Child to Parent Violence and Abuse: An International and National Perspective

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Child to Parent Violence Seminar
as part of WRDATF Awareness Week
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Menlo Hotel, Galway
Tuning In....Aims

- Raise awareness of nature and extent of child to parent violence and abuse, controlling behaviour and reversal of power in families.
- Talk about a brief, practical and research based programme for working with parents living in fear of their child.
Introductions

Eileen Lauster, NVR Private Practitioner, past RCPV Project Research Assistant and UCFRC Research Assistant Fellow, NUI Galway. Member of the Mid-West Responding to Child to Parent Violence and Abuse Committee.

Dr. Declan Coogan, Lecturer in Social Work, School of Political Science & Sociology, National University of Ireland Galway, RCPV Project Lead in Ireland. Member of the Mid-West Responding to Child to Parent Violence and Abuse Committee.
A Research Project
Responding to Child to Parent Violence
Action Research Project.
EU funded Responding to Child to Parent Violence Project - 5 countries; raise awareness, share knowledge & experiences, develop & assess impact of 2 intervention programmes.

Non-Violent Resistance is one of the intervention programmes.

Dissemination of results of RCPV Project.

Supported the Power2Change programme.
No single or simple definition of child to parent violence - describes a wide variety of abusive & controlling behaviours.

- A form of Domestic Violence.
- Harmful act(s) intended to gain power and control over parents.
  - Use of physical or psychological violence to gain control over parents.
  - Children & young people aged between 10-18 years of age.

Child to Parent Violence - what does it look like?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9nmZbvIvuM&ebc=ANyPxKq1zxJyxX86VTdFn1II9WgURYoVAGKtXMLkG1Dxj01DPV9UZ1vLPx4Z8znU-jXvBDUVKMHj
Have you seen or heard parents/carers report similar behaviour in their homes?

Who is in control in this situation?
Why talk about child to parent violence?

- An emerging problem for families and practitioners.
- Many parents who are assaulted by their children deny or minimise it or blame themselves for their children’s behaviour.
- Parents fear blame from workers who can either minimise or excuse the child’s violent behaviour.

  (Omer 2004; Gallagher 2004; Edenborough et al 2008).
Why talk about child to parent violence?

- Asking about it signals it is ok to talk about it, even if not immediately acknowledged by parent.
- Working with multi-stressed families, it can be difficult to know what best to do and where to focus our intervention. Preventing violence & enhancing safety is a good place to start.
- It can be difficult to see that a child can be both a victim and a perpetrator of abuse.
- Sometimes labels (e.g. ADHD; “attachment disorder”) distract us from what is really going on.
What do we know about child to parent violence?

- Has received little attention in policy and practice development 
  (Omer et al 2008; Edenborough et al 2008; Wilcox 2012).
- Most under-researched form of family violence, despite high rate of occurrence and increasing prevalence 
  (Walsh & Krienert 2007)
- Parents reluctant to talk about adolescent violence towards them until it reaches unbearable levels. 
  (Sheehan, M 1997)
Is there a lot of child to parent violence in families?

- Figures vary but some argue 18% of two parent and 29% of one parent families
  (Walsh & Krienert 2009)
- Pagani et al (2009) - among 15/16 year olds, 12.3% of males and 9.5% of females were physically aggressive towards their fathers in the previous six months.
Where does child to parent violence take place?

- Across all socio-economic and cultural groups (Avraham-Krehwinkel & Aldridge 2010; Omer 2004, 2011)
- Some families develop repeated patterns of interaction through conflict which leads to recurrent cycles of violence.
- Two parent families - often well educated and middle class, with “over entitled” children (Gallagher 2004, 2008).
Reversal of power dynamics...

- Difference between childhood testing of boundaries and child to parent violence? The issue of power makes the difference.

- Child to parent violence is an abuse of power through which the child or adolescent attempts to coerce, control or dominate others in the family.

Small Group Discussion

Turn to your neighbour and ask:

- Have you seen or heard of an increase in this type of behaviour recently?
- Does the numbers of 18% of two parent families and 29% of single families seem high or low compared to your experience?
Child to Parent Violence in Ireland

- Efforts in Ireland since 2008
- What we know from the training research in 2013-15
- Practitioner groups in Dublin and Cork
- Mid-West Responding to Child to Parent Violence Committee
Non-Violent Resistance (NVR)

- Adapted with agreement from the work of Haim Omer in Israel (Omer 2004; Weinblatt & Omer 2008).

- Based on the politics of resistance and commitment to non violence (e.g. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King)
Short-term evidenced based programme lasting 5-10 weeks with sessions of individual session and telephone support.

Adapted in Ireland with positive results.

There are no exclusion criteria, though NVR can be offered in parallel to other specific programmes (e.g. interventions targeting school attendance or drug/ alcohol misuse problems).

Neither parents/carers nor the child are pathologised due to aggressive and violent behaviour.
Parents/carers are the focus of both psycho-educational and therapeutic support.

NVR compliments and can work along with already existing knowledge and skills of practitioners.

Parents/carers reflect on their own contribution to aggressive and violent behaviour while developing non-escalation skills.

The problem of violence in the family is openly talked about, denial and minimisation are no longer issues and parents sense of isolation reduced.
Non-violent resistance aims at giving the child a clear message

“I am your parent. I am no longer going to put up with this situation and I will do all in my power to change it – except by attacking you verbally or physically”.

- Parents take a firm stance against any violence, risk taking or anti-social behaviours.
- Parents commit to avoiding all physical or verbal attacks.
The Core Elements of the Non-Violent Resistance Programme.

- Commitment.
- Breaking the escalation cycle - ending behaviour patterns & pressing the pause button.
- Stepping out of secrecy - the supporter network.
- Increasing parental presence.
- Externalise the behaviour.
- Declaration of commitment to Non Violence Resistance.
- Non violent resistance & protest - refusal of orders, service strike, sit in
- Reconciliation Steps - drawing out positive aspects of child’s personality.
Useful images/ metaphors in the Non-Violent Resistance Programme.

- **Attachment**: emphasis on increased parental presence and involvement creates a sense of a secure base and safe harbour for the child.
- **Non Violent Resistance**: persistence and strength as an anchor.
Review

- What do we mean by child to parent violence?
- Core Elements of NVR.
- Comments/ Questions?
Child to Parent Violence and Evidence Based Practice.

Integrated practice and research.
Short term intervention focusing on parents - 5 individual therapy sessions for parents; 10 sessions of telephone support.

2 locations in Tel Aviv. 73 parents (41 families). Males and females aged between 4 -17 years, referred with severe behaviour problems. 32 families were 2 parent and 9 families were one parent households.

31 families (75%) were previously seen in treatment for childhood behaviour problems.
During the NVR intervention, parents reported significant reductions in their aggressive and provocative behaviours and increase in their positive behaviours.

Parents reported less permissiveness and less helplessness in their parenting style.
Outcomes of NVR Project

- Mothers reported significant reductions in child’s aggressive behaviours and increase in child’s positive behaviours.
- Approach seemed no less effective for parents of older children.
- Drop out rates very low (one parent).
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• Coogan, D & Lauster, E (2014b) Non Violent Resistance for Practitioners - Responding to Child to Parent Violence in Practice. NUI Galway/ RCPV Project.


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