

*ESTSS workshop  
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# Childhood experience of care and abuse (CECA) – Assessment issues

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## Aim of session

- To describe the CECA interview of childhood experience
- To outline findings of CECA studies with offenders
- To highlight psychological abuse as a form of trauma
- To illustrate psychological abuse with DVD interview



# Childhood Experience and Offending

- “ *Most offenders come from seriously maladaptive social and family backgrounds and are damaged individuals* (Kear-Colwell, 1996)
- Abusers may have experienced abuse as children, but specificity of type of experience and disorder (where relevant) is largely unconfirmed. Measures are needed which can help in the recall of time-based early life adverse and traumatic experience.

**Are there particular experiences, or combinations of experiences that differentiate different types of offending or disorder? For example psychological abuse?**

**Can assessment measures be used to illicit descriptions of trauma that can be utilised to aid in intervention?**



# Lifespan approaches

- In order to understand the origins of adult disorder, we need to understand early life experience, and important transitions.
- This needs to incorporate early relationships with parents as measure of attachment problems and social adversity.
- This can have social, psychological and biological impacts on the developing child.



# Retrospective assessment

- To understand the childhood experience of adults, we need to ask them to recollect their early experience and relationship with parents and other adults.
- This entails use of retrospective measures. These can be open to reporting bias.
- We need robust investigative interviews to determine individual's factual history in order to determined causal models, and for treatment purposes.



# The CECA

- A retrospective assessment of childhood experience to the age of 17 for use with adults or adolescents (14+)
  - A semi-structured interview with a narrative interview style including probing questions.
  - Broad context of family arrangements, care, abuse and social arena covered. Experiences recorded chronologically.
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# Interviewing on CECA

- The interview takes about one hour for a medium risk case. (Longer for complex cases).
  - The interview is audio-recorded, scoring is undertaken from the recording. It is not necessary to transcribe all material.
  - Stem questions and probes are outlined in the CECA interview pack. Additional probing questions may be added as required.
  - The interview has a conversational style but a basic underlying structure to guide it.
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# Scoring the CECA

- CECA is scored according to set of definitions, rating rules and precedent 'benchmark' examples identified in the CECA manual.
- Most of the scales are 4-point:
  - 1-marked, 2-moderate; 3-some; 4-little/none.
- Ratings are made for each parent or perpetrator and repeated for different household arrangements or changes in severity.
- Information is scored according to benchmarked thresholds.



# Interview topics

## Core CECA

Demographics

Household arrangements & loss of parents

Care – antipathy, neglect, role reversal

Abuse – physical, sexual, psychological

## Extended CECA

Control – supervision and discipline

Parental risk – discord & violence; psychiatric disorder, financial and housing difficulty

Social arena – social involvement, support

Cognitive sets and competencies

Home leaving



## Neglect scale

### *Definition*

Material neglect and indifference shown by parents and carers to child in relation to:

- material care (being fed, clothed); regular household routines; health & hygiene.
- Socialisation: neglect of friendships, school work, career options
- Emotional needs & support
- Severity determined by pervasiveness of neglect and number of areas of neglect

### *Rating*

#### SEVERE

1. Marked
2. Moderate

#### NON-SEVERE

3. Mild
4. Little/none

### Scored:

For each carer

Overall (combined impact)

For each household arrangement

For major changes in severity



# Example of neglect



## 1. Marked

‘You had the bare essentials, you had your bed, your wardrobe and that was it. If we came home from school there wouldn’t be a meal on the table, Mum would probably be asleep. She’d give us some money to get a cake for our dinner. I often went to bed feeling hungry...we bathed ourselves - two in the bath and save the bath water for the others. Mum never washed our clothes - we took them to the launderette. She used to keep me off school Friday to do all the washing. She was never interested in my school work. I can’t every remember my mum or dad being loving or supportive.



# Physical abuse

## *Definition*

- Violence shown to child from household member. Includes severe beatings, being hit with implement, punched, kicked, burned. Potential for causing injury. Usually repeated but can be single severe attack, usually from adult, but maybe older child/young person.
- Severity determined by intensity of attack, type of hitting and frequency.

## *Rating*

### SEVERE

1. Marked
2. Moderate

### NON-SEVERE

3. Mild
4. Little/none

### Scored:

For each perpetrator

For changes in severity over time

# Example of physical abuse



- 1- Marked
- This woman describes how her father would hit all the children regularly with a belt from earliest years and at least once a week. This could be for some misbehaviour, or just because he lost his temper.
- “One day he beat us with the strap of a suitcase because we asked to go to the park on a Sunday afternoon. He had been drinking and wanted to go to bed for a few hours. All of us children kept asking him if we could go to the park and if a friend could take us. He lost his temper and started beating us’.
- “There was constant tension in the home. I used to run around to try to humour him (placate him) so that he wouldn't cause a row or wreck the place. (Did you ever have any injuries?) He cut my toe once - he threw his dinner on the floor in a temper and the plate broke and split my toe. Otherwise I mainly got bruised from being hit with the belt. He was very unpredictable. He sometimes hit us for no reason at all.”



## Antipathy

### *Definition*

- Cold, critical, angry or rejecting parenting. May be verbal or behavioural. May involve scapegoating of a child.
- Severity determined by intensity, frequency and pervasiveness of parental dislike

### *Rating*

#### SEVERE

1. Marked
2. Moderate

#### NON-SEVERE

3. Mild
4. Little/none

### Scored:

For each parent

For changes in severity over time



# Example of antipathy mother



## 1. Marked

- My mother never liked me. if I asked her if she loved me she said 'no'. She was always unsympathetic if I was upset. She always said I wasn't a good child..I was the ugly one..things like that. She used to say I was dirty and scruffy to upset me. They used to say I was a baby when I wet myself (She had a kidney complaint). I wasn't allowed in the room when they were watching tv - especially on a Sunday when my dad was at home.



# Sexual Abuse

## *Defintions*

- Sexual behaviour to child by any adult or older child/young person. Usually sexual contact but can include verbal solicitation, observing sexual activity/ pornography. May be with or without force. Other can be any relationship to child or stranger. Can be single incident or repeated.
- Severity determined by degree of contact, repeated nature, relationship to other.

## *Rating*

### SEVERE

1. Marked
2. Moderate

### NON-SEVERE

3. Mild
4. Little/none

## Scored

For each abuse by different perpetrator

For changes in severity over time

# Example of sexual abuse



- This girl was abused by her father, together with her sisters.
- 'My dad used to try and molest us. I had five sisters and shared a bedroom with two of them. He tried it with all of us. What we did was actually fight him off a lot of the time.' He would touch my breasts and genitals and did attempt intercourse, but didn't succeed with me. He would try and touch me most nights, from the age of 7 to 17. My older sister was more physically developed than me and I know she experienced it nearly every night, including intercourse. She shared a bedroom with this sister, and was aware of what was happening to her. (Did he ever threaten you?) Yes, he would if we didn't comply. I think he must have abused all of us at one time or another. But I think my oldest sister most.

# Psychological Abuse



- Sadistic & cruel behaviour, coercive control of the child involving:
  - humiliation, extreme rejection
  - deprivation of basic needs or valued objects,
  - inflicting marked discomfort/distress,
  - Terrorising
  - Cognitive disorientation
  - Emotional blackmail or exploitation.Can be single incident or ongoing  
Frequency and severity rated.

## Severe

1. Marked
2. Moderate

## Non-severe

3. Some/mild
4. Little/none

- Rated separately for different parent figures
- Rated on global 4-point severity scale, as well as subscales
- Rated for changes over childhood
- Thresholds benchmarked with manualised examples



- Sadistic, cruel behaviour to the child and coercive control involving at least one of:

- Humiliation (publicly shaming the child)
- Deprivation of valued objects (destroying child's favourite toy, object of sentimental value or pet)
- Deprivation of basic needs (locking child in cupboard or cellar, refusing to let child sit with siblings at mealtimes)
- Extreme rejection (Wishing the child dead in some explicit way, abandoning the child)
- inflicting marked discomfort/distress (forcing child to eat noxious substance eg boot polish or faeces)
- Emotional blackmail (threats to harm sibling if child is not compliant)
- Terrorising (playing on child's particular fears e.g. of the dark)
- Cognitive disorientation (giving confusing information, obliterating past memories)
- Exploitation (forcing child to steal, distributing pornographic image of child)

# Example of Psychological Abuse



## 1. Marked (terrorising, deprivation of basic needs).

Mother was always very strict, very harsh with us. If one of us had taken a biscuit without permission, she would threaten to cut our tongues off with a knife. We were afraid of her because she beat us regularly. I used to have to light the coal fire in the morning. I was locked in the coal cellar if I couldn't get the fire started. It was cold and dark in there. It happened about twice a week, she would leave me for 2 hours. I don't think our mother wanted us. (From age 6).



# Reliability of CECA

- Good inter-rater reliability achieved.
- This aided by training & manual of examples.
- 20 interviews rated blind by by different raters.
  - $K_w = .63-.92$  ( $K^w$ )
- Average agreement on 15 scales = .78



## Factor analysis of parental CECA scales and Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker et al, 1978)

<b>CECA experience</b>	<b>Care</b>	<b>Control</b>
Antipathy	.63	.33
Neglect	.80	
Supervision	-.65	.51
Discipline		.74
Role Reversal	.58	
Physical abuse	.47	.51
Psychological abuse	.36	.22
Sexual abuse	.31	
PBI care	.71	
PBI control		.75



**Validity** – corroboration between 87 adult pairs of sisters raised together and reporting on each other

CECA experience	Kw	P<
Neglect	.70	.001
Physical abuse	.57	.001
Sexual abuse	.52	.001
Physical abuse by father	.63	.001
Physical abuse by mother	.46	.0001
Sexual abuse household perp	.56	.0001
Sexual abuse non-household perp	.37	.0001

## Validity of CECA:

Agreement with child treatment records and adult CECA used at follow-up (Menninger Clinic data)

	No record of early adversity	Record of early adversity
No CECA adversity (N=16)	75% (12/16)	25% (4/16)
CECA adversity (N=54)	41% (22/54)	59% (32/54)

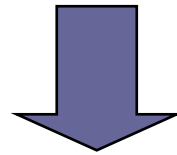
Stein, Fonagy, Fultz & Allen, 2003

# The Lifespan study of London mothers and adolescent children



## ● 1. High-Risk Community Mothers (1990-5)

- Questionnaire screening of high risk women registered in North London GP surgeries. 303 mothers with poor support, conflict with partner or neglect/abuse in childhood investigated in relation to depression.



## ● 2. Transmission of risk to adolescent children (1995-99)

- 146 mothers were followed up and re-interviewed and permissions sought to interview their adolescent children aged 16-30, male & female.
- (*high mother compliance – 70%; moderate adolescent compliance 63%*)



# SCID measure of disorder Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV

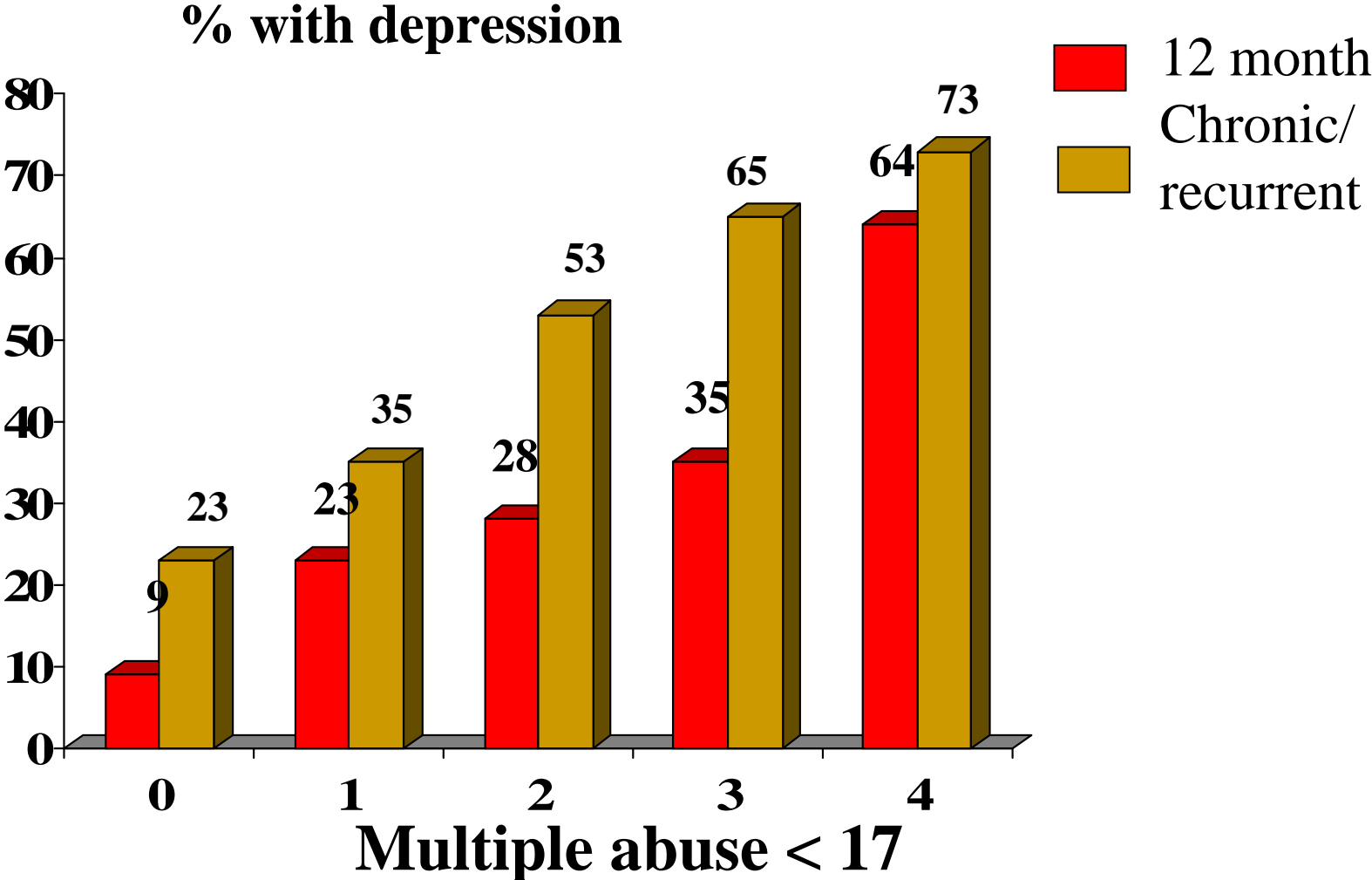


- Adult women – major depression in 12 months before interview & lifetime episodes
- Adolescents – major depression; anxiety states; substance abuse in 12 months before interview.

CECA experience and major depression in 12 months:  
303 adult women

CECA peak rating <i>% disorder</i>	Severe (1-2)	Non-severe (3-4)	Odds ratio	P<
Antipathy mother	26%	15%	1.94	.07
Antipathy father	32%	13%	2.93	.05
Neglect*	34%	14%	3.18	.001
Lax control	32%	13%	1.78	.10
Physical abuse*	33%	14%	3.00	.001
Sexual abuse*	52%	14%	7.00	.001
Psychological abuse*	52%	27%	2.85	.007
INDEX* Neglect/abuse	34%	11%	3.96	.001

# Multiple abuse in childhood and adult depression – dose-response effect



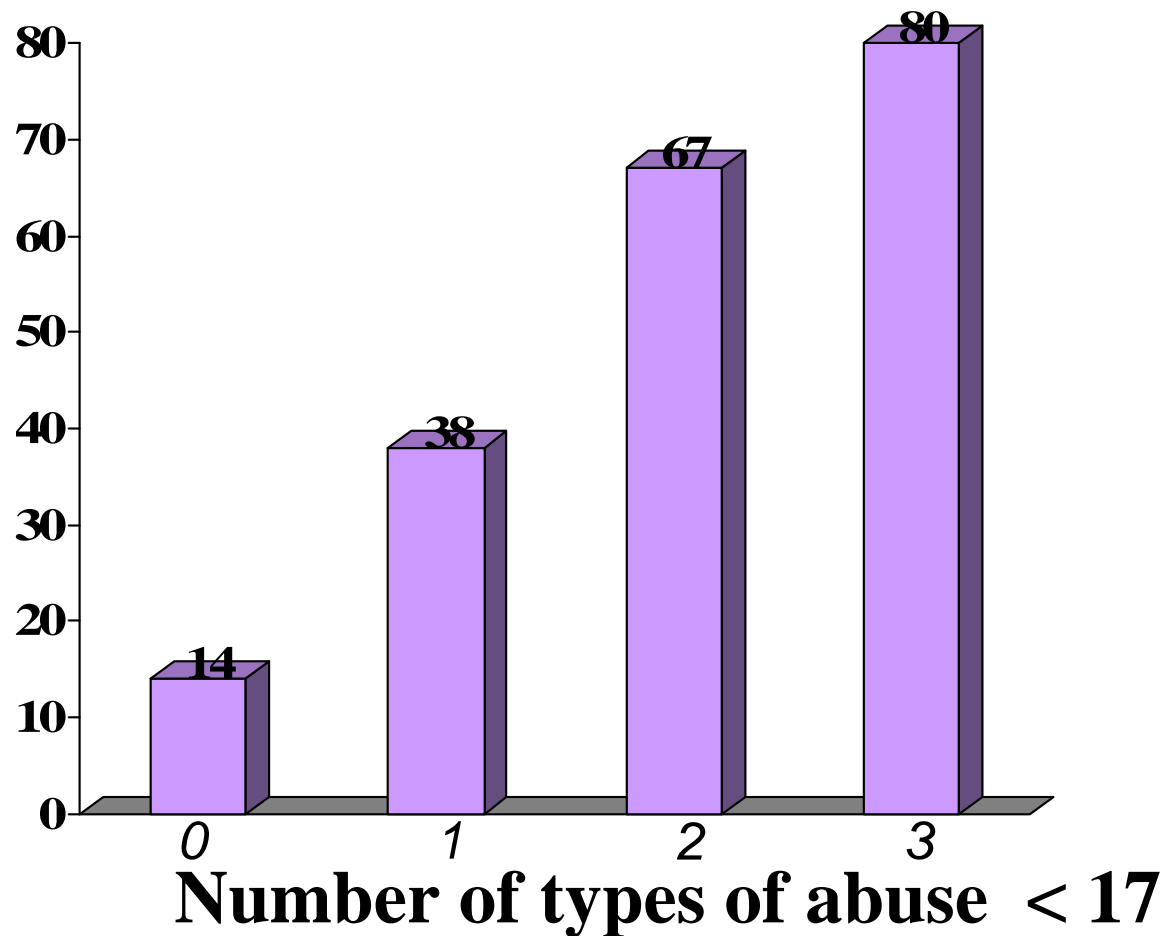
Severe neglect or physical or sexual or psychological abuse

CECA experience and any case disorder in 12 months  
 – young people 16-25

CECA dichotomy – peak % disorder	Severe 1-2	Non- severe 3-4	Odds ratio	P<
Antipathy mother	43%	19%	3.16	.001
Antipathy father	39%	20%	2.49	.01
Neglect	56%	19%	5.27	.0001
Lax /variable control	28%	20%	1.57	NS
Physical abuse	48%	16%	5.03	.0001
Sexual abuse	67%	20%	7.88	.0001
INDEX NEGLECT OR ABUSE	44%	14%	5.00	.001

# Multiple abuse in childhood and any case disorder - young people

**% with disorder in 12 months**



Sum of:  
Neglect,  
physical,  
or sexual  
abuse

## CECA findings – Conduct disorder

- In males only, significant relationship between childhood experience of maternal antipathy (OR=5), father (OR=10), neglect (OR=8), physical abuse (OR=7), sexual abuse (OR=10). Any one abuse (OR=4) to conduct disorder. Dose-response effect for number of abuses and conduct disorder.
- Victims of bullying experienced neglect/ abuse from parents *and* problems at school.
  - However victim/perpetrators experienced problem peer groups and conduct disorder/substance abuse.
  - Victims alone of bullying had no problem peers but emotional disorder (depression, anxiety).

# CECA findings – studies of offenders

## 1. Adolescent Offenders

- **Young violent offenders**
  - 100 adolescents – half in CJS selected for psychopathy and half controls. Higher levels of physical abuse, sexual abuse, inappropriate supervision and discipline in psychopaths. Dose-response between numbers of abuse and PCL-YV psychopathy score (Carney, 2003).
- **Young sexual offenders**
  - Case record scrutiny of childhood experience of 224 sexual abuse victims examined in follow-up in relation to perpetration of new abuse. 12% became perpetrators. Neglect & lax supervision & sexual abuse by a female and domestic violence related to perpetration of abuse (Salter, et al, 2003)
  - High change of household & residential care, parental violence and discord related to sexual offending (Ducro, Pham et al 2004)

# CECA findings – 2. Adult Offenders

## **Violent**

- Psychopathy in 110 male offenders in Scottish prisons related to higher parental antipathy, and neglect, psychological abuse and lax supervision and discipline than non psychopathic prison offenders (Marshall & Cooke, 1999)
- Violent male offenders have higher rates of parental tension and violence, neglect and sexual abuse (Hill & Nathan, 2008)

## **Sexual**

- Victim perpetrators differentiated on physical abuse, supervision and bullying from victims. (Samuels, Haefeli & Skuse, 2001). Longer period of inappropriate supervision, longer duration of sexual abuse found. Protective effect from close friends with more than one peer – effective in victim group only.



# Use of CECA in practice contexts

- HMP Whitemoor DSPD unit. Full staff group (psychologists and psychiatrists) using the CECA for assessing early life experience and This used to help with psychotherapeutic trauma work
- SWAAY organisation for young sex offenders using CECA to summarise background adversity.
- Kingston child protection service using CECA to inform ongoing assessments of neglect and abuse



# A focus on psychological abuse

- Definitions
- Association with other trauma
- Impacts in childhood

UN convention on Rights of the Child  
(Ratified by UK government 1991)



- (Article 19) Children should be protected from abuse or neglect
- *(Article 37) No child should be subject to torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. No child should be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily.*



## Quote: Emotional abuse

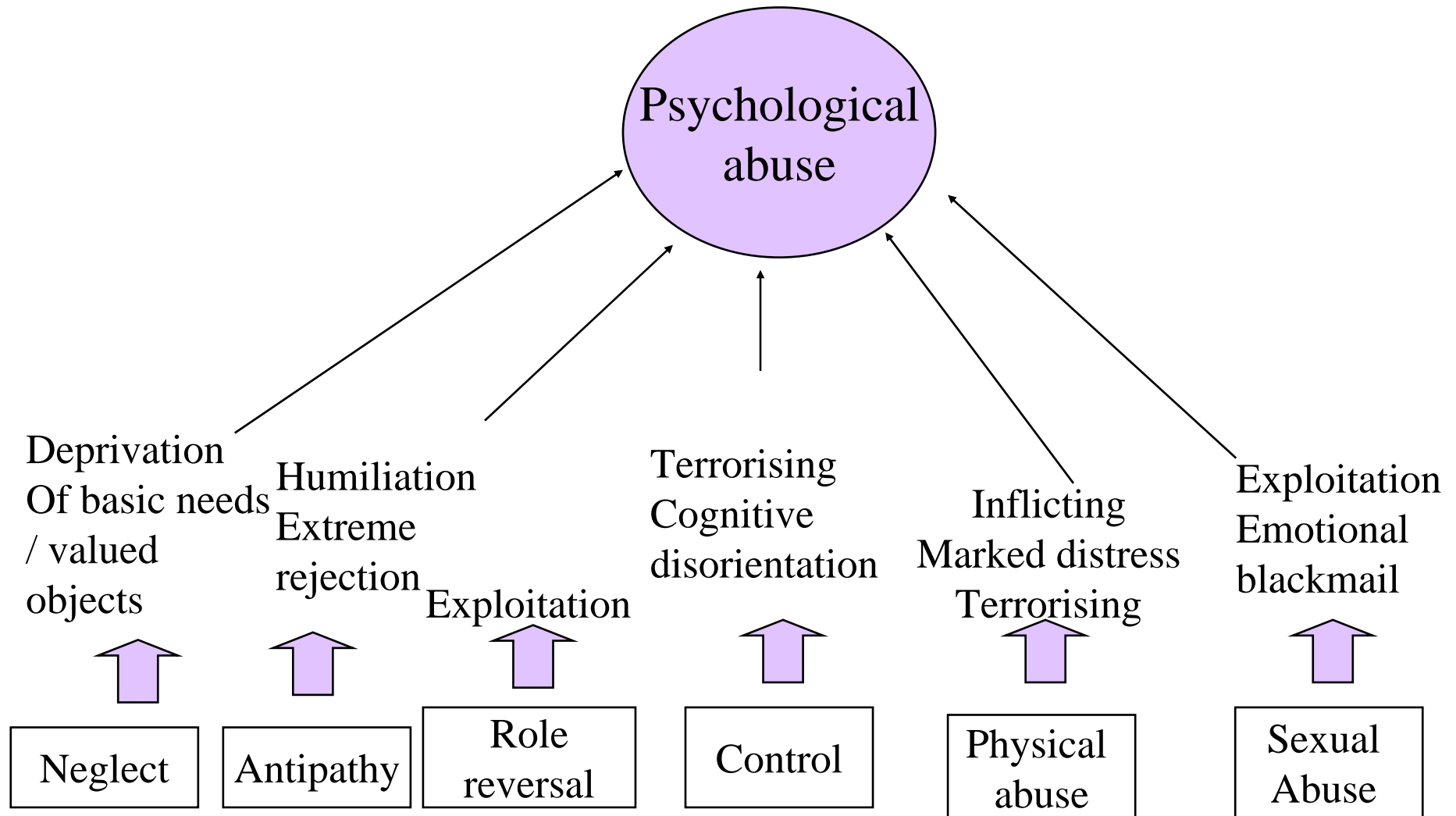
- 'it would be fair to say that no other form of child abuse has created so many difficulties for practitioners and so much confusion for researchers and theorists alike'
  - *Iwaniec, 1995 The emotionally abused and neglected child. Chichester Wiley*
- Emotional abuse frequently defined by its consequences - as that which causes emotional damage.
- *Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child*
  - Working together to safeguard children, 2006



## All abuse as emotional abuse

- If all abuse is emotional abuse, then it becomes a redundant category.
- It is the case that all abuse (at severe levels) is emotionally damaging. However, such damage is not always observable. Also there can be other non-abuse causes of emotional damage.
- If all abuse is emotional abuse, how do we evidence its presence or define its severity?

# Psychological abuse and other maltreatment –conceptualisation





# Complex abuse

- When two or more different forms of abuse can be discerned in the same incident(s). For example sexual abuse with violence.
- Psychological abuse is often accompanies another abuse in the same incident – for example sexual abuse together with threats to harm a sibling if no compliance.
- Note – this is different from the case of different types of abuse happening concurrently in childhood.

# How common is psychological abuse?

London comparison women (n=40)

Peak experience < age 17 1.marked, 2.moderate, 3.mild, 4.none	Any severity 1-3	Severe only 1-2
Antipathy either parent	51%	24%
Physical abuse	26%	10%
Sexual abuse*	28%	12%
Neglect	26%	5%
Psychological abuse	4%	1%

\* Any perpetrator

What is the most common subtype of psychological abuse?

Subcategory of abuse (n=56)	% of psych abuse
Humiliation	38%
Deprivation of valued object	24%
Deprivation of basic needs	16%
Extreme rejection	16%
Inflicting marked distress/ discomfort	14%
Emotional blackmail	9%
Terrorising	7%
Cognitive disorientation	7%
Corruption	5%

Is psychological abuse related to all other abuse equally? (N=303)

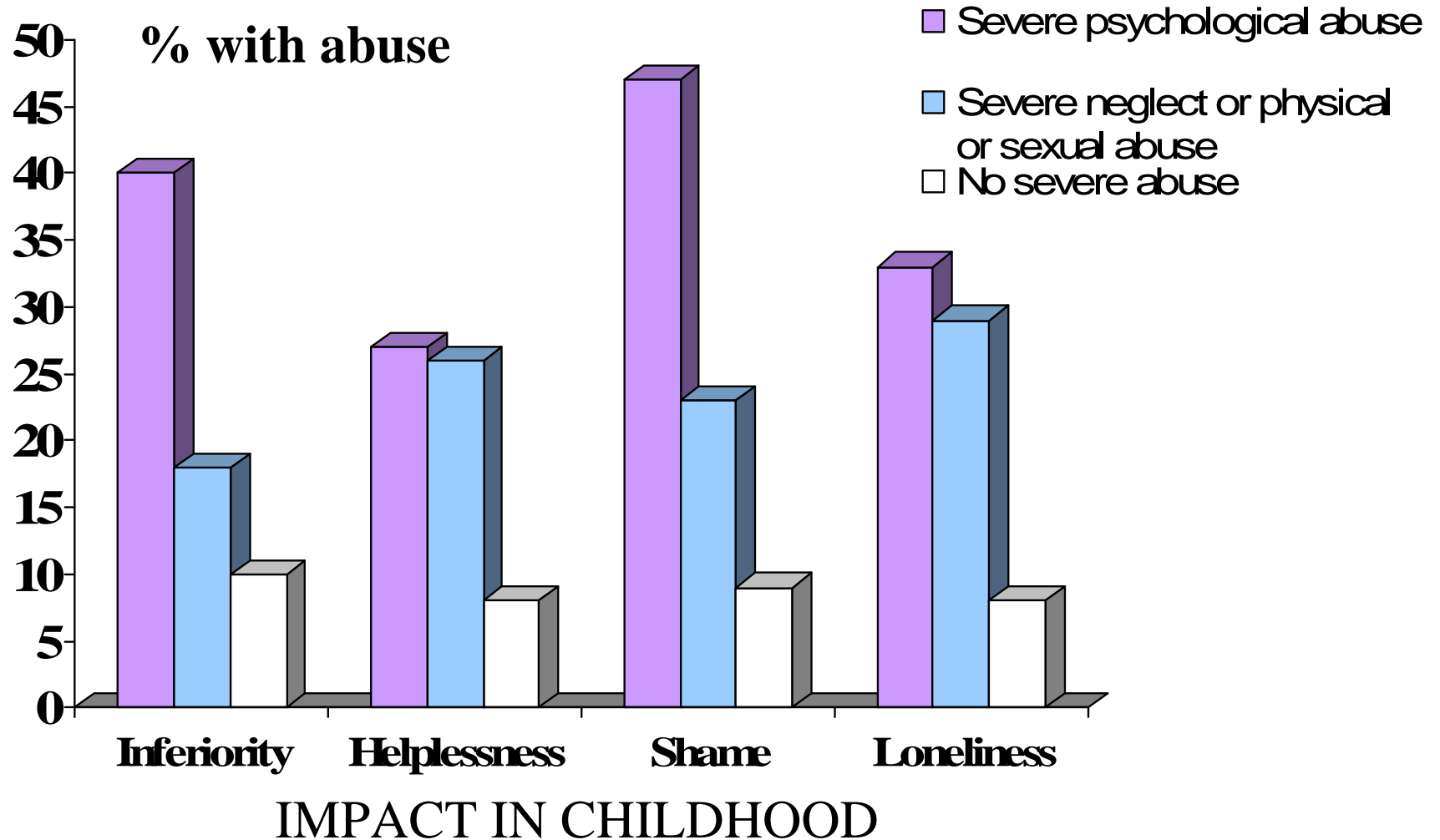
Childhood experience	Psychological abuse	
	r	p<
Antipathy	.32	.000
Neglect	.27	.000
Physical abuse	.24	.000
Discipline	.21	.000
Parental Sexual abuse	.15	.002
Role reversal	.16	.03
Supervision	-.05	Ns

*(n=418, mother and father rated separately)*

# Is psychological abuse related to all family risk factors equally?

Childhood experience (sig correlations only) 'r'	Psych abuse	Antipathy r	Neglect r
Parent alcohol abuse	-	-	.23
Parent psychiatric disorder	.17	-	.27
Discord in family	.19	.27	.49
Violence between parents	-	.22	.26
Parents separate	-	.15	.46
Loss father	-	-	.38
Loss mother	.24	-	.62
Housing difficulty	.26	.34	.60
Financial hardship	-	.21	.47
Father social class	.14	.29	.38

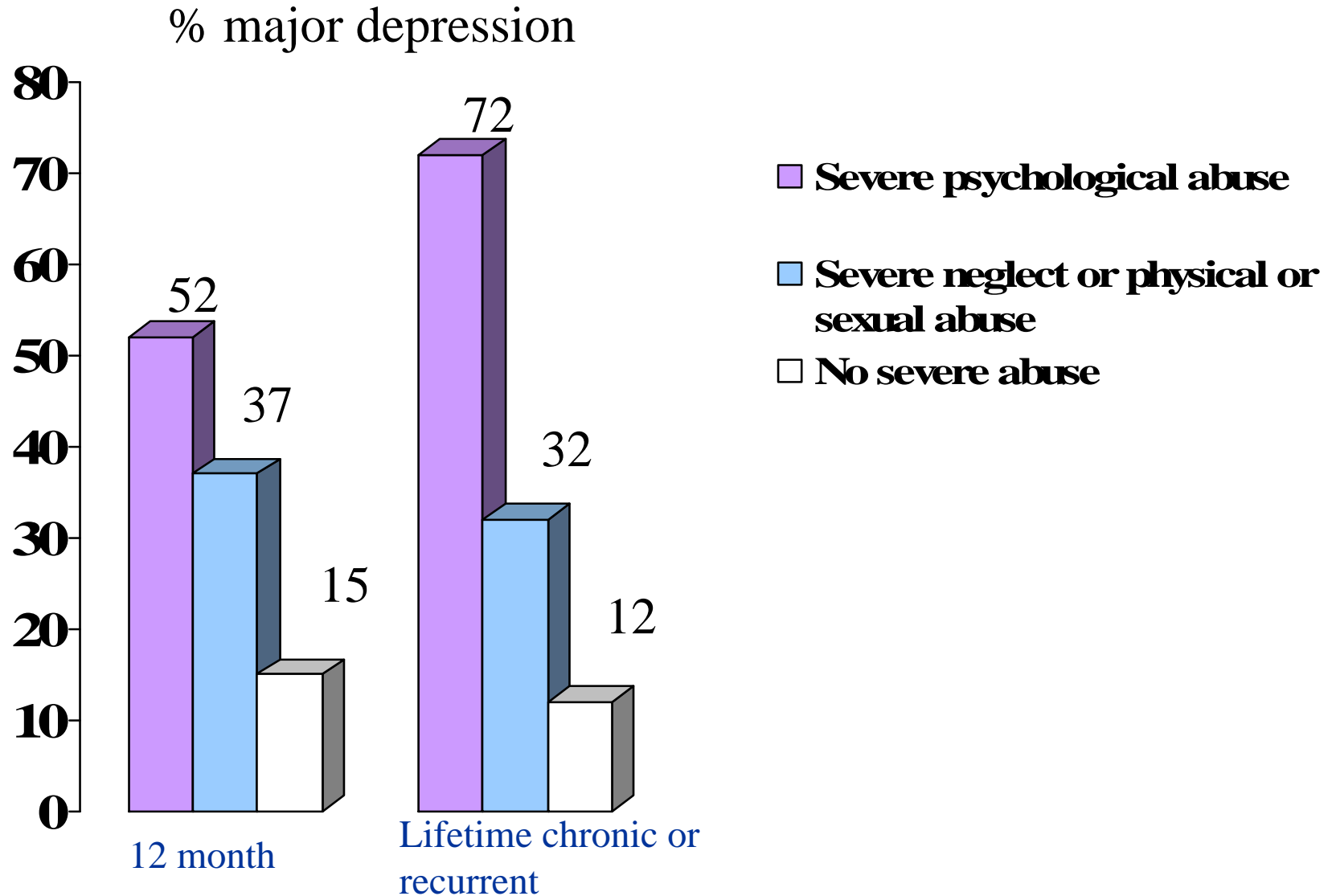
Is psychological abuse associated with negative impacts in childhood?



# Childhood experiences and lifetime recurrent major depression (SCID, DSM-IV assessment)

Experience	Odds ratio	P<
Psychological abuse	5.66	.001
Antipathy	2.61	.001
Neglect	2.88	.001
Physical abuse	2.76	.001
Sexual abuse	2.00	.02
Any one experience	3.58	.0001

# Psychological abuse, other abuse and adult depression (SCID assessment of lifetime major depression)



Psychological abuse, other abuse and  
chronic/recurrent lifetime major depression

Childhood experience	Odds-ratio	Wald	P<
Psychological abuse	0.59	5.44	.01
Antipathy	1.21	1.58	Ns
Index of: neglect or physical or sexual abuse	2.51	6.55	.01

*Psychological abuse adds to the general index of abuse in modelling  
Lifetime major depression*



# Summary

- Psychological abuse is not clearly defined in practice documents. To state all abuse is emotional abuse weakens its discriminatory power.
- Psychological abuse needs to be defined by perpetrator behaviour and differentiated from other types of abuse.
- It commonly occurs with other abuse sometimes as a complex.
- It is highly related to adult disorder.



## DVD – Sheila psychological abuse experience

- Sheila is aged 40, married with 4 children. She described severe maltreatment in childhood.
- She was separated from her father aged 7 when mother left with children and moved in with stepfather who was abusive.
- Sheila experienced anxiety and depression as an adult. Her attachment style is angry-dismissive.



## Discussion points



- Do examples of psychological abuse come up in offender's accounts of childhood? Does the CECA help to encapsulate these?
- Could the CECA usefully be employed in assessment of offenders?
- How could it be linked into treatment (eg of trauma)?