ACCOUNTING FOR IPV PERPETRATION. A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF ENGLISH AND BRAZILIAN MEN’S ACCOUNTS OF PERPETRATING VIOLENCE TOWARDS THEIR INTIMATE PARTNERS

Polly Radcliffe, Ph.D.
Research Fellow
National Addiction Centre
Polly.Radcliffe@kcl.ac.uk
Presentation Outline

• Aims of study

• Background

• Methodology

• Findings

• Implications for practice
Perpetration of intimate partner violence by males in substance use treatment: a cross-cultural Research learning alliance

1. Estimate and compare the prevalence of IPV perpetration by males in substance use treatment in London and São Paulo

2. Qualitatively explore and compare the cultural construct of IPV perpetration by male substance users in England and Brazil

3. Develop culturally sensitive theory of IPV perpetration among male substance abusers

4. Develop and disseminate a cross-culturally applicable framework for substance use staff to work with male perpetrators in the context of substance use treatment
Prevalence among substance misusers

- Among men seeking or receiving substance abuse treatment, 38%-40% had physically or sexually abused their partners (Frye et al., 2007; El-Bassel et al., 2007; Gilchrist et al., 2011b) – rates around four times higher than reported by males in the general population (O’Farrell et al., 2003)

- Women in drug treatment experience IPV victimisation at rates ranging from 41% to 80% (El-Bassell et al., 2001; Easton et al., 2000; Gilchrist et al., 2007; 2011; Clark & Foy 2000, Downs & Miller 2002) of general population estimates (Feder et al., 2009).
Policy response to domestic violence and abuse

Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy
‘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’
(England and Wales, Home Office, 2013)

• Recently identified, defined
• Made possible by campaigning, lobbying, activism and increasing integration of feminist thought and a rights agenda in the UK policy process
Legal Measures England and Wales

**Criminal Law**

IPV can be prosecuted as murder, rape and manslaughter, assault, harassment and threatening behaviour.

**Civil Law**


- **An Occupation Order**
- **A Non-molestation Order**

In addition, the *Protection from Harassment Act 1997* (as amended) also provides for important civil and criminal remedies, including **non-harassment and restraining orders**.
Policy and Legal Measures Brazil

- **Protective Services for Women** (Delegacia de Defesa das Mulheres or DDM) established in 1985, staffed by women police officers and focused on investigating and prosecuting crimes committed against women especially sexual violence and IPV. Now 494 DDMs nation-wide.

- Law 11.340/2006, or **Maria da Penha Law**

- **2007 National Policy to Combat Violence Against Women**
Aim: to qualitatively explore and compare the cultural construct of IPV perpetration by male substance users in England and Brazil

- Purposive sample of 40 substance users in treatment services who identified as perpetrators in questionnaire interviews (including a range of ages, types of substances misused and types of violence)
- Semi-structured interviews exploring attitudes towards men and women’s relationships; their direct experience of violence in their relationships and how they accounted for that
- The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, were digitally recorded, transcribed and anonymised
- We were interests in how the accounts were organised and authorised and what sorts of explanations were given for IPV
Common sense categories, frame cultural knowledge

Gender differences
‘I suppose it’s the woman that does everything and the man’s just the law, isn’t he?’ (UK/London/Edward, white Scottish born/Opioid substitution therapy)

Men and women’s attitudes towards substances
“Oh, because no woman likes when a man drinks, you know?’ (Brazil 14)

Masculinity, the man’s role
“I’m old school. I’m like, I should go out to work and provide for you, you know. Not that I want you – because you’ll go to work and do what you want to do – do you know what I mean? but I’ve still got to put food on the table, buy you your clothes, buy you nice things. I like to provide for a woman; it just makes me feel a bit worthwhile with myself” (UK/Jerry, white, heroin and crack user)
Equality between men and women

“Yeah, nowadays ... Let’s say, it’s equal rights. For example, I work, she works. Then I do dishes, I sweep the floor, I do laundry ... She and I, for instance, because there is the washer we use it. She taught me. I sweep the floors ... Only that ... it’s never perfect, but I do it” (B/10)
Accounting for IPV perpetration

- Wrong doers use linguistic devices to disavow their deviance – in a ‘vocabulary of motives’ (Mills, 1940)
- Perpetrators of IPV are not alone in using verbal techniques of *neutralisation* (Sykes and Matza, 1957) including minimising, justifying, denial in order to demonstrate their shared normative values.
- Despite very different national and cultural contexts, UK and Brazilian men use very similar linguistic devices in accounts of IPV
Minimising violence

“But I’ve never actually used [06:34 – a] closed fist with her, you know. Like I said, in the 10 years, I hit her about four times, but she’s hit me just as much as I’ve hit her [yeah]. So who’s to blame?” (UK, Martin, White, former crack and heroin user)

“Word fights...[And did you ever raise your hand or did she raise her hand to you?] It happened a couple of times, yes, but it was light...only a light thing. Yeah, some pushes and shoves” (Brazil, AUDIO 14)

“In the end it’d just be, like, ‘Aaargh, Oh, shut up,’ and maybe lash out at her and, you know, but it was never a sustained attack or anything like that. It’d probably be one hit or something like that, or, I never [08:52 really] pushed her or anything like that. I have grabbed her by the throat a few occasions, to, like, probably shut her up, thinking along them lines, you know, like. But, in front of the kids, never in front of the kids. Did they know about it? No doubt they did. They’re in the house” (UK, Kevin, White, crack and heroin user)
Substance Use implicated in a Range of justifications for IPV

- Directly linked to substance use, character-changing, disinhibiting effects of substance,
- Linked to substance using relationship and lifestyle
- Linked to stresses caused by substance use (particularly in relationships where other partner is not using)
- Response to accusation, theft, injustice, context of anger, sometimes retaliation
Violence presented as directly facilitated by intoxication and substance misuse;

I: And so this study – you know, I’ve talked to you already about it. It’s about relationships and how that’s affected [yeah] by drug and alcohol use [yeah].

IV: Yeah. It’s definitely, yes. Alcohol, it brings out the worst in me, you know. You know, when you’re not drunk, you’re calm and you can just ignore someone or walk out. **But when you’re drunk, something flicks a switch and you become violent** (UK, Wayne, hazardous drinking, OST)

“Arguments. Arguments that sometimes it got physical. That was it. That was it, because of the drinking, you know? I would drink, then I’d go out, then I’d come home late, and then when I got home there was fighting” (B/11)
Violence is linked to seeking, using, sharing drugs in drug using relationships

IV: We'd just been and scored. We'd been out for the evening, all day, we'd just gone and got our heroin and was cooking it up and she was convinced that I'd had more of it and it just started and she was just getting in my face and I just lashed out (UK, Jason, white, former heroin user)

When there was no money for drugs. There was no money for drugs. Then the woman would turn into a beast and she’d start breaking stuff in the house.

(B/13)

You cannot live together if you’re both using drugs. You cannot. It’s impossible. It is impossible. If you’re both using drugs, you cannot live together, yeah? (UK, Eric, Mixed Heritage, former heroin and crack user)
Conclusions – implications for practice

• In both England and Wales and Brazil, there are legislative and safeguarding frameworks to protect victims and hold perpetrators to account

• Intoxication, seeking drugs and spending money on drugs and alcohol is linked in these accounts in remarkably similar ways to IPV perpetration

• Despite enormous national, cultural and language differences, and despite their avowed disapproval of IPV, linguistic repertoires and narratives that minimise, justify and explain IPV are remarkably similar amongst men in Brazil and England and Wales
Conclusions – implications for practice ctd.

• The challenge and implications for practitioners must be to find ways to undermine men’s accounts in order to hold them accountable for their violence in a non-judgemental way.

• Practitioners need to be able to ask questions in a range of health care settings in order to enable both IPV victims and perpetrators to seek help and have their needs met safely.

• The high prevalence of IPV perpetration amongst substance misusers suggests the need for an integrated, joined-up response, that includes enabling staff to identify IPV perpetration and to access resources, support and referral pathways.