

# Parenting as an Injecting Drug User

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AIVL



# Personal history

- Childhood
- Finding drugs
- Coming to understand drugs
- What the decades and the drugs have taught me



# Autumns wedding day



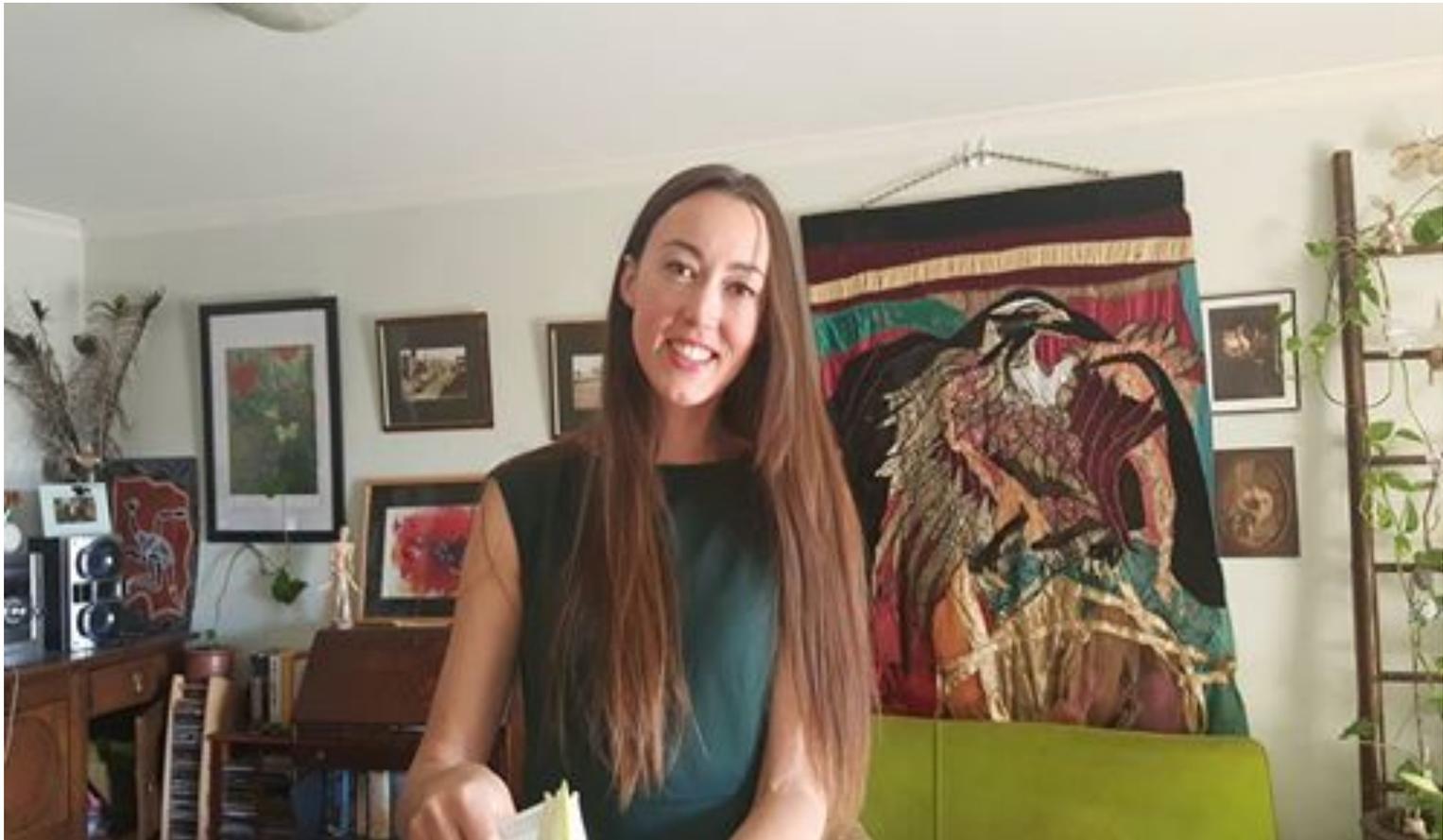
# Rose white and rose red



# Lara and Aidan



# Imogen



# Grandma assisting the Easter Bunny



# Myles and Autumn



Myles





# Imogen's Study



‘She just adored the ground I walked on  
Challenging dominant discourses of  
injecting-drug using parents

“ As the child of an injecting drug user I am driven to investigate ‘constructions’ of IDUs as parents because my direct experience is not reflected in research about, or by constructions of, drug users and their families.



# Methadology

- pragmatic phrenomenology was used to analyse data, studying streams of consciousness rather than attempting to demystify the unconscious
- Qualitative semi-structured interviews
- Recruiting through peer based drug user organisations in cities
- \$50 dollars payment for approximately 2 hours



# Demographics



- 11 participants,
- 3 male
- 9 female
- 3 Indigenous
- Ages 17 to 37

# Results and Discussion

## Section one: Challenging the Dominate discourses

- Drug using parents do spend money on rent, bills and food
- Drug using parents do give gifts to their children
- Drug using parents are not thieves and prostitutes
- Drug-using parents sometimes need support
- Drug using parents do love their children



- “We never went without food or {had} no electricity or anything like that. We were always comfortable in our lives (Ruby)
- During the times she was using, when school camps came I just didn't even bother asking 'cause I knew I couldn't go. I didn't bother asking- I'd always say 'oh no I don't wanna go'. Because at the same time I didn't want her stressing about money” (Kate)



- My mum really overcompensated for being a drug user. I was a really spoilt kid. My Christmases were just ridiculous. My birthdays were ridiculous. She bought me something every week, every payday. I could have whatever I wanted food wise, you know {she} just really overcompensated for being an IDU. (Kelly)



- We always got the best things. Mum was a drug dealer so she always had money. But even when she didn't she'd always go out of her way to save her dole and she'd always dress in the nicest clothes.(paul)

- She didn't want to be who she was. she loved her kids so much she would do anything for 'em she was just trapped in that world and she didn't want to have had a special soul and a special heart that me and my family could see but no-one else could see. (sam)
- You Know I don't want them to feel sorry for me....I don't want them to talk about it every time....once I tell them then I know that its not that important, but its sort of the not telling them that becomes important. (paul)



# Session two: Children know about and experience discrimination against IDUs

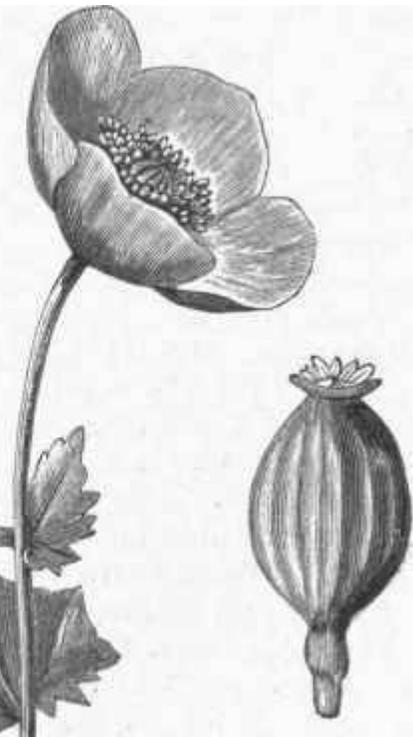
- Children know their parents take drugs even if they aren't told
- Children learn to be ashamed of their parents
- Children learn to be ashamed of themselves
- Children **keep the secret** so they can pass as normal(in most cases)
- Telling people is **always** difficult
- Children like to know they are not alone



- We'd walk to the shops, just doing the shopping whatever people would look at my mum and just know 'she uses cocaine' and just look down on her....we knew what was going on and people looked down on our family and it pissed us off (sarah)
- I think there was times when kids weren't Allowed to play with me after their parents cottoned on {and} my parents weren't {parents}
- For some reason I always knew not to tell anyone so I must have known something about why it would not be good for people to think that about her. So I don't remember when (zara)



- Its been a barrier for me I **feel like if people don't know they really don't know me...**For some reason its really important..... If I really am close to someone they do eventually know.{ it makes me feel} comfortable and it is relief and I feel happy that they know (zara)



- I think just having friends who were experiencing the same thing made it so much better . And more normal...Not normal I mean we always knew it wasn't normal I spent a lot of time hiding it from my other school friends...but I think because we had each other it felt OK (ella)

# Conclusion

This research reflects the shame, stigma and discrimination experienced by people going about lives in the best manner they know how due to the 'junky' and 'child of a junky' stereotypes.

At the same time in many cases, the stories repudiate the very existence of a 'stereotypical' junky parent. The stories point to the fact that drug use does not equate with bad parenting and that the children of functional IDUs can experience more harm from outside the family home than from within it.

