

‘I didn’t know what I was doing’: The role of substance use in child to parent violence.

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Leeds – 15th July 2014

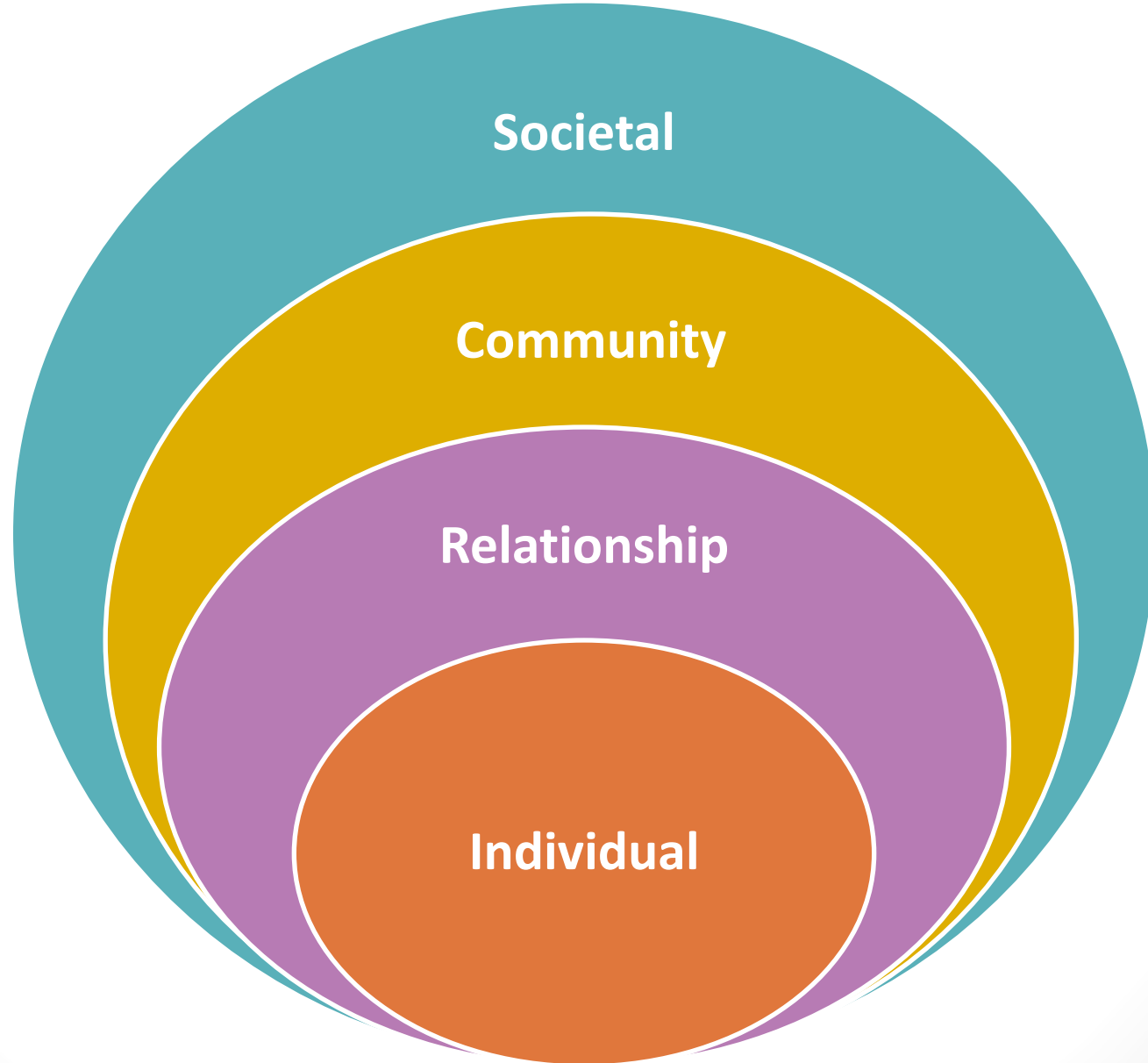
Overview

- Understanding domestic violence
- Understanding the role of substance use in domestically violent behaviour
- Nature and extent of sub related CPV
- Implications for our responses

Understanding DV: theory

- Individual/intra individual factors
 - Personalities, e.g. personality disorder
 - Characteristics, e.g. low self esteem, alcohol and other drug use, excessive jealousy
- Socio-cultural factors
 - Social-structural, e.g. Social class, education, income
 - Feminist theories, e.g. Gendered power relationships/patriarchy
 - Social learning/socialisation e.g. witnessed violence and abuse as child, own experiences – normality
- Combination of internal and external factors

Ecological model for understanding violence



Understanding substance use in violence perpetration: evidence

- No simple causal relationship
 - Pharmacological effect – affects cognition and motor coordination. Dose related. Huge individual variation.
 - Disinhibition – cognition disrupted – incorrectly interpret other people's behaviour. No uniform effect.
 - Expectancy effect – key role in impact of substance use *regardless* of impact of pharmacological effects.
 - Deviance disavowal – substance use is used as an excuse; minimise responsibility – blame the substance.
 - Socio-cultural influences – importance of cultural messages about impact of substances and acceptable behaviour; gender roles

MacAndrew and Edgerton 1969: 172

- *...persons learn about drunkenness what their societies impart to them, and comporting themselves in consonance with these understandings they become living confirmations of their societies' teachings.*
- 'time out' concept – rules of accountability set aside

Cultural redefinition

If the power of alcohol as an instrument of domination is the power of a cultural belief that it causes violence, that power exists only so long as we go on believing in its power and acting and reacting on that basis.

(Room 1980: 8)

So what...?

- *Why is she banging on about theory?*
- *I much preferred the earlier speakers who talked about practice and interventions?*
- *Is it time for lunch yet?*

Why is it important?

- Our theories and beliefs determine our responses, our models for practice and intervention?
- Substance to blame – get treatment and all will be well
- Individualist theories – change/punish the individual person
- Social learning/socialisation – work with the family/local community
- Socio-cultural – need to look at policies; need to look at messages our society and cultures give out about alcohol and other drugs, violence, gender

Extent of substance involved CPV

- Don't know.
- Galvani/Adfam/Stella Project Study (2010) - Providers of Family Support:
 - family conflict daily
 - regular violence and abuse
- Adfam/AVA (2012) – 88 parents/grandparents
 - high levels of co-existence – range of abuses
- The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS 2009:14) found all six perpetrators of parental homicide (mainly mother) “were either suffering from mental health problems or under the influence of alcohol and/or controlled drugs”.

Nature of substance involved CPV

- Financial and emotional - needing money for substances (particularly if use is problematic)
 - "Definitely emotional - a drug using child is usually very good at manipulating a parent's emotions so that they can carry on using, and get money for it, no matter how terrible it makes that parent feel. Then there's financial, and in some cases, it will get physical."
 - "... with alcohol, it's more the physical or verbally abusive side. With drugs, it tends to be related to needing money or keeping a certain lifestyle, it's more financial and emotional abuse, but it's still there"

Nature (cont.)

- Physical (taken from Adfam/AVA report, *Between a rock and a hard place* (2012))

"I've had knives at my throat off him...he said to me 'you better move now cos I'll use it', so I said 'do me a favour and do it because I can't take it anymore, you're destroying me'."

"[My son] pinched my car and smashed my house up...it was mother's day."

Nature (cont.)

“...it was only when the boys started copying their father's behaviour that maybe everything just fell into place and I weren't having it. I was not having my boys being brought up like that. And they would have done, they would have carried on and they're worth so much more than that and that's what did it. That is what really, finally, I'd had enough when they started swearing and if I got cross with them they would turn round kicking and punching and biting and swearing and it's not fair.”

- Mum – late 20s; Dad – perpetrator after drinking (sometimes); Children – aged 2yrs and 4yrs

Does substance use affect CPV differently to adult DV?

- ? less physical tolerance of substances in CYP – faster/ higher levels of intoxication:
 - Possible/probable - but assumes substance use has a causal effect on violent and abusive behaviour
- ? less experience of handling the effects of the substance, mentally and emotionally:
 - Possible/probable – lack of emotional maturity so substances may emphasise moods; for some this is mixed in with adolescent angst and development

Does substance use affect CPV differently to adult DV? (cont.)

- ? more vulnerable to hearing wrong or mixed messages around substance use and abusive behaviour/time out:
 - Possible – less mature; less exposure to range of views and also to consequences
- ? is it about learned behaviour – saw dad drink and abuse mum, that's the way to behave
 - Probable – home/parents are main influence on children in relation to substance use, and violent and abusive behaviour

Does substance use affect CPV differently to adult DV? (cont.)

- Violence and abuse tolerated more by parent due to substance use
 - Possible – particularly for teenage children – blaming the substance; ‘experimenting’ with substances; hope that things will change/just a phase
 - Getting help for substance will change behaviour
 - Additional issues stemming from parent-child bond: disbelief; guilt; self-criticism; heartbreak; bad experiences of service responses.

What does this mean in terms of responses?

- Understand difference between conflict and DV in families affected by substance use
- Understand shame and stigma felt by parent*
- Ask the right questions, in the right way, and do so routinely – for both issues
- Intervene as early as possible with:
 - Parent being abused
 - Individual being abusive
 - Other Children and family members
- Knowledge of a) local substance use and b) local DV services
- Be prepared to educate support services**

“Double stigma”

- “It’s the same as with having a drug or alcohol user in the family. It’s that stigma. And then there’s the double stigma of admitting you’re being abused as well. ... The other thing is that they are scared of what the person who’s abusing them would do if they found out.”
- Prevents help seeking and disclosure

Education of family support services

- "I would be interested in any statistics you've got about which drugs are more linked to it. And about domestic abuse towards parents. And the advice we can give a family member so they can cope with it, and keep themselves and the rest of the family, like other siblings, safe."
- "I would be interested along the lines of what fuels it - Is Stella or Whisky more inclined to make someone violent, things like that."

Thank you!

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- Email: sarah.galvani@beds.ac.uk
- Galvani, S. (2010) '*Living with domestic abuse and substance use.*' Available to download from http://www.adfam.org.uk/docs/livingwith_dv.pdf
- Galvani, S. (2012) *Supporting people with alcohol and drug problems.* Policy Press: Bristol