

Adolescent-to-parent violence

Current issues and future priorities

A Seminar of the Criminology Research Group, Edge Hill University
& the North West Branch of the British Society of Criminology

Wednesday 2 April 2014 1-4pm

Edge Hill University, Room SPS001

St Helens Rd, Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 4QP

Directions at: www.edgehill.ac.uk/location

Speakers:

Dr Caroline Miles, University of Manchester

Dr Helen Baker, Edge Hill University

Dr Amanda Holt, Lancaster University

A response will be provided by **Helen Bonnick**, social worker and
author of the Parent Abuse Blog <http://holesinthewall.co.uk>

The seminar is free and open to all

If you would like to attend can you please confirm by email to
Andrew.millie@edgehill.ac.uk or Helen.baker@edgehill.ac.uk
Also, please let us know if you require a parking space.

Criminology Research Group, Department of Law and Criminology, Edge Hill University:
www.edgehill.ac.uk/law/research/criminology-research-group

British Society of Criminology:
www.britsocrim.org

Adolescent-to-Parent Abuse: Mapping Developments in Intervention Work

Dr. Amanda Holt, Lancaster Law School, Lancaster University

The problem of adolescent-to-parent abuse has posed a particular set of challenges for practitioners who work with families. Whether working in the fields of youth justice, mental health or domestic violence, existing intervention programmes have been found insufficient for work with this unique and complex problem. In response, a number of practitioners at the local level have developed their own programmes for working with parents or young people (or both) where adolescent-to-parent abuse is a feature of family life. This paper will explore some of the developments in intervention work that are emerging across the Global North. By examining the theoretical and practical similarities and differences across these different intervention programmes, this paper will identify the dilemmas and tensions which arise when working with this complex form of family violence and will highlight the challenges that continue to face practitioners and families.

Theorising parent abuse as a 'new' social problem

Dr. Helen Baker, Department of Law and Criminology, Edge Hill University

The paper seeks to explore parent abuse and considers the issues it poses for constructing a much needed specific theoretical framework for it, within a UK legal and social policy context. Parent abuse clearly challenges established feminist theories in relation to domestic violence and abuse for example, which label adult men as perpetrators, and women and children as victims of male violence. The current research evidence suggests that parent abuse is mainly committed against mothers by their teenage sons, who have often themselves been victims of domestic abuse. There is a need therefore to theorise parent abuse in order to combat both 'mother/parent blaming' in relation to this complex issue, and an over reliance on simplistic 'intergenerational transmission of violence' theories to explain why parent abuse occurs. The paper will also discuss the evidence that teenage girls also commit parent abuse and that male adults or fathers are also victims of it. These patterns of parent abuse may be under-reported because they unsettle societal gendered norms and expectations in relation to masculinity and femininity. The paper will also discuss how parent abuse raises issues in relation to both familial and societal adult-child power relations.

Responding to adolescent to parent violence

Dr Caroline Miles, School of Law, University of Manchester

Adolescent to parent violence represents a unique and complex form of family violence posing a number of problems to families who experience the violence as well as individuals and agencies who encounter adolescent to parent violence in their work. The greatest challenge perhaps relates to a widespread reluctance to engage with a problem described as the 'last taboo' in family violence. Adolescent to parent violence inverts traditional perceptions of intra-familial power relations and control. Parents experiencing violence from their children report feelings of guilt, blame and shame, which are often reinforced by those to whom they disclose their victimisation. The prevailing silence surrounding adolescent to parent violence at both individual and institutional level is inextricably linked to a lack of appropriate responses to this problem. Parents are understandably reluctant to report their child to the police and, when they do involve the Criminal Justice System, parents face mixed responses. If not taken seriously, parents' fears of being blamed or met with disbelief are realised; and if taken seriously, parents risk their child being criminalised. Unlike other forms of domestic violence, where victim protection is sought through removing perpetrators of violence from the home and severing relationships, this is simply not feasible in parent-child relationships and often goes against parents' wishes. In this paper, alternatives to traditional criminal justice responses are considered, drawing upon diversionary and restorative approaches which are proving popular and successful in this emerging field of family violence.