workforce and as taxpayers, as well as the oppressing or even censoring of languages and cultures of the colonised subjects, forcing the spreading of the colonisers' language and culture instead. The influence of colonisation can be long-term and usually involves a certain cultural proliferation, with the colonial subject emulating what the colonising power expects from them (see Fanon 1952/2008). CSA can also be a formative experience, having long-term effects (Sanderson 2015), playing a role in forming one's perception of themselves, whether negatively or positively or both.

The process of colonisation has been compared to the sexual acts of penetration and insemination by Said (1978/2003). The body of the abused is akin to the colonised landmass/nation. The abuser, and then later the rescuer, are the colonisers. The abuser and the saviour occupy the same space in relation to the colonised, as they are those with the power, the expertise, the knowledge, the status. The abused is the one to be feared or reformed, the *other*, seemingly damaged, lacking, unreliable and unpredictable; not capable of 'self-government' as it were (Said 1978/2003: 228). These labels unfortunately also apply to victims/survivors of CSA, who are generally perceived as forever damaged and unbalanced (Woodiwiss 2014), and thus not capable of being fully responsible for themselves.

My suggestion would be to research the bodies of survivors, with the survivors, through a metaphor. The metaphorical idea is to frame the body as a place. The participants will be asked to draw a map of their body as place/space, while also being invited to orally engage in an interview. When framing the body as a place or a space, with a landscape of destinations, the taboo of CSA can be explored without the direct confrontation of talking about ones sexual body parts or their abuse experience, but of their corporeality as a canvas, from which to abstractly explore their everyday experience of themselves. This would assumingly be less intimate and thus less laden with shame (Andresen 2018), which would hopefully bypass any barriers that would subconsciously be there about discussing one's experience of their body. Approaching the body in terms of how one may approach a city map may be an enlightening exercise. In any city there are areas one wishes to explore, to see, to experience, to share with others, but also areas inhabited by others, or memories in corners that are dark, dangerous, taboo. By identifying the safe and unsafe areas, for example, some general characteristics of the post-abused, post-colonial body may emerge, giving us an idea of what tracks and traces abuse can leave on the body, saved in its corporeal memory.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A concluding thought could be that we do not yet know enough about CSA, in sociological and anthropological terms, to understand its nature and prevalence fully (An-

dresen 2018). Thus, we would need to find ways as a society to understand the practice of CSA, to create a language surrounding it, before we can even talk about preventing it. My approach is to take the survivor perspective, in order to understand the long-term effects of this experience in childhood, and how it affects adulthood. This can be done through the *processing* of experiences of CSA, on a personal and societal level (One In Four 2015), creating a safe space for people's stories to be heard, acknowledged and believed. This could be done through creative expression, or oral history, much like I am suggesting through my PhD research. The processing state is one that proceeds the colonial or colonised state, and is thus post-colonial.

> Processing requires clarification, documentation and (historical) analysis. It aims to identify structural, cultural and social causes of injustice and violence. As a procedure, a process of coming to terms with the past depends on clear responsibility and institutional independence. (Andresen 2018: 55)

This frames CSA as a 'public concern' (Hickle & Hallett 2016: 308) and aims at contextualising it within a wider intersection of social factors, all coming together and contributing to the effect of CSA on the individual. Thus, it is not only about the trauma of CSA but a 'cumulative/complex trauma' (ibid.) encompassing every knock-on effect or reaction, one's surrounding circumstances and personal attributes, as well as opportunity to seek or receive help.

Furthermore, framing CSA as an invasion of a body in much the same way one nation-state invades and/or land-grabs another landmass, may start the discussion around what this practice means, for all those involved but also for society as a whole, as it is a symbol of how people, relate to each other power-wise, on micro and macro levels. My research aims to understand how CSA is carried by those who experienced it through(out) adulthood and how that can impact wider sociological dynamics. This may be a simpler starting point, with the aim of understanding deeply complex power relations and constellations more fully.

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