Elder Abuse In Aboriginal Communities

1. Discuss your understanding of FV, taking into consideration underpinning values & philosophies based on current theory and knowledge.

DFV is ultimately about power and control. The perpetrators are predominantly male and this is largely based on their idea of masculinity. Expectations are that men should be strong and more powerful than women. Appearing weak or unmanly can trigger some men to become enraged or to act on violent impulses. There is a desire to gain and maintain power and control over their partner and children (or parents in the case of elder abuse). They hold a belief their needs and feelings should be the priority and use abusive tactics to undermine their partner's confidence and ability to leave the relationship. Violence takes many forms, none being mutually exclusive. While physical is the most visible form, others such as emotional, sexual, financial, social and spiritual abuse can be just as harmful. Perpetrators are unlikely to take responsibility for their behaviour and will blame other factors such as having a bad day/stress, they were provoked, they just lost control or were under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

2. Discuss the prevalence & historical & socio-political context of DFV (e.g. why does it exist? Who gets harmed, why?)

Domestic violence directly affects the victims, their children, their families and friends, employers, co-workers, and has repercussions for the quality of life in a local community. There can be far-reaching financial, social, health and psychological consequences. The impact of violence can also have indirect costs, including the costs to the community of bringing perpetrators to justice or the costs of medical treatment for injured victims. More at risk of abuse are pregnant women, indigenous women, women with a disability, children and young people living with DFV. Children may go on to become perpetrators themselves as their only role model for relationships has been an unhealthy one. There can be long term affects for children inheriting grief and trauma.

There are many theories and perspectives regarding DFV such as:

- Family Violence Perspectives
- Systems Theory
- Ecological Theory
- Exchange/Social Control Theory
- Subculture-of-violence Theory
- Feminist Perspectives
- Resource Theory
- Integrated Theory
- Integrated Perspective

Two bodies of theory — family violence and feminism — clearly define the sociological literature on intimate partner violence. (Jennifer Lawson (2012) Sociological Theories of Intimate

PartnerViolence, Journal of Human Behaviour in the Social Environment)

3. Outline the impact (e.g. physical, emotional) of DFV on your chosen group & identify the needs of the group, including specific and cultural considerations.

Some of the effects of elder abuse are:

- Injury/Death
- Pain
- Higher levels of stress and depression
- Increased risk of being put in a nursing home or being hospitalised
- Loss of assets
- Decline in health

CALD Communities:

A number of factors can increase vulnerability to abuse, in particular for those whose primary language is not English. Their dependence on family members for support plus the potential conflict in relation to cross-generational expectations in regards to caring obligations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

“In relation to elder abuse in Aboriginal communities, a 2005 report by the Office of the Public Advocate in Western Australia established that in the Aboriginal context, even at the level of terminology, the conceptualisation of the mainstream concept of elder abuse requires reconsideration. Both the terms 'elder' and 'abuse' were considered problematic, as 'elder' has a specific meaning in Aboriginal communities, and 'abuse' may be considered inapt and confrontational. The research indicates that, as in the non-Aboriginal context, the most common type of abuse is financial but that other types of abuse also occur. Two factors that were identified as having particular implications in the Aboriginal context were cultural obligations and the circumstances of grandparents. From a cultural perspective, Aboriginal norms in relation to reciprocity, the expectation that resources will be shared, and kinship (where a wide variety of relationships are involved in familial and community networks), are dimensions that complicate understandings of whether and how elder abuse is occurring. The extent to which calls on grandparent resources to care for grandchildren are culturally reasonable or unreasonable was also highlighted by the research. Substantially more work is required to understand and conceptualise elder abuse in the Aboriginal context, especially among different groups in different circumstances, given the diversity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.” (https://aifs.gov.au/publications/elder-abuse/export)

4. Outline the legal and ethical challenges you can envisage working in the chosen area of your DFV research (e.g. duty of care, confidentiality & disclosure, codes of conduct, professional boundaries)

If I were to work in Elderly care I believe it would pose challenges such as maintaining impartiality when witnessing abuse when the victim is not able or willing to take any action. It would be very hard to watch a person get abused by their own child or someone close to them and they feel too guilty to take any action against them. Even worse would be to identify abuse but know the victim has absolutely no-one else to care for them. I would need to seek guidance and advice on how to handle such a situation effectively and ethically. If the perpetrator were to be taken away would the victim end up worse off? I think if I were working in an elderly care facility and I identified abuse by other staff members I would not hesitate to go through the right channels to see action taken to address the abusive behaviour.

5. Discuss how perpetrators can be held accountable for DFV and suggest a change strategy.

I think there needs to be more awareness raised generally about ageism and treating our elders with respect and care in order to try to prevent abuse in the first place. School programs similar to Respectful Relationships in schools to highlight ageism and the effects of elder abuse are. Professional carer's should have minimum qualifications. Institutions should meet certain requirements or have funding pulled. There should be more monitoring of those institutions to make sure they are properly caring for people.

There needs to be more affordable housing available, the current waiting lists are too long.

Alternatives to living arrangements – such as a number of senior people sharing a home or more community-based housing rather than old people's homes. Outreach workers could come to them to ensure everyone's needs are met.

As far as the perpetrator being held accountable I believe a long term workshop on elder abuse would be a beneficial. The workshop/course would include a mixture of in-the-home support with the perpetrator and victim to work on the issues and make change, as well as attending workshop sessions with other perpetrators.

6. Explain what you learned about DFV from the project and how your personal beliefs have been challenged.

I learned that I myself have been guilty of ageism. Just recently I found myself saying Bernie Sanders would be such a good President but he's just too old. I immediately reflected on what I said and questioned why I felt that way. I am also in the age group that will likely suffer age discrimination as well. I worry I won't be able to gain employment after this course.

After undertaking research and creating the campaign I find it is something in the forefront of my mind now, when it really wasn't something I thought about much previously. It has resulted in me thinking about my relationships with both my mother and daughter. I recently went to Adelaide and visited my Aunt who suffers from dementia and is in a care home. She was so drugged up she just slept the whole time. A nurse told us she had been given medication due to being aggressive but they had decided to cut back on it as she was so sleepy. This raised so many questions for me and I found myself jumping from one side to another. Was my Aunt a danger to others in the home? Were the staff suitably trained with enough resources to properly

care for everyone? Ultimately I am now far more aware of the issues surrounding elder abuse and will be able to share that awareness with others.

References

1. https://www.dvrcv.org.au/about-us/relationship-violence
2. https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/d1a8d479-a39a-48c1-bbe2-4b27c7a321e0/aihw-fdv-02.p
3. https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/archive/Domviolence df.aspx?inline=true