



Childhood parentification and the impact on adult intimate relationships. A scoping review.

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Abstract:

The dissertation analyses the topic area of the childhood impacts of parentification on adult intimate relationships. This is done through a scoping review methodology, the researcher utilised the Arksey and O'Malley framework (2005), where the researcher examined two main psychological databases; PsycINFO via OVID and MEDLINE via PubMed, the University journal database and the university library. The results show an initial 137 sources relating to parentification and relationships, this was reduced to 12 sources. The 12 sources included, 7 quantitative studies, 4 qualitative studies and one book that included case analysis. The quantitative studies used surveys and questionnaires as interventions and the qualitative study and book used couples and family therapy as an intervention. The researcher clearly saw the incorporation of both the construct of parentification and its relation to adult intimate relationships. The researcher thematically analysed the 12 sources and produced four themes;

- Relationships as a challenge – feelings of dissatisfaction
- Re-enactment of childhood relationships
- Development of insecure attachment style – taken into adulthood
- Transgenerational repetition of parentification

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Attestation of Authorship Statement:

I Indigo Mathias, hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date: 27.01.2022

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Introduction:

Parentification is a constructed phenomenon that describes a pattern of relating where a switch between the parent and the child happens; a form of role reversal assignment rooted in generational boundary transgressions. Parentification is also known as adultification, parent-child role-reversal, spousification and the parental child; all defined as an overarching category of boundary dissolution between a parent to a child.

Development of parentification occurs through an emotionally immature adult who likely did not have their needs met when they were a child and had not been modelled towards healthy behaviours or taught how to feel safe. Consequently, parents use their children as surrogate parents in an unconscious attempt to relive their childhood. Parentification manifests through the adult's behaviour, almost always unconsciously, and permeates the child's psyche. Inherent in parenting is the notion that a parent has the responsibility to raise the child to maturity in a healthy and nurturing way; therefore, the presence of parentification points to broader domestic issues (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984).

Parentification is intergenerationally pervasive and ubiquitous in families; it can occur destructively and pathologically. Its outcomes are far-reaching and thus cannot be tangible to measure. Parentification can also occur between partners and is rooted in an unconscious repetition compulsion. (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984).

This dissertation is a scoping review exploring the effects of childhood parentification on adult intimate relationships. Parentification is a widely known phenomenon among psychological clinicians and was born out of Family Systems Theory (Minuchin, 1974)

This scoping review collects data from significant health databases, with the outcome being to map existing parentification and adult relationship literature extensively. For this review, the use of the term "child" is all-encompassing for any young person who experiences

parentification. The term "parent" defines the adult who subjects their child or child in their care into this phenomenological behaviour.

To map this research, the following question has been developed:

"The impacts of Parentification on adult-children and how this affects their primary relationships".

The rationale behind the topic comes from an awareness that parentification exists in many social issues and many parents rely on their children in hard emotional times. For example, social issues like; divorce, alcoholism, sexual abuse, single-parent families, mental illness, chronic illness, marital conflict, addiction, attachment styles, infant, childhood and adolescent development, identity confusion and externalising disorders.

With that in mind, parentification is somewhat a covert-silent phenomenon but is not explicitly known about, except to therapeutic clinicians or those involved in treating families (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984; Chase, 1999)

The construct of parentification is rooted in family therapy and comes from family systems theory, looking at boundaries and role structures in the family (Minuchin, 1974; Pattison, 1969; Roach, 1969). Parentification is also looked at through psychoanalytic theory using transference, projection and projective identification. Parentification is also viewed through the later development of psychodynamic theory using the unconscious (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984; Zeanah & Klitzke, 1991)

Transference simple means, a "re-direction" of felt emotions onto someone else – in a therapeutic setting, the transference happens from a client to a therapist. In a "real life" setting, transference happens in relationships; felt emotion from early childhood usually "inflicted" by

parents/caregivers, transferred onto primary partner (Grant, 1998). Projection refers to projecting emotions, feelings, behaviours; outwards that are disowned aspects that are inside of us, that we have not yet become conscious and aware of (Loewald, 1960). Projective Identification is a psychic process involving two individuals. The first individual (person A) feels something that they'd rather bypass, so they project it onto the second individual unconsciously. Sometimes the second individual can reject it, and the projection fails, but other times the individual can somehow identify with it, and they feel a combination both the avoided feelings of person A and their own feelings (Waska, 1999).

Object relations theory, attachment theory and identity formation theory can also be helpful theories to view parentification through (Bowlby, 1980; Chase, 1999; Engelhardt, 2012; Goldner et al., 2019; Wells & Jones, 1999).

Object relations theory is derived from psychoanalysis and theorises that humans are generally driven by their need for contact with others; the strong need for form relationships (Wells & Jones, 1999).

Attachment theory is an understanding that we form an emotional bond with our parents/caregivers/important people in our life and we become attached to them. There are four ways children and people attach, simply there is; secure (the goal), anxious, avoidant and disorganised (a mix of both anxious and avoidant traits). Attachment really is contingent on the way a caregiver attunes to the needs of the child; whether they are available and dependable for the child. If they are not, usually the child will develop an anxious, avoidant or disorganised attachment to their caregiver (Bowlby & Ainsworth, 2013).

Identity Formation Theory comes from Erik Erikson and psychosocial development and is understood through ego development. Identity Vs Confusion is the fifth stage of ego

development, where there is a push and pull for adolescents to test their independence and develop a sense of self (Wells et al., 1999)

There is literature arguing that there might be some developmental value for the child or young person who assumes the parental role (L. Hooper et al., 2011; L. M. Hooper et al., 2011). There may be merit in this notion; however, this scoping review concerns the dimension of destructive Parentification. The child or young person overtly takes on expressive and extreme or developmentally inappropriate instrumental burdens, unfairly assigning and maintaining a role their parent or caregiver would usually retain. Moreover, its impacts on adult relationships are essential because relationships and connections are central to human existence. Through work in therapeutic settings, we know Parentification can significantly impact mental health and the development of interpersonal skills. There is also a body of knowledge illustrating the personal effects of Parentification and the many different forms. However, due to this subject's vast scope, there is limited literature regarding the impacts of childhood parentification in adult relationships.

Before developing this dissertation, a preliminary search was conducted to ascertain whether similar reviews existed or 'works in progress' in databases such as Wiley, PubMed, Taylor & Francis, SpringerLink, Science Direct, Sage and PsycInfo.

The researcher used the Scoping Review framework by the Joanna Briggs Institute, with methodology underpinned by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) because of its iterative and flexible approach to reviewing. To fill the wide gaps in the literature, the researcher feels that utilising a scoping review framework with the parentification and adult relationships phenomenon is suitable. This scoping review aims to examine the impacts of parentification on an individual and the consequences for how it impacts their ability to be in an intimate relationship. The researcher seeks to synthesise available literature on the personal effects of parentification into a working body of knowledge and examine how personal effects evolve into interpersonal

effects of Parentification. Utilising this methodology is beneficial as it allows the researcher to identify currently available literature, synthesise all revealing information, look at gaps in the literature, and use it as a precursor to a future systematic review or an experimental design later.

Literature Review:

The literature review section of this scoping review has been broken up into three sections; Understanding, Parentification in Context and Theoretical underpinnings. Understandings covers the conception of parentification, a brief history of how the construct came to be and several working definition. Parentification in context delves deeper into the construct and breaks down the different subtypes of parentification; further looking at the detrimental effects of parentification. There is also a small section to consider the positive impacts parentification could have on a child – this is not a separate subtype, but a consideration that some theorists like to acknowledge (Hooper et al., 2008). The Theoretical underpinnings section expands further on Parentification in Context, where the writer uses specific theories; psychodynamic, object relations and attachment theories and relates and further contextualised how parentification can be understood and present in multiple theories.

It is important to note here that some sources mentioned in the literature review section were used in the thematic construction. The information is different because the data is used in a different way; in the literature review, the writer tells a story and paints a picture for the reader as to how parentification came about and delves deeper into the contextual and theoretical underpinnings. The data used in stage five; the thematic construction is used in a way where it assimilates all charted data into the coherent themes that the writer found throughout the scoping review.

Understandings:

The definition of parentification has been around in clinical circles in society for at least fifty years. For example, Freud et al. (1965) spoke about the dangers of parental divorce and death on children and how these circumstances can create a "role vacuum" which might be filled functionally and prematurely by the child that remains. The construct of parentification originally came from Minuchin et al.'s concept of the Parental Child (1967). It was a concept frequently referred to in his created therapeutic modality known as Structural Family Therapy (Minuchin, 1974).

Minuchin defined the Parental Child as the "one who has the responsibility and authority to care for other children in the family" (1974). The basis of Structural Family Therapy works on the notion of boundaries. Parentification points to dysfunction in the family structure, which means something structurally amiss within the family unit causes parentification to occur (Goldner et al., 2019). The theory operates on a boundary ideal, where the boundaries of parent and child are separate and transparent and reflect developmentally appropriate positions (Minuchin, 1974). The precise positions define psychological appropriateness and reinforce each member's role within the structure to ensure that parents handle adult matters.

In their book *Invisible Loyalties*, the term "parentification" originated and was initially introduced out of a therapeutic setting by Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and Geraldine Spark in their book *Invisible Loyalties* (1984). Boszormenyi-Nagy and Sparks (1984) define parentification as a

"subjective distortion of a relationship as if one's partner or even children were his parent" (p151).

Chase (1999) defines parentification as

"functional and or emotional role-reversal in which a child forfeits their needs in order to provide care for the emotional and behavioural needs of their parent" (p5).

As a result, parentification has been hard to define because it does not speak of a measurable consequence; every individual's experience is subjective (Chase, 1999).

Parentification in context:

Parentification can occur on a spectrum, where there are four types of classification. These are Adaptive, Destructive Non-Parentification, Infantilisation and Destructive and then we view these classifications through sub-types of parentification, which are either emotional or instrumental (Jurkovic, 1997). As has already been stated, this review is most concerned with the destructive effects of parentification. First, destructive parentification can occur; instrumentally where the child plays functional roles in the family system include cooking, cleaning, and other household logistics. This classification usually occurs because one or both parents cannot meet these duties due to other physical circumstances, like physical incapacitation or working to keep the family financially supported. The second subtype of emotional parentification is an expressive role assignment of caretaking a parent/caregiver (Valleau et al., 1995)

The parent consciously or unconsciously expects the child to support them emotionally. This happens through providing socioemotional needs such as confiding in, providing emotional crisis support, protecting family members, and feeling responsible for the emotional and familial environment, secret-keeping, decision making, and conflict mediating (Engelhardt, 2012; Jurkovic, 1997). While the child is caring for the parent, the parent is not caring for the child, which means the child is not getting their needs met or modelled healthy behaviours (Hooper et al., 2008; Jankowski et al., 2013). The parent's health, the environment of the family, environmental factors, and the child's nature are the reasons why parentification comes about (Jurkovic, 1997). Both parents are not emotionally responsive to their child's

needs; they are emotionally immature and lack emotional health. This makes it challenging to manage stressors such as; a broken marriage, chronic health concerns, trauma, addictions, and mental health issues (Goldner et al., 2019). The parent behaves in a certain way, and the child essentially uptakes to create parentification. Parentification is rooted in "emotional gain" of basic needs like security (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984). Instrumental parentification is said to be less damaging, as the child is not outwardly carrying an emotional burden of caretaking the parents; this may mean fewer affective states for the child to manage (Titzmann, 2012). However, high levels of instrumental parentification can be inappropriate for the child's development and contravene with their boundaries (Nuttall et al., 2021; Nuttall et al., 2018).

There is certain theory around instrumental parentification that states the uptake may increase self-efficacy and allow the child to feel they are helping their parents, denoting increased self-esteem and responsibility, which aids in a positive identity formation (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1986);(Hooper et al., 2008). The positive effects of instrumental parentification are firmly rooted in contextual factors and depend on the child's age, duration, whether there is also emotional parentification and wellness of parent (Nuttall et al., 2019). The act of a child taking on developmentally appropriate tasks in a family unit is a normal part of parenting a child, adolescent or teenager in a practical way (Williams, 2017).

However, it is essential to note that socio-economic and cultural factors influence both types of parentification. If the type of parenting is encouraged within a particular culture or environment and is seen as usual - it is unlikely to have the same emotional effect on the child (Jurkovic, 1997). Parentification is different from pro-social empathy; however, empathy is present in a parentified child (Brankin, 2015). To a certain extent, a child wants to be there for their parents; this is appropriate in a developmental context; however, caring for a parent becomes abnormal when dysfunction is present (Reeves, 1999). Parentification is not a "healthy concern"; it is a feeling of responsibility for their parent's well-being. They are

responsible for making their parent emotionally stable in the hopes of having their own needs met and feeling safe (Hastings et al., 2000; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002)

Quantifying the effects of parentification and defining such behaviour can be challenging because the line between appropriate and inappropriate can be very fine. However, we know that parentification impacts cognitive and emotional developmental tasks of the child or young person and affects the way they reach their developmental milestones such as interpersonal communication and relationship building (Nuttall et al., 2012). The impacts on a child are vast, and they extend into adulthood. Impacts include a myriad of mental health issues like anxiety, depression and PTSD, deeper repressed emotions of shame, a self-isolating tendency, intergenerational pattern formation, rejection sensitivity, enmeshment, and co-dependency (DiCaccavo, 2006; Hoffman & Shrira, 2019; Jurkovic, 1997; Gregory J. Jurkovic, 1998; Gregory J Jurkovic, 1998; Mayseless & Scharf, 2009; Nuttall et al., 2012)

According to Hooper et al. (Hooper, 2007b) destructive parentification can be categorised as emotional abuse, neglect, maltreatment and ultimately is classed as trauma because there is an abandonment of an inherent parental duty and responsibility for caring for the child and family. Trauma causes emotional deprivation and, according to Selman (1981) impacts our competence in interpersonal relations. Linking back to self-differentiation, emotionally dispossessed parents struggle to conceptualise their children and the parenting process beyond their perspective (Azar, 2016)

According to Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1984), the parent "transforms" their child into an adult; this is an unconscious process. Solomon and George (1999) talk further about the concept of the mother being dysregulated and having disorganised emotions whereby they are not there for their children and enlists them into being their own "self-object". This example is also understood through attachment theory; an anxiously attached mother lacks self-security and generally feels anxious (Bretherton, 1985). The child picks up on this and moves

into the caretaking role. Jacobvitz et al. (1999) speak further about this; A type of infantilisation happens to the parent; they look to their child to meet their own unmet childhood needs or balance the parenting scale; they must get something in return for their parenting efforts. Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1984) further reference the revival of their proverbial "all-powerful" parent who is unconsciously transferred onto the child in the hopes of a redo. We know that the quality of parenting is generally rooted in the previous generations parenting, like a transgenerational transmission of parenting. If the parent does not receive adequate parenting, the cycle will likely repeat destructively through neglect, sexual abuse and dysfunction (Jurkovic, 1997).

Miller (1981) in Jurkovic (1997) talks about a lack of differentiation of self as a parent uses their child as an extension of who they are. From this, the child does not develop the ability to grow their own identity, and their caretaking behaviours can be linked to who they are (Valleau et al. 1995). Fusion can occur with the parent as well, where there is a high chance that when that child grows up – they will fuse with either their parent or their children, so the cycle continues.

Theoretical underpinnings:

According to Schier et al. (2015) looking through a psychodynamic lens, a child can develop a "false ego", an internalised structure that allows them to make sense and endure the burden of looking after their parents. However, this false ego creates a false sense of self – through being deemed the saviour, who is brave and strong, the child begins to receive gratification from this role, and they do not develop an established sense of self. The identity created from the false ego linked to the parentified behaviour translates into other relationships. According to Leon and Rudy (2005) cited by Schier et al. (2015), this type of behaviour creates an imbalance unbalance in other relationships. The individual becomes the

caretaker of their partner or becomes overly controlling because things were done their way as a child.

This idea further can be seen through object relations theory, Le Goff (2005) taking conceptualisation from Klein, Fairbairn and Guntrip, Winnicott and Balint where we can see pervasive patterning. The notion is that our psyche develops through a connection with those in our immediate environment in childhood; we internalise our environment as children and take in the relation patterning and then re-externalise these before becoming parents. We could also look at this from a psychodynamic perspective regarding transference. An expert from Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1984) speaks to this notion eloquently:

"As I recreate my past attitudes towards my father in my relationship with my son, potentially I become both father and son. At any moment when I copy my father's fathering attitudes, something also revives in me, my hungry child self who used to be held and supported by his parents." (p153)

Attachment theory is another way to understand the construct of parentification (Earley & Cushway, 2002). Children need their parent/s for survival, and attachment theory is a way we can understand how children emotionally attach to their caregivers (Bowlby, 1980). The theory elucidates how the primary caregiver interacts with the child, frames the child's emotional relating state, sets the foundation for how the child will relate intimately with others and relate to themselves and their internal sense of safety (Jankowski et al., 2013). Within the theory of attachment, there are four styles of relating; secure, anxious/preoccupied, avoidant/avoidant and disorganised. The child creates an internal working model of interacting based on their level of attachment, which means how much their emotional and physical needs are met and whether they feel safe with their caregiver and within their environment. When needs are unmet, and safety is absent, or only partially there, the child develops an insecure attachment style. Parentification is a severe disruption of the attachment system (Chase, 1999).

Methods:

The study design of this dissertation is a scoping review. The researcher argues that a scoping review best fits the topic of childhood parentification and its adult intimate relational impact on individuals and couples. The field of parentification is extensive in scope; there is comprehensive information about the how parentification occurs, how it effects the child, and how it can affect the child as an adult but there is little scope for how parentification effects adult intimate relationships, and this is the rationale behind this review.

The Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework on scoping reviews has been utilised in this review process. The first step was to determine the gaps in the literature on parentification and deduce the current research base; the methodology used informs the process of conceptual thinking (Pham et al., 2014) Scoping reviews are a useful approach when looking at an area of interest that might be broad, as they allow researchers to collate and map all relevant data pertaining to the topic. The data does not have to be specific in detail as this process is more about identifying the extent and range of literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The researcher also decided upon a scoping review to determine the value of completing a systematic review, mixed methods, or experimental design project in the future.

The methodological framework proposed by Arksey, and O'Malley (2005) follows a non-linear process, that requires researcher/s to interact with literature in a reflexive manner, as to scale through all literature in an extensive but broad way. The framework has six stages, but the researcher modified this framework slightly and decided not to use step six which is an optional stage of "consultation exercise". The stages the researcher used are as follows:

1. Identifying the research question
2. Identifying the relevant studies
3. Selecting the literature/studies
4. Charting the data
5. Collating, summarising, and reporting the results.

The process followed by the researcher is explained below:

Identifying the Research Question:

When identifying the research question, the researcher conducted a preliminary search on current literature available as to identify possible gaps. The researcher has a personal interest in parentification, and its impacts, stemming from familial patterns. Of particular interest is how childhood parentification affects an adult intimate relationship and this area lacks the most literature and research. The researcher knew that to keep the search broad they needed to include the impacts of parentification as to bring about the as much literature as possible. Therefore, the research question has two elements to it; "*The Impacts of parentification on adult-children and how this affects their primary relationships?*".

This question remains expansive enough, as a preliminary search for the individual effects showed that the effects are broad and extensive and there is not one clear answer. The researcher chose to incorporate the two elements into the research question, as the researcher needed to identify the general scope of the impacts for the individual who experienced parentification, so we know the general consequences to intimate relationships.

Identifying Relevant Studies:

The aim of a scoping review is to scope the field in the most comprehensive manner possible to identify published and unpublished sources that are suitable for establishing the scope of the topic area. To accomplish this, the researcher adopted a design whereby they search via different sources with the inevitable plan of narrowing it down after finding the most suitable. The different sources that were utilised initially were:

- Electronic Databases
- Reference Lists
- Individual searching through key Journals

A preliminary search of the topic area was conducted to identify the gaps in the literature. Identifying the gaps helped the researcher develop the research question and showed the breadth of literature and how deep they could go into the topic area while still considering the time constraints of the university year.

The researcher decided that given the small scope of the topic area, publishing dates of research articles would not be considered in the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Instead, the researcher focused on the terms used in the literature title and the terms used in the abstract. This allowed the literature to guide the researcher in having tangible elements that restricted inclusion and exclusion. Given the nature of a scoping review and how comprehensive it is, the researcher set a time span for study selection as to reflect the eight-month period of completion. This time frame was pushed out due to covid-19 interruptions and a university extension. The researcher set themselves a submission timeframe for January 2022, in line with university protocol.

Electronic databases

The researcher found the use of electronic databases fruitful in the process of study selection, because the electronic databases show citation and abstract details of published material. The researcher identified the electronic databases to search through, the terms used for searching and any related terms and or synonyms. The researcher also piloted the search strategy multiple times.

In order to find relevant studies, the researcher created a search strategy, which was informed by the review question and the key concepts related to the topic area. The researcher found creating a search strategy to be an iterative process, and also found that she did not have the strategic skills to find what she was looking for. The researcher utilised a librarian's help in creating a search strategy. The librarian and the researcher worked together to find key words that reflected the topic question; these may have been different in each database. The librarian also advised on the best databases to use that reflect the content the researcher was looking for. The librarian and the researcher then designed a search strategy, again being

an iterative process that needed refinement until the researcher was happy with the result. The first design was used in PsycINFO (OVID) as this is the main psychological databases, which is suitable for the topic area and then a subsequent search through MEDLINE via PubMed. The initial search terms that were used were "parentified child" or "childhood parentification" or "child role-reversal" or "mother adolescent parentification" or "child therapist" and outcomes or effect or affect or growth or predictors or impact or consequence and "relationships" or "adult primary relationships". This produced many sources, few that were relevant and many that were not. The researcher wondered whether there was a possibility that the information that they were looking for was not able to be viewed through a psychological lens. The concept could be hard to quantify as there are many things, aside from parentification that could affect a couple's ability to relate.

This search was done in June. In November, while in the process of charting, the researcher decided to run another search in PsycINFO (OVID) which looked like this: "child-role reversal" or "parentification"; accounting for the parentification aspect and "relationships" or "adult intimate relationships" or "relationship issues" or "couple conflict" or "marital conflict" or "relationship challenges". The terms were slightly changed and the use of words like "outcomes" or "effect" or "affect" or "growth" or "predictors" or "impact" or "consequence" were taken out. Using the new search terms in PsycINFO, 109 total results were produced. Similar search terms were used on PubMed, with the addition of "adult child" in the second search connection; ("child role-reversal" or "parentification") and ("relationship" or "adult intimate relationships" or "relationship issues" or "adult child" or "couple conflict" or "marital conflict" or "relationship challenges"). PubMed produced 15 full text results.

Reference lists

Whilst searching through databases and evaluation articles and studies, the researcher also explored the reference lists of the articles. Reference list searching was done simultaneously to database searching, as the researcher looked at key terms within reference list articles and applied those in the hopes of finding more relevant sources.

Individual searching through key journals and books

The researcher conducted a search through the University library data base of journals with the key term “Couples Therapy”, the search produced 64 results, with only four of them being journals and the fifth being a journal comprised of case studies. The journals were:

- Journal of Couples Therapy
- Journal of Marital and Family Therapy
- The Family Journal: Counselling and Therapy for Couples and Families
- Journal of Family Therapy
- Clinical Case Studies

Searching the journals was done through their publishing databases; T and D Francis, Sage and Wiley. The researcher identified that The Family Journal: Counselling and Therapy for Couples and Families, produced the most useful and relevant articles, however, most of these articles had already been found in the PsycINFO database. The researcher looked in the AUT library online in the books and media section and did a search on “Parentification”, four possible sources were produced, two of those being hardcopy books and two eBooks.

Study Selection:

At the initial inspection of the sources, the researcher found many citations were related to the effects of parentification on the child, while some of this information was relevant to the parentification process into adulthood, they did not fall into the area of scope. The researcher found that through this process, an iterative progression occurred using specific populations, context, concepts, and terminology which informed the inclusion and exclusion criteria of this scoping review. The researcher developed the scoping question ad hoc and had come to create a loose inclusion and exclusion criteria ad hoc and the inclusion criteria

was kept open, should the researcher feel they wanted to adjust. The inclusion criteria were based upon; methodology, age of participants, context of participant and whether the source made mention of parentification in relation to adult intimate relationships.

This looks like:

- Methodology: qualitative or quantitative study, case study, evidence synthesis.
- Age of participants: for experimental designs; over seventeen
- Context: for experimental designs; participants must have experienced childhood parentification or parentification as an adolescent teenager and have experience with an intimate relationship
- Source: mention of the impacts of childhood parentification on adults who are in intimate relationships; how this affects their ability to relate and connect.
- Exclusion: non-destructive parentification, articles with experimental designs that are focused on children that are presently being parentified and how this may affect them in the future.

The researcher applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria to the sources. The researcher first assessed the title and the abstract to see if it met criteria, if they were unsure, the researcher would then read the sources in full and decided whether they fit the inclusion criteria. The researcher found that reading the abstracts may not be indicative of the true representation of the content of the source. The included citations were managed in Endnote (desktop version) that was downloaded from the University database. The citations were then added into their own file, duplicated were removed in process and coded based on theme.

A flow chart of the process can be seen in figure 1 below.

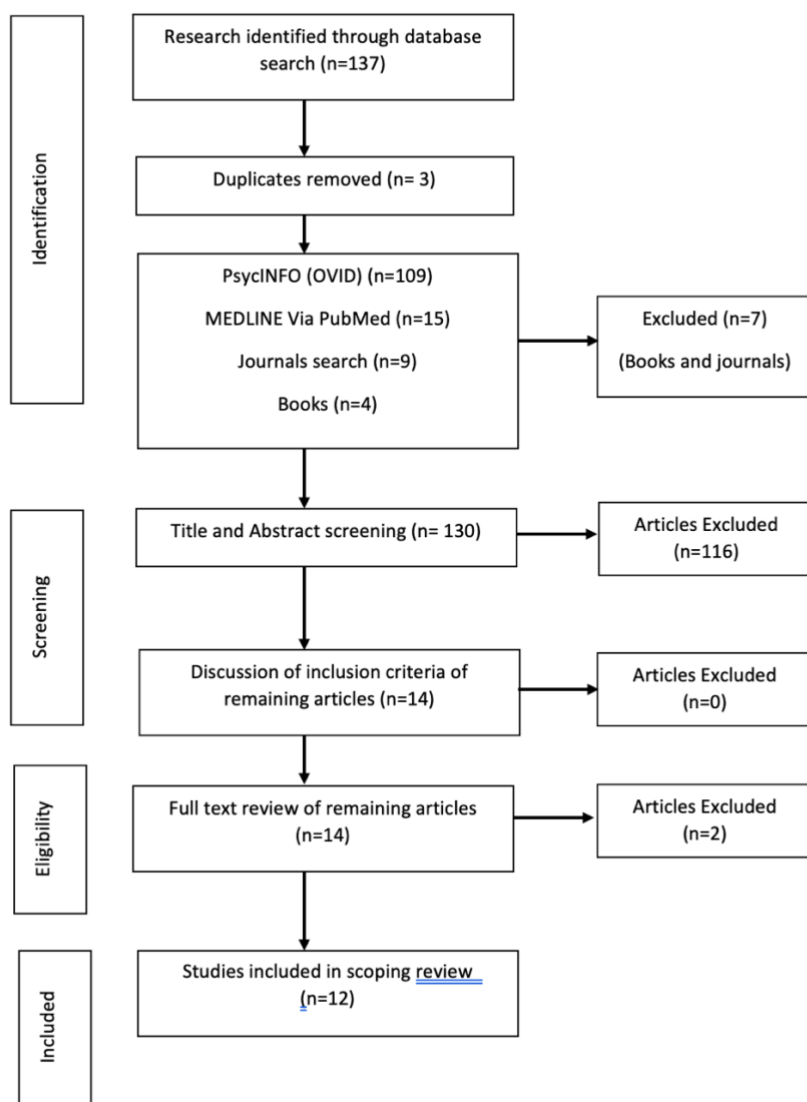


Figure 1. Prisma flowchart of study selection development

Charting the data:

The data extraction process refers to the charting of the data found from the scoping process. The data charting process provides readers with a coherent and in-depth summary of the scoping results that reflect the objectives. The researcher found the most appropriate and useful approach to charting the data was using a method suggested by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), proposed by Pawson (2002). The charting process could be described as a type of narrative review, which allows for more expansive view of the content of the collected sources. This is done by investigating and analysing it with the aim of sorting it into groups of key issues and themes. Charting through a narrative approach made the most sense for this scoping review as studies included are both qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods; this allows the researcher to give a comprehensive and also cohesive framework to view the information through. As the concept of parentification and its impacts are subjective; this allowing the reader to see the nuance that the phenomena and its outcome holds.

The researcher developed a charting table in Microsoft excel to list all information on the evidence found. It is up to the researcher as to what information they decide to chart; for this process the research included the below:

- Author(s), year of publication, country of origin
- Title (To know how many studies use direct terms pertaining to the research question)
- Aims and purpose of the study, sample size of study,
- Methodology /methods,
- Intervention used (if applicable) and details of such interventions
- Outcomes and their details and the key findings from the study

Below are the charted data:

Author, Year, Country	Title	Aims/Purpose	Population	Methodology	Intervention used	Outcomes and Key Findings
Abramowitz, J.L., 2015., USA	Effects of Childhood Parentification and Parental Mental Illness on Adult Wellbeing	<p>Two-part aim: part one: to present current literature on effects of childhood parentification. Part two: examine effects of parentification and parental mental illness on the well-being of the adult child.</p> <p>Dissertation has four hypotheses; researcher is concerned with hypothesis 1: "Higher levels of parentification, specifically expressive, will be related to later in life psychological symptoms (i.e. depression, anxiety, somatization) and various domains of life satisfaction (i.e. general, relationship, academic, financial)".</p>	178 participants, 18-69 yrs. old. Mean age 29.5. 78.1 % female. 73% White/Caucasian, 10.2% Asian/Pasika, 6.2% Hispanic/Latino and 2.7% Black/African American	Quantitative study (dissertation)	<p>Demographics (22 item used to gather basic demographics)</p> <p>Adverse Child Experiences Questionnaire (ACE, 1998).</p> <p>Filial Responsibility Scale-Adult (FRS-A, 1999).,</p> <p>Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS, 2004).,</p> <p>Attitudes toward Seeking Professional Help Scale (ATSPPH-SF, 2005)</p> <p>Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI-18, 2001).</p>	<p>Hypothesis one: evidence was found deducing a relationship between parentification and psychological symptoms in adulthood – that effect life satisfaction negatively. Individuals who saw themselves as "lacking equity, reciprocity and acknowledgement " experienced more discontent with life and in their relationships and academic achievements</p> <p>Study found that emotional parentification contributed to higher levels of psychological symptoms and there was a strong correlation between emotional parentification and somatic experiences (psychological symptoms that manifest in a physical way).</p>
Baggett et al., USA. 2015	Father-daughter parentification and young adult romantic relationships among	To examine the association between retrospective reports of paternal	542 college women (psychology students) - mean age= 19.29	Quantitative Longitudinal Prospective Empirical Study	Paternal parentification (The Parent-Child Boundaries scale - 53 item self-report measure	Findings confirm that paternal parentification among college women is negatively associated with

	college women	parentification and self-reports of romantic relationship satisfaction and insecurity			<p>assessing retrospective reports of boundary dissolution experienced while respondent was growing up.</p> <p>Adult attachment style (The Relationship Styles Questionnaire).</p> <p>Romantic Relationship Outcomes (assessed using current relationship insecurity and current relationship satisfaction).</p> <p>Parenting style (The parental authority questionnaire).</p> <p>Paternal Health (to select all potential applicable health of father when participant was young)</p>	<p>insecurity in romantic relationships. Also consistent with the finding that maladaptive behavior correlates with outcomes of childhood parentification. In addition, the study found that parentified children may develop insecure orientations towards relationships and then carry those beliefs into young adult romantic relationships. Being in a developmentally inappropriate caregiving role as a child might put young adults at a higher risk for perceiving their value only in association of serving a purpose to their mates. There is high risk of engaging in people pleasing behaviors and feeling responsible for the emotions of those around them – which might cause the pleaser to distance to self-protect in the hopes of avoiding rejection or abandonment, thus confirming a core negative belief about their value.</p>
Betchen. S. J., 1996., USA	Parentified Pursuers and Childlike Distancers in	Aid in counselors practicing marital	3 x case studies: John and Lois (middle 40's, married for 13	Qualitative longitudinal study;	Couples Therapy	The article elucidated the pursuer distancer dynamics and

	Marital Therapy	therapy become more familiar with the parentified dynamic in relationships and offer several techniques to alleviate it.	years) Sam and Mary (early 30's, married 6 months), Ed and Pamela (middle 50's, married for 22 years)	empirical study		how they can cause severe marital difficulty. Findings show that both pursuer and distancer were triangulated in their family of origin, the pursuer was severely parentified, and distancer was infantilized - these individuals seemed to seek each other out unconsciously to replicate their childhood patterns.
Byng-Hall, J., 2002., USA	Relieving parentified children's burdens in families with insecure attachment patterns	Explore the relationship between insecure attachment and parentification	Margaret and Bruce with their children, Ann (2.5yrs) and Susan (7m)	Qualitative, case analysis	Family and Couples Therapy	Illustrates familial patterns – shows transgenerational connection and pattern of how child can become parentified and how this affected child rearing AND parent/ couple relationship
Byng-Hall, J., 2008., USA	The significance of children fulfilling parental roles: Implications for family therapy	To illustrate the dynamics of how the child can become parentified and how important this is for therapists to be aware of.	The B Family; Bruce and June; for couple's therapy. The C Family; comprised of Mother Rebecca, father, son and daughter.	Qualitative case analysis	Family Therapy	Parentified children often partner with someone who unconsciously wants care, which can mean they join the children's subsystem. This way of relating can work until the parentified partner asks for more - which may cause the dependent partner to protest and pull their mate back into the caring role. It is possible that the parentified partner is insecure and needs to be

						needed for her self-esteem and sense of self. If there is no awareness of this dynamic, it can cause tension and push a couple apart - however, if a child is pulled into a parental role to meet the needs of the dependent partner, then the system can stay intact.
Hooper, L.M., 2007., USA	The application of attachment theory and family systems theory to the phenomena of parentification	To analyse the application of attachment theory and the therapeutic modality of family systems therapy in treating parentification	n/a	Literature Review	n/a	Article shows application of working with both frameworks and talks about adverse effects of insecure attachment styles and the possible perpetuation of multigenerational parentification
Hooper et al., 2008., USA	Predictors of growth and distress following childhood parentification : A retrospective exploratory study.	To investigate the possibility of positive benefits of parentification on childhood. Measuring post traumatic growth through self-differentiation, attachment style, parentification and resilience. Hypothesis: instrumental and emotional childhood parentification , secure attachment style, resilience and self-	156 college students. Students were above 18 yrs. old, read and spoke English language at year eight level. Some students were excluded due to not meeting criteria and not providing adequate information. Total study consisted of 143 students, unmarried, 99 females and 44 males. Age range was 18-49 with a mean of 22.45. 63% non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black 22%, Hispanic/Latino 19%.	Retrospective quantitative study.	Demographic Survey (school year, program enrollment, race, ethnicity, age, marital status, and their country of origin). Parentification Questionnaire (PQ). Differentiation of Self Inventory (DSI). Resiliency Attitude Scale (RAS) Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ)	Childhood parentification is a risk factor and has many negative consequences. There are some cases in which a protection occurs of mild post traumatic growth [PTG]. Time and maturity are important factors in the absorption of the negative effects of parentification. Findings that emotional parentification is a significant predictor of distress (feeling down, anxiety and somatic complaints,

		differentiation predict and explain the growth and distress, of participants.			Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI).	experienced in the last seven days prior to procedure) in adulthood, falls in line with current body of literature. Conversely, the possibility of mild PTG effect that was found to be present in this study, accounts for the reduction of assumption that all parentification is negative.
Jurkovic G.J., 1997., USA	Lost Childhoods: The plight of the parentified child.	An exploration of the complicated individual, family, sociocultural, and existential-ethical forces at work in the lives of parentified children and treatment strategies that systematically address different layers of the parentification process.	Families and individuals Couples therapy: Carl and Shirly, married 12 years, 2 children. Shirley as "caretaker" and Carl and "little brother".	Book. Case studies with ethnographic and phenomenological literature.	Family, individual and couple's therapy.	The book illustrates the phenomena of parentification and how it comes to be. Shows its inception in individuals, families and explains how it effects couples. Case study on Carl and Shirly illustrates couple dynamics and links couples' early childhood lives into how they are operating in couple dynamic. Shirly is caretaker, while Carl is emotionally unavailable. Intertwines their early story and systemic issues into their painful dynamics.
Levine, A., 2010, USA	Parentification and Adult Psychosocial Life Distress	To explore relationship between parentification in childhood and adult psychosocial distress.	233 adults recruited from mental health clinics, family doctors and community centers. Male and female over age of 18 all from New York City.	Quantitative retrospective correlational study.	Independent variable: Filial Responsibility Scale – Adult (FRS-A). Dependent variable: Adult Psychosocial distress (APD)	Individuals who are moderately distressed in intimate relationships are more likely to have been destructively parentified in childhood and

					measured by the Life Distress Inventory (LDI)	adolescence. Relates to Jurkovic (1997, 1998) and Karpel (1977) that - individuals who were parentified may fail to develop proper social skills, social relationships, trust, initiative, sense of identity that support them as adults - along with shame proneness.
Madden and Schafer., 2016., USA.	The Relation between Parentification and Dating Communications: The Role of Romantic Attachment-Related Cognitions.	To examine the relationship between childhood parentification and intimate partner relationship communication and the individual's attachment related cognitions. Hypothesis: The presence of childhood emotional parentification would foresee the lack of productive communication in intimate partnerships.	57 participants. 46 Female and 11 males. Mean age: 19.49. university undergraduate students in hetero sexual relationships aged between 18-25.	Quantitative Study	Filial Responsibility Scale- Adult (FRS-A) Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ) Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R).	The study found that, in line with their hypothesis that higher degrees of emotional parentification were related to destructive communication patterns within young adult relationships. Anxious and avoidant attachment styles were related to the presence of childhood emotional parentification, which supports the notion that emotional parentification can cause insecure romantic attachment related beliefs.
Valleau et al., 1995., USA.	Parentification and caretaker syndrome: An empirical study	To explore and determine if individuals who were destructively parentified as children, emerge as adults with caretaker	208 Female undergraduate psychology students. Only females were employed for study as literature attests to mainly females upholding caretaking roles.	Quantitative Study	The Parentification Scale (PS) Caretaker Syndrome Survey (CSS) (CSS was created for the purposes of this research).	Study strongly supported hypothesis. Results showed that individuals who were parentified as children did behave in a way that displayed more caretaking

		<p>syndrome and unhealthily over function in relationships.</p> <p>Hypothesis: individuals who experienced childhood parentification would exhibit more caretaking characteristics – than individuals who were not parentified.</p>	<p>Students received extra credit in their course for participation.</p>			<p>traits and over functioned to a detrimental level to the person and possibly the relationship.</p>
<p>Williams, K., 2017., Canada</p>	<p>Risk and resilience in emerging adults with childhood parentification</p>	<p>To explore the process of emerging adulthood succeeding childhood parentification experiences and to establish factors that affect outcomes of parentification .</p> <p>Six major hypothesis were created, however inclusion of this is most concerned with hypothesis four; “Do perceived stress of adult role taking, perceived unfairness in the family, coping resources and strategies, and parentification</p>	<p>Emerging adults who related to one or more risk factors of parentification. 205 participants, 42 male and 163 female</p> <p>Qualitative Narrative section: participants were recruited from the participant pool (181, 40 male and 141 female).</p> <p>Interview: after reduction from questionnaire, final interview sample was 10 participants (1 male and 9 female).</p>	<p>Thesis: mixed methods approach. Quantitative and Qualitative parts.</p>	<p>Demographics.</p> <p>Parentification Context Form (Williams, 2013).</p> <p>Parentification Questionnaire ([PQ], Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1999).</p> <p>Parentification Scale ([PS], Mika et al., 1987).,</p> <p>Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Involvement Scale ([AADIS], Moberg, 2000).</p> <p>Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 ([DASS-21], Antony et al., 1998).,</p> <p>Satisfaction With Life Scale ([SWLS] Diener et al, 1985).,</p> <p>Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being – Positive Relations with</p>	<p>Integration of qual and quant findings together: childhood parentification has negative impacts into adulthood and in most cases brings about a maladaptation. Depression, anxiety, addiction, low relational satisfaction, and an abatement of life satisfaction are some of the negative aftereffects. Conversely, positive outcomes of childhood parentification can be related to an increase in maturity in emerging adulthood, higher levels of responsibility and positive coping mechanics.</p>

		<p>context variables affect the relationship between parentification and positive social relations?" and hypothesis five; "Do perceived stress of adult role taking, perceived unfairness in the family, coping resources, coping strategies, and parentification context variables affect the relation between parentification and life satisfaction?".</p>			<p>Others Scale ([RPWV], Ryff, 1989).,</p> <p>Objective Measure of Ego Identity ([OMEIS-Revised], Adams, 2010) selected items from Extended Objected Measure of Ego Identity Status-Revised ([EOM-EIS], Bennion & Adams, 1986).</p> <p>Response to Stress Questionnaire – Family Stress ([RSQ-FS], Compas, 2000).</p> <p>Rotter Internal-External Locus of Control Scale ([RIES], Rotter, 1966).</p> <p>Self-Control and Self-Management Scale ([SCMS], Mezo, 2009).</p> <p>Social Support Questionnaire ([SSQ], Sarason et al., 1987).</p> <p>Written narrative from: Parentification Narrative Form (Williams, 2013).</p> <p>Interview Portion: six questions created by Williams (2013). Questions were: 1. Roles in family. 2. How their adult roles impacted their childhood. 3. How the adult</p>	
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					roles they took on, impact them currently. 4. The reasons for the current impacts. 5. Their beliefs around how similar the impact of their experience are to what others experienced, and why. 6. Anything further they wanted to share.	
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Table 1. Data from scoped sources

Collating, summarising, and reporting the results:

Stage five requires the researcher to take the information found from charting the data. The process happens in two stages; the first stage is a summary of the physical scope of the field, such as geography, year of publication, type of study and interventions used. The second stage is the thematic summary and content analysis.

From the search on PsycINFO (Ovid), there were 109 total sources; from this original search, 14 were selected, and 12 were used. Two articles were excluded as full-text options were not available. There were 15 total sources from the PubMed search, none of them met inclusion criteria. From the hand searching of journals, the researcher searched through the Journal of Family Therapy, which produced three articles, none of which met inclusion criteria. From the Family Journal: Counselling and Therapy for Couples and Families, there were six articles found published by Sage; three of the six articles were duplicates from the PsycINFO (Ovid) search, which were already included in the study selection. The other three did not meet inclusion criteria. Finally, none met the inclusion criteria of the four books that the researcher found through the Auckland University of Technology online library.

Study Range and Characteristics:

The publication dates range from 1995 to 2017, with more sources from 2002 and 2017 (n=9). Eleven sources for inclusion criteria were published in the USA, and one was published in Canada. Seven publications were quantitative studies (n=7), two of those being masters' dissertations. Sources used multiple surveys and questionnaires; three used a demographic questionnaire (Abramowitz, 2015; Hooper et al., 2008; Williams, 2017), and all sources used multiple surveys and questionnaires as interventions. The survey's related to parentification, attachment, life satisfaction, caretaking syndrome, drug and alcohol involvement, post-traumatic growth, self-individuation, resilience, parental health and parental relationships (Abramowitz, 2015; Baggett et al., 2015; Hooper et al., 2008; Levine, 2010; Madden & Shaffer, 2016; Valleau et al., 1995).

Of the quantitative studies that met inclusion criteria, the participants were predominantly female; of the seven studies, every single one had more females than males. Valleau et al. (1995) comment that females were only recruited for their study because the literature suggests that primarily females fall into caretaking roles. Many were recruited through the university undergraduate program they attended. Levine (2010) recruited from mental health clinics, family doctors and community centres, and this sample is the only one that does not stipulate the exact number of females versus male ratio.

The age range for the participants of the seven studies varied between 18 and 30, with a mean of 19.49 years (Madden & Shaffer, 2016), 22.45 years (Hooper et al., 2008), 19.29 years (Baggett et al., 2015) and 29.5 years (Abramowitz, 2015).

There were four (n=4) qualitative studies; interventions were individual, couples and family therapy, conducted by an author who was also a therapist (Betchen, 1996; Byng-Hall, 2002, 2008; Jurkovic, 1997). Of the qualitative studies that used couples and family therapy as an intervention, the participants were John and Lois, Sam and Mary and Ed and Pamela, all for couples therapy (Betchen, 1996). From Jurkovic (1997), Carl and Shirley for couples therapy (these were the only participants the researcher included). Byng-Hall (2002) counselled The Young Family using couples and family therapy. Byng-Hall (2008) counselled The "C" Family and The "B" Family using couples and family therapy.

One literature review (n=1); no intervention (Hooper, 2007a). One book with qualitative ethnographic care studies (counted as a qualitative study) using couples and family therapy as an intervention (Jurkovic, 1997). One mixed-methods approach used three interventions (survey, written and interview) (Williams, 2017).

Thematic findings:

The second stage of the analysis is a thematic construction, where the researcher constructs the data into coherent themes that make sense to support the aim and purpose of the review. The researcher decided to use content analysis to perform the data analysis on the content of the sources required from this review. The researcher chose content analysis because it is a tool used to establish the presence of patterns, themes, and words in data. The type of content analysis the researcher decided to use is conceptual analysis, which looks explicitly at concepts within the data and then draws semantics from them. A concept is chosen based on its occurrence in the data, implicitly or explicitly and allows the researcher to understand the meaning the concept has for the topic area (Clarke & Braun, 2014; Stemler, 2000; Stemler, 2015).

The process of content analysis can be arduous, and given the timeframe of the honour's dissertation, the researcher decided to look at words that commonly occurred and general themes. The researcher also decided to be flexible on how many concepts to code for throughout the process, not to miss out on other concepts that may appear throughout the process. The researcher then collated these findings into categories that built the basis of the general scope of the impacts of childhood parentification on adult intimate relationships. Initially, the researcher devised six themes; however, it became apparent through planning and writing that there was some overlap and repetition, and only four themes were needed. It is also important to note that these themes are not mutually exclusive. The concepts displayed in the themes exist within each other, and each because of the other.

Below are four significant themes explained in detail:

Theme One: Relationships as a challenge – feelings of dissatisfaction:

One of the over-arching themes permeating the twelve articles is that relationships for the Parentified child can be challenging and, most often, have a dissatisfactory dynamic. Multiple elements can constitute dissatisfaction; communication challenges, challenges with Intrapersonal processes, fears around intimacy, rejection and abandonment (Williams, 2017). These are all subjective, but it is clear from the literature that an adult parentified as a child is more likely to experience outcomes of challenge and dissatisfaction related to their intimate relationships (Levine, 2010). There is a theory of “over-functioning and under-functioning”, “parental-childlike”, “co-dependent” and “masochistic-narcissistic” where one person in the relationship becomes the parent (because they have a history of being a parentified child); this behaviour causes them to feel severe dissatisfaction (p147) . Role taking is rooted in historical parentification (this

will be further detailed in Theme 2), but this conditioning makes it harder for the dissatisfied mate to confront their partner with their feelings.

In Williams (2017), there are many references to “low life satisfaction” and the association of parentification with dissatisfaction in many aspects of life. In addition, Williams (2017) conceptualises the relationship between a decrease in psychosocial functioning and low life satisfaction, along with symptoms of depression and anxiety.

There is no explicit use of the terms “low life satisfaction“ or “dissatisfaction” in Betchen (1996). However, it is clear that the pursuer/distancer dynamic, the act of one partner coming towards and the other pulling away, causes intense marital discord supporting feelings of dissatisfaction.

Levine (2010) uses Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development as a theoretical rationale for the relationship between destructive parentification and adult psychosocial life distress. Levine (2010) explains Erikson’s theory concerning the development of destructive parentification the dissatisfactory feelings in adulthood.

Madden and Shaffer (2016) look at how parentification affects dyadic communication in relationships, stating that;

“Specifically, experiences of parentification may affect relationship schema by subverting typical parent-child roles, and disturbances to views about relationship security could subsequently affect abilities to engage in positive, constructive communication with romantic partners” (p314).

Madden and Shaffer (2016) confirmed through their study that higher reported levels of emotional parentification (more destructive) are related to lower levels of effective and healthy communication, which can be challenging and cause dissatisfaction.

Hooper (2007a) looks at the relationship between attachment style, the theory of internal working models and parentification, and states that;

“an ongoing, indefinite period of emotional parentification is usually detrimental to children’s development, often resulting in the suppression of their own needs to meet the needs of their parents and siblings, at the expense of their development, and ultimately disrupting their future functioning and ability to form adult attachment relationships”(p218).

Attachment style will be detailed further in the Results section; however, we know from prior literature that having an insecure attachment style can make relationships more challenging and dissatisfactory (Hooper, 2007a).

Theme Two: Re-enactment of childhood relationships:

Maladaptive coping strategies like people-pleasing behaviour, co-dependency and caretaking are presented in the literature, the destructively parentified child’s job was to caretake for their parent (Byng-Hall, 2008; Valleau et al., 1995)

If this was all they were exposed to in their formative years of development, then their development is centred around making sure the other is a safe person for them. The notion of this is understood through the following passage; “if I can make you ok, then you can finally be what I need you to be – for me to feel ok”. This process is primarily acted out without conscious awareness and lacks mutuality (Theme One).

Jurkovic (1997) talks about marital dysfunction as a source of stress if the relationship is unhealthy. If there is a history of “emotionally impoverished developmental histories”, the parent will seek it out from their mate (p30).

Jurkovic (1997) explains this dynamic nicely through a case study on Carl and Shirly, a couple coming to therapy after being married for 12 years and desperately struggling in

their marriage. Shirley has been described as a “classic co-dependent” (p141) and did not know how to stop over-functioning in her marriage or what might happen to her family if she did. Shirley describes her husband more as a little brother; she feels she is always taking care of him. After some initial investigation from Jurkovic, it became apparent that the way Shirley related to Carl was the way she related to her little brother. As a child, Shirley was left in charge of her younger brother after her parents’ divorce; her father was an alcoholic who paid child support intermittently. As a result, her mother had to work long hours to support the family. The responsibility of raising her brother was Shirley. Shirley worked hard to gain her mother’s approval through becoming the “good older sister” and “co-parent” (p143), but her mother only seemed to take notice when Shirley could not manage her brother’s behaviour. Shirley took care of her mother by taking care of her brother; this is a type of covert parentification. Shirley’s mother still received the benefits of Shirley’s parenting behaviour towards her brother. A quote from Jurkovic (1997) to support this notion further:

“Couples’ presenting complaints often do not include their families of origin. However, it is assumed that intergenerational processes are at the root of many of their problems and provide a rich source of solutions as well, particularly when destructive parentification is involved” (161p).

Carl comes from a family where the members were emotionally distanced and had to fend for themselves; his parents divorced when he was seven, and his father abandoned the family and has not been seen since. Carl physically resembles his father, and he believes that he has become alienated from his mother for this reason. After Carl and Shirley’s first child was born, Shirley felt things change.; she felt the sole responsibility of child-rearing while Carl was at work. Shirley became upset at Carl’s unavailability and irresponsibility. Carl lacked an effective and appropriate male role model. His lack of self-understanding around his father of origin issues meant that he never grieved the loss of his father and his feelings of abandonment. Through this lack and irresponsible role, he too effectively abandoned Shirley and his children (Jurkovic, 1997).

We can see the similarities between both Carl and Shirley's family of origin stories and how they are being re-enacted in their dynamic. Byng-Hall (2008) further explains this dynamic with the quote in his article;

"Parenting roles can become part of the child's identity within the family, and if the child also identifies herself as a little parent, she may take on an identity that is likely to prevail for a long period, often a lifetime, as 'I look after others'" (p148).

This process involves both partners because, to re-enact these maladaptive coping strategies, one partner must find another that fits the role of being looked after. As the behaviour was normal to the parentified child, they can become attracted to what is familiar and, through the theory of psychodynamics, can seek out a partner with similar qualities to their parent.

Theme Three: Development of insecure attachment style – taken into adulthood:

Byng-Hall (2002, 2008) Ambramowitz (2015) Hooper (2007a), Jurkovic (1997), Madden and Schaffer (2016) Williams (2017), Valleau (1995) and Baggett et al. (2015) speak about insecure attachment as antecedents to parentification and its construct concerning attachment theory. The theory of attachment comes from the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth (2013). It is a theory about how a child attaches to their mother/primary caregiver (for this explanation, the researcher will refer to attachment with a mother figure). There is four styles; secure, anxious, avoidant and disorganised insecure attachment. Ideally, the attachment a child has to their mother is secure. The connection builds internal safety, nurturance, and self-strength, allowing the child to feel safe and know that their needs are essential, matter, and trust that they will be met (Jurkovic, 1997). The attachment is built based on the child's interaction with their mother; if the child is getting their emotional needs met, not just physical, being attuned to, feeling supported, cared for and loved; in theory, a secure attachment should ensue. When the child does not receive

the above examples, they can develop an insecure attachment style, either avoidant, anxious or disorganised. The avoidant attachment style develops when the parental figure is not responsive or nurturing to the child's needs; they may have their physical needs met, but the emotional needs are void. The anxious attachment style develops when the parental figure is not attuned to the child and is inconsistent in meeting the child's emotional needs (Byng-Hall, 2002). A quote from Hooper (2007a);

“Bowlby hypothesised that future security, well-being, and positive relationships in adulthood are often contingent on the secure mother-infant relationship (secure base and bond) and the internal working models experienced and produced during infancy and childhood. Furthermore, if maternal deprivation, loss, or separation occur, the outcome can be devastating for the child”. (218pp).

Suppose the child grows up without a secure base and a parent not present to their emotional experience. In that case, they will likely grow up with an insecure attachment pattern, and if the child learns that the only way they can get their needs met is through first meeting their parent needs, they will likely take this patterning into their adult relationships. Williams (2017) suggests that parentification is a disruption to the attachment system and a quote from Hooper (2007a) further supports this notion;

“As a consequence of acting as caretaker to their parents and siblings while having to raise themselves, parentified children may form skewed relationships and poor functioning within the family and the outside world” (p219).

While insecure attachment and parentification are separate constructs, they are not mutually exclusive. Rarely will a child that has been parentified be securely attached, purely based on the nature of what happens in the parentification construct. From here, Williams (2017), Byng-Hall (2002) (2008), and Hooper (2008) talk about the development of internal working models for the parentified child; meaning they can develop a belief that “others cannot be relied upon for care and comfort in times of need” (p7) (Williams, 2017). Internalising this belief can cause the child to believe that they are not getting their needs met because they are underserving, resulting in feelings of worthlessness that can stay with the child into adulthood and thus affect their adult intimate relationships.

An insecure attachment style in adulthood speaks to theme two of this results section. It can create a re-enactment of early childhood behaviours and invariably trigger the other. The internal working model belief can be perpetuated.

Theme Four: Transgenerational repetition of parentification:

The theme of transgenerational repetition of parentification is tied to the three previous themes and does not exist independently. By that, the researcher postulates that other outcomes of parentification for the individual and the couple must be present in order for repetition to occur. Precisely because for this theme to occur, the parentified child must have had a child themselves and now be in a partnership that lacks emotional support (Byng-Hall, 2007; Jurkovic, 1997; Valleau, 1995). Trans-generational repetition of parentification means the passing on of the parentified cycles; the dynamic that the parent was inducted into now becomes the dynamic they have inducted their child into. This repetition happens because the “quality of parent-child relationship is rooted in the parent’s parenting by his or her parents” (Jurkovic, 1997) (p20). There is a type of entitlement that unknowingly comes with being a parentified child frequently the individual seeks a type of compensation from their partner or their child, and this is because they have been “deprived of their inherent right or entitlement to appropriate parenting” (p47) (Jurkovic, 1997).

In many sources, the term “perceived unfairness” is used often to describe the feelings of the parentified child against their caregivers, and this pattern “can often be traced across the generations and should be taken as far back as the parent’s grandparents” (p382) (Williams, 2017). Parents can feel entitled to collect a debt from their child, who then grows up feeling a sense of unfairness and then that child collects the debt from their child, and the cycle of “unfairness” continues (Byng-Hall, 2002).

Byng-Hall (2002) illustrates this cycle through a case study example of The Young Family, consisting of Margaret (M), Bruce (F), Ann (2.3/4) (daughter 1) and Susan (7 months) (d2). The family was initially referred due to sleeping and eating problems they were experiencing with Ann. Ann would only go to sleep when both parents were at home; they would both spend half an hr trying to settle her down, and then she would wake when they left the room. Margaret and Bruce had a tumultuous relationship, and Margaret would threaten to leave Bruce once a week but says, “everyone knows I do not mean it” (p383). Threatening Bruce would trigger his attachment system and make him more emotionally available to Margaret, thus getting her attachment needs met (relating to Theme three). Ann would take this threat at face value and feel scared. Her way of controlling the situation was only to sleep if both parents were in the house to settle her down (covert parentification; in controlling the parents, Ann believes she may be able to control the situation). In further therapy sessions, it came to light that the parents expected Ann to care for each of them; they would ask Ann if she loved them often and expected Ann to give affection instead of giving themselves freely. This is a type of parentification in that the parents are expecting Ann to make them feel loved, and their feelings rely on Ann’s behaviour. Further, the therapy uncovered that Margaret’s parents divorced when she was two and Jean (Margaret’s mother) became heavily depressed, and Margaret tried to care for her. Margaret was consumed by the unfairness that she believed her childhood to be, had many unresolved feelings toward her childhood, and felt deprived of Jean’s parenting. Specifically, many issues and feelings for Jean and Margaret were avoided and not discussed. Because of this, Margaret vowed that she would be completely transparent when she had her kids. However, Margaret realised that this patterning was not helpful and was too much responsibility for Ann, who was too young to handle the emotionally complex information. A quote from Williams (2017) to further support this notion:

“Authors highlight the transmission of parentification from generation to generation and discuss parentification as an attempt to recreate the past relationship with one’s parents through one’s children. The role reversal is thus said to fill a void that has been left by the previous generation” (p5).

Bruce’s mother left the family very suddenly and without warning when Bruce was 10, leaving Bruce to be looked after by his elder sister and father. Bruce constantly anticipated the breakdown of his marriage to Margaret and was prepared to look after his children, with the help of Ann, to look after baby Susan, thus perpetuating a generational pattern.

The article shows how Bruce and Margaret’s upbringing is linked to their dysfunctional behaviour in their marriage; we can see the link between the parentified patterns within their family systems and how they have been brought into their family unit. Both experience a deprivation from their perceived lack of parenting, and both bring deprivation to their partnership and then their child-rearing abilities.

Discussion:

This scoping review aimed to examine the field for literature relating to childhood Parentification and its impact on adult intimate relationships. This discussion section will summarise the primary evidence base and thematically constructed themes. The researcher will discuss the process and the methodology's strengths and limitations and critique the research process.

The researcher located 137 sources through a database search, journal databases search and a book search, using the search terms outlined in the methodology. This number was reduced to 12 after applying the formulated inclusion/exclusion criteria. The researcher used the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) six-stage methodology approach with some integration of the JBI approach primarily. The researcher found the Arksey and O'Malley methodology suitable for its iterative approach. The JBI model felt too confined and as a first-time researcher, could add and subtract as needed allowing for more flow in the research process.

The JBI process of research was created and form of the basis of the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) approach, which was further extended by Levac et al. (2010) and then further extended again by Peters et al. (2017; 2015). The JBI process still uses the five/six steps that Arksey and O'Malley, Levac et al, and Peters et al use, however three extra steps are used (2005; 2010; 2017; 2015). These are; seven: analysis of evidence. Eight: Presentation of the results and Nine: Summarising the evidence in relation to the purpose of the review, making conclusions and noting any implications of the findings. The researcher implemented the use of the JBI step seven, into step five of the Arksey and O'Malley framework (2005). Step eight of JBI was integrated with step four of Arksey and O'Malley and step nine of the JBI process was used to underpin 10.1 – Reflections, Limitations and Conclusions.

The use of Arksey and O'Malley enabled the identification of a lot of literature, which sometimes the researcher felt overwhelmed by (written more about in the Reflections and Limitations section) . The flexible process allowed the researcher to add and subtract information as needed. From this, content analysis was conducted on the 12 citations, and the themes below emerged:

1. Relationships as a challenge – feelings of dissatisfaction
2. Re-enactment of childhood relationships
3. Development of insecure attachment style – taken into adulthood
4. Transgenerational repetition of parentification

Through the thematic construction, it became apparent that these themes were closely interrelated do not stand alone, as mentioned in Theme 4. The constructs and phenomena displayed are not singular and co-occur. For example, Theme 1, 'Relationships as a challenge – feelings of dissatisfaction', presents a theme in the literature. If an individual has an insecure attachment style, it re-enacts childhood dynamics and carries childhood into parenting. Here they are likely to feel dissatisfied in their relationship; rarely, maladaptive issues occur independently as an exclusive pathology(Abramowitz, 2015; Betchen, 1996). This shows that there is a psychopathological integration in any dysfunction. This is not to say that general or non-pathological dissatisfaction is not normal because healthy couples experience dissatisfaction at points throughout their relationship. The dissatisfaction and challenge that the researcher refers to sit inside historical dysfunction that parentified children are burdened with(Byng-Hall, 2007). As mentioned in the first theme, there is the act of over-functioning and under-functioning. This behaviour comes to form the pattern of destructive parentification, either with each other or with their child. This is called "Unilateral Parentification", and the example is the relationship between Carl and Shirley, which is also intertwined with Theme Two (Jurkovic, 1998) (p147). This patterning can be challenging to move out of because often parentified children develop a self-concept and personality

around being a caretaker, a "good daughter", and the rescuer (Betchen, 1996; Jurkovic, 1997).

When individuals have a history of emotional deprivation and dysfunction, keeping a relationship is harder for several reasons (Jurkovic, 1997). Grant (Grant, 1998) mentions "falling in love is an attempt to make up the shortfall of childhood" this is connected to Theme Two of re-enacting childhood dynamics (75p). Grant (1998) confirms this by stating that at the peak of romantic love stages, frequently referred to as the honeymoon stage, there is an "intrapsychic" regression. Partners are unaware of their roles because of the common intoxicating lustful feelings associated with the beginning of a relationship; there is no awareness of the child re-enactment and ensuing parentification dynamic. Individuals can unconsciously be attracted to the familiar. A parentified child may initially be attracted to a partner that has similar characteristics to their unavailable parent. There might be an unconscious hope that this prospective partner can meet their unmet childhood needs (Grant, 1998; Jurkovic, 1998). The researcher notes that the theory of repetition compulsion is very similar here and could be used within the context of Psychic-Regression (Weiner, 1980 in Grant, 1998). Repetition compulsion is the tendency to unconsciously relive childhood to master the dysfunctional states they were raised in (Grant, 1998).

The emergence of a type of entitlement as the parent that was discussed as an element of trans-generation repetition of parentification specifically links with Theme two. From the individual's perspective, there are two ways this repetition and re-enactment happens, first through attempting to parentify their partner, drawing their partner in to be their parent. If the other partner were parentified, they would move into this role quickly. Suppose the other partner was not parentified, and for example, their parents were emotionally absent. In that case, the process of caretaking their parent is not natural to them, and they will distance themselves from the partnership dynamic (Betchen, 1996; Valteau et al., 1995).

Once there is distance in the partnership dynamic, the parentified partner will now scramble to get their needs met by someone else, and this is where they enlist their child (Byng-Hall, 2008). The parentified adult was not parented appropriately, entitlement emerges, and there is no awareness around their inappropriate behaviour. This process can be seen clearly in Byng-Hall's (2002) illustration of The Young Family, with Margaret and Bruce, and Carl and Shirley in Jurkovic (1997). The researcher was particularly drawn to these two case analyses, and they felt that it draws the entire thematic construction of themes together and explains all processes coherently.

The process of trans-general repetition and childhood re-enactment is further understood within Theme Three. For example, the parentified adult might be anxiously attached; needy and self-fulfilling; the partner might be avoidant; distancing and lacking emotional capacity due to a lack of childhood attunement (Abramowitz, 2015; Betchen, 1996). Attachment systems are a way that a family system can be understood and conceptualised through internal working models (Byng-Hall, 2002; Hooper, 2007a). The family system may have its attachment ecosystem or a family script that is inherently known and felt; these could be roles and positions within the family such as who does what and who supports who (Bretherton, 1985). Attachments are formed in childhood; the anxiously attached child is more likely to be parentified first in the family script. Anxiously attached individuals need more security, as they cannot trust that their caregivers will continue to be there for them because the care, they receive is intermittent. They learn that they need to meet the parent's needs to receive connection and safety, giving them a sense of connection and importance. From this, they seek to make their parent "safe enough" through their parenting behaviours to make their parent be there for them in a more stable way (Byng-Hall, 2002; Hooper, 2007a; Jurkovic, 1997). The parent of the anxiously attached child is often anxious themselves. They are only intermittently available because they are often preoccupied with their issues. The anxious child is hypervigilant to any sign of unavailability and distance. They cling to their parent to avoid feelings of abandonment and often behave

to demand the parents' attention (Byng-Hall, 2002). When the parent becomes anxious, the child's closeness is utilised for support and protection, which soothes the child's need for connection and continues the cycle. It is noted that parents and children are likely to remember this cycle differently. Parents remember when their child tried to get their attention by demanding and did not remember when the child was there to support and soothe them – because they were preoccupied with other issues. The child then remembers when the parent was not there for them and the burden of responsibility, they felt to caretake their parent but not remember their demanding behaviour. The result is that the anxious child grows up feeling that the way they were parented was unfair and then unconsciously tries to collect the debt from their partner first and then their child. Thus, the cycle of parentification continues.

Reflections, Limitations and Conclusion:

This review intended to examine the scope of childhood parentification and its impact on adult intimate relationships. I chose this topic to locate and examine existing literature available on both dynamics concurrently. I was pleasantly surprised with what I found and, in retrospect, thought I would not locate as many sources. That said, I could have refined the search strategy further, directing the searching to couples' dynamics more and further specifying their inclusion criteria.

The quantitative sources did not provide adequate depth, limiting the thematic process and adjusting the inclusion criteria to only mixed methods and qualitative studies would have been more suitable. I was expressly hoping to find depth on the topic with explicit mention of how childhood parentification might affect adult couples. However, during the examination process, I understood there to be not one specific affectivity. Instead, the phenomena of parentification resides in an individual, and the way the individual conducts themselves in a relationship determines' how the dynamic plays out. I was aware of this but

did not know enough about couple dynamics to reflect this adequately in the scoping process.

I identified studies explicitly noting how childhood Parentification affected intimate adult relationships. In reporting the results, it became clear to me, that the topic area needs further extrapolation as a significant number of variables emerged in their own context. I found it difficult to delineate the thematic construction themes mentioned previously in the discussion. The themes are complex and intertwining and, in many cases, exist within each other as overlays or as different levels of dysfunction. This made the reporting processes challenging to me, because I had not been exposed to the complexities and different variables associated with this field prior to this research. The results needed to be reported in a clear and sophisticated manner that is currently out of my current experience level. To overcome this, I could have selected one element of the phenomena, such as attachment and parentification, rather than attempt to analyse and report the entire scope. While I thought about adjusting the methodology, this topic would be more suited to a qualitative design. However, given the sensitive and confidential nature of relationships, ethical approval and time constraints; I decided against it.

I found only one source covering all aspects of the topic; *Lost Childhoods: The Plight of the Parentified Child* (Jurkovic, 1997). I found this source all-encompassing with theoretical underpinnings, clinical case examples (including couples), a historical perspective, causation, consequences, treatment, and prevention were all covered. More evidence-based data would support a more robust understanding of this subject, providing professional therapeutics with a platform for meaningful discovery and positive outcomes.

The area of transgenerational repetition and attachment lend themselves to further research because of the dire consequences on human relationships. We know that positive

and negative relationships significantly affect our well-being, and bringing awareness and healing to these cycles minimises their occurrence.

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