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Title: "Witness" to violence? Psychological discourses of children in situations of domestic violence

Thematic area: Feminisms and intersectionality

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This paper takes a critical discursive and feminist perspective on psychological accounts of children who experience domestic violence. Academic, popular and professional discourses around domestic violence (DV) tend to represent children and young people (CYP) as passive witnesses and victims - as individuals who watch, who suffer from and who are damaged by the violence (e.g. Rivett and Howarth, 2006; Spilsbury et al, 2007). We consider how constructs like 'witness', 'trauma' and 'exposure' operate in psychological and other health and social care discourses of children, exploring the implications of such constructions for young people's identities. In particular we explore how such accounts constrain the articulation of more agentic and resistant subjectivities in children living with domestic violence.

Keywords: Domestic violence; child witnesses; agency; resistance