Child to parent violence and abuse:

Should you call the cops on your kids? And other questions

Helen Bonnick, June 11th 2018
“Don’t do it again ……. 
or I’ll come back and tell you not to do it again.”
(2005)
• What is child to parent violence?
• How do we know about child to parent violence?
• What do we know about child to parent violence?
• Why has it been so hidden?
• Is it a type of domestic violence?
• Where do you go for help?
So you mean parents attacking their children?

No? Elder abuse then?
• Children and young people
• Anyone in a caring role
• Direction of abuse
• Violence and abuse

• Not confined to a particular group or section of society
• Is it gendered?
“A pattern of behaviour, instigated by a child or young person, which involves using verbal, financial, physical and/or emotional means to practice power and exert control over a parent.”

“The power that is practised is, to some extent, intentional, and the control that is exerted over a parent is achieved through fear, such that a parent unhealthily adapts his/her own behaviour to accommodate the child.”

(Amanda Holt, 2015)
Lack of intent to harm

Conscious power and control
“Children are in the business of getting their needs met.”
So it’s bad parenting then?
“I can't believe my eyes!! I mean these parents are so passive......!
All of them wants a good hard whipping! Unbelievable!”
• Parenting style
• Experience of domestic violence
• Family circumstances
• Early trauma
• Mental health diagnosis
• ASD
• Substance use
• Relationships outside the home
• Learning difficulties
• ??????
... Correlations not causes
The impact on families

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Financial / economic
- Educational
- Housing
- Social
Is this a new epidemic?
“Huge rise in violence against parents by their children: cases up by 60% as offspring as young as seven are investigated”

(Mail online May 7th 2015)
How would we know?
- Old texts
- Quantitative studies
- Research into other things
- Clinical and court data
- Annual reports
- Ongoing specific research
- Personal testimony
Changes in society?
Why didn’t you tell me earlier what was going on?
shame + didn’t know it was abuse + blame + thought it was normal + didn’t know where to go + shame + asked but ignored + sent away + asked at the wrong place + shame + thought it was my fault + asked for the wrong thing + shame + frightened of response + thought I was the only one + shame + fear + shame
Why don’t you just kick him out? / give her back?
Where is the help?

Everywhere and nowhere
More questions!

- How does our personal experience and training impact how we think about this and respond to families?
- What can we do better?
- What does a good response look like?
Should you call the cops?
“We have had an amazing response from our local police. They have taken the time to listen and understand the issues and now pop in regularly to see how we are. The relationship they have with X means they can help de-escalate a situation really well.”

(2017)
Thank you for listening

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