University of Huddersfield Repository

Woodiwiss, Jo

Bridging the gap between past and present: Childhood sexual abuse, recovery and the contradictory self

Original Citation

Woodiwiss, Jo (2013) Bridging the gap between past and present: Childhood sexual abuse, recovery and the contradictory self. Women's Studies International Forum, 38. pp. 135-146. ISSN 0277-5395

This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/17380/

Jo Woodiwiss j.woodiwiss@hud.ac.uk

Bridging the gap between past and present: Childhood sexual abuse, recovery and the contradictory self, Jo Woodiwiss, Division of Criminology, Politics and Sociology, University of Huddersfield, Queensgate, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD1 3DH, England, United Kingdom

Abstract

The West's understanding of childhood sexual abuse (CSA), as totally and inevitably damaging, has become so firmly established that damage narratives have come to dominate contemporary western constructions of victims of CSA at the expense of other victim identities. Not only is evidence, in the form of symptoms, thought to be evident in the lives of adult victims even if they have no concrete memories of having been sexually abused in childhood but this also in turn has enabled unhappy or dissatisfied adultwomen living in Britain to identify 'symptoms' in their own lives and thereby construct themselves as victims of CSA with no 'concrete' memories. However, in doing so they construct a life story that lacks biographical continuity and thereby risk creating an identity that lacks validation and/or is isolated from the past. To avoid such 'autobiographical limbo' (Tietjens-Meyers, 1997) theymust find a way to connect the (new) self of their adulthood with a (damaged) self of the past.

This paper draws on a research project exploring women's engagement with the sexual abuse recovery literature and in particular the constructions of the self found in this literature. Readers are presented with contradictory formulations of the self as both 'core' and 'in the making' which enables them to identify a damaged self at the same time as it allows for healing a makeable self. In this paper I argue that, rather than being problematic, such contradictory formulations enable women to construct a self they are happy with whilst also establishing a connection with a past self that, particularly for those whose sexual abuse narratives are based on a correlation of symptoms rather than concrete memories, they may otherwise have no knowledge of.

Bridging the gap between past and present: childhood sexual abuse, recovery and the contradictory self

Introduction

The late 20th and early 21st centuries have seen the encroachment of therapeutic culture into more and more aspects of everyday and not so everyday life. This has been accompanied by a turn to the self and what Bauman calls a 'frantic search for identity' (Bauman 2001:152). However, the identities we construct do not indicate a stable, core self, unchanging through each individual's progress through life (Hall 1996). The self of late modernity is recognised within sociological thinking as a process, continually under (re)construction rather than something we have. It can be seen as a project to be worked on (Giddens 1991) and improved, reflexively constructed through narrative (Giddens 1991) to be continually reconstructed in light of new experiences, challenges and understandings. Yet, paradoxically, at the same time as we are being urged to work on this self, we are urged to embark on a journey of discovery, to uncover our true, or core self. Nowhere are these contradictory formulations of the self (Simmonds 1996) more evident than in the self-help and recovery literature of the contemporary Western world (Woodiwiss 2009).

Within sociological writing on the self, Craib (1998) argues, there is a gap in the understanding and explanation of the self that fails to say anything of how it experiences the world. Missing, he suggests, is what 'goes on 'inside' the bearer of identity or identities' (Craib 1998:4). A sociology of the self leaves us with 'a choice of being either a 'plurality' or 'assembly' of parts or a 'more or less unitary' self' (Craib 1998:5) but, drawing on Mead (1934) he asks why can we not be both at the same time, both the 'I' and the 'Me' (Craib 1998). We need to look not just at the constructed or reflexively created self but also at the processes through which this self is constructed. The contradictory self, both static and in the making, that populates much of the self-help and recovery literature (including that aimed at adult victims of childhood sexual abuse or CSA) may offer a way to fill this gap – to acknowledge not just the constructed self but also who or what it is doing this constructing.

In order to understand the significance of these different concepts of the self in the sexual abuse recovery/healing literature for re/constructing the self it is important to understand how this literature presents CSA. Sexual abuse in childhood has been constructed as so inevitably and overwhelmingly damaging that its effects are thought to be identifiable in the lives of adult victims – whether or not they have concrete or recall memories of such abuse (Woodiwiss 2009). This allows for 'symptoms' to be identified in the lives of adult victims and these 'symptoms', which have been redefined as 'memories' and which I have termed 'alternative memories' (Woodiwiss 2009, 2010), to then be correlated with sexual abuse in childhood,

thereby removing the necessity for 'concrete memories' and allowing those who are unhappy or dissatisfied with their lives to identify themselves as victims of CSA through identifying the 'symptoms' of such abuse in their adult lives. However, these 'symptoms' are not equally available to men and women but are themselves gendered. Not only are different aspects of women's and men's lives identified as problematic but these symptom lists also prescribe what is 'normal' and acceptable for women and men. These 'symptoms' are often presented in the form of checklists which readers are encouraged to tick. Those aimed at women include questions such as the following taken from *The Courage to Heal* (Bass and Davis 1988:35)*:* Are you able to enjoy feeling good? Do you feel unable to protect yourself in dangerous situations? Have you ever experienced repeated victimization as an adult? Do you have trouble feeling motivated? Can you accomplish things you set out to achieve? Do you feel you have to be perfect? These 'symptoms' can also be found in other CSA recovery texts. Parks, for example, suggests those sexually abused in childhood are 'guilt ridden, self-sabotaging, sexually dysfunctioning on-going victims' (Parks 1990:13), whilst Herman believes they are at 'great risk of repeated victimization' and find it 'difficult to form conscious and accurate assessments of danger' (Herman 1992:111), and Blume includes depression, phobias, low self-esteem, fear of the dark, wearing baggy clothes, and a pattern of ambivalent or intensely conflictive relationships in the list of 'symptoms' (Blume 1990). These checklists are 'general enough to include everybody' (Tavris 1991:323) can apply to most women at some point in their lives whether or not they have been abused in childhood (Woodiwiss 2009, 2010, Haaken 1999, Showalter 1997, Tavris 1991). They also fail to acknowledge the contexts of women's lives which can provide alternative understandings for women's unhappiness and dissatisfaction. Nor do they recognise the 'other side' of being a victim which demonstrates the 'active and positive ways in which women resist, cope and survive' (Kelly 1988:163), or the significance of social support to women's and children's ability to do so.

Much of the above recovery literature claims to be gender neutral but is premised on gendered norms of behaviour (with men expected to be strong, powerful and independent and women to be passive, emotional and dependent). This literature 'gives a clear story of what a good/normal woman should be' (Warner 1996:47), constructs women who deviate from this story as problematic (Woodiwiss 2009, Tavris 1992) and constructs the victim of sexual abuse as both long suffering (Lamb 1999) and 'other' (O'Dell 2003, Haaken 1998b, Reavey 2003). It is not only women who are unhappy or disaffected with their lives who could be seen to carry evidence of past trauma. Deviation from prescribed norms of 'good' and 'normal' womanhood can also be seen as evidence of abuse, as this literature also encourages women to identify such deviation as problematic and look inward for both its cause and solution. As this suggests, how women and men engage with narratives of CSA based on the 'harm story' (O'Dell 2003), is also gendered as it is deviation from prescribed gender norms, rather than

just a particular set of 'symptoms', that helps to identify victims. The messages promoting ideals of gendered behaviour are not limited to the recovery literature but reinforced in many cultural texts currently in circulation such as magazines, film and television programmes and contemporary literature (Woodiwiss 2009, 2010), and therefore form part of the background against which women engage with the recovery literature.

For those who engage narratives of CSA, concrete memories are not necessary to (re)write a life story within a narrative framework of CSA, but for those who have no concrete memories this lack may create a gap between the past and the present and result in 'autobiographical limbo' (Tietjens-Meyers 1997) and ontological insecurity. A fierce debate has raged over the 'truth' or 'falsity' of recovered memories of CSA and whilst the 'recovered memory wars' form part of the background to this paper the intention here is not to engage directly in those debates. Rather the aim of this paper is to explore sociologically women's engagement with narratives of CSA and the self-help / CSA recovery literature and in particular to look at how they negotiated the different conceptions of the self found in this literature. I argue that drawing on the contradictory formulations of the self as both core and makeable found in self help literature (Simonds 1992, 1996), can help to bridge this gap and (re)connect the self of the past with that of the present. To do so I explore the experiences of sixteen women living in Britain who had at some point self-identified as a victim of CSA and examine their engagement with the contradictory self presented in self - help literature aimed at adult victims of CSA (and also used by therapists in this field).

I begin with a brief look at the self of self-help/self-improvement literature before looking specifically at the self-help literature aimed at adult victims of CSA. Within this I focus on the literature the participants identified as having read (including *The Courage to Heal* by Bass and Davis 1988, 2008; *Secret Survivors* by Blume 1990; *From Surviving to Thriving* by Dinsmore 1991; *Trauma and Recovery* by Herman 1992, and *Rescuing the Inner Child* by Parks 1990 - some of which, although now quite old, has been reprinted many times). I then go on to explore participants' understandings of and engagement with the different formulations of the self they encountered within this literature. All the participants did, at some point, identify themselves as a victim of CSA, although the majority had no concrete memories of sexual abuse, but constructed their victim identity through correlating 'symptom' with CSA. At the time of the research five women had come to reject their memories as false and identified themselves as victims of false memory syndrome (FMS). However, of these only two completely rejected the idea that they had been sexually abused. The remaining three engaged more critically with FMS and rejected only that aspect of their 'memories' that constructed their fathers as the perpetrators. The degree to which these women had (confidence in their) memories is, I argue, significant to their engagement with the different formulations of the self. Those without concrete memories were more reliant on the idea of a

damaged core self as this self provided their only evidence of abuse and therefore their only connection to an (abused) child self. This in turn may have created an imperative for them to also engage with a makeable self as it was through this self that they would be able to move beyond the self as damaged. Also of significance here was the extent to which the self deviated from acceptable norms of healthy womanhood as this in turn reinforced the construction of a damaged and therefore abused self in need of 'healing'.

Throughout the paper I refer to 'self-identified victims' whether of CSA or FMS. This is not because I wish to cast doubt on their victim identities or adopt an uncritical acceptance of either recovered memories or false memory syndrome. The intention is not to judge their identities or the narratives on which they were based, but rather to move beyond such 'doubt' and start from the basis that their memories, their life stories and their identities were 'true' to the women who participated in the research on which this paper is based, whilst recognising that these were constructed within particular narrative frameworks (of CSA and FMS) that helped (or directed) them to explain present unhappiness and plan for the future. Within the recovered memory wars the women whose stories are at the centre of the debate are constructed as passive victims either of CSA or of FMS and misguided therapists (Woodiwiss 2009). Both narrative frameworks offer women a way to make sense of their lives and plan for the future and the women who participated in this research played an active part in constructing their own narratives and identities, albeit within the constraints of currently circulating stories. This is not to argue that the stories women told within these frameworks were 'true' or 'false', or to suggest that their use was unproblematic, and indeed I would argue in support of other feminist writers that both narrative frameworks have their limitations and problems.

The 'harm story' of CSA (O'Dell 2003), together with its therapeutic corollary the 'healing discourse' (Davies 1995) has, particularly within the context of self-help, served to depoliticise and individualise violence against women and girls (Woodiwiss 2009, Armstrong 1994, Kelly 1988, 1996, Kitzinger 2010) and victims have been 'psycho-pathologised (Brown and Burmam 1997) and constructed as overwhelmingly and inevitably damaged (Woodiwiss 2009) within which future unhappiness, dissatisfaction and abuse can be seen as a result of a failure to heal rather than the result of external factors (Woodiwiss 2009, Kelly 1988). I also recognise that FMS (which adheres to the harm story for 'real' victims) has been used, and taken up by the media, to silence women's and children's stories of sexual violence. However, I would argue that we should not let this prevent us from engaging critically with those discourses that have obscured early feminist analysis of CSA (Armstrong 1994, Kitzinger 2010) and which silence those women whose stories and identities deviate from the new victim identity promoted in the harm story. As I argue elsewhere (Woodiwiss 2009), FMS can be seen as an alternative abuse narrative which enables those who wish to reject their CSA narrative

(possibly because it has not ultimately led to a happier and more successful life) to rewrite their life story (and in some cases withdraw their accusations) and possibly reconnect with those they have become isolated from. Claiming to be a victim of FMS does not necessarily mean one has not been sexually abused – it may simply reflect the use of an alternative narrative framework within which to make sense of one's life, reconnect with past relationships and/or plan for the future (particularly, but not only, in the absence of concrete memories).

Contradictory formulations of the self – the self of self-help literature

At the beginning of the 21st century in the Western world the self is located within a therapeutic culture (Furedi 2004, Woodiwiss 2008, 2009) and bombarded with advice on how to be a better, happier, authentic self together with warnings of what might happen if this advice is not followed (Woodiwiss 2008, 2009). For Giddens, therapy and the reflexive self are intricately linked. Therapy, he suggests, is a secular version of the confessional, 'not simply a means of coping with novel anxieties, but an expression of the reflexivity of the self' (Giddens 1991:34). This reflexive self is, like the self of pop psychology and recovery, an all-powerful self which is seen to have real power over itself and its future. The watchword of therapy is 'recover or repeat' (Giddens 1991:79) and likewise, a central theme of much self-help literature is the idea that the reader is damaged (Simonds 1996) and needs to recover and heal. This 'recovery' is seen to involve personal rather than political change (Plummer 1995, Showalter 1997, Simonds 1992, Woodiwiss 2007, 2009), and victims are warned that without 'recovery' they are likely to be an ongoing victim or even an abuser (or someone who facilitates the abuse of others). In embarking on a process of 'recovery' the reader is told she can release her inner power to become better, stronger, happier and more powerful. Therapy, it is argued:

> Can help us reach beneath our conditioning to contact the power locked in ourselves (Ernst and Goodison 1981:4)

There is a relentless optimism in much of this literature which has as its selling point the promise of a new and better self. However, this is accompanied by an imperative that suggests a failure to embark on this project of the self will lead to a catalogue of ills, from unhappiness and dissatisfaction to victimisation and self-sabotage (see for example Bass and Davis 1988, 2008, Blume 1990, Parks 1990). This literature promotes itself as a means of 'self creation', 'damage control' and 'revival' whilst at the same time promising to reveal the 'true' self (Simonds 1996). Readers are encouraged to find their true, powerful, inner self, which may be buried under layers of trauma and abuse but which remains untouched by that abuse (see for example Ernst and Goodison 1981). At the same time they are told that, through hard work and dedication, they can become the selves they want, or even should, have been - an individual self not influenced by external factors or constraints. They can become who they

'truly' are (see for example Ainscough and Toon 1993). This inner or core self, whilst essentialist in conception, is portrayed in the self-help literature as

> 'Realized through a construction process based on instruction by therapeutic experts, hard work and interactive expression' (Simonds 1996:16)

This self also featured in the CSA recovery literature engaged with by the women who participated in the research on which this paper is based. Whether or not they have concrete memories, women must first accept they have been damaged, and for some this damaged self is their only evidence of sexual abuse and their only connection between a past self, abused in childhood, and a present adult self. Having identified their damaged selves they can begin the process of 'healing' and leaving the damaged self behind. However, as Kelly (1988) has argued of traditional responses to sexual violence (which pose particular problems for those whose narratives are based on identifying a damaged self), 'coping' and 'recovery' are not measured according to the active ways that women resist and survive or the lessons they might learn but are measured according to a 'return to normal functioning' – a return to a pre abused or undamaged self, in which the self is not said to be 'healed' but rather the 'effects' of abuse on the self are said to be removed.'

This assumes such a return to be both desirable and possible, but when this is applied to adult victims of CSA it may not be possible to locate a time before the abuse took place, and for those whose life story is based on recovered memories to even know when that time was. Instead of attempting to return to what was the aim, by returning to a true self, is to start again - to live a life that would (and should) have been, if their child self had not been abused:

> The self that's been hiding all these years, the unique and loving person you were meant to be. Together, we'll help free that person so that your life can finally be your own (Forward 1989:12)

Maintaining the unrelenting optimism found in this literature writers rely on promoting a concept of the self which requires work on uncovering a core self together with work on a self becoming:

> Talking about your sexual abuse, understanding and accepting what really happened and breaking free from the person you are underneath…you can find your true self and live your life as you want to (Ainscough and Toon 1993:243)

However, readers must negotiate their own path through this literature as other messages are also presented, and they are told that they cannot escape the past or leave it completely behind:

> There is no such thing as absolute healing. You never erase your history (Bass and Davis 1988:167)

Whilst it is not always clear what the writers mean by the self, Whitfield does provide some clarity:

> One way to view the recovery process is to compare it with peeling away the layers of an onion. Each layer is a manifestation and consequence of the false self and our attachment to it. And each layer surrounds, constricts and imprisons our true self (Whitfield 1995:257-8)

The layers of this onion are not the abuse itself but the consequences of the abuse and the aim of therapy is to remove them:

> Underneath all these layers, at the core of our being, lies the goal of recovery and our true identity: our True Self (Whitfield 1995:259)

Herman also believes that the effects of abuse can be removed, if the victim chooses to do so. However, she does also acknowledge that the experience itself may contain an element that might be of value to the victim:

> Her task now is to become the person she wants to be. In the process she draws on those aspects of herself that she most values from the time before the trauma, from the experience of the trauma itself, and from the period of recovery. Integrating all of these elements, she creates a new self, both ideally and in actuality (Herman 1992:196)

Herman's advice allows for a reflexive self and helps to maintain some continuity in the readers own biographical narrative as the reader is encouraged to create a new self drawing on both the past and the present. It is this contradiction between a core abused self and a self in the making that offered the possibility of identifying or connecting with a damaged or abused self (who they may or may not remember but who could be seen to influence their adult lives) without tying them to this damaged self but allowing for the possibility of 'healing'

or moving on. In the remainder of this paper I will explore the extent to which the women in my research engaged with this contradictory self or found it useful.

The research: methods and participants

This paper draws on the findings from a research project exploring women's engagement with CSA recovery literature. Sixteen women participated in the research of whom the majority had no recall memories or concrete knowledge of having been sexually abused. Five identified themselves as having continuous, concrete memories of CSA, six believed they had recovered memories of CSA (with all but one of these based entirely on 'alternative memories' – or perceived 'symptoms' redefined as 'memories'), and five believed they had recovered false memories of CSA and were victims of false memory syndrome (FMS). Of the five who believed they had recovered false memories, three did not reject entirely the idea that they had been sexually abused in childhood, only that the perpetrators were their fathers. However, the research was not concerned with establishing the 'truth' or 'falsity' of women's claims but took as its starting point that women's memories and the narratives they told were 'true' to them, whilst recognising that, like all of us, they are constrained by the stories that can be told (Woodiwiss 2008, 2009 Bauman 2001, Gergen 1994, Plummer 1995, 2001).

The research was conducted, in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the British Sociological Association, in the United Kingdom where all the participants were living at the time. The women were contacted through an article describing the research and calling for participants which appeared in the newsletter of two organisations: one supporting self identified victims of CSA, and one supporting those who identified as victims of false memory syndrome. The latter resulted in few responses and the organisation sent an additional letter to female members on my behalf. All the names in this paper are pseudonyms. The women's experiences, whether of 'healing' and 'recovery' or recovering false memories, occurred in Britain but they were not all British. Ten women were white British, two were British Asian, two were white European, one was non European of mixed heritage, and one was 'other'. The majority were in their thirties (seven) or forties (six) with one women in her late fifties and two in their early sixties. Eleven identified themselves as heterosexual, two as heterosexual with some bisexuality, one as bisexual, one as a lesbian and one as 'gone off men'. When asked about their educational qualifications four had O levels, one had A levels or equivalent, one had NVQs, one was a mature student, one had a professional qualification and seven had a first degree or higher.

The aim of this research was to explore women's engagement with the CSA recovery literature in the process of making sense of their lives, (re)constructing their life stories, and planning for a brighter future. The research was conducted within a feminist social

constructionist framework. The intention was not to focus on women's experiences or memories of CSA (and indeed the majority of the women had no concrete memories of abuse). I therefore chose a two-stage approach with a questionnaire followed by either an interview or written account. The questionnaire was designed to establish some background information including, if known, women's age, sexuality, the time and place they believed the abuse took place, who had abused them, and what self-help and recovery literature they had engaged with. This enabled women's abuse histories to be taken as given, leaving the second stage to focus on women's engagement with the process of 'healing' and 'recovery'. In this stage participants were given the choice of being interviewed (11) or providing a written account (5) (based on the same semi structured interview questions).

The interviews lasted between two and six hours (of which one went over two sessions) with the majority conducted in participants' own homes but with one conducted at a University office. They were all conducted by the author, tape-recorded, and later transcribed. The written accounts were conducted at a time and place of the participants choosing and posted to the researcher. Once the interview transcripts and written accounts were collected they were subjected to thematic analysis. All the transcripts and written accounts were read multiple times to identify principle themes and particular areas of interest. A further re-reading and revision of the themes resulted in a number of the themes being subsumed into larger themes or categories. This reflexive process allowed me to develop themes by immersing myself in the data through reading and re-reading the material rather than by indexing the text with coding software. This produced three overarching categories or mega themes: 'Narratives' which included the sub themes 'making sense', 'symptoms', 'discourses and understandings of CSA'; 'Knowledge and the inner child' which included the sub themes 'the inner child', 'multiple and split personalities' and 'alternative memories'; 'Healing and the self' which included the sub themes 'identity', 'the self' and 'healing and moving on'. It is that material relating to the self that is the subject of this paper, and therefore only those aspects of women's stories that relate to this area are included in this paper.

Engaging with the self: Findings/discussion

We may understand or conceptualise it differently, but a sense of self, of who we are, is important to how we are and what we do in the world. For most of us, this self who populates our adult lives has some observable connection with the self who populated our childhoods, and indeed the lack of an observable connection may result in a fracture in one's biographical narrative and a resulting lack of ontological security. In this next section I look at how some women, including those who lacked memories and therefore could not see a connection between their adult and child selves, engaged with the contradictory formulations of the self found in much of the CSA recovery literature, the majority of whom articulated a sense of self

or 'I ness' (Scott 2001), but some of whom had at times lost sight of this self. Indeed, their involvement with the CSA recovery literature is itself illustrative of an uncertainty or dissatisfaction with who they were and how they saw themselves. For those who participated in this research but who did not draw on continuous memories, their engagement with contradictory formulations of the self enabled them to make or establish connections between a past (abused, child) self and a present (adult) self (in need of 'healing') that they might otherwise have been unable to do.

Working with a core self

Self-identity is 'the self as reflexively understood by the person, in terms of her or his biography' (Giddens 1991: 53). The self, argues Giddens, is 'not something that is just given...but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual' (Giddens 1991: 52). Biography is central to Gidden's reflexive self and is also important for those who, with no concrete memories to reflect upon, attempt to establish and sustain some continuity for the self as it is 'routinely created and sustained'. (Re)constructing a biography within a narrative framework of CSA required women to engage with, although not necessarily adopt, the idea of a core self. This was a self that could be returned to and, through removing the effects of abuse, freed to become the person she would have been. Not all participants accepted such a core self untouched by abuse and, of those who did, not all embraced such a formulation uncritically or even unambiguously. As I go on to show, of those who identified a core self not all accepted that this core was untouched by abuse. However, for those who did, this provided a connection to an abused (childhood) self – a self that might not otherwise be connected to their adult self.

The majority of those who participated in this research had no concrete memories of having been sexually abused, and this lack of memories was itself linked to the very young age at which they believed they were abused. With no memories on which to reflect, the idea of a core self who could be returned to did provide a connection to their abused child self and some continuity to their life story, which might otherwise have been lacking. The young age at which they believed they were abused also helped some women negotiate the contradictory selves that were both makeable and core, as they identified a core self but believed it was not fully formed before a certain age. Fiona, for example, recognised a core self which she identified as a constant presence through her life but, partly because of the young age at which she believed she had been abused, she did not believe this core was untouched by abuse:

> My core self was abused. My concept of myself, the abuse happened so young to me that my self wasn't formed at the time that was happening so as I grew up my self had been abused (Fiona)

Whilst Fiona accepted the idea of a core self, which connected her adult life to her childhood, she did not believe this core was static and could be returned to undamaged, but thought it was influenced by life events in both childhood and adulthood. It is perhaps the idea of a connection, provided by the concept of a core self, between past and present, or even future, selves that was most important to women, whether through an abused or 'damaged' part of themselves or through some inner light that remains untouched:

> It's part of who I am, I can't separate myself from it (Fiona)

> You have a flame or a light inside you and that never goes out but through stages of life which is the inner self it gets small but it's still there and with mine it's just grown (Sarah)

This self can, as Sarah suggests, be one which:

> Has always been there but it just needed to come out and grow (Sarah)

The idea of a 'true' self was sometimes linked with this core self and could be contrasted with a false self, which a number of women found useful. This false self, believed by some to exert an unhealthy influence over the adult woman, was also envisaged as a masquerade or mask, which might conceal or protect the true self. It could also be seen as an external influence outside the individual's control. Although women engaged with the concept of a false self in different ways it was an idea that enabled them to connect an abused (child) self (which might be unremembered or concealed) with a (core or true) adult self, and was therefore particularly useful for those who had no concrete knowledge or memories of having been abused. This concealed self could function like the 'inner child' of the recovery literature who is said to have 'split' at the time of the abuse and to hold knowledge of that abuse (Bass and Davis 1988, 2008, Fredrickson 1992, Herman 1992). As 'time was frozen' (Dinsmore 1991:59) at the point of abuse, this inner child can be returned to ask what happened. The false self could be held responsible for concealing a true self, but this concealment could also be embraced by the adult self as it provided a means of protection or withdrawal from the outside world much like the protective layers of an onion identified by Whitfield (1995) or the protective, false self identified by Winnicot (1965). Sarah used the idea of a true self constructed in opposition to a false self to embrace the self she was happy with (becoming) and to distance this self from the self she had been and who she was not happy with. Her false self was, Sarah thought, a mask hiding her true self which had been locked away because of the abuse, resulting in her:

> Living in a sort of fictional, masked world for so many years (Sarah)

This was also a world from which her true self had ultimately 'come through' and in doing so provided a connection between her past and present selves that enabled Sarah to create and sustain her biographical narrative and a degree of ontological security.

Whilst the false self might continue to adulthood it might also be restricted to childhood where it could be seen to have played a valuable role but to have outgrown its usefulness:

> In order to survive in our dysfunctional families we form a "false self" which serves our growth until there comes a time when this self becomes restrictive and we begin a journey to a "self" that is more reflective of our "true self" or soul (Jenny)

Within a discourse that constructs women who still need to heal as childlike and in need of re-parenting, Jenny's understanding could also be applied to adult women still in the process of 'healing' and 'recovery'.

Not all women conceptualised their true self in the same way but the idea of seeking, finding or uncovering a true self was important to a number of women, within which we can recognise a 'process of internal negotiation' (Craib 1998). For some, like Beccy, this true self was a constant presence, albeit one she was not always aware of:

> I have a true self that is me. There is basically three things: there's my body, my mind and my soul/spirit. My true self is my soul/spirit is all I maybe am and then I am in this body which is me as well and then there's my mind ... and my mind most of the time actually is the thing that controls my body and there's this thing that controls my true self. Kind of like being shut out, my true self is being shut out of me because of things that are in my mind (Beccy)

Only Beccy conceptualised her true self as her soul, which she believed was shut out by her mind, but this was an understanding that fitted with the idea of a mask concealing or shutting out the true or core self. It was also a conceptualisation that allowed some role for the adult Beccy – it was her mind (albeit a mind that had had things done to it), itself linked to the idea of a mask, that was doing the shutting out. Beccy's relationship with her self illustrates the role and the value of different conceptualisations, or aspects, of the self. We can not only see Beccy's constructed self but also who is doing the constructing – an example of the internal negotiation identified by Craib (1998).

Whatever their reasons for engaging with the CSA recovery literature, the desire to heal and construct a healthier happier self ready to face the future was central. For many this was

linked to the idea of a life interrupted - a life that should have been lived and which, through 'healing' and 'recovery', could be returned to. This also fits with traditional responses to sexual violence, whereby 'recovery' is measured by the degree to which victims have been able to return to 'normal' and a pre existing, and therefore, undamaged self. As adult victims of CSA may not be able to locate a time prior to the abuse, instead of returning to what was, they are encouraged to return to a 'true' or 'core self'. The idea of an interruption in their lives (and therefore also the self) allows for the fluidity of a core self – a self halted by abuse in the past but returned to in the present to 'grow up' to be the woman that should have been. This rediscovered life was therefore seen to involve a process of becoming in which women could 'become' the self they would, or should, have been – a (core or true) self that could be returned to and, without the effects of abuse, helped to heal and grow, leaving the abuse and the abused part of the core self behind.   Whilst abuse might have interrupted the self becoming, 'healing' enabled a return or reconnection with that self:

> What I do with my life now is the person that deep down I always felt I could be... I feel the core of me is the person that put that stuff to one side and continuing to be that person that I want to be. But I think that's always been inside me (Julie)

This was also an understanding that gave a certain imperative to women's engagement with this literature. Together with the 'implicit memories of trauma [that] have a life of their own' (Hovdestad and Kristiansen1996:43), this self was seen to be waiting to surface, although the adult woman was not entirely responsible for the emergence of this self and who/what she was becoming. This process of becoming could also be linked with the idea of re-parenting or starting again:

> Building a relationship with myself, slowly, slowly releasing pain and trauma, being re-parented in a healthy way (Jenny)

Women's conceptualisations of the self were not only influenced by their engagement with the recovery literature and the desire to heal but also informed by the lives they wanted to live, or not live, and the kind of self, or selves, they wanted to be. Julie, for example, accepted the idea of a core self, but was also clear that who she was or would become was down to her. Her formulation of the self and her understanding of own self was linked to external factors such as blame, responsibility and the importance of breaking what she understood to be a 'cycle of abuse', something which she believed she had done but her brother (who had been abused and went on to abuse others) had not. The theory of a 'cycle of abuse' promoted in some recovery literature can be particularly damaging for victims of abuse. Not only does it individualise the issue and fail to explain why the majority of perpetrators are men and victims women, it also identifies abuse as the cause of (future) abuse and thereby constructs victims

as potential abusers (Armstrong 1994, Kelly 1996). However, it does form the background against which victims construct their identities. Whilst some women rejected this argument, seeing it as 'insulting' and potentially 'damaging' (Emma) or a 'slap in the face' (Fiona) other women did draw on it. For some it offered an explanation for why they were abused that at least to some extent helped to mediate the role of their abusers, who they may still have loved:

> I believe 100 per cent of people who sexually abuse children have been abused in some way (Beccy)

Julie accepted the idea of a cycle of abuse and therefore needed a way to construct and maintain a non abusing self whilst distancing her own self from the (abusive) self of her brother, and taking credit for the work she did in 'healing' her self. Drawing on a construction of the abused self found in the recovery literature as one who was likely to be an abusive self, Julie did not blame herself or her brother for having been abused, but did blame her brother for not making the choice to heal (his self) that she had made and this, she believed, made him responsible for the abuse he perpetrated on others. Julie's idea of the self was therefore intricately linked with the process of constructing a self she was both happy with and responsible for:

> Now I've got this knowledge of myself and my childhood, I then wasn't prepared to be the person that I was (Julie)

An abusive childhood might cause damage but through 'healing' Julie was becoming:

> The person that I really want to be (Julie)

Engaging with a core self might also be linked to the degree to which women were comfortable with and had confidence in who they were. For women who lacked confidence or were unhappy with who they were, the idea of a core or real self allowed for the possibility of discarding their present self and returning to or seeking out a 'real' self. In doing so they had to start again to rebuild their selves, and the prospect of rebuilding or starting again might itself have been tempting.

Questioning the self

Julie was one of the few participants who entered adulthood with concrete memories of having been sexually abused, and therefore also memories of an abused child self. The majority of women had no such memories but had uncovered 'evidence' which they believed demonstrated a history of abuse through the effect it had had on their self and the life that self

was living. Whilst they could construct a biography based on this evidence it was one which lacked detail and reflexive engagement, and therefore the self who inhabited this life was not a reflexively constructed self. Of those whose narrative was based on such evidence, five came to reject the memories on which these narratives were based, and therefore also the narratives (or at least the details) themselves. Drawing instead on a narrative framework of false memory syndrome (FMS), they were able to retract their memories and, in rewriting their biographies, reconstruct themselves as victims of false memory syndrome. In doing so they were able to create a new life story within which they attempted to sustain a recovered sense of self. However, in questioning their memories and doubting their past life they also came to doubt the self who had lived (and was living) that life and such a fracture in their biographical narratives and ontological security was not easily overcome. For three of the participants, who did not completely reject the idea that they had been sexually abused, this was attempted through a more critical engagement with FMS.

As Rose (1989) suggests, during their 'passage through therapy' women become 'attached to the versions of themselves they have been led to produce' (Rose 1989:251). Whilst I am not suggesting the women had been 'led to produce' their life stories, the majority did become attached to the versions of themselves that emerged or were emerging through their engagement with the CSA recovery literature, although this attachment was less clear for those who doubted their memories. For the majority of participants who were confident in their life stories, their experiences of 'recovery', 'healing' and finding (out) who they were had a positive outcome but those who believed they had recovered false memories of CSA were left with uncertainties. Their uncertainty related not just to what happened to them but also therefore to who they were and all five had trouble maintaining a connection between the self of their adult lives and the (abused) self of their childhoods. They had constructed a life story based on having been sexually abused by their fathers but in rejecting at least some element of this story, they had also created a tear in the biographical narratives that had connected their adult selves with their childhood selves. However, as discussed below, some did find a way to connect their adult selves with an (abused) past self, albeit a self from a previous life.

The process of recovering, and later rejecting as false, memories of CSA had challenged not only the confidence women had in all their memories, but also their sense of self, of who they were, and what had informed who they had become or were becoming. This doubt was not restricted to women's memories of abuse but to their sense of who they were, and other aspects of their lives, and had created a fissure in their biographical narratives that threatened to fracture their sense of identity. It may be such a fracture that is evident in Rae's response to a question about the effects of FMS on her:

> But whether it's altered me as a person or not I don't really know because I don't know…I honestly don't know because I've got nobody to tell me if I'm any different now (Rae)

We all present a self to the outside world, and through the narratives we tell, we also present this self to ourselves, but this self is influenced by what we see reflected back to us, and, as discussed above, that reflection is informed or constrained by gender. Rae's lack of confidence in her self illustrates the importance of others both to an individual's sense of self and who that self might be. However, there were times in Rae's life when she took this 'looking glass self' (Cooley 1902) to such an extreme that she did not have a sense of self, at least one that was separate from a self articulated or reflected back by others. Rae had been attached to the version of herself she had produced in her sexual abuse narrative and in rejecting aspects of her memories Rae had also rejected aspects of her (damaged) child self and the adult self she (thought) she had become. Whilst she had replaced one damage narrative (based on CSA) with another (based on FMS) she was left with a story and a self that she lacked confidence in. As Berger argues self and identity are 'bestowed in acts of social recognition. We become that which we are addressed' (Berger 1963:99). It may be that Rae was able to see a reflection of herself in the FMS recovery literature but it was arguably still a self that needed social recognition. Such uncertainty around a sense of self was also present for Hazel who linked a lack of confidence in her memories to a lack of confidence in herself:

> I lost a lot of confidence; I lost an awful lot of confidence in myself. I don't trust my memories anymore. I do not trust my memories. I can't remember, I can't remember names anymore, people's names. I can't remember places, I can't remember (Hazel)

Whether they had continuous or recovered memories, confidence in their memories was significant for women to have a secure sense of self. It was memories that connected them to the past, and it was a connection to the past that enabled them to construct an identity or self that had a continuity throughout their life. It was this continuity, this constant presence, that was significant to women's self-confidence and sense of well-being. Those who rejected their memories lost this connection and it maybe that maintaining a victim identity (of FMS instead of CSA) enabled them to maintain some biographical continuity at the same time as they rejected part of their biographies.

Rae's lack of confidence in herself surfaced when she came to doubt her memories of abuse and the self who had been informed by those memories. When she later visited a therapist to help her deal with what she understood to be false memory syndrome (FMS) the therapist did not attempt to establish the truth or falsity of Rae's memories:

> I remember her saying that erm, what we need to restore in you is your original image of yourself and that's what she worked on (Rae)

The importance for Rae was in connecting the self she had become to the self she recognised herself to have been, and thereby re-establishing some biographical continuity. This restored self had not been sexually abused by her father, although it might have been abused by someone else, a possibility she wondered about and which provided some validation of the otherwise 'false' (in the sense of not abused in the way she previously believed) self that she had constructed. Perhaps reflecting Rae's continuing uncertainty, this newly restored self had an unreal quality to it. It was a self Rae did not fully believe in and which needed someone else's help to construct or visualize. It was also a self that she was continually trying to make sense of but which she had trouble connecting to her child self, in part because she was unsure what had happened to that child self. Rae was not alone in this, and like Pat, she constructed (or connected with) a different self: a self who was abused not in this life but in a previous one. The idea of a previous life not only established and maintained biographical continuity, and preserved a connection with a damaged self, but also helped them explain how they had uncovered 'false' knowledge of CSA. Their memories could be seen as true of a previous life but not true of their present life. However, as this was an understanding not easily validated, so too was their sense of self.

This idea of a lost, fragmented or shattered self was one that featured in several of the participants' accounts. This self was also linked to women's confidence as she represented falling apart, losing touch, or a lack of confidence with their place in the world. However, for the majority of women this was a temporary state of being – a consequence or symptom of their abuse which they thought could be addressed through 'healing' and 'recovery'. Although in the recovery literature the idea of fragmentation and becoming whole was often linked to an inner child (said to have 'split' at the time of the abuse), there was not such a clear connection in the accounts of those who participated in this study. Becoming whole was linked with finding the true self, or rebuilding a shattered self, rather than with integrating an inner child. Women used the ideas promoted in the literature but they did not necessarily employ them in the same way or attach the same meanings to them. Whilst some believed in a self that could be returned to, this was rejected by others.

Some women, talking about a time before they began to recover or heal, made reference to a shattered or fragmented self. Whilst not necessarily a lost self, it might be a self who felt lost:

> I think I was pretty much out of touch with feelings and had no real sense of self or emotional maturity (Jenny)

> Lots of my life was disintegrating and it was like having a pane of glass that had been shattered and I was left with a big empty void and then starting to rebuild it bit by bit... (Angela)

This experience of falling apart contained within it the possibility of liberation in that it offered women the possibility of starting again to build a (new) self, a self they were happy with and who might, like the self of the self-help and recovery literature, be stronger and more powerful. However, this might be a fragile self if it was not constructed through a reflexive process which drew on the past activities of, and/or connected with factors external to, the individual. Falling apart might also be experienced as frightening:

> Everything that I had for comfort and security seemed to be gone and I didn't know who I was anymore... my personality felt like it was a pack of cards that had been thrown up into the air and I was all over the place. I didn't know who I was, what I liked, what I didn't like, what I wanted to do, what my strengths and weaknesses were. Everything was shattered. Going to that counselling every week held me together (Fiona)

Fiona believed it was counselling that helped her maintain a sense of self and it may be that her counsellor reflected a self back to Fiona that she was able to use to maintain some continuity, and therefore sense of belonging and identity. There is also a suggestion in Fiona's account that the self that was 'held together' was a core self – a self waiting to be recovered or restored to its rightful place. This understanding provided Fiona with a degree of security: Fiona might not have known who she was or what she liked but she did at least have a continual self, which connected her adult self with the self from her childhood. Whilst this was important to Fiona who had no memories of abuse in childhood, the experience of identifying a shattered self, a self that had fallen apart and needed putting back together, was also shared by women who had continuous, concrete memories. In responding to or dealing with a shattered self women negotiated their own path through the contradictory selves of the recovery literature: they could engage with both a core or true self and a self in the making. 'Healing' a shattered self enabled women to put themselves back together, using elements of a pre existing or core self, but also play an active role in constructing a new self, a self they wanted to be, but also the self promoted in the self-help literature who was both strong and powerful. As it connected child and adult selves it also provided a degree of ontological security that they may not have had before.

Beyond a core/damaged self

Whilst many of the participants acknowledged a core self, which may or may not have been untouched by abuse, many also at the same time embraced the idea of a makeable self. Not only did this allow them to move beyond their experiences of abuse but it also enabled them to take control of this process, to create a self that they wanted (to be), through a dialogue between these different selves. This might have been particularly important for those who felt they had had little control over their lives, but might also be related to the memories they had of their abused child self. For those who entered adulthood with concrete knowledge or memories of abuse, it was not necessary to establish a connection with the past (abused) self which might make it easier to embrace the idea of a makeable self. This could be a self not so closely tied to an abusive past; a self free to move beyond a damaged core because such a self did not need to be established or maintained to support a victim or survivor identity as it might for those without memories.

The relationships women developed with different formulations of the self were informed, not only by their memories of abuse, but also by the degree of confidence they had with/in themselves and their place in the world. As such, it was a relationship that, like the makeable self, was not static but evolved in part in relation to their self confidence and security, and therefore also a self that needed a degree of social recognition. Fiona's self was linked with inner confidence. Although Fiona recognised a core self, damaged by her abuse, rebuilding 'self confidence' in order to recognise who she was and who and what she wanted to be, was an integral part of the process of finding her inner self. The new confidence she had in 'knowing' her self was translated by Fiona into a confidence and an optimism in her self and (therefore) also in her future (self):

> I felt like I could cope with whatever life could throw. I would be able to deal with it because I'd found an inner confidence. I knew who I was and I knew I had the ability to cope with things and that was all good (Fiona)

Whilst Fiona talked about finding an inner confidence this could also be likened to connecting with an inner or core self as it was equated by Fiona with knowing who she was. Confidence (which she achieved through 'healing') was also important to Julie and enabled her to embrace a self in the making, a self whose creation she had contributed to:

> It healed me enough to be confident enough to go forward. To be the person that I wanted to be (Julie)

Some women believed 'healing' would enable them to become who they would have been had they not been abused as it would allow them to remove the effects of their abuse. Others recognised in the self they were becoming, a process which included their abuse, 'recovery'

and their experiences in-between. This was an understanding that could also be shared by those who recognised in themselves a core self, if that core were accompanied by a process of negotiation (Craib 1998). Believing the self to be, at least in part, influenced by past traumatic or abusive experiences did not necessarily lead to a negative construction of the self as damaged:

> I think I am glad and happy about the person that I've become. For me to get here… because of the trauma in my childhood or in fact thirty years of trauma and battling and battling and battling to survive… but I am pleased and happy to be the person I'm becoming (Sarah)

Although for some constructing a healthy self was about removing the effects of abuse, for others it was about learning from the experience in order to construct a self that was stronger, and this involved an understanding of the self as makeable, an ongoing process:

> There's always more things you can understand about yourself. You never stop learning. Whether that be about the actual abuse itself or whether that be about the effects of how I view myself or the effects on my relationships that I have with the children or how I deal with them growing up… Cos I do think if I hadn't been abused then I wouldn't have been forced to have to be strong (Angela)

It was through this process of learning that Angela:

> Found out how strong I could be or what I could do (Angela)

This idea of learning who they were and how strong they were also resonated with messages promoted in the recovery literature which encouraged readers to 'break free' and 'unlock the power within'. Angela entered adulthood with continuous memories of having been sexually abused and it may be that because she could remember her abuse she was better placed to learn from the experiences, and be able to do so without casting doubt on her life story. Those who, like Angela, also entered adulthood with continuous memories were not reliant on the construction of a damaged self to know they had been abused, and were able to draw on their memories of abuse and the ways they survived and resisted to construct a more positive or strong self:

> I felt like I could cope with whatever life could throw. I would be able to deal with it because I'd found an inner confidence. I knew who I was and I knew I had the ability to cope with things and that was all good' (Fiona)

This was also the case for Julie for who reaching adulthood was the significant factor in being able to leave behind (negative) ideas and beliefs learnt in childhood. Adulthood was also significant for Julie in terms of her relationship with her self as it was the time at which she believed one could choose the person one wanted to be. Although Julie did not say what it was about adulthood that would enable a person to make those choices, the process through which she engaged with the self involved drawing on the different conceptualisations promoted in the self-help / recovery literature, which allowed for the effects of abuse to be identified on her (core) child self but also allowed for the adult Julie to play an active role in constructing the self she was becoming:

> When you get to a certain age you are the product of how you're brought up. I think you can choose to be whoever you want to be. You get to an age where I think I chose to be who I want to be today (Julie)

It may be easier for those with continuous memories to learn from their experiences of abuse to construct a stronger self. This is, in part, because they had concrete memories of abuse to draw on and could trace their self through their life story, but more importantly because they did not need a damaged self to know (or demonstrate) that their memories of sexual abuse were 'true'.

Conclusion

The majority of the women who participated in this study entered adulthood with no concrete or recall memories of having been sexually abused as children, but they did all, at some time, believe their adult lives showed evidence of such abuse. That they were drawn to sexual abuse narratives, I argue, says more about the limited narrative frameworks available for women to make sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction in their lives, and the dominance of individualising therapeutic discourses and damage narratives, than it does about 'recovered memories', 'false memories', or childhood sexual abuse. However, the messages promoted in the CSA recovery literature extend beyond this literature to a variety of currently circulating cultural texts and as a result are familiar even to those who do not seek them out. Therefore, whether they have knowledge or access to memories of past trauma, unhappy or dissatisfied women are encouraged to identify problems in their adult lives caused by a damaged self in need of 'healing', and through the contradictory self of the self-help / recovery literature are promised 'healing' and a brighter happier future.

Whether based on what they believed to be continuous, recovered or false (and therefore later retracted) memories the women who participated in this research engaged with the CSA recovery literature because they were unhappy or dissatisfied with at least some aspect of their lives and were looking for ways to improve those lives. In doing so they were directed to

identify problems in their adult lives and look inward for both the cause of and solution to those problems. Directed to make connections between present adult unhappiness and (perceived) childhood trauma, they were encouraged to (re)construct themselves as damaged and in need of 'healing', within a framework that depoliticises not only CSA but all aspects of women's unhappiness and dissatisfaction, and reconstructs them as individual mental health issues in need of individual therapeutic solutions. For some, tracing a connection to remembered abuse and adult unhappiness might be relatively straightforward, even if it involves identifying a causal connection between CSA and particular difficulties, and reconstructing themselves as damaged. However, for those with no concrete memories, basing such a connection on 'symptoms' or 'alternative memories' can result in doubt and uncertainty and therefore the concomitant life stories they construct and the selves who inhabit those stories, risk being insecure and/or fragile. More importantly perhaps, those selves are also at risk of being unconnected to their past and through that past to the future, and therefore locked in a state of limbo and insecurity.

The contradictory self of the CSA recovery literature offers a way to bridge this gap but to do so relies on the construction of a damaged core self together with a makeable self who can be healed. It may therefore be particularly important for those who lack continuous or concrete memories of childhood (abuse), and therefore also biographical continuity, to connect with an abused, and therefore damaged, core child self, as it is through this self that they can establish a continuity to their life story. However, those with concrete memories of sexual abuse might also need to rely on this construction of a damaged core self as they too are encouraged to make connections between the abuse they remember and problems in their adult lives – problems they might not otherwise have connected to childhood abuse. Whether or not they have concrete memories and an observable connection between past and present, with this formulation of the (damaged) self alone they cannot create the healthy, happy or powerful adult self, ready to successfully face the future promised by the recovery literature. For those who believed their adult lives showed evidence of the effects of abuse, the idea of a makeable self, and therefore the possibility of 'healing', offered the opportunity to reclaim their lives (and their life stories) and the selves who populated those lives.

Rather than finding the contradictory formulations of the self located in the CSA recovery literature problematic, the women took a pragmatic approach to develop a more fluid and ultimately helpful conceptualisation of the self. The contradictory self enabled women to establish and/or maintain a connection with the past (and an abused self) and draw on aspects of that self they were happy with, such as the lessons they learned and their ability to cope, resist or survive. At the same time such formulations enabled women to embark on a project of the self and embrace the future with a (new) undamaged or healed makeable self who they believed could go on to live a happy and fulfilled life. They did so within the context

of the harm story which not only constructs victims of CSA as damaged but also promotes the idea of a 'cycle of abuse'. Whilst a number of women did recognise this idea as problematic, there were also those who found it helpful, if only because it helped to mediate the role of their abusers, who they may still have loved. It was therefore important for the women to be able to distance themselves from what they understood to be a self that was both vulnerable to future abuse and itself potentially abusive, and break the 'cycle of abuse' that, without 'healing', some believed their biographical positioning directed them towards.

The contradictory self of the 'healing' and CSA recovery literature offers a way to bridge the gap between past and present and therefore move beyond biographical uncertainty. It does so by enabling connections to be made and maintained between the self becoming and the core/abused self, and between the abused child self and the self of adulthood. This, I would argue, is especially important for those who have no memories of having been sexually abused in childhood and therefore no direct or 'concrete' connection with their (abused) child self. However it does so by individualising and depoliticising, not only CSA, but all aspects of women's unhappiness and dissatisfaction, and by constructing those who deviate from 'good' and 'normal' womanhood as problematic and encouraging them to look inward to their perceived damaged psychologies for both the cause of and solution to any and all adult difficulties. In this way all unhappy or dissatisfied women can be constructed as damaged and in need of 'healing', leaving the material conditions of their lives unexamined and unaddressed.

Acknowledgements

References

Ainscough, C and K Toon (1993) Breaking free: Help for survivors of child sexual abuse London: Sheldon Press

Adler, P and P Adler (1999) 'Transience and the post modern self: The geographic mobility of resort workers' in The Sociological Quarterly Volume 40, Issue 1, pp. 31 - 58

Armstrong, L (1994) <u>Rocking the cradle of sexual politics: What happened when women said incest</u> London: The Women's Press

Bass, E and L Davis (1988) <u>The courage to heal: A guide for women survivors of child sexual abuse</u> London: Cedar

Bass E and L Davis (2008) (20th Anniversary ed). <u>The courage to heal: A guide for women survivors of child sexual abuse</u> New York: Harper Collins

Bauman, Z (2001) <u>The individualized society</u> Cambridge: Polity

Berger, P (1963) <u>Invitation to Sociology</u> Garden City, NY: Doubleday

Blume, E (1990) <u>Secret survivors: uncovering incest and its effects in women</u> New York: Ballantine Books

Brown L and E Burmam (1997) 'Feminist response to the "false memory" debate' <u>Feminism and Psychology 7(1):7-21</u>

Collero, P (2003) The Sociology of the Self in <u>Annual Review of Sociology</u> Vol. 29 pp115-133 accessed 7.6.2003

Cooley, C H (1902) <u>Human Nature and the Social Order</u> New York: Charles Scribner's Sons

Craib, I (1998) <u>Experiencing identity</u> London: Sage

Davies, M (1995) <u>Childhood sexual abuse and the construction of identity: Healing Sylvia</u> London: Taylor and Francis

Dinsmore, C (1991) <u>From surviving to thriving: Incest, feminism and recovery</u> New York: State University of New York Press

Ernst, S and L, Goodison (1981) <u>In our own hands: A book of self-help therapy</u> London: The Women's Press

Forward, S (1989) <u>Toxic parents</u> New York: Bantam

Fredrickson, R (1992) <u>Repressed memories</u> New York: Fireside / Parkside.

Furedi, F (2004) <u>Therapy culture</u> London: Routledge

Giddens, A (1991) <u>Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age</u> Cambridge: Polity

Haaken, J. (1998b) <u>Pillar of salt: Gender, memory and the perils of looking back</u>. London: Free Association Books.

Hall, S (1996) 'Who needs identity' in Hall, S and P du Gay (eds) <u>Questions of cultural identity</u> London: Sage

Herman, J (1992) <u>Trauma and recovery: From domestic abuse to political terror</u> New York: Basis Books

Hovdestad, W and C Kristiansen (1996) 'Mind meets body: on the nature of recovered memories of trauma' in Contratto, S and M J Gutreund <u>A feminist clinician's guide to the memory debate</u> London: Harrington Park Press

Kelly, L (1988) <u>Surviving sexual violence</u> Cambridge: Polity Press

Kelly, L (1996) Weasel Words in <u>Trouble and Strife</u> 33

Kitzinger, J (2010) Transformations of public and private knowledge in Haaken, J and P, Reavey (eds) <u>Memory Matters: Contexts for understanding sexual abuse recollections</u> London: Routledge

Lamb, S. (1999) 'Constructing the victim: Popular images and lasting labels', in S. Lamb (ed.) <u>New versions of victims: Feminists struggle with the concept</u>. New York: New York University Press.

Mead, G H (1934) <u>Mind, self and society</u> Chicago: University of Chicago Press

O'Dell, L (2003) 'The "harm" story in childhood sexual abuse: contested understandings, disputed knowledges' in Reavey, P and Warner, S (eds) <u>New feminist stories of child sexual abuse: sexual scripts and dangerous dialogue</u>s London: Routledge

Parks, P (1990) Rescuing the 'inner child': Therapy for adults sexually abused as children London: Souvenir Press

Plummer, K (1995) Telling sexual stories London: Routledge

Plummer, K (2001) Documents of life 2: An invitation to a critical humanism London: Sage

Reavey, P. (2003) 'When past meets present to produce a sexual 'other': Examining professional and everyday narratives of child sexual abuse and sexuality', in P. Reavey and S. Warner (eds) New feminist stories of child sexual abuse: Sexual scripts and dangerous dialogues, London: Routledge.

Reavey, P and Warner, S (2003) (eds) New feminist stories of child sexual abuse: sexual scripts and dangerous dialogues London: Routledge

Rose, N (1989) (2nd edition) Governing the soul London: Free association books

Scott, S (2001) The politics and experience of ritual abuse: Beyond disbelief Buckingham: Open University Press

Showalter, E (1997) Hystories: Hysterical epidemics and modern culture London: Picador

Simonds, W (1992) Women and self-help culture: Reading between the lines New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press

Simonds, W (1996) 'All consuming selves: self-help literature and women's identities' in Grodin, D and T Lindlof (eds) Constructing the self in a mediated world London: Sage

Tavris, C (1992) Mismeasure of woman: Why women are not the better sex, the inferior sex, or the opposite sex. New York: Touchstone Books

Tietjens-Meyers, D (1997) 'The family romance: A Fin-de-Siecle Tragedy' in Nelson, H L (ed) Feminism and families London: Routledge

Warner, S. (1996) 'Constructing femininity: Models of child sexual abuse and the production of "woman"', in E. Burman, P. Alldred, C. Bewley and B. Goldberg (eds) Challenging women: Psychology's exclusions, feminist possibilities, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Whitfield, C L (1995) <u>Memory and abuse: Remembering and healing the effects of trauma</u> Deerfield Beech, Fl: Health Communications Inc.

Winnicott D. W, (1965) "Ego distortion in terms of true and false self," in <u>The Maturational Process and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development</u>. New York: International UP Inc., pp. 140-152.

Woodiwiss, J (2007) 'Politics, responsibility and childhood sexual abuse', Sociological Research Online <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/12/2/woodiwiss.html>

Woodiwiss, J (2008) 'Compulsory sexuality: A guide to healing?', Culture, Health & Sexuality, 10: 4

Woodiwiss, J (2009) Contesting stories of childhood sexual abuse, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Woodiwiss, J (2010) 'Alternative memories of childhood sexual abuse' in Haaken, J and Reavey, P (eds) Memory Matters: Contexts for understanding sexual abuse recollections, London: Routledge