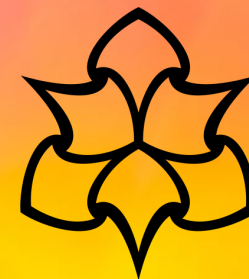




'Myth Busting' Hearing Voices

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Hello!

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Zarah Eve, PhD Researcher,
multiplicity for young people

Lauren Kinch, PhD Researcher,
Imaginary Friends

Hannah Leach, Trainee Clinical
Psychologist, compassionate flow with
voices for young people



Sarah Parry and colleagues have worked with Voice Collective since 2016 on the @youngvoicestudy and to develop the [Uniting Senses and Experiences Network](#) with funding from Emerging Minds. This presentation was developed for ACAMH on 29th June 2022.

What do we know?

- Everyone's experience is different and unique to them
- Young people want access to early, tailored, compassionate options for support
- Parents and practitioners can feel deskilled and under supported
- It seems to be the 'C & T' of CBT approaches that young people state are most helpful
- Normalisation, psychoeducation and 'space to talk without judgement' are wanted by young people and parents

Challenging Stereotypes

"They were like special friends who I could confide in. They would all give me advice or comfort me when I felt bad."

"Because I don't have any friends and they keep me safe"

"If I'm going through something bad, they mostly support me!"



NOT HAVING TO
TELL MY STORY
OVER & OVER
TO EVER
CHANGING
PROFESSIONALS

ACTUALLY **HELP** ME
DON'T TRY TO CONVINCE
BOTH OF US THAT YOU ARE...

SOMEONE
WHO
BELIEVES
IN ME

NOT HAVING TO
TAKE CARE
of the
PROFESSIONAL
WHEN THEY'RE SHOCKED
BY MY STORY

DON'T **PANIC**!
IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE
ANSWER JUST SAY SO...

DON'T JUST OFFER
QUICK FIXES
I'VE HEARD IT BEFORE!

& USE
THESE ALREADY

HELP ME!

I SHOULDN'T HAVE
TO GET **REALLY ILL**
BEFORE I GET
SUPPORT

WHAT WOULD GOOD SUPPORT
LOOK LIKE & INCLUDE?

*For young people with multi-sensory experiences

UNDERSTAND

★ THAT IT'S REALLY HARD
TO **ARTICULATE** WHAT I'M EXPERIENCING

★ THAT PROFESSIONALS ARE
DAUNTING

★ THAT I'VE HAD **BAD EXPERIENCES**
WITH PROFESSIONALS

★ THAT IT'S SO EASY TO
MISINTERPRET WHAT I'M SAYING

LISTEN

DON'T DISMISS
ME OFF-HAND

SILENCE
can be
POWERFUL
TIME TO THINK

ASK ME.....
Do you
want
COMFORT
or a
SOLUTION

**TWO-WAY
SUPPORT**

EQUALLY **LISTENED** TO & **HEARD**

PEOPLE'S
NEEDS WHAT THEY
WANT

BALANCE

**GIVE ME
TIME & SPACE**

- A PRIVATE
PLACE

BE HUMAN

★ Humility

DON'T MAKE ME FEEL
LIKE I'M A
BURDEN

SARAH PARRY
@dr Sarah Parry

PAUL FRENCH
@pfrench123

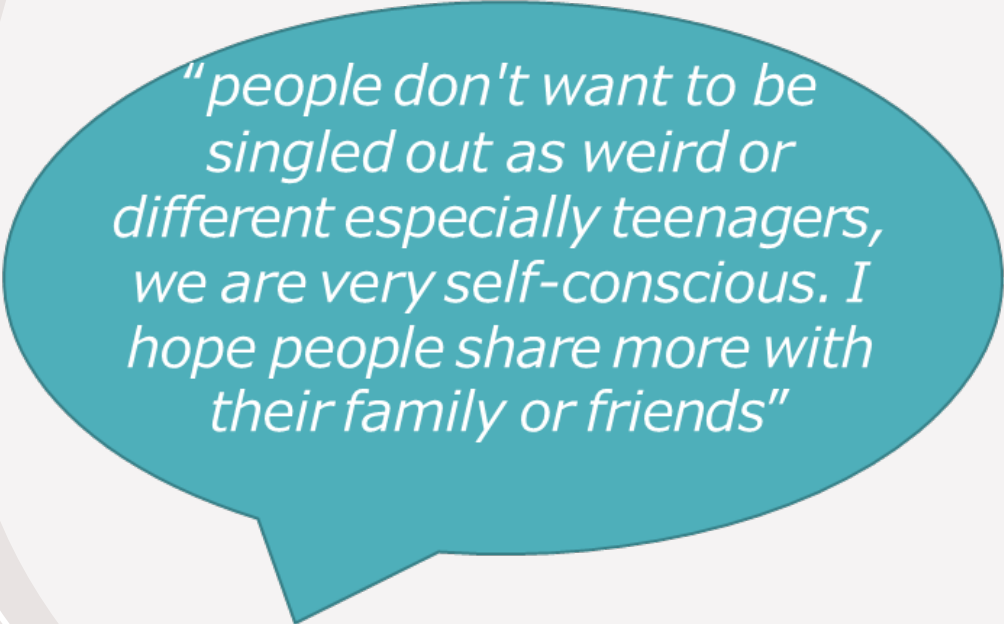
FIONA
MALPASS SARAH
MORGAN @voice
collective

Emerging
Minds

DIAGNOSTIC.CO.UK

Practical tips and communication

- Try to listen without judgement
- Explore the young person's lived experience with them, together
- Don't assume the voices themselves are problematic
- Try to contain your own feelings
- View reliable information and speak with informed practitioners, such as at Voice Collective
- Offer a safe space to talk and listen
- We have developed some [self-help guides](#) and [videos](#), based on young people's recommendations



"people don't want to be singled out as weird or different especially teenagers, we are very self-conscious. I hope people share more with their family or friends"

Coping strategies

“Turn it into an imaginary setting and talk to them if they're bothering you”

“I've never been a "talker" I find it very difficult to express my feelings and talk about them in a structured way where I get my point across. I prefer metaphors and mantras. Writing is my way of communicating the truth. When I talk I hide or miss parts out. It isn't raw or real. When I write I can be me”

“Sometimes I listen to music and do mindfulness colouring but if the voice is strong enough I just have to ride it out and wait for the voice to stop which is awful”

“Art helps me and my friends”

For young people in the Young Voices

What is your advice for other young people who hear voices?

“To make meaning of it or remember that even though they're there they have never hurt me.”

“Talk to someone you really trust if you can –

“...because you're not strong enough but because it's foggy and your vision is clouded. Get help if it's

“...to people, it will aid you. Always someone who you trust. A best

“If your voice makes you feel bad that it's there, or if it makes you angry about you, or anyone else, bounce it back to where it belongs – the voice.”

“Realise why they are there the voices. Also, that you're in control.”

“Try to focus on your positive voices, if you can't, then create them. Or even write things that you like about yourself – like, your laugh, your music”

“You are not alone if you're close

Find information

Next Steps

Collaboration is key!



-
- Developing an app for young people who hear voices



- Developing brief interventions for young people in CAMHS and schools



- Investigate why and how distressing hallucinations may increase risk of self-harm and suicidal thoughts in adolescence



What is Multiplicity?

- The experience of having more than one self in the same body
- While Dissociative Identity Disorder is a diagnosis, multiplicity is an *experience*, encompassing a holistic range of experiences
- People's experiences vary greatly and are thought to lie on a spectrum
- Current focus is heavily medicalised, which excludes a range of people, especially younger people
- There is a need for tailored support and understanding

Practical tips for living with multiplicity

- Ask about personal language preference
- Don't ask for proof
- Share experiences with open-minded people, often online
- Try to develop positive internal communication
- Schedules often help to minimise involuntary switching
- Accept headmates on their own terms
- If there is amnesia, everyone keeping a diary can help to fill in gaps
- To join the mailing list for this PhD, please email Zarah at z.eve@mmu.ac.uk

Compassion with voices

What research has been done so far?

A recent review found that not enough research or clinical work focuses on building compassionate relationships with voices.

In therapy, voice hearers are often encouraged to get rid of their voices or stand up to them as if they were a bad influence.

The idea of making friends with your voices, and supporting each other, is rarely explored in therapy. But do some young people naturally do this?

Children and young people are far more likely to hear voices than adults. Often this is at stressful times of life, e.g. when a young person is being bullied, and the voices may stop naturally when the stress ends.

As researchers we could learn a lot from the ways young people make sense of their voices, and how they cope with hearing them.

To join the mailing list for this study, please email h.leach@lancaster.ac.uk

Hearing Voices in Childhood

- It is quite a common human occurrence, with around 75% of people experiencing hearing a voice or voices at least once in their lifetime!
- Contrary to what you may have heard, it doesn't always mean it is due to a mental health problem.
- It can be caused by a whole wealth of other factors. This includes a lack of sleep, extreme hunger, stress or worry. Sometimes having a high temperature can also cause voice hearing, along with drug use.
- Hearing voices is not always a negative experience! Although some people describe their voices as annoying or intrusive, for some people, the voices are positive and welcomed.

Check out the Uniting Senses and Experiences Network (USEN)



<https://www.mmu.ac.uk/research/research-centres/hpac/usen-network#ai-18477-3>

IMAGINARY COMPANIONS

Imaginary companions can be an invisible friend, a personified object or an impersonation the child has created. They can also be a voice inside or around the head.



Enhance language skills



Greater theory of mind



Enhanced emotional skills



Better understanding of second order false belief



More advanced social skills

Most existing research has focused on psychosocial benefits of imaginary companions, considering and analyzing why a child may be experiencing them. My current research looks at the psychotherapeutic benefits of imaginary companions, making sure the data comes directly from the child.



Any Questions?

If you would like to know
more about my research,
please contact me at:

19089489@stu.mmu.ac.uk

Associated Publications

Parry, S., Djabaeva, R. & Varese, F. (2018). Engaging Young People Who Hear Voices in Online Mixed-Methods Research. SAGE Research Methods Cases. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526457783>

Parry, S. & Varese, F. (2020). Whispers, Echoes, Friends and Fears: Forms and Functions of Voice Hearing in Adolescence. Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health. doi: 10.1111/camh.12403, ISSN 1475-357X

Parry, S., & Varese, F. (2021). "Listen to the parents... Really listen to the child!" Parents Narratives of Supporting Children Hearing Voices. Psychosis: Psychological, Social and Integrative Approaches. doi: 10.1080/17522439.2020.1856174

Parry, S., Loren, L. & Varese, F. (2021). Young People's Narratives of Hearing Voices: Systemic Influences and Conceptual Challenges. Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy. doi: 10.1002/cpp.2532

Eve, Z., Parry, S. (2021) '[Exploring the experiences of young people with multiplicity](#).' *Youth and Policy*, July 2021

Parry, S., Eve, Z., Myers, G. (2022) 'Exploring the utility and personal relevance of co-produced multiplicity resources with young people.' Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma, 15(2) pp. 427-439.