

# WHAT IS IT LIKE TO PARENT A CHILD AFTER HAVING EXPERIENCED PREVIOUS CHILD REMOVAL THROUGH SOCIAL SERVICES?' AN INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Joanna Douzenis  
Supervised by: Dr Daphne Josselin

## 01 INTRODUCTION

- As of March 2023, there are approximately 83,840 children in care in England (GOV.UK, 2023), a 9% increase in the number of Looked After Children (LAC) from the previous year.
- In a report commissioned by Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, the probability of a woman entering repeat proceedings following a previous removal within the past 10 years was 1 in 5 (Alrouh et al, 2022), suggesting there is a lack of support offered to these parents.
- The gradual increase in the number of children in care, in addition to the fact that the cycle of child removal is often repeated (Broadhurst & Mason, 2013; Meier & Edginton, 2013), highlights the increasing relevance of this topic.
- From existing literature, we now know that child removal significantly impacts both parental mental health and identity. It is also well-established that parenting and the parent-child relationship significantly influence child outcomes and later mental health for the child, parents, and entire family (Ranson & Urichuck, 2008). Whenever a parent goes on to have other children or stepchildren, this crucial parent-child relationship is likely to be impacted by previous experiences of child removal (Cristobal et al, 2017). In addition, the stigma and lack of support for these parents exacerbate the negative effects of child removal. This is also likely to affect parent-child relationships after a previous child has been removed (Song et al, 2018).

## 02 AIMS

- Explore maternal experiences of parenting after child removal
- Empower parents to share experiences that are often shrouded in stigma and silence
- Shine a different light on the experience of child removal and challenge the perception that child removal is considered a 'life sentence'.
  - Secondary aim: Uncover strategies for reducing stigma and fostering resilience among parents post-removal.

## 03 METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Qualitative Approach.  
Epistemology: Phenomenological Stance & Critical Realist ontology  
Data Analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)  
Ethical approval has been granted  
Recruitment:  
Currently recruiting through charity organisations  
Focusing on Greater London area  
Have completed 3 interviews.

## 04 A FEW QUOTES

'It feels like they  
are not mine'

'There's parts  
missing'

'the main thing is that I  
carry; a fear of it  
happening again'

'the hardest thing that I  
have found out of it all is  
grieving two people that  
are still alive'

'the way that I think now is always  
kind of in a preventative way'

'I felt like I lost my identity'

## 05 APPLICATION TO COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

Minimal post-removal support for birth parents intensifies grief and stigmatization, negatively impacting mental health and resource access (Richardson & Brammer, 2020).  
Counselling Psychologists can provide essential support, raise awareness, and reduce stigma around child removal (Sankara et al., 2018) while conducting research and advocacy to help parents navigate the system.

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