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CONSTITUTING CHILD-TO-PARENT VIOLENCE: LESSONS FROM ENGLAND AND WALES

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This paper draws upon the first national study of local responses to child-to-parent violence (CPV) in England and Wales to examine emergent representations of CPV and consider their implications for children and families. Central amongst these is the Government's depiction of CPV as a form of 'domestic violence and abuse'. For many individuals and organisations, that term is synonymous with intimate partner violence. We contend that the resulting conflation of (and confusion between) violence by intimate partners, and by children, towards women is producing dominant representations of CPV that may have negative consequences for families. Our research with over 200 practitioners reveals the existence of subjugated knowledges of CPV, however, that provide pockets of resistance to these dominant representations.

Key words: child-to-parent violence, domestic abuse, discourse, problematization, representation.

Introduction

A recent review of international research concluded that child-to-parent violence (CPV) remains 'one of the most understudied types of family violence' (Simmons et al 2018: 31).[1] The repeated infliction by some children of harm on their parents is regarded as distinct from the occasional conflict that is commonplace within families (Cottrell 2001: 3). While early accounts of CPV focused on physical violence more recent narratives have included emotional, psychological and financial abuse (cf. Harbin and Madden 1979: 1288; Cottrell 2001: 3; Holt 2013: 1). Parents' reluctance to disclose CPV alongside a lack of awareness amongst practitioners have hampered attempts to gauge the extent of the problem in England and Wales. In the international literature, however, estimates of the 12-month incidence of physical CPV by adolescents in community-based samples range from 5% to 21%, while comparable figures for 'verbal, psychological, and emotional' aggression range from 33% to 93% depending on the definition employed (Simmons et al 2018: 32).

To date, much of the research in this nascent field has sought to document the 'reality' of CPV, describing the behaviours displayed, its causes and correlates, and its impact. This has included discussion of whether witnessing intimate partner violence is a risk factor for CPV, and the nature of any causal pathways. Evidence suggests that children who experience family violence are at heightened risk of violent behaviour generally (Kushner 2020), and that between 50 – 80% of children engaged in CPV have witnessed or been subjected to

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[1] Throughout the article, 'parent' is used to include anyone acting in a parental capacity. It thus includes (but is not limited to) biological, foster and adoptive parents, special guardians and kinship carers.

violence at home, although the causal mechanisms between violent victimization and CPV remain unclear (Simmons et al 2018: 38-9). The complex interplay between intimate partner violence and CPV is a central theme of this article.

In England and Wales, CPV has historically been absent from official policy documents, practice guidelines and academic commentaries on domestic violence, criminal justice and social care (Holt 2009: 7; Miles and Condry 2015: 1076). In recent years, however, the findings from a study of 1,892 cases of adolescent to parent violence (APV) reported to the Metropolitan Police (Condry and Miles 2014), the publication of books on filial violence by academics and practitioners (Bonnick 2019; Coogan 2018; Holt 2013, 2016), and research with practitioners in England (Nixon 2012; Holt 2013) and Europe (Wilcox and Pooley 2015), have raised the profile of CPV amongst practitioners, academics and policy-makers. There has also been much discussion of CPV amongst those working with adoptive families (e.g. Adoption UK 2019) who have drawn media, academic (Selwyn and Meakings 2016) and political (Department for Education 2014; 2017) attention to their experiences.

It might be concluded that CPV is increasingly being *recognised* as a social problem. Our contention, however, is that CPV is currently being *constituted as a particular sort of* social problem through competing discourses, knowledges and truth claims.[2] Of particular note is the Government's articulation of CPV as 'a form of domestic violence and abuse' (Home Office 2015a). This article deploys a post-structural approach to policy analysis (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016) to interrogate this representation of CPV and consider its effects. It also documents the alternative accounts or 'subjugated knowledges' (Foucault 1976a) of CPV identified by the authors during the first nationwide study of local responses to CPV in England and Wales.

The findings and arguments presented in this article come at a critical moment in the emergence of CPV. After a long gestation the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21 looks set to appear on the statute books.[3] The Bill includes a definition of domestic abuse as 'abusive' behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are 'personally connected' (Section 1(2)). The following behaviours are deemed 'abusive': '(a) physical or sexual abuse; (b) violent or threatening behaviour; (c) controlling or coercive behaviour; (d) economic abuse; (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse' (Section 1(3)). Individuals are 'personally

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[2] Here and throughout, 'discourse' is used in the Foucauldian sense to mean the rules and practices that structure action (Foucault 1968; 1969).

[3] In 2018, Theresa May's Conservative Government held a consultation on proposals for *Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse* (Home Office 2018). In January 2019 the Government published its response alongside a Draft Domestic Abuse Bill (HMSO 2019), followed in July by the Domestic Abuse Bill (House of Commons 2019). In November Parliament was dissolved pending a General Election and the Bill fell. In December Boris Johnson's new Conservative Government announced plans for an enhanced version of the original Bill (Prime Minister's Office 2019: 79-80). In March 2020 the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21 had its first reading in the House of Commons. At the time of writing (October 2020), the Bill is journeying through the House of Lords.

connected' if they are (or have been) married, in a civil partnership, intimate partners, in a parental relationship, or relatives (Section 2(1)). That the definition includes filial violence has been made explicit: '*Domestic abuse does not only occur between couples*. It can also involve wider family members, including parental abuse by an adolescent or grown child' (HMSO 2019: 5, original emphasis).

We contend that representations of CPV as a form of domestic violence without informed debate about its contexts and correlates could have deleterious consequences for children and families. If research is a political practice (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 13-26) then this article is a deliberate act of subversion. By highlighting the different discourses of CPV and examining their 'conditions of existence' (Foucault 1991: 60), we demonstrate not only how dominant narratives have been 'produced, disseminated and defended' but also how they may be 'disrupted and replaced' (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 20).

The article begins by articulating the aim of the research and the methods deployed. This is followed by information about the practitioners who participated. The main body of the paper documents the dominant and subjugated representations of CPV, and of the children involved, that emerged during the research. The ensuing discussion considers the lived effects of these representations upon children and families. The paper concludes by considering recent developments in domestic violence policy and their implications.

Aim and Methods

The aim of the research was to identify the diverse and divergent discourses of CPV within central and local government policy and practice and consider their effects. We adopted a post-structural approach to policy analysis (Bacchi 2012; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016), which rejects the notion that governments *identify* and *respond* to problems, contending instead that governments *establish* objects for thought through discursive practices. On this line of argument, '"Knowledge" … is something immanent to what people *do*, not a transcendent phenomenon, waiting to be discovered' (Bacchi 2012: 3, original emphasis). The research was also underpinned by a belief that governance 'includes numerous sites, agencies and "ways of knowing" that interrelate in important ways' (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 5) to construct both the objects (e.g. CPV) and subjects (e.g. children and families experiencing CPV) of practice.

We began by examining official representations of CPV in central government policy documents. We then examined the discourses of CPV apparent in local policy and practice, as evidenced by practitioners. We regard CPV, and the children and families who experience it, as concepts in constant flux, contingent upon the knowledges and discourses that mould and (re)make them. Accordingly, the research examined how CPV and those involved are

'problematized' in governmental policies and practices,[4] explored the deep-seated assumptions upon which these representations rest, and considered the possible impact on children and families.

The exploration of local discourses of CPV proceeded in three phases. In Phase One, conducted between July 2014 and March 2015, questionnaires were distributed to practitioners attending conferences on CPV in two large northern cities, one southern town, and one London Borough. The questionnaires gathered qualitative accounts of practitioners' work with children and families experiencing CPV. Phase One generated 152 eligible responses.[5]

Although Phase One provided useful preliminary data, the convenience sampling method meant that findings were skewed towards practice in Northern England.[6] In Phase Two, conducted between June 2016 and April 2017, we contacted the Heads of all 153 Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) in the seven regions of England and Wales[7] to ask what services they or other local organisations offered to families experiencing CPV. YOTs, established by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, are multi-agency teams of practitioners that facilitate the delivery of youth justice services in local authority areas. They are a key site where CPV is encountered (Condry and Miles 2012: 248), and are well placed to provide details of local practice within and beyond their organisations. Responses were received from 59 practitioners from 57 YOTs in England and Wales, with responses from individuals in all seven regions.[8]

During Phase Three, conducted between July and September 2017, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 YOT managers and other practitioners engaged in the delivery of CPV services in England and Wales, with at least one interview in each of the seven YOT regions. The practitioners were chosen because it was apparent from Phase Two that they had significant experience of CPV and adhered to divergent discourses, thus enabling the exploration of different discourses in depth.

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[4] Here and throughout, 'problematization' refers to how an issue (i.e. CPV) is represented (or problematized) in policy and practice (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016).

[5] Questionnaires completed by practitioners from outside England and Wales (n=7) or by policy makers with no experience of practice (n=3) were excluded from the analysis.

[6] Many respondents (n=63/149, 42%) came from the northern cities and the majority (120/149, 81%) came from North East or North West England. Location data were missing in three cases. Valid percentage figures are given throughout, rounded to the nearest whole number.

[7] The seven regions are: London; the Midlands; North East England; North West England; South East and Eastern England; South West England and Wales. The Heads of Youth Offending Teams were contacted by email. Their contact details are listed on the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) website.

[8] The numbers received from the different regions were: London (10 out of 31); Midlands (6/19); North East England (11/26); North West England (8/20); South East and Eastern England (13/29); South West England (4/13) and Wales (5/15).

In total, the research gathered information from 216 practitioners drawn from 70 of the 153 YOT areas in England and Wales.[9] [10] Practitioners' details were entered into SPSS and analysed to produce descriptive statistics about respondents. The qualitative data from all three phases were coded using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) that examined *what* was said, how these 'truths' had been constituted (i.e. the conditions under which they *could* be said, thus locating them within a wider discourse), and their effects (Bacchi and Bonham 2016).

Finally, although the interviews were transcribed verbatim, some quotations underwent minimal tidying before inclusion in the article to aid readability. Every care was taken, however, to ensure that the original meaning was retained. Practitioners' accounts are not presented as indicative of 'reality' but of their position in relation to particular 'knowledges' of CPV. They are also presented because 'the mere fact of speaking, of employing words, of using the words of others … is in itself a force … that brings about effects', the nature of which are central to this article (Foucault 1976b, cited in Davidson 1997: 4-5). All quotations are accompanied by non-personal identifiers: ID1 – 152 denotes the practitioners who completed questionnaires in Phase One; ID153 – 211 refers to the YOT managers and their colleagues who responded to email requests for information (Phase Two); ID212 - 226 denotes those who participated in interviews (Phase Three).

The Research Participants

The study involved practitioners from a wide range of organisations. In Phase One, of the 149 (out of 152) professionals who indicated which organisation they worked for, most came from YOTs (n=30, 20%), family and parenting services (n=20, 13%), youth and children's services (n=17, 11%) or domestic violence services (n=16, 11%). Other agencies represented included adult and children's safeguarding services, the education sector, substance misuse services, adoption support, the police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), health and housing. When asked whether they or their organisation currently encounter cases of CPV, all but three respondents said that they did, with half (n=77, 51%) describing the encounters as 'frequent' or 'very frequent'. In Phase Two, the responses from YOT managers described practice within and beyond their organisations, as did the accounts from practitioners in Phase Three.

Forming the Subject: Representations of the Child Engaged in CPV

Research on filial violence in criminal justice samples depicts it as physical aggression by adolescent males (e.g. Condry and Miles 2014: 1; Routt and Anderson 2015: 26; Ibabe and

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[9] The total number of practitioners involved (n=216) is less than the total involved in Phases One, Two and Three (n=152, 59 and 15 respectively) because some individuals participated in more than one Phase.
[10] Any reader who wishes to view the data collection instruments used during Phases One and Three should contact the corresponding author.

Juareguizar 2010: 620 – 622). However, most studies of physical CPV in community and clinical samples have found no significant difference in rate of perpetration by gender (Simmons et al. 2018: 33). Possible reasons for boys' overrepresentation in offender samples include: a higher prevalence of serious violence amongst boys engaged in CPV (p.33); gender biases in criminal justice responses to violence by girls (p.33); and greater social tolerance for aggression by girls (López 2009, cited in Ibabe and Juareguizar 2010: 622). Community-based research has also found differences in the nature of CPV by gender. Simmons et al. (2018) reported 'that girls tend to be more verbally or psychologically abusive towards their parents than boys' (p.33), but said that definitional issues in some studies made their findings tentative.

Understandings of CPV as gendered were apparent in this study. As one practitioner stated:

> Young lads tend to be more violent, the outbursts, the threats, the maybe damaging property. What we found with the girls, their behaviour is more emotional, psychological. So you get the odd one where they will hit, shout and scream, but it tends to be threats to hurt themselves. (ID 213)

The reports of emotional abuse by girls, including 'threats to self-harm' or 'to kill myself' (ID 213), making false allegations of abuse against a parent (ID 212) and unpleasant name calling (ID 173), unsettle 'taken for granted' (Foucault 1981: 456) understandings of CPV.

There was also evidence that a child's gender may shape practitioners' perceptions of their behaviour. One family support worker, for example, was unable to find support services for a family where two 15 and 20 year old girls 'were severely beating Mum on a daily basis', and felt that the issue 'wasn't taken seriously because it was daughters against Mum' (ID 4). Further, the academic literature and the accounts of practitioners both present female carers as most likely to experience CPV. Practitioners also contended that involvement in group-based interventions for parents usually fell to mothers. This may be due, in part, to a greater incidence of CPV in single-parent families, where lone parents tend to be female (Simmons et al. 2018: 40). In this study, practitioners also suggested that interventions delivered in the day may be difficult for working fathers to attend (ID 218), and that 'pride' and 'being ashamed to admit that it's happened to them in an open group' (ID 213) may deter men from being involved. The message, then, was that women disproportionately experience, and are held responsible for addressing, filial violence.

Turning now to age, the practitioners in this study described CPV by children of all ages. Some suggested that challenging behaviour by young children might only be recognised as problematic 'when it doesn't stop, and they get to 13, 14, and they're breaking doors, smashing windows, and getting in your face' (ID 213). The research also revealed the risk posed by some young children, illustrated by this description of a 10 year old's behaviour towards his mother:

'He's head-butted her in front of me, bites her ... I've seen her "here to here" black and blue.[11]

Her eye was closed and swollen, it looked like a boxer had hit her in the face ... She suffers from anxiety, and they've got a bike shed downstairs and he'd locked her in it... It was 20 or 25 minutes and then his aunt realised. She let her out, and he punched her in the face and caused this eye.

He has assaulted her in front of a doctor, a social worker, me, and at school.' (ID 220)

These findings are consistent with a study of over 1,023 American children (Ulman and Straus 2003) and a survey of 538 parents drawn from across Great Britain (Thorley and Coates 2018) that reported CPV by children of all ages. Filial violence by young children unsettles the contemporary 'formation' (Foucault 1969) of those engaged in CPV as adolescents. Nevertheless, it is this representation that informs (and is formed by) the Government's guide for practitioners on responding to 'adolescent to parent violence and abuse (APVA)' (Home Office 2015a). At the time of writing, the guide is being revised.[12] It is hoped that the new version will frame the problem differently to better support the provision of services for children and families.

Forming the Object: Representations of CPV

We examined official representations of CPV, as evident in central Government policy documents. We also explored practitioners' accounts of their practice to determine 'on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based' (Foucault 1981: 455), and considered their impact. This enabled us to identify the different representations of CPV in circulation that shape governmental action with implications for children and families.

CPV as resembling Domestic Violence

Until the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21 is enacted, there exists an agreed cross-party, non-statutory definition of domestic violence and abuse as:

'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.' (Home Office 2013: 2)

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[11] In stating that the woman was '"here to here" black and blue' the practitioner was indicating the extent of the bruising caused by her child.
[12] Both authors had direct engagement with members of the Home Office Domestic Abuse Team in 2020 as part of the review process.

This framing includes not only physical violence, but also psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse (Home Office 2013: 2), and coercive and controlling behaviour that is now a criminal offence (Home Office 2015b). It covers not only the actions of current and former intimate partners but also those of family members, thus including CPV and elder abuse. It also 'includes so called "honour" based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group' (p.2). When the definition was widened to encompass 16 and 17 year olds in recognition of the prevalence of intimate partner violence within this group (Home office 2013: 4-5), this brought young people who are violent towards their parents within its remit. Policy and practice guides have consistently confirmed the inclusion of CPV within the official definition of domestic violence (Home Office 2013: 15; HMIC 2014: 29; Home Office 2015a: 3; HMSO 2019: 5).

Despite the breadth of this definition and its statutory replacement, for many individuals and organisations 'domestic violence' and 'domestic abuse' are synonymous with violence by men towards female intimate partners.[13] For example, when the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights published the results of a pan-European survey of violence against women, it used the terms 'intimate partner violence' and 'domestic violence' interchangeably (FRA 2014: 3). In England and Wales, a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) on 'Improving the Police Response to Domestic Abuse' deployed 'domestic abuse' to mean intimate partner violence throughout (HMIC 2014), whilst recent National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Guidance for domestic abuse-related work in prison and probation settings explicitly 'focuses on violence and abuse that takes place between intimate partners' (NOMS 2016: 5). Support services including Refuge and Women's Aid, academics (e.g. Buzawa and Buzawa 2017; Hester 2009) and media reports also tend to depict domestic violence as gendered intimate partner violence.

It is, then, important to distinguish between CPV *as a subset of* domestic violence, where domestic violence is the collective name for a wide range of behaviours, and CPV *as resembling* domestic violence, where domestic violence is narrowly conceived as intimate partner violence. By problematizing CPV as a form of domestic violence when domestic violence is widely conflated with intimate partner violence, official narratives are blurring the conceptual boundaries between violence by children, and by intimate partners, towards women. Given this conceptual slippage, it is apposite to examine the discourses that frame intimate partner violence to determine what it means for CPV to suggest that the two are somehow similar. Feminist representations of intimate partner violence have significantly shaped conceptions of (and responses to) men's violence against women (Houston 2014).

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[13] It is widely accepted that intimate partner violence is gendered. Of the 2.4 million adults known to have experienced intimate partner violence in the year ending March 2019 in England and Wales, two thirds were women (Office for National Statistics 2019: 2).

On this line of argument, intimate partner violence is one facet of a social and structural schema that renders women subordinate to men in all spheres. Some commentators also frame CPV in the context of power dynamics. Coogan (2018: 25), for example, states that 'child to parent violence is an abuse of power through which a child or adolescent under the age of 18 coerces, controls or dominates parents' (see also Cottrell 2001; Routt and Anderson 2015; Tew and Nixon 2010; Wilcox 2012), whilst research with boys engaged in CPV has documented their misogynistic attitudes towards women generally (Howard and Rottem 2008).

The problematization of CPV as resembling intimate partner violence was reflected by some practitioners during this study. It was apparent, for example, in suggestions that filial violence represents an attempt 'to exercise control over the parent' (ID 44). It was also implicit in some practitioners' descriptions of CPV as learnt behaviour resulting from 'witnessing and experiencing domestic violence as a child in the home' (ID 25) which leads to the 'normalisation of domestic violence' (ID 68). Further, it was suggested that the normalisation of misogyny and violence towards women in the domestic sphere is supported by broader social and cultural trends. One practitioner, for example, suggested that society has 'taken some steps back around what young men think is okay behaviour' towards women (ID 212), whilst another cited celebrity figures whose actions appeared to legitimise violence towards women (ID 213).[14] These accounts contribute to a narrative of parallels between intimate partner violence and CPV.

There is evidence of CPV being conflated with domestic violence in national policy and local practice. At the national level HMIC, for example, directs police officers to deploy the Domestic Abuse and Stalking Harassment (DASH) risk assessment in cases of 'domestic abuse within families [as well as] intimate partner violence' (HMIC 2014: 68).[15] The practitioners in this study provided evidence of CPV being constituted as domestic violence through local policies and practices. Examples include: the referral of young people engaged in CPV to their local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC); the presence of practitioners engaged in the delivery of CPV services on their county council's Domestic Abuse Board; the adaptation of interventions for intimate partner violence for use with CPV; and the delivery of CPV services by local domestic violence services. We will return to the complex interplay between domestic violence and CPV when considering recent policy developments and their implications.

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[14] Speaking about Chris Brown's violence towards Rihanna (Beaumont-Thomas 2017) and Eminem's depiction of domestic violence in song lyrics (Doyle 2010), he said: 'They're watched by millions and they behave like that, and you've got these impressionable young people looking up to them … and they mirror some of the behaviours'.
[15] Concern has been raised about the validity of the DASH assessment in cases of CPV (McManus et al. 2017) and about the predictive power of the tool generally (Turner et al. 2019).

CPV as a consequence of 'poor parenting'[16]

Representations of antisocial children as the product of materially and morally impoverished parents have a long history. Over two centuries ago, the Committee for Investigating the Causes of the Alarming Increase of Juvenile Delinquency in London deemed '[t]he improper conduct of parents' largely responsible for the trend (1816: 10). Concern for the poor was intertwined with a belief that poverty eroded morality, that a 'laxity of morals ... has rendered a considerable number of parents regardless of the welfare of their children' (p.12), and that an absence of care and control was fuelling crime. The conflation of poverty, morality and poor parenting is also evident in recent political history. Since the late 1990s, a stream of policy initiatives by different governments have deemed 'good parents' central to family, community and societal security. Commentators have suggested that notions of a 'parenting crisis' run 'like a golden thread' (Jenson 2018: 12) through a history of neoliberal strategies infused with a politics of parent-blame that targets poor families whilst marginalising the effects of structural inequalities (Crossley 2018; Jenson 2018).

As one social worker stated, CPV is 'very much seen as a parenting issue' (ID 21). Analysis of practitioners' comments revealed the objectivization (Bacchi and Bonham 2016: 83-94) of CPV by some respondents as a product of 'inadequate parenting' (ID 56) by those with 'poor parenting skills' (ID 70). Practitioners from several areas reported the use of generic parenting programmes in response to CPV. These included, for example, the Triple P-Positive Parenting Programme which, according to its author, 'aims to prevent severe behavioural, emotional, and developmental problems in children by enhancing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents' (Sanders 1999: 72). Evidence of Triple P's effectiveness, however, pertains primarily to its use as a preventive intervention for parents of children from birth to 12 years (Sanders et al. 2003), not with parents experiencing violence from their adolescent children. Some practitioners have questioned the appropriateness of generic parenting programmes in this context, suggesting that services designed specifically for CPV are required (Wilcox and Pooley 2015: 58). Similar concerns were raised in this study by practitioners who challenged '[t]he belief that parenting programmes are sufficient' (ID 126), and criticised the use of generic interventions 'where parents are processed like sausages through parenting programmes, and it doesn't work' (ID 143).

Many respondents suggested a causal relationship between some parents' complex problems, deficient parenting and CPV. Parents' poor mental and physical health, problems with drugs or alcohol, experience of intimate partner violence, and 'chaotic lifestyle' (ID 30) or 'dysfunctional family structure' (ID 24) were among the issues cited. The

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[16] The term 'poor parenting' reflects the views and language used by some practitioners. It does not reflect any judgement on our part.

problematization of CPV as the product of poor parenting caused by personal circumstance was evident in some local policies and practices. As one YOT manager stated:

'If you're so mentally ill that you can't leave the house, it's really hard for me to talk to you about how to engage better with school. If you've been in a domestically violent relationship, I've got to help you with that before I can start to talk to you about sanctions and managing your child who has witnessed all that. So we evolved our parenting offer to be much more about supporting the parent. And all of this will address CPV.' (ID 222)

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2007: 1) suggests that people living in poverty are more likely to experience the individual and family-level factors that were linked to poor parenting. Despite this, there was little reference by practitioners to the wider socio-economic landscape within which parenting occurs. Since 2010 changes to taxes and benefit payments have reduced the net incomes of households in the poorest quintile by approximately one tenth (Portes and Reed 2018), whilst between 2010-11 and 2017-18 local authorities saw a 49.1% reduction in government funding resulting in sustained cuts to local services (National Audit Office 2018). In neglecting such factors, practitioners' accounts of deficient parenting resonated with neoliberal knowledges that place responsibility for poor outcomes of all kinds firmly within the family home.

CPV as the product of complex trauma or complex needs

Since the 1990s, the fields of neuroscience and psychiatry alongside clinical practice with children and families have produced new 'truths' about the impact of 'multiple or chronic exposure' to sources of 'developmentally adverse interpersonal trauma' such as being subjected to physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or witnessing violence (van der Kolk 2005: 404). According to this narrative, complex trauma can have a negative impact on brain form and function and psychological development, which may precipitate maladaptive behaviours that appear oppositional, rebellious or antisocial (van der Kolk 2005; Perry and Szalavitz 2017), and increase the risk of serious, violent or chronic juvenile offending (Fox et al 2015). Recent years have also seen growing concern about the psychological impact of witnessing domestic violence on children and its deleterious impact on their behaviour (Kimball 2015). Further, there is a growing literature on children with cognitive and developmental disabilities or 'complex needs', such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum conditions, mental health issues, and foetal alcohol syndrome, that includes discussion of complex needs as risk factors for violence and aggression (Brosnan and Healy 2011).

To date, research on CPV has focused on children's behaviours, not their backgrounds. The practical and ethical constraints upon gathering sensitive information from vulnerable children mean that detailed accounts of their experiences are largely missing from current accounts of CPV (*c.f.* Swift 2014). The practitioners in this study provided information that

begins to fill this knowledge gap. This included descriptions of children's experiences of violence and abuse:

> 'He was 20, but the police officer remembered him being 14 or 15 and in care. His mum and step-dad were in a very abusive relationship and he was quite badly treated.' (ID 217)

> 'There was suspected sexual abuse. And the parents were very punitive. The children were made to stand on a chair with their hands out, with books on their hands. They were made to stand there for ages. They were put in cold showers. They were hit. They were forced to watch pornography.' (ID 219)

> 'Mum is very, very verbally aggressive to her son … They had been out for the day on a coach and he got travel sick. Mum thought he was playing up. She told him that she hoped he'd die.' (ID 220)

Describing the experiences of five children in one family experiencing CPV, one practitioner said:

> 'There was very, very, very severe domestic violence, physical violence, particularly from the youngest children's father. The oldest children, who weren't his, were victims too.'

> 'The oldest daughter is playing up at the moment. She's very unhappy at home. All she wants is love and attention. She's aggressive to Mum, the other siblings, smashes the house up, aims it at everybody, swearing, going out and engaging in risk-taking behaviour to get attention, but it's the wrong kind of attention.'

> 'The next child down thinks it's all his responsibility. He tried to hang himself because he thinks that everything that's going wrong is his fault because he's the next oldest male. He's ten years old.' (ID 219)

These experiences echo the causes of trauma described in the literature on developmental trauma, the impact of which is frequently discussed in the literature on fostering and adoption (e.g. American Academy of Pediatrics 2015). It is unsurprising, then, that the emerging literature on CPV in foster and adoptive families tends to attribute filial violence to early life experiences of trauma and their developmental and behavioural impacts (e.g. Selwyn and Meakings 2016; Adoption UK 2017). In this study, the influence of neuroscience and child psychiatry was particularly apparent in the 'knowledges' of CPV articulated by practitioners working with foster and adoptive families. One paediatrician working with families of adopted teenagers, for example, explained the main causes of CPV as:

'Developmental trauma disorder, or complex post-traumatic stress disorder, as a result of extreme early neglect and abuse which led to their removal from abusive birth families, placement in local authority care, and later adoption from local authority care.' (ID 82)

These sentiments were echoed by other practitioners working with adoptive families. For example:

'[The main reasons behind the CPV that I encounter are] early neglect and abuse in the birth family; poor quality, non-therapeutic foster placements; children with neuro-disabilities and no ability to self-regulate, who are fighting attempts by adopters to re-parent them therapeutically.' (ID 72)

'Adopted children have, in the main, encountered abuse, neglect, trauma and foetal damage. They do not always receive the therapeutic help they need to process this, and so they develop control issues.' (ID 128)

These and other respondents advocated therapeutic responses to filial violence. A collaborative initiative by Adoption UK, PAC-UK and the Department of Health, entitled the Child-to-Parent Violence Project 2017-18, provided training for social care, health and education practitioners that included discussion of early life trauma and appropriate responses.[17] Similarly Evans (2016) advocates trauma-based responses to filial violence. Such initiatives constitute CPV as a product of complex trauma, and as having a psychological or neurological basis.

Turning to complex needs, the academic literature notes the prevalence of complex needs amongst children engaged in CPV (see Simmons et al. 2018). In this study, some practitioners' explanations for CPV referred to such traits. There was, however, little evidence of CPV being constituted as a product of complex needs in policy or practice. Practitioners working with children with complex needs cited 'a lack of resources for children and young people with disabilities who are violent towards their parents' (ID 107). Concern was expressed that 'professionals don't want to know, or feel they can't provide support due to a child's disability' (ID 108). Whilst recent years have seen the growth of group interventions for children and parents (Holt 2013: 125-131), some respondents questioned 'whether programmes are appropriate for children with complex care needs, or learning disabilities' (ID 109). Similarly, it was suggested that 'more specific work is necessary with disabled young people, especially those with autism and Asperger's Syndrome' (ID 116).

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[17] This information comes from an undated leaflet for the scheme available at: https://www.pac-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Child-to-Parent-Violence-Project-Brochure-v1.0.pdf , last accessed 21/10/20.

Reflections on the dominant narrative and its effects

Our research has identified divergent problematizations of CPV, which sit within wider discourses. Problematizations of CPV produce 'discursive effects', which shape what is thought and said about filial violence, 'subjectification effects', which constitute children and families in particular ways, and 'lived effects', where the discursive and subjectification effects intertwine to produce responses that impact upon people's lives (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 23). When CPV is conflated with domestic violence, the resultant subjectification produces a child perpetrator and an adult victim. Some have suggested, however, that whilst there may be a clear dichotomy between victims and perpetrators in cases of intimate partner violence, with CPV this is less clear cut (Condry and Miles 2014: 270). As noted at the outset, experience of family violence is common amongst children who engage in CPV (Simmons et al. 2018: 38-9). Other correlates of CPV include: parental rejection (p.35); low self-esteem, a lack of confidence and unhappiness (p.36); mental health issues including depression and self-harm (p.36); substance use (p.36); and learning difficulties and other problems at school (p.40). Thus 'perpetrators' of CPV may be victims in other contexts.

Some practitioners explicitly rejected such representations of CPV. For example, one practitioner, who deemed CPV a consequence of poor parenting, rejected terms like 'parent abuse' and 'perpetrator' because they 'make the victim of shite parenting to blame for acting out the consequences of what they have been exposed to'. He also maintained that using language commonly associated with domestic violence is not appropriate because 'it's not … supporting and nurturing and encouraging' (ID 222). Another practitioner, who viewed filial violence as resulting from a dysfunctional home life, said that the children involved 'should be dealt with as children and not labelled as domestic violence perpetrators' because 'they may not get the right intervention' (ID 213). We shall now examine the interventions that may flow from such labels.

Official representations of CPV could have deleterious 'lived effects' beyond constituting children as domestic violence perpetrators. Contemporary definitions of CPV include psychological abuse which, according to some writers, is designed to 'dominate, coerce and control' (Howard and Rottem 2008: 10). Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 made repeated or continuous coercive or controlling behaviour in an intimate or family relationship a criminal offence. Miles and Condry (2015: 1079-80), noting that the legislation applies to everyone aged 10 and above, suggested that it 'introduces a potential new route for criminalizing abusive behaviour from adolescents towards their parents under the

broader umbrella of domestic violence'. Official data on proven offences by juveniles are insufficiently fine-grained to determine whether this is the case, however.[18]

Representations of CPV sit within broader discourses of domestic violence. Houston (2014) contends that in the USA, feminist understandings of intimate partner violence as patriarchal force have driven the criminalization of domestic violence policy, resulting in mandatory criminal interventions in domestic violence cases. Official statistics for England and Wales depict intimate partner violence as highly gendered, with women more likely to experience all types of domestic abuse than men (Office for National Statistics 2019). This representation has also been articulated in a series of policy documents on violence against women and girls (e.g. Home Office 2011; 2016; 2019), alongside moves towards the criminalization of domestic violence. This is evidenced, for example, by the emphasis placed by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the National Police Improvement Agency on positive action in domestic violence cases (ACPO / NPIA 2008), the advent in 2015 of a criminal offence of coercion and control, and the publication in 2018 of revised guidelines for sentencing in domestic abuse cases which state that the domestic context makes the offending more serious and thus deserving of a higher sentence (Sentencing Guidelines Council 2018).

The move towards criminalization was evident in the Government's consultation on *Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse* (Home Office 2018) which eventually precipitated the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21. After proposing to enshrine a broad definition of domestic abuse in statute, the consultation document focused on intimate partner violence in language that reinforced the dichotomy between 'victims' and 'perpetrators'. Measures to 'pursue and deter perpetrators' (p.47) included provisions to facilitate victimless prosecutions because 'victims may not always want to pursue a criminal justice response' (p.49). Examples included the use of body worn video cameras, which may increase the proportion of detections leading to a charge in domestic violence cases (College of Policing 2014). Questions about how to 'support victims through the justice process from the point of report onwards' (p.53), alongside a proposed legislative assumption that all victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in court to enable them to testify (p.51), promoted a criminal justice response as the appropriate response to domestic abuse.

International evidence suggests that the criminalization of domestic violence may have deleterious 'lived effects' for families experiencing CPV. American research (Strom et al. 2014) found that mandatory and pro-arrest policies for domestic violence increased the likelihood of arrest for boys and (in particular) girls engaged in filial violence, leading the authors to call for 'continued examination of the impact of these policies and the responses

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[18] The Youth Justice Statistics (YJB / MoJ 2020: Chapter 4) aggregate violence against the person offences, within which coercion and control is subsumed.

of police more generally on changing arrest rates for juveniles and on arrest rates for girls specifically' (p.446). Canadian and Australian research suggests that concerns around criminalization may prompt parents to endure violence to protect their child (Cottrell 2001: 35-7; Howard and Rottem 2008: 54).

This study found evidence that criminal justice responses may also pay insufficient heed to the relational context within which CPV occurs. As one YOT manager observed:

> We had a case where there was an exclusion zone around a parent due to ongoing abuse and violence. Within their license agreement the young person was not allowed to go back to the house. That wasn't a very effective way to manage it, because Mum still wanted contact with her son. And quite a lot of their contact, from our point of view, was positive... Putting something in place to prevent contact is difficult to impose within a family structure. (ID 226)

Criminal justice responses to CPV may have other perverse consequences. One practitioner expressed concern that a parent-victim might be held liable for a fine incurred by their child following an incident of CPV (ID 95). Further, recognition of the criminogenic effects of systems contact have underpinned sustained reductions in the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system (Lewis et al. 2017: 1244-5), which could be undermined by the criminalization of young people engaged in CPV.

It seems, then, that dominant representations of CPV, coupled with the criminalization of domestic violence, could have deleterious effects upon children and families. That is not to suggest, however, that discussions of CPV should divest it from the context of family violence within which it may occur. Despite disagreement about the precise mechanisms, the existence of a causal link between children's violent victimization and CPV is a constant theme throughout the representations of filial violence identified in this research. Representations of CPV as resembling domestic violence present it as a learnt behaviour, flowing from cognitive distortions about the normality and necessity of patriarchal violence in relationships (Gilchrist 2009: 135-7). Representations of CPV as a consequence of 'poor parenting' suggest that women's own experiences of violent victimization might impede their ability to be a 'good parent'. Representations of CPV as the product of trauma often cite experiences of family violence as the cause. If children's violent victimization is a large part of the problem, then work with perpetrators alongside support services for child and adult victims must be part of the solution. This brings us to reflect upon recent policy developments around these issues.

Developments in Domestic Violence Policy and their Implications

Before COVID-19, the Children's Commissioner estimated that 831,000 children in England were living with intimate partner violence (2019: 30). Throughout the Government

consultations and Parliamentary debates on the new domestic abuse legislation, the impact of family violence on children, and the need to include them in any statutory definition of domestic abuse, were repeatedly raised. For example, in evidence to the Commons Public Bill Committee Lucy Hadley, the campaigns and policy manager for Women's Aid, stated:

> We absolutely support making clear in the definition that children are impacted by domestic abuse … [J]ust witnessing domestic abuse is not what we mean here; it is about living in an environment of fear and control that has really devastating impacts on children's wellbeing and development. (HC Deb 4 June 2020, c42)

It was envisaged that including children in the definition would support the development of bespoke services. As Andrea Simon, head of public affairs for the End Violence Against Women Coalition, stated, 'There are certainly many gaps that need addressing, in terms of service provision for children…' (HC Deb 4 June 2020, c40). Nicole Jacobs, the designate domestic abuse commissioner for England and Wales, noted significant geographical variation in the availability of children's services, stated that child-victims often do not qualify for children's social care services, and confirmed this as one of 'the biggest areas where there are gaps in the system' (HC Deb 4 June 2020, cc5-16). At the end of the Bill's journey through the House of Commons, a Government amendment broadened the proposed statutory definition of domestic abuse to include children.[19]

There is much in the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21 to be applauded. As the Bill enters the House of Lords, however, key concerns remain outstanding. Part 4 of the Bill places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide accommodation-based services for domestic abuse victims and their children. During the consultations and debates key stakeholders argued for this duty to be extended to community-based support. As Nicole Jacobs stated:

> … if we go ahead with the statutory duty for refuge-based or accommodation-based services, local authorities that are cash-strapped or concerned about budgets will obviously prioritise that duty, and the unintended consequences could be that these community-based services are curtailed or cut … when even now they are barely covering the breadth of support that they should. (HC Deb 4 June 2020, c.9)

After an Opposition-led amendment to include community-based provision within the statutory duty was rejected in the House of Commons, a national children's charity contended that 'the *Bill risks creating a two tier system* in which … the *majority of victims, including hundreds of thousands of children, who remain at home could miss out*' (Barnardo's 2020: 1, original emphasis). There is particular concern about migrants without permanent residency: they have no recourse to public funds which impedes access to domestic abuse services (Home Office 2020). The implications for children were described thus:

> There are children in migrant families who are very much failed by the inability of a parent with no recourse to public funds to access the kinds of support and assistance

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[19] The amendment was made at report stage and appears in Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21 as introduced into the House of Lords on 7 July 2020 (House of Lords 2020).

they need. Children in those families face a number of impacts, such as enhanced child poverty and not being accommodated safely because of their parent's inability to access safe accommodation. (Andrea Simon, HC Deb 4 June, c.42)

An Opposition-led amendment to extend domestic violence services to those with no recourse to public funds was rejected in the House of Commons, however. There is concern too about whether new interventions with perpetrators will be sufficient to protect victims.[20] Representations of CPV as a function of family violence suggest that any failure to address family violence could lay the groundwork for problematic behaviour by child-victims in future.

Conclusion

At a time when research on CPV is limited, this article makes a distinct empirical contribution to the international literature by presenting findings from the first national study of local policy and practice with practitioners from England and Wales. In contrast to much work in this field which aims to describe the 'reality' of CPV and practice responses, we adopted a post-structural approach to policy analysis to reveal how CPV is being *constituted* in official discourse *as a particular sort of* social problem. We also revealed the existence of multiple competing representations of filial violence.

Following Foucault (1981: 456), the critique presented in this paper 'consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices [around CPV] are based'. We documented how dominant representations of CPV, bolstered by recent policy developments, may have negative consequences for children and families. We also, however, illuminated the existence of alternative accounts or 'subjugated knowledges' (Foucault 1976a) of CPV and detailed how they have been 'produced, disseminated and defended' (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 20). The local policies and practices that form these 'subjugated knowledges' provide a means through which official representations of CPV may be 'disrupted and replaced' (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016: 20). Public service provision is replete with examples of practitioners frustrating the will of central government through local practices deemed preferable for service users (Barnes and Prior 2009). We hope that this paper, and the arguments made herein, will support local and national pockets of resistance to deleterious policy and practice developments around filial violence.

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[20] Part 3 of the Bill introduces new Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs). Whilst welcoming the measures, both Dame Vera Baird QC, the Victims' Commissioner, and Lucy Hadley raised concerns about their implementation and enforcement (HC Deb 4 June, cc.59-65 and cc.37-45 respectively). Whilst welcoming the Government's investment in DRIVE, an intervention for high-risk, high-harm perpetrators, Suzanne Jacob, the Chief Executive of SafeLives, called for this to be delivered 'within the context of a comprehensive strategy for the perpetrators of domestic abuse' (HC Deb 4 June 2020, c.46).

This paper comes at a critical moment in international history. Following reports of a global surge in domestic violence cases in 2020 as COVID19 lockdowns spread, the United Nations (2020) noted the possible long-term impact on children and encouraged governments to prioritise the provision of child-focused services alongside support for parents and carers. It also comes at a critical juncture in national history, as a landmark Bill to address domestic abuse in England and Wales journeys through Parliament. We hope that this paper provides support for legislators and practitioners working to address family violence now and in the years ahead.

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