

# ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE IN THE HOME – THE MISSING LINK IN FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

JO HOWARD

*Manager, Peninsula Health Drug and Alcohol Program & Youth Service*

## KEY POINTS

- Adolescent violence in the home is a form of family violence, frequently resulting from children's experience of family violence and manifesting as the perpetration of violence against parents and other family members when they reach adolescence.
- Most incidents of violence are committed by male adolescents against mothers.
- Male adolescents who use violence against mothers may progress to using violence against women as adults.
- The current service system response is frequently parent/mother/victim blaming.
- There is lack of clarity as to how the service system and criminal justice system understand and respond to this violence.
- There is merit in adapting current Australian approaches to adult family violence to address adolescent violence in the home through a coordinated community response involving police, youth justice and community services.
- One model, Step UP, used across the United States is discussed. This model shows promising results in supporting adolescent violence behaviour change and increasing victim safety.

## INTRODUCTION

*As a mother I see those holes but I'm oblivious to them at the same time because I just want to see my son – why do women stay with their husbands when they punch the crap out of them? Because...they hope one day that it might change. I look at those holes and I think what does the future hold for him... who's he going to put a hole through?*

*(Howard & Rottem 2008)*

In 2004, Natasha Bobic raised concerns in an Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse Topic Paper that '...parental abuse is peripheral in discussions of family violence...' (2004, p. 11). Seven years on, policy and program responses to adolescent violence in the home have not significantly progressed around this particularly complex and emotive issue. For example, the recently released Australian Government's *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children* (2011) highlights the need to respond to children as victims of family violence but overlooks the fact that children may also perpetrate

violence in the home. Although the Plan clearly states its intent to end violence against women, it does not recognise adolescent violence in the home as a form of violence which severely impacts on women (and some men).

Adolescent violence in the home reflects a gendered pattern. While both male and female adolescents can and do perpetrate violence against mothers and fathers, male adolescents are more commonly perpetrators and women in the family are more likely to be victims. This paper is particularly concerned with the use of violence by male adolescents against their mothers, as a feature of intergenerational violence. The intergenerational transmission of violence refers to boys modeling abusive fathers' behaviour towards women. It should be noted, that the orientation of this paper does not imply that other presentations of adolescent violence in the home, such as female adolescent violence to parents, is not as serious or damaging.

A growing body of evidence highlights the value of early intervention to prevent violence against women and the intergenerational transmission of violence

(VicHealth 2007). Typically, such evidence has not been applied to intervention in adolescent violence in the home (Cornell & Cottrell 2001; Gelles 1982; Howard & Rottem 2008; Rossman *et al.* 1999; Routt & Anderson 2011).<sup>ii</sup> This is because adolescent violence does not fall within common definitions of family violence and remains largely unarticulated across the fields of child protection, youth, family violence, family work, mental health, alcohol and drug, policing and criminology. This paper explores the issue of adolescent abuse, placing emphasis on its relevance to the family violence sector and the prevention of violence against women. Through analysis of Victorian and international data, synergies between adolescent and adult family violence are highlighted.

In recent years, a range of programs and responses have been developed to address adolescent problem behaviour, including violence, such as school based anti-violence programs, drug and alcohol programs, mental health and child protection interventions. As these have been discussed extensively elsewhere in the literature, they will not be explored here. Whilst restorative justice and family reparation approaches are often not regarded as suitable frameworks to address adult family violence (Southwell 2003), they have merit when applied to adolescent violence in the home. An adolescent based program delivered in the United States is put forward in the paper as a preferred example of an integrated community response that includes criminal justice options (Pence & McMahon 1999). The paper concludes that there is a need for policy and practice reform to support the engagement of adolescents who use violence in the home and enhance the safety of victims.

## WHAT IS ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE IN THE HOME?

### TERMINOLOGY

A lack of consistent terminology to describe and define adolescent violence in the home may be contributing to obfuscation of the problem and a consequent inadequate service system response. The problem has not yet found a 'policy home'. The various and inter-related determinants for adolescent violence in the home have led to the use of multiple terms to describe this form of abuse, including: 'teen violence to parents'; 'child-to-mother violence'; 'youth violence'; 'teen abuse'; 'child-to-parent violence'; 'battered parents syndrome'; and 'adolescent violence to parents'.

This paper uses the term 'adolescent violence in the home' in order to:

- acknowledge parents, siblings, other family members and pets as victims of the violence
- include carers, particularly foster parents and out-of-home carers as victims
- conceptualise it as a form of family violence, similar to adult family violence (a pattern of abusive behaviour by one person to gain power and control over another)
- stress the importance of safety and human rights for victims.

Modifying a definition of family violence used by Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (1997), this paper defines adolescent violence in the home as:

*... an abuse of power perpetrated by adolescents against their parents and other family members, including siblings. It occurs when an adolescent attempts to physically or psychologically dominate, coerce and control others in their family.*

### TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Adolescent violence in the home occurs as part of a continuum of abusive behaviours that frequently starts as verbal abuse and progresses over time to emotional and physical abuse (Eckstein 2004). The range of abuses against family members may include:

- Physical violence – hitting, punching, kicking, use of weapons, threatening physical gestures
- Damage to property – breaking or damaging property
- Emotional, verbal and psychological – screaming, yelling, threats (against self and other family members), insults, intimidation, coercion, humiliation, blaming, manipulation, public abuse. Verbal abuse against mothers frequently 'echoes' language used by abusive and violent partners (Howard & Rottem 2008). Adolescents may denigrate their mothers' appearance, intelligence, parenting, care and ability to nurture and contribute meaningful to society
- Financial abuse – extortion, demanding money, including in out of home contexts.

### PREVALENCE

Police and court data provide indications of prevalence trends when adolescents are involved with the criminal justice system because of violence.

A snapshot of Victorian data is indicative of prevalence. Nine per cent of all family violence incidents recorded by police and 4% of all the aggrieved family members in finalised intervention order applications involved

parents as victims of violence from their adolescent children (Victorian Police 2010, p. 46). In 2009/10, Victorian police were called to 2,831 family violence incidents where the offender was aged less than 18 years (Victoria Police, 2009/10). A Victorian Department of Justice report which gathered data about family violence over a nine year period (1999-2008) showed a consistent 13% of family violence incidents recorded by police involved incidents where a parent was the victim (DoJ 2009, p. 45) but note, this included violence against parents by adult children, as well as adolescents.

Some families may be at heightened risk of this form of abuse. For example, a Western Sydney study found 51% of sole mothers experienced abuse and violence from their adolescent, with the most common cohort being male adolescent violence against mothers (Stewart *et al.* 2006).

Research across Australia, the United States (US), Canada, France and Spain illustrates similar trends and patterns. United States and Canadian data indicate that between 7% to 13% of parents have been victims of physical violence from their adolescent child at some time (Agnew & Hugley 1989; Cornell & Gelles 1982; Pagelow 1989; Paulson, Coombs & Landsverk 1990; Peek, Fischer & Kidwell 1985), a figure that rises to 29% in the case of sole parents. Canadian and British research estimates 1 in 10 parents are assaulted by their children (DeKeserdy 1993; Tew & Nixon 2011), again with greater prevalence across one-parent families (Ibabe *et al.* 2009).

It is important to note that these figures do not accurately reflect the severity and frequency of adolescent violence in the home (Crichton-Hill *et al.* 2003). For example, adolescents may be charged with offences such as 'damage to property', effectively masking the impact of the violence on family members. Moreover, parents who are abused by their children will often deny or minimise their victimisation (Cornell & Gelles 1982; Howard & Rottem 2008; Monk 2010; Pelletier & Coutu 1992). The shame, guilt, embarrassment and fear victims experience prevents disclosure of violence, which in turn can lead to their social isolation and a lack of service support (Anderson & Routt 2011; Cottrell 2004; Pagelow 1984). Calling police can be an extremely difficult decision, often made when parents are at their wits' end.

### AGE OF PERPETRATORS

Canadian and United States studies indicate that adolescent violence often begins when a child is between 12 and 14 years old (Cottrell, 2001),

estimating the peak age for violent adolescents at between 15 and 17 years (Evans *et al.* 1988; Wilson 1996). In Australia, Victorian police data support this pattern, with 33 incidents out of 2,831 perpetrated by offenders aged below 10 years, 840 between 10 and 14 years and 1,958 by offenders aged between 15 and 17 years (Victoria Police 2009/10).

Higher rates of violence against parents positively correlates with an increase in age, size and strength of the adolescent (Agnew & Huguley 1989; Harbin & Madden 1979; Paulson *et al.* 1990), although some exceptions are noted in which younger adolescents cause more severe injury through the use of weapons.

### GENDERED PERPETRATION AND VICTIMISATION

Most research on adolescent violence in the home indicates a gender bias both in perpetration and victimisation. The research presented below suggests that around one third of perpetrators are female and two thirds male. Further, the majority of violence is perpetrated against mothers, mostly by male adolescents, and abuse against fathers is usually by sons (Bobic 2004; Boxer *et al.* 2009; Cornell & Gelles 1981; Cottrell & Monk 2004; Evans & Warren-Sohlberg 1988; Harbin & Madden 1979; Hunter *et al.* 2010; Routt & Anderson 2011).

For example, data from Seattle in the US on 1,339 incidents of adolescent violence to parents over a three year period revealed 65% of offenders were male and 35% female (King County Juvenile Court 2005). Both sons and daughters used violence against their mothers at higher rates than against their fathers, with mothers comprising 72% of victims and fathers 28% (Routt & Anderson 2011). Similarly, a US analysis of 479 domestic violence offences where the offender was under 18 years showed 67% were male offenders and 33% female offenders (Sellick-Lane 2007). Of the victims, 74% were female and 26% were male. The same data analysed the victim's relationships to offenders and found 46% of the violence was against mothers, 15% against fathers, 9% against sisters, 4% against brothers, 12% against girlfriends; 1% against boyfriends; and 13% was against other family members.

Closer to home, Victorian police data for 2009/10 also find that one third of adolescent offenders (932) were female and two thirds (1,895) were male (Victorian Police 2010). In 2007/8, 74% of parents who sought an intervention order against their child were mothers (Department of Justice 2009, p. 45).

Aside from disaggregated gender data, there is little research that analyses the complex variable of gender and even less which focuses specifically on female adolescent violence to mother or father. Indeed, most research highlights the pattern of male adolescent violence against mothers, in part to articulate the relationship between adolescent violence in the home and the 'intergenerational cycle of violence'. For example, one Spanish study found 95% of cases involved assault by male adolescents against their mothers, leading the researchers to suggest the issue could be referred to as 'violence by sons against mothers' (Ibabe *et al.* 2009, p. 15).

Some studies suggest violence by male adolescents is likely to be more severe than that by female adolescents, including when weapons are used (Brezina 1999; Evans & Warren-Sohlberg 1988, Patterson *et al.* 2002) and that female adolescents are more likely to use emotional and verbal abuse (Evans & Warren-Sohlberg 1988). Severity of abuse by sons has been found to increase incrementally between ages of ten and 17, whilst parent abuse by daughters increases between the ages of ten and 13 years, after which incidents of parental abuse by daughters fall (Cornell & Gelles 1981; Evans & Warren-Sohlberg 1988; Harbin & Madden 1979). Clinical and forensic studies support this contention (Cochrane *et al.* 1994; Laurent & Derry 1999). Further, Agnew and Huguley (1989) hypothesise fathers may more likely be victims of violence by *older* male adolescents.

## VICTIM IMPACT

The impact of family violence on women and children is now well recognised, yet the impact on victims of adolescent violence in the home has been seriously overlooked, particularly in relation to safety. Perhaps this is due to incredulity that a child could cause high levels of physical and emotional harm to parents and/or siblings.

Unfortunately, there is a paucity of statistical data examining male adolescent violence against sisters (Strauss & Gelles 1990; Finkelhorn *et al.* 2005; Sellick-Lane 2007, Howard & Rottem 2008) despite siblings frequently being victims of such violence (Eckstein 2004). One study has showed that in every case where the violent male adolescent had a younger sibling, the sibling was also assaulted (Howard & Rottem 2008):

*She [twelve year old daughter] has copped it on and off ... for the past three years. He hits her, punches her, yells at her, he puts her down.*

The threat and reality of damage to, or theft of property or harm to siblings, may mean parents are

fearful to leave their adolescent alone at home (Cottrell 2001; Jackson 2003). If younger children are victims of violence, parents may be concerned that seeking help will result in removal of the child victim from the home (Howard & Rottem 2008). Parents may compromise the wellbeing of siblings by prioritising the needs of the abusive adolescent in order to prevent the violence (McKenna 2006).

Victims of adolescent violence consistently report the emotional and psychological impacts as more profound and long lasting than incidents of physical violence. Parents report the most significant effects relate to the shock, incredulity and disbelief that their own child is using violence against them: 'No one should have to go through this. It's just horrible, it's just unbelievable...families are supposed to stick together...it rips you to shreds' (Howard & Rottem 2008). Prevailing effects include significant and enduring mental health problems, particularly anxiety and depression (Cottrell & Monk 2004). McKenna (2006) found parents reported high level negative effects on their health and wellbeing, including: depression; sleep problems; feeling they could no longer cope; suicide ideation; and attempted suicide.

The *impact* of these behaviours is traumatic, with family members commonly adjusting their own behaviours in order to try and prevent the abuse and violence (Patterson *et al.* 2002). Parents describe 'walking on eggshells' (Patterson *et al.* 2002) and spending considerable time and energy attempting to prevent the violence. Violent adolescents may harass their parent at work (Howard & Rottem 2008). Associated 'at risk' behaviours may mean parents are called away from their workplace to deal with other related issues including problematic school behaviour (Ibid).

Parents may refer to their experience of violence in an offhand way, deny it or minimise the impact (Pettelier & Contu 1992; Bobic 2004; Howard & Rottem 2008; Nixon & Hunter 2009). Jackson (2003) attributes this to the difficulty of articulating such a complex experience and the cultural expectations of unconditional parental love. For example, Daly and Nancarrow (2009) highlight the ambivalent relationship mothers may have to their sons' offending and feelings about actions to seek justice as mothers who are both victims and expected to be their sons' supporters. This minimisation of violence mirrors women's denial or minimisation of adult family violence:

*He actually grabbed a dog leash and whacked it across my knuckles ... **little** things like that (Howard & Rottem 2008). [author's emphasis]*

Parents may experience shame, guilt and embarrassment that they were unable to stop the violence (Kennair & Mellor 2007; Stewart *et al.* 2005). Fear of how their adolescent will behave in public and fear of outsiders noticing the effects of the violence (such as property damage) may further compound isolation (Howard & Rottem 2008). Parents frequently blame themselves for their victimisation or fear others will blame them (Edenborough *et al.* 2008) and, therefore, keep the experience to themselves. The need to keep up the appearance of a 'happy family' acts as a powerful inhibitor to disclosure.

It is highly likely that mothers and fathers will experience impacts of abuse differently and that this may also depend on whether the violence is perpetrated by a female or male adolescent. However, the literature does not articulate these gendered differences.

### CONTEXTUALISING ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE IN THE HOME

Like other forms of family violence, the violence used by adolescents is an exertion of power and control. Their violent behaviours are not simply 'challenging behaviours' (Stewart *et al.* 2005), isolated, arbitrary or reactive events but rather they occur on a regular basis. They are intentional, designed to gain power and control over family members, ... 'a psychological strategy for achieving a given objective' (Pueyo & Redondo 2007, cited in Ibabe *et al.* 2009, p. 3). Adolescent males who use violence in the home believe they are 'entitled'; that others should meet their demands (Bancroft & Silverman 2002; Gallagher 2004; Routt & Anderson 2011). This sense of 'entitlement' supports a view that the use of controlling behaviour, abuse and violence is acceptable.

Theorising about adolescent violence in the home is complex for several reasons. For one, adolescent violence in the home confronts traditional notions of familial power relations that rest on the assumption of parental power and authority. For another, responsibility is attributed to perpetrators who are effectively children and who may be victims of family violence and/or child abuse themselves by adults in the family. Lack of recognition of adolescent violence may be in part due to 'the widespread belief that parents need to protect their children, even when it is to their own detriment...'. (Bobic 2004, p. 1).

While parents can be victims of adolescent violence, they are likely to have greater economic and social resources than a child (Patterson *et al.* 2002), which makes the balance of power between parent and

child a particularly complex one (Holt 2009). The common experience of parents feeling blamed by professionals to whom they turn for help (Cottrell 2001; Howard & Rottem 2008; McKenna, O'Connor & Verco 2010) or a perception that the victim has in some way 'invited' the abuse (McKenna 2006) may result in parents not disclosing the violence. Rather than being seen as a form of family violence, adolescent violence in the home is commonly construed through a discourse of 'delinquency', (Downey 1997) with professionals advocating more assertive parenting, despite the violence and high levels of parental fear making this impossible (Hunter *et al.* 2010). Not adopting recommended parenting strategies supports adolescents' use of violence and extends parental experience of failure.

### DETERMINANTS

Adolescent violence in the home is not easily understood. No one theory accounts for the complexity of interrelated determinants and risk factors. Not all adolescents, even those with significant risk factors, will progress to using violence in the home.

Researchers have highlighted numerous determinants for adolescent violence in the home, including: their experience of family violence (Strauss *et al.* 1980; Cornell & Gelles, 1982, Downey 1997; Gallagher 2004; Kennair & Mellor 2007; Howard & Rottem 2008), parenting style (Cottrell 2003, Gallagher 2004), family conflict and separation (Gallagher 2004), adolescent and/or parental mental health and/or substance use (Gondolf 1990; Pelletier & Coutu 1992; Hemphill 1996; Cottrell & Monk 2004; Pagani *et al.* 2004; Kennair & Mellor 2007), child abuse, physical punishment, behavioural disorders (Cottrell & Monk 2004; Howard & Rottem 2008), developmental delay, mental health and learning disorders (Hemphill 1996; Howard & Rottem 2008, Routt & Anderson 2011). Poverty, family stress, negative peer influence and lack of social supports may also be contributory factors to adolescent violence in the home (Cottrell & Monk 2004, p. 1076, McKenna *et al.* 2010).

Cottrell and Monk (2004, pp. 1091) articulate a 'Circle of Influence' that highlights the interrelated variables which support adolescent violence in the home. This influence includes sociological, as well as individual and familial influences. It is difficult to directly measure the influence of societal and cultural determinants that contribute to violence against women and/or adolescent violence in the home, although attitudes, assumptions and beliefs about gender are contributing factors. Both violence against women and adolescent violence in the home are supported by a culture that:

- privileges male dominance, decision making and control of resources (VicHealth, 2007, National Crime Prevention 2001, p. 17; Cottrell & Monk 2004, p. 1076)
- applauds and accepts the use of power, control, threats and violence (VicHealth, 2007; National Crime Prevention 2001)
- privileges 'instant gain' over 'delayed gratification' (Ibade *et al.* 2009)
- promotes adolescent entitlement and minimises adolescent responsibility (Garrido 2005)
- privileges consumerism and acquisition of 'things' to gain acceptance and importance (Garrido 2005)
- holds views about mothering which privilege putting children before oneself, particularly male children (Holt 2009; Hunter *et al.* 2010)
- has weak sanctions against gender inequality and maintains rigid gender roles (VicHealth 2007).

Within this context, the two most influential (and inter-related) determinants for adolescent violence in the home are a mother's and child's experience of family violence (Howard 1995; Rubin 1996; Tomison 1996; Downey 1997; Rossman, Hughes & Rosenberg, 1999; Ulman & Strauss 2003; Bobic 2004; Howard & Rottem 2008; Routt & Anderson 2011) and parenting style (Agnew & Huguley 1989; Cottrell 2001; Downey 1997; Gallagher 2004; Haw 2010; Ibabe *et al.* 2009; Kennair & Mellor 2007; Laurent & Derry 1999; Wilson 1996). The paper will focus on these latter two important and related determinants.

## EXPERIENCING FAMILY VIOLENCE

The most significant determinant for adolescent violence in the home is a child's and mother's experience of family violence (Bobic 2004; Downey 1997; Ibabe *et al.*'s 2009; Rossman, Hughes & Rosenberg, 1999; Rubin 1996; Tomison 1996; Ulman & Strauss 2003). Children's experience of family violence means their development may be compromised, leaving them with limited skills and attributes to support non-violence, and with negative and pejorative attitudes to women.

A child's experience of family violence impacts on their early development, when the central nervous system experiences rapid growth and when foundations for a child's values and attitudes are formed. The experience of trauma, common when children experience family violence, triggers a range of biological and chemical responses which affect their emotional, behavioural, cognitive, social and physiological functioning (Perry 1997; Shonkoff 2002). Children who experience trauma may not reach normal developmental milestones. They may: experience anxiety; be easily

frustrated and stressed; have decreased trust; lack capacity to regulate emotions and constructively manage conflict; be hyper-vigilant to the possibility of threat, making them more inclined to lash out against others; lack impulse control; and experience cognitive distortions (Wolfe & Marsh 2006).

Violence against women is an assault not only on the mother but also on the mother/child relationship (Buchanan 2008; Edelson 1999; Humphreys 2007a; Levendosky 2006). A mother's physical injuries, mental health issues and poor health generally may negatively impact on a child's attachment to their mother and on her ability to parent. Because a woman has left a violent partner does not necessarily mean the effects of the violence will cease (VicHealth 2009). Fathers may use contact visits to undermine and criticise ex-partners. They may actively undermine the relationship between mother and child, and support the child to disobey and disregard his mother.

Children raised by violent men can learn to view women as not of equal status to men. If parental authority is held by the 'man of the house', his absence may support male adolescents to step in to a perceived male parental role (Tew & Nixon 2011). Children learn it is appropriate and acceptable to use violence against women, that violence is an acceptable way to resolve interpersonal conflict and get what they want (Jaffe *et al.* 1990; Mitchell & Finkelhor 2001). When violent and controlling behaviours succeed, the reward is a powerful reinforcement to repeat the same behaviours (Routt & Anderson 2011).

*It's not his fault. Because he learnt from his father ... He sees it with his own eyes, so he thinks the way his father treats women ... that it's right for him to treat women that way too.*

(Howard & Rottem 2008)

The effect of the violence on mothers and children leaves mothers vulnerable in their ability to parent actively and assertively, and having to parent children who are traumatised and encouraged to disregard their mother's authority (Howard 1997). Women re-experience the trauma of family violence, only this time the perpetrator is their child. Mothers frequently report the abusive language and behaviours used by their child as almost identical to those used by their former partners.

*It's disturbing to me when I recognise it ... that sometimes I feel I am living in the relationship with my ex husband. It disturbs me enormously.*

(Howard & Rottem 2008)

## PARENTING STYLE

A number of studies highlight the contribution of parenting style to adolescent violence in the home. Some parenting styles appear to be more supportive of, rather than the cause of, adolescent violence in the home. Four frequently inter-related styles of parenting are identified below:

- there is an absence of hierarchical structure within the family and lack of parental supervision, guidance and boundaries (Agnew & Huguley 1989; Cottrell 2001; Downey 1997; House Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth 2010; Ibabe *et al.* 2009; Kennair & Mellor 2007; Laurent & Derry 1999; Wilson 1996), so that adolescents are not appropriately guided in moral and ethical development, leading to a lack of empathy for others, difficulty in delaying gratification and lack of impulse control
- parents are indulgent, protective and risk adverse, so that instead of supporting children to reach developmental milestones such as self responsibility, separation and independence, children develop a sense of entitlement (Gallagher 2004); violence against parents begins when parents finally draw a line and do not give their child what they want
- parents are authoritarian, controlling or abusive (Kennair & Mellor 2007; Ibade *et al.* 2009; House Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth, 2010), which may 'work' when a child is physically weaker than the parent but once a child reaches adolescence, they resort to abuse and violence in reaction to the abuse they experience
- parents are inconsistent, alternating between indulgence and authoritarian parenting or when parents have opposing parenting styles, with one parent parenting indulgently and the other firmly (Kennair & Mellor 2007; Haw 2010, p. 7).

It is important to recognise that not all adolescent violence in the home is a result of inadequate or poor parenting (Gelles 1979; Hunter *et al.* 2010). Attribution of responsibility of adolescent violence to parenting may mask dynamics of gendered power and control in adolescent/parent relationships (Harris 1998; Hunter *et al.* 2010) and neglect the contribution of '... long term, intergenerational and embedded problems of poverty, social exclusion and inequality' commonly inherent in families in which adolescents use violence (Jamieson 2005, pp. 184).

## CURRENT INTERVENTIONS

### SERVICE SYSTEM RESPONSE

Over the past decade, *integrated* responses to family violence in Australia have flourished (Australasian Policing Strategy 2008; Australian Law Reform Commission 2010), resulting in greater coordination across a range of services; such as criminal justice, health, educational and community services. Responses include: strengthening common risk assessment and risk management frameworks; developing comprehensive police codes of practice to respond to family violence incidents; strengthening family violence protocols across government departments and agencies; expanding the role of courts to enable fully mandated referrals to men's behavioural change programs; and an improved response to women and children.

Despite these significant gains, states and territories lack a clearly articulated response to family violence where the offender is less than 18 years. Siloed responses by child protection, family services, mental health, alcohol and drug, youth and other services may inadvertently support the adolescent perpetrator because assessment lacks an exploration of safety and power and control within family relationships. Services may engage with separate family members at different times and in response to specific incidents. Often the service system response focuses on working with adolescents or parents (because adolescents will not engage), and from a victim/perpetrator dichotomy.

Parents of violent adolescents consistently report a lack of service options, feeling blamed and receiving less than optimal support (Bobic 1994; Howard & Rottem 2008; Haw 2010; McKenna 2006). A lack of understanding about the dynamics of adolescents' use of violence, particularly when male adolescents assault their mothers, means unrealistic expectations can be put upon parents to 'fix' the problem. Responses which rely solely on invoking parental responsibility leaves unquestioned the wider structural gendered power relationships which may be operating within the family (Holt 2009) and set the parent up for failure.

### THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

The complexity of adolescent violence in the home warrants flexible options which both protect victims and engage adolescents in a behavioural change process. How adolescent violence in the home is understood informs service system responses to address it. Where adolescent violence is understood

as a psychiatric disorder; for example, as related to 'conduct disorder' or 'oppositional defiance disorder', the response by mental health services may be to address what they understand as inept parenting practices that have reinforced anti-social behaviours in the child (Patterson *et al.* 1989). Treatment with adolescents may include cognitive behavioural therapy and skill development, with little acknowledgement of broader structural gendered power relations which may be operating both within the family and within systems designed to support it.

Family agencies' methodologies are informed by family centred practice, family therapy and family mediation. Family centered practice holds the position that violence is never acceptable and that adolescents may use violence when they feel powerless and helpless, and may experience unresolved internal, as well as external conflicts (Sheehan 1997). Most programs include a skills based component to assist parents to learn specific parenting strategies, including imposing consequences for abusive behaviour, and assist adolescents to learn 'time out', 'anger management' and communication skills. Adolescents and parents learn similar skills relating to communication, conflict management and resolution, and safety.

This approach is limited by the fact that adolescents frequently refuse to participate in treatment. Although useful work can be undertaken with parents when adolescents do not participate (Gallager 2004), evidence that the violence co-occurs with a range of other issues supports the need for interventions which maximise adolescent engagement, in order to address these issues and create safety in the home.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE INTERVENTIONS

Youth justice approaches are commonly used when adolescents use violence within the public domain, such as outside nightclubs. However, when violence in the home occurs, parents are '...overwhelmingly positioned as contributory agents to their child's action...' (Holt 2009, pp. 2). One study from the US (Gebo 2007) showed that family violence by children is treated more leniently in the courts than non-family adolescent violence. Hunter *et al.* (2010) point out the development of specialist responses to domestic violence in the criminal justice system does not apply to violence used by children because of the limitation of the definition to violence as between adults. For this paper, the author was able to source Victorian police data, which offer some information as to local criminal justice responses towards adolescent violence in the home.

When Victorian police are called to a family violence incident where the offender is under 18 years, they must consider whether the child is 'at risk' and, therefore, in need of child protection and/or whether the child is an offender. In the latter circumstance, police can use a range of measures from cautioning to charging, including referral to child protection or application for an interim Intervention Violence Order (IVO). Victorian police data for 2009/10 indicate only 14% (422) of police call outs where an adolescent was an offender resulted in an application for an IVO. It is unclear how police and courts respond to the 86% of incidents where an IVO is not initiated. Nor is it clear how many IVOs initiated by police result in finalised orders by the court and the terms and conditions of these orders, rates of breaches and how these are responded to. Whilst local courts can hear some cases, many are referred to the Children's Court, particularly if the adolescent is younger and/or the offence is of a serious nature.

Victorian police have several options in responding to *adult* incidents of family violence. An L17 form can be used by police to fax the offender's details to a regional men's behavioural change intake point and women's and children's details to women's family violence services in order to link both perpetrator and victim into a service response. Police can issue a Safety Notice which acts as an application to the Magistrates' Court for an IVO and as a summons for the respondent to attend court on the first mention date. However, when adolescents are offenders, options such as a L17 form or Safety Notice are not available.

The absence of formal police protocols, unclear court response and low numbers of IVOs initiated by police, support parents' feedback that they are unsafe and unprotected, and that adolescents are not held accountable for their use of violence. The complexity of dealing with offenders, who are still technically children, may be abusing their siblings and may be 'at risk' compound the difficulty of implementing a consistent criminal justice response. Parental responsibility and lack of alternative accommodation options for adolescents, mean options to leave the family home are severely curtailed (Kennair & Mellor 2007).



## POTENTIAL FOR A COMMUNITY BASED, CRIMINAL JUSTICE INTERVENTION

Whilst the criminal justice system cannot 'make' adolescents stop their use of violence, it does offer a means to engage adolescents who would otherwise not participate in behavioural change and clearly articulates an escalated response should their behaviour not change. In conjunction with community based approaches, a coordinated response could be used to support but not blame parents and hold adolescents accountable for their offending. Both violent adolescents and adults could be invited and challenged to consider the inherent isolation that goes with their attempts to control others (Tew & Nixon 2011) and explore what opportunities for connection with others will emerge when trust and safety replace fear and domination.

If a criminal justice response is used to respond to violent behaviour, it needs to sit within a coordinated community response that addresses co-occurring issues. A coordinated community response adds value for several reasons. These include: engaging adolescents who use violence; sending a clear message through the involvement of police and courts that the use of violence is not acceptable; facilitating the involvement of services to address co-occurring issues like mental health and substance use; and prioritising the safety of all family members. Elements of this response are used by a number of services across Australia (Bobic 2002; Patterson *et al.* 2002; Sheehan 1997; Howard & Rottem 2008; Haw 2010).

Adolescents are still 'children' and require care and protection. Responses can both hold that the use of violence is not acceptable and address the risk factors negatively impacting on the adolescent. Existing responses to adult family violence are not appropriate for adolescent violence in the home, given the vulnerability of the adolescent and their need for care and protection (Kennair & Mellor 2007). However, the core philosophies of safety (those of the adolescent's and other family members), accountability and responsibility for the use of violence, empathy and 'making amends', respect and non violent problem solving are valid tenets in working with offenders of both adult and adolescent family violence.

The literature highlights 'promising approaches', rather than evidenced based practice to adolescent violence in the home (Monk & Cottrell 2006, p. 86). There are currently no Australian programs which *mandate* adolescents to attend behavioural change interventions and are coordinated across courts, police and community agencies. Programs tend to focus on support to parents, in part because offending adolescents are difficult to engage.

## CASE STUDY – STEP UP, A US-BASED COMMUNITY PROGRAM

One program, *Step UP*, delivered across five locations in the US, has significant potential for duplication in Australia. The program works with court mandated adolescents and their parents to support adolescents to stop their use of violence. *Step UP* is predicated on family reparation, restorative justice, therapeutic jurisprudence and conjoint adolescent/parent work methodologies. The model is influenced by men's behavioural change approaches to family violence prevention; particularly the Minneapolis domestic abuse intervention program (DAIP). The program integrates restorative justice approaches '...to repair the harm caused by crime, to actively involve offenders, victims and communities in the criminal justice process and to provide a constructive intervention for juvenile offending' (Richards 2010, p. 381). A therapeutic jurisprudence approach considers how courts can also be natural collaborative partners with community based organisations, rather than coercive systems set aside from more traditional service organisations (Van Horn & Hitchens 2004).

*Step UP* originated in Seattle, Washington in 2001 in response to the high number of juvenile family violence cases in King County Juvenile Court, Seattle, Washington<sup>iii</sup> (Ashley 1998). The program, delivered through the domestic violence court, uses a youth justice diversionary approach as leverage to 'engage' adolescents and give a strong message about the unacceptability of the use of violence. Initial goals of *Step UP* were to: a) implement changes in the juvenile justice system's response to juvenile offenders to increase family safety and juvenile accountability; and b) provide intervention services to juvenile offenders and support for victimised families (Routt & Anderson 2011, p. 4).

*Step UP* is predicated on the assumption that, where possible to do so, family connection and reparation will best support adolescents to stop their violence and address co-occurring 'at risk' behaviours. Both parents and the adolescent participate. *Step UP* involves two core components; a 20 week parent/adolescent group work program and intensive 'wrap around' family case management. Both adolescents and parents attend the group program, although some sessions are specific to adolescents and others to parents.

Adolescents learn to avoid using violence and abuse and take responsibility for their behaviour. Parents learn how to respond to abuse and violence, safety planning in the home and parent skills to support their adolescent staying non-violent (Routt & Anderson 2011). The group program aims to build empathy and

family connection, develop skills and self awareness and provide a mechanism to witness and enhance change. Parents and adolescents attend some sessions together and some independently. 'Wrap around' support addresses co-occurring issues, including adult family violence and conflict, substance use and/or mental health. Active participation in education, training and work is a key intervention in violence prevention.

Families enter *Step UP* when police are called because of the adolescent's violence in the home. The adolescent is charged and held in juvenile detention until the next available domestic violence court session (usually within 24 hours). When adolescents come before a judge, they are given the option of attending the *Step UP* program or the domestic violence charge being heard before the court. Almost all opt for the *Step UP* program. An adolescent cannot participate in *Step UP* without at least one parent's concurrent involvement.

A comprehensive assessment pre, during and post program participation is undertaken by the youth probation officer with representation from other agencies, such as schools or mental health services and includes:

- the adolescent's use of violence (types, frequency, severity etc)
- social, mental health, substance abuse and family history
- parenting and discipline styles
- current and past adult family violence
- safety of family members and parental level of fear
- school attendance, issues, challenges, and support needs
- community involvement – social and community connection
- need for other services, such as drug and alcohol or mental health evaluation.

Parents and adolescents are interviewed separately, so both feel safe about disclosing information. Assessment is undertaken separately with mothers and fathers, as one study has found that 65% of adolescents have reported experiencing family violence, of which 88% identified the father as the abuser (Buel 2002, p. 6).

Data from the Seattle program showed that 53% of adolescents interviewed from 2001 to 2004 identified an experience of family violence (Routt & Anderson 2011, p.8). In that program, 38% of adolescents, out of a total of 268 program participants, had experienced physical abuse by a parent (p. 8). When adult family violence is identified, support is offered to the victim

and where safe to do so, the relationship between the adult use of violence and adolescent use of violence is explored. Adolescents who are living with an abusive parent may be referred to child protection and/or family support as part of 'wrap around' support.

A Safety Plan is developed for all families and includes assessment of risk, mental health and drug and alcohol assessment. Safety Planning with the parents includes:

- how to respond to adolescent's abuse and violence
- consequences for the use of violence
- steps for safety in the home
- resources for support.

Safety Planning with the adolescents and parents includes:

- steps the adolescent will take to prevent using violence
- discussion with parents about the Plan
- adolescent 'sign up' to the Plan
- parents' commitment to support their adolescent to follow the Plan.

Assessment identifies relevant supports to assist the adolescent to stop their use of violence. Services including alcohol and drug, educational or mental health participate in care planning, coordination and review where relevant to the family's treatment goals. *Step UP* plays a key advocacy role when adolescents are at risk of school dropout or disengagement from school, training or work.

Court staff are highly involved with interventions. A judge presides over fortnightly case review where the adolescent and family members speak about progress toward non-violence and probation officers articulate care planning outcomes, referral linkages and assessment and treatment.

Key treatment goals with adolescents include:

- taking responsibility for behaviour and being accountable for the effects of their violence on others
- demonstrating empathy for those they abuse
- deciding on and implementing actions to 'make amends' for their use of violence
- learning skills such as non violent conflict resolution, 'time out' techniques and assertive communication
- addressing other issues that negatively impact on family relationships
- engagement in work, training or school.

Key treatment goals with parents include:

- exploring family history, particularly adult family violence, and its impact on their child and their parenting

- 'making amends' for abusive, harsh or violent parenting
- learning new skills such as boundary setting, use of consequences, 'time out', communication, conflict resolution
- psychoeducation about parenting and child development, particularly the adolescent years
- addressing issues that may negatively impact on parenting
- restoration of family relationships (where safe to do so).

Combined parent/adolescent sessions focus on:

- taking 'time out'
- understanding warning signs
- making amends
- assertive communication
- respectful communication
- using 'I' statements
- problem solving together.

The Power and Control Wheel (DAIP 2006), used by some Australian men's behavioural change programs, has been adapted in *Step UP* to the 'Mutual Respect Wheel' and 'Abuse Wheel' as a means for adolescents

and parents to monitor progress to non violence and mutual respect. The following diagram illustrates this.

The Wheel enables adolescents to identify progress towards taking responsibility for violent behaviour. Adolescents are asked to consider:

- Who was harmed by their violent behaviour?
- What was the harm, damage or loss that was done (to themselves, others and family relationships)?
- What behaviour on the Mutual Respect Wheel could have been used instead?
- What tools or strategies could have been used instead and how could this have helped?
- What has been done, or needs to be done, to repair the damage, harm and loss?

Adolescents 'graduate' from *Step UP* when they can demonstrate:

- identification of behaviours from the Abuse and Respect Wheels
- appropriate use of 'time out'
- letters of responsibility and empathy
- respectful communication
- ability to problem solve.

## What behaviors did you use during the past week?



Step Up Program, (200) 288-7581  
Adapted from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project



Step Up Program, (200) 288-7581  
Adapted from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project

The goal is to move to using the Mutual Respect Wheel

Check-In Slide

## EVALUATION

*Step UP* has been evaluated three times by independent research and evaluation since it began in 1997. An extensive array of evaluation tools is used, including Parent and Teen Participation Surveys and a Teen Behavioural Scale of violent and abusive behaviours. Outcomes show a significant reduction in the use of violent and abusive behaviours by adolescents who participated in the program.

An external evaluation of *Step UP*, Seattle found '...lower recidivism rates than youth who did not complete... At 18 months we find ... the average number of DV Referrals and DV filings (ie. recidivism rates) is less than half of Non-Completers' (Organizational Research Services in Anderson & Routt, 2010). The evaluation also found 'significant improvements in attitudes, skills and behaviors (and) significant decline in the extent to which youth engaged in such behaviors in family situations' (Ibid).

An evaluation of Toledo, Ohio *Step UP* revealed that out of 48 adolescents who graduated in the first two years, (July, 2007 - June, 2009), only four had additional domestic violence charges filed. Other outcomes include family reunification, reengagement in education, cessation of substance use and assessment and treatment for mental health problems. Feedback from participating *Step UP* parents and adolescents demonstrates they rate the program extremely positively. In hindsight, most adolescents are glad their parents called the police because it enabled them to make positive changes and regain family connection.

There has been no comparison between long term outcomes achieved by *Step UP* and those of men participating in men's behavioural change programs. Whilst there are mixed findings about the success of men's behavioural change programs, several differences in working with adolescents who use violence in the home support the likelihood of positive outcomes. These include:

- adolescents are still developing and, therefore, have greater capacity for change
- adolescents are usually dependent on parents for support and material resources which gives parents bargaining power to influence adolescent behaviour (for example the imposition of consequences)
- society supports parental and adult power and authority over adolescents.

The significant success of *Step UP* in terms of low recidivism rates and parental/adolescent satisfaction with change, although only ascertained through short term evaluation, can be attributed to the above factors. The restorative justice framework of *Step UP* offers

additional benefits of enhancing victim empowerment and healing, circumventing the social alienation of offenders which result from punitive sanctions and incarceration, and offering a type of justice that avoids further disadvantaging culturally- and economically-marginalised communities (Strang & Braithwaite 2002). *Step UP* demonstrates the benefits of a coordinated partnership between police, courts and community agencies that engages adolescents in a process of behavioural change.

## APPLICATION TO AUSTRALIA

Whilst *Step UP* in the US includes holding the adolescent in juvenile detention, philosophical and practical differences in the Australian system would not support this component. The issue of mandating violent adolescents and their parents to participate in behavioural change programs is contentious, with differing views about the benefits offered by this approach.

However, a similar program to *Step UP* could be delivered in Australia through presentencing or youth diversion. Court mandated interventions, such as those currently delivered through family violence courts that mandate violent men to attend men's behavioural change programs, would support engagement of adolescents in intervention. This would mean when police are called to a family violence incident where the offender is adolescent, they must take a specific course of action (as now occurs when they are called to an adult family violence incident). When the adolescent appears in court, the magistrate mandates him or her to attend a program. Failure to participate and/or complete the program may mean the adolescent is back in court and possibly charged with an offence. Intervention Orders and police contact could also include referral to a *Step UP* program or similar.

## CONCLUSION

Adolescent violence in the home is a form of family violence with lasting consequences for victims and offenders. While there are key differences between adolescent and adult family violence, gender bias and power dynamics are key elements of both. There is a clear relationship between male adolescents' experience and use of violence in adulthood against female partners. The relationship, if any, between female adolescents' use of violence, their experience of family violence and their use of violence against partners in later life is not well articulated.

Best practice responses should be informed by a feminist analysis of gender and power when violence

occurs in a family context. These responses prioritise the safety of victims of the violence; understand the violence as located in a social, cultural and gendered context; view the violence as a 'tool of power' (Sheehan 1997); and stand firm on the unacceptability of violence. Feminist analysis plays a critical role in understanding and responding to male adolescent violence against mothers and other females in the family. Recognition that adolescent violence in the home is an abuse of power highlights '...the need to have theorisations of family power relations that enable us to recognise, understand and conceptualise this phenomenon and devise appropriate strategies of intervention to empower parent-victims to reestablish control over their situations' (Tew & Nixon 2011).

Not all adolescents will require a criminal justice response or intensive involvement in specific programs. For some adolescents, strengthening parenting skill and supporting parents may be enough to enact change. Others, particularly where police have been called, require a more intensive response.

The relatively ad hoc response that currently exists across the country requires coordination and enhancement to engage with and treat adolescents and parents. Whilst the knowledge base is still developmental, evidence on severity and prevalence highlights the need for an urgent response across policy and program jurisdictions. The *Step UP* program provides a template for application in Australia and addresses the problematic issue of how to engage adolescents in treatment. This model offers an 'early intervention' approach that maximises adolescent and parental connection and relationship, important at this crucial stage of adolescent development. Moreover, a response to adolescent violence in the home is an early intervention response to the prevention of adult family violence.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author gratefully thanks the paper's reviewers, Ms Mary McKenna, Lecturer in Legal Studies at the School of Law at Flinders University and Ms Rosemary Paterson from Anglicare Victoria for their very helpful comments and suggestions.

## REFERENCES

- Agnew R & Huguley S 1989, 'Adolescent violence to parents', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, issue 51, pp. 699-711
- Anderson, L & Routt, G 2010, '*Step UP*: A curriculum for teenagers who are violent at home', Lucas County Juvenile Court, Seattle, Washington
- Ashley N 1998, *Report on Initial Meetings, King County Juvenile Court Domestic Violence/Sexual Violence Assault Task Force*, King County, Seattle
- Australasian Policing Strategy (APS) on the Prevention and Reduction of Family Violence, 2008, *Family Violence Prevention and Reduction*, Commonwealth of Australia and New Zealand
- Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) 2010, *Family Violence – A National Legal Response*, Report 114, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra
- Bancroft L & Silverman JG 2002, *The batterer as parent: addressing the impact of domestic violence on family violence*, Sage Publications, California
- Bobic N 2002, *Adolescent violence towards parents: Myths and realities*, Rosemount Youth and Family Services, Sydney
- Bobic N 2004, *Adolescent violence towards parents*, Topic Paper 14, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney
- Boxer, P, Gullan, RL & Maloney, A 2009, 'Adolescents' physical aggression toward parents in a clinic-referred sample', *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 106-116
- Brezina, T 1999, 'Teenage violence towards parents as an adaptation to family strain: Evidence from a national survey of male adolescents', *Youth and Society*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 416 - 444
- Buchanan F 2008, 'Mother and infant attachment theory and domestic violence: crossing the divide', *Stakeholder Paper 5*, Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney
- Buel S 2002, 'Why juvenile courts should address family violence: promising practices to improve intervention outcomes', *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, vol. 53, issue 2, pp. 1-16
- Buka S & Earls F 1993, 'Early determinants of delinquency and violence', *Health Affairs*, Winter, pp. 46-64
- Cochran, D, Brown, M, Adams, S & Doherty, D, 1994, *Young adolescent batterers: A profile of restraining*

- order deficits in Massachusetts, Trial Court, Office of the Commissioner of Probation, Boston
- Cornell, C.P & Gelles, R.J 1981, *Adolescent to parent violence*. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Society of Criminology, Washington, DC
- Cornell CP & Gelles RJ 1982, 'Adolescent-to-parent violence', *Urban Social Change Review*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 8-14
- Cottrell B 2001, *Parent abuse: The abuse of parents by their teenage children*, Family Violence Prevention Unit, Canada
- Cottrell B 2003, *Parent abuse: The abuse of parents by their teenage children*, National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, Ottawa
- Cottrell, B & Monk, P 2004, 'Adolescent-to parent abuse: a qualitative analysis of common themes', *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 25, no. 8, pp. 1072-1095
- Cottrell, B & Monk, P 2006, 'Responding to adolescent-to parent abuse: a qualitative analysis of change factors', *Canadian Social Work*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Autumn, Canada
- Crichton-Hill Y, Evans N & Meadows L 2006, 'Adolescent violence towards parents', *Te Awatea Review*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 21 – 22
- Daly K, & Nancarrow H 2009, 'Restorative justice and youth violence towards parents' in J. Ptacek (eds), *Feminism, Restorative Justice and Violence Against Women*, Oxford University Press, New York
- Day A, Chung D, O'Leary D, Moore S, Carson E & Grace A 2010, Integrated responses to domestic violence: Legally mandated intervention programs for male perpetrators, *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, no. 404, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra
- DeKersedy WS 1993, *Four Variations of Family Violence: A Review of Sociological Research*, Health Canada, Ottawa
- Department of Justice (DoJ) 2009, 'Measuring Family Violence in Victoria, Nine Year Trend 1999-2008', Victorian Family Violence Database, Melbourne
- Domestic Abuse Intervention Program (DAIP) 2008. Viewed 12 May 2011 <<http://www.theduluthmodel.org/>>
- Downey L 1997, 'Adolescent violence: a systemic and feminist perspective', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 70-79
- Eckstein N 2004, 'Emergent issues in families experiencing adolescent-to-parent abuse', *Western Journal of Communication*, vol. 64, no. 4, pp. 365-388
- Edelson JL 1999, 'Children witnessing of adult domestic violence', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 14, no. 8, pp. 839-870
- Edenborough M, Jackson D, Mannix J & Weekes L 2008, 'Living in the Red Zone: the experience of child-to-mother violence', *Child and Family Social Work*, vol. 13, pp. 464-473
- Evans D & Warren-Sohlberg L 1998, 'A pattern analysis of adolescent abusive behaviour towards parents', *Journal of Adolescent Research*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 210-216
- Finkelhor D, Ormrod R, Turner H & Hamby SL 2005, 'The victimization of children and youth: a comprehensive, national survey', *Child Maltreatment*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 5-25
- Gallagher E 2004, 'Youth who victimize their parents', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 94-105
- Garrido V 2005, *Los hijos tiranos*, Ariel, Barcelona
- Gebo, E 2007, 'A family affair: the juvenile court and family violence cases', *Journal of Family Violence*, vol. 22, pp. 501-509
- Gondolf EW 1990, *Psychiatric response to family violence*, Lexington Books, Massachusetts
- Harbin, H 1977, Episodic dyscontrol and family dynamics, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 134, no. 10, pp. 1113 – 1116
- Harbin, HT & Madden, DJ 1979, 'Battered parents: a new syndrome'. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 136, pp. 1288-1291
- Harris JR 1998, *The nurture assumption*, Free Press, New York
- Haw A 2010, *Parenting over violence: understanding and empowering mothers affected by adolescent violence in the home*, Patricia Giles Centre, Perth
- Hemphill S 1996, 'Characteristics of conduct-disordered children and their families: A review', *Australian Psychologist*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 109-118
- Holt A 2009, 'Parent abuse: some reflections of the adequacy of a youth justice response', *Internet Journal of Criminology*. Viewed 12 May 2011 <[http://www.internetjournalofcriminology.com/Holt\\_Parent\\_Abuse\\_Nov\\_09.pdf](http://www.internetjournalofcriminology.com/Holt_Parent_Abuse_Nov_09.pdf)>
- House Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth 2010, *Avoid the harm – stay calm: Report on the inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians*, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

- Howard J & Rottem N 2008, *It all starts at home: male adolescent violence towards sole mothers*, Inner South Community Health Service, Melbourne
- Howard J 1995, 'Family violence: children hit out at parents', *Community Quarterly*, no. 34, pp. 38-43
- Humphreys CF 2007, *Domestic violence and child protection: challenging directions for practice*, Issues Paper 13, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney
- Hunter C, Dixon J & Parr S 2010, 'Mother abuse: a matter of youth justice, child welfare or domestic violence', *Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 37, no. 2, June, pp. 264-284
- Ibade I, Jaureguizar J & Diaz O 2009, 'Adolescent violence against parents. Is it a consequence of gender equality?' *European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 3-24
- Jackson D 2003, 'Broadening constructions of family violence: mothers' perspectives of aggression from their children', *Child and Family Social Work*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 321 – 329
- Jaffe PG, Wolfe DA & Wilson SK 1990, *Children of battered women*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA
- Jamieson J 2005, 'New Labour, youth justice and the question of 'respect'', *Youth Justice*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 180-193
- Kennair N & Mellor D 2007, 'Parent abuse: a review', *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 203-219
- King County Juvenile Court 2005, *Juvenile Domestic Violence Incidents of Adolescent to Parent Violence: 2001-2004*, Seattle
- Laurent A & Derry A 1999, 'Violence of French adolescents toward their parents', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 21-26
- Levendosky AA, Huth-Bocks AC, Shapiro DL & Semel MA 2002, 'The impact of domestic violence on the maternal-child relationship and preschool-age children's functioning', *Journal of Family Psychology*, vol. 204, pp. 544-552
- Lieberman A & Van Horn P 2005, *Don't Hit My Mommy*, Zero to Three Press, California
- McKenna M 2006, 'Adolescent parental abuse: The abuse of parents by their adolescents', Paper presented at *Parenting Imperatives 11: 2nd National Parenting Conference*, Adelaide, 25-27 May
- McKenna M, O'Connor R & Verco J 2010, *Exposing the dark side of parenting: A report on parents' experiences of child and adolescent family violence*, Regional Alliance Addressing Child & Adolescent Family Violence in the Home, Adelaide
- Mitchell KJ & Finkelhor D 2001, 'Risk of crime victimization among youth exposed to domestic violence', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 16, no. 9, pp. 944-964
- National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2011, *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra
- National Crime Prevention 2001, *Young People and Domestic Violence – National Research on Young People's Attitudes and Experiences of Domestic Violence*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra
- Nixon J & Hunter C 2009, 'Disciplining women: anti-social behavior and the governance of conduct', in A Millie (ed), *Securing respect: Behavioral expectations and anti-social behavior in the UK*, Policy Press, Bristol pp. 154-182
- Pagani LS, Tremblay RE, Nagin D, Zoccolilli M, Vitaro F & McDuff P 2004, 'Risk factor models for adolescent verbal and physical aggression toward mothers', *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, vol. 28, no. 6, pp. 528-537
- Pagelow MD 1984, *Family Violence*, Praeger, New York
- Pagelow MD 1989, 'The incidence and prevalence of criminal abuse of other family members', in L Ohlin & M Tonry (eds), *Family Violence*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago
- Partnerships Against Domestic Violence 2001, *Young people and domestic violence*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra
- Patterson G R, deBaryshe B D & Ramsay E 1989, 'A Developmental Perspective on Antisocial Behaviour', *American Psychologist*, vol. 44, pp. 329-335
- Patterson R., Luntz H, Perlesz A & Cotton S 2002, 'Adolescent violence towards parents: maintaining family connections when the going gets tough', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 90-100
- Paulson MJ, Coombs RH & Landsverk J 1990, 'Youth who physically assault their parents', *Journal of Family Violence*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 121-133
- Peek CW, Fischer JL & Kidwell JS 1985, 'Teenage violence towards parents: A neglected dimension of family violence', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 47, no. 4, pp. 1051-1058

- Pence E & McMahon M 1999, 'A coordinated community response to domestic violence', in N Harwin & G Hague & E Malos (eds), *The Multi-Agency Approach to Domestic Violence: New Opportunities, Old Challenges?*, Whiting and Birch, London, pp. 150-168
- Perez T & Pereira R, 2006, '*Violencia filio-parental: revision de la bibliografía, Mosaico*', vol. 36, pp. 1-13
- Perry BD 1997, 'Incubated in terror: neurodevelopmental factors in the "cycle of violence"', in Osofsky J (ed.), *Children, Youth and Violence: The Search for Solutions*, Guilford Press, New York, pp. 124-148
- Pettelier, D & Coutu, S 1992, 'Substance abuse and family violence in adolescents', *Canada's Mental Health*, vol. 40, pp. 6-12
- Pueyo A & Redondo S 2007, Prediccion de la violencia: Entre le peligrosidad y la valoracion del riesgo de de violencia, *Papeles del Psicologo*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 157-173
- Richards K 2010, Police-referred restorative justice for juveniles in Australia, *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, no. 398, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra
- Rossmann RBB, Hughes HM & Rosenberg MS 1999, *Children and interparental violence: the impact of exposure*, Bruner/Mazel, Philadelphia, PA
- Routt G & Anderson L 2011, 'Adolescent violence towards parents', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 1-18
- Rubin G 1996, 'Teenage behaviour – when parents can't cope, NSW Health, cited in Bobic N (2002), *Adolescent violence towards parents: Myths and realities*, Rosemount Youth and Family Services, Sydney
- Sellick-Lane L 2007, *Survey of domestic violence, Juvenile Section*, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, USA
- Sellick-Lane L 2007, *Survey of domestic violence: Juvenile Section*, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Seattle (unpublished report)
- Sheehan M 1997, Adolescent violence – strategies, outcomes and dilemmas in working with young people and their families', *ANZ Journal of Family Therapy*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 80-91
- Shonkoff J & Phillips D 2002, *From neurons to neighbourhoods; the science of early childhood development*, National Academy Press, Washington
- Southwell J 2003, 'Restorative justice and family violence: debating paradigms for justice for family violence', *Domestic Violence & Incest Resource Centre Newsletter*, Spring, pp. 3-7
- Stewart M, Wilkes L, Jackson D & Mannix J 2006, 'Child-to-mother violence: a pilot study', *Contemporary Nurse*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 297-310
- Strang H & Braithwaite J (eds) 2002, *Restorative justice and family violence*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne
- Strauss MA & Gelles RJ (editors) 1990, *Family violence in American families: risk factors and adaptations to violence in 8,145 families*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, NY
- Tew J & Nixon J 2010, 'Parent abuse: opening up a discussion of a complex instance of family power relations', *Social Policy and Society*, vol. 9, issue 4, pp. 579 – 589
- Tomison A 1996, Intergenerational transmission of maltreatment, *Issues in Child Abuse Prevention*, no. 6, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Melbourne. Viewed 26 March 2011 <<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/issues/issues6/issues6.html>>
- Ulman A & Strauss M 2003, 'Violence by children against mothers in relation to violence between parents and corporal punishment by parents', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, vol. 34, pp. 41-60
- Van Horn P, & Groves B 2006, 'Children exposed to domestic violence: making trauma-informed custody and visitation decisions', *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, vol. 57, Issue 1, pp. 51-60
- VicHealth 2007, *Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, VicHealth, Melbourne
- VicHealth 2009, *National survey on community attitudes to violence against women 2009: Changing cultures, changing attitudes. Preventing violence against women. A summary of findings*, VicHealth, Melbourne
- Victoria Police, 2009/10, Data – police family violence incidents
- Wilson J 1996, 'Physical abuse of parents by adolescent children', in DM Busby (ed), *The impact of violence on the family: treatment approaches for therapists and other professionals*, Allyn & Bacon, Massachusetts, pp. 101-123
- Wolfe D & Marsh E (eds.) 2006, *Behavioral and emotional disorders in adolescents: Nature, assessment and treatment*, Guilford Press, New York



## ENDNOTES

- i. Adolescents are frequently referred to as ‘teenagers’, ‘juveniles’, ‘youth’ and ‘young people’ in the literature. This paper refers to ‘adolescence’ as the period of life between ten and eighteen years of age.
- ii. There may also be a relationship between adolescent violence in the home and ‘elder abuse’.
- iii. There were 950 family violence cases in 1996 where adolescents were offenders.

### Publication information

ISSN: 1443 – 8496

© 2011

Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse

The University of New South Wales

Sydney NSW 2052

p: +61 2 9385 2990

f: +61 2 9385 2993

freecall: 1800 753 382

e: [clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au](mailto:clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au)

<http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au>

This is a refereed publication. The views expressed in this Stakeholder Paper do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government or the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse. While all reasonable care has been taken in the preparation of this publication, no liability is assumed for any errors or omissions.

The Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse is linked to the Centre for Gender-Related Violence Studies, based in the University of New South Wales, School of Social Sciences and International Studies. The Clearinghouse is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.



**UNSW**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES



**Australian Government**