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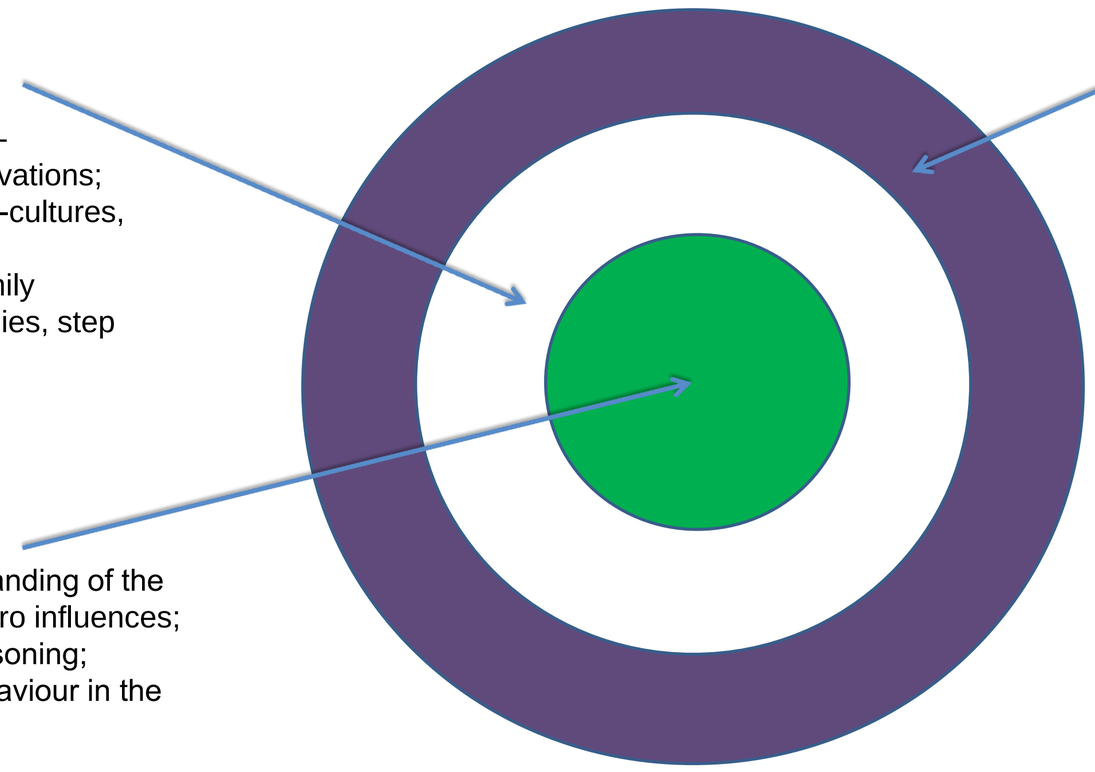
Evaluation of an intervention for men experiencing angry emotions and violent behaviour

Men who experience feelings of anger and/or that behave in violent ways are limited in where they can go for support. In one locality, men who experience angry emotions or exhibit violent behaviour can self-refer, or can be mandated by court order, to attend a programme of facilitator and group-based peer support designed to reduce angry emotions and incidence of violent behaviour. This poster describes an (in progress) process and impact evaluation which utilises qualitative methods of data collection.

Background



Miso

• Community factors – neighbourhood, deprivations;
• Cultural factors, sub-cultures, social opportunities;
• Relationships – Family dynamic (former families, step children), friends.

Micro

• Individual's understanding of the macro, meso and micro influences;
• The individual's reasoning;
• The individual's behaviour in the moment of choice.

Macro

• Societal changes and people's roles;
• Economic opportunities – employment types, unemployment and under-employment;
• Laws and policies that relate to the issue

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Method and Methodology

A 'Realist' methodology is being used in this evaluation. Realism recognises that the social world is highly complex and that any programme intervention is embedded in existing social processes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). As such, there needs to be an acknowledgement of how the intervention fits with other strata of the social world. This leads to an iterative process of using methods to develop theories about the intervention, then testing these theories with methods which refine these theories, and so on.

Interviews with intervention staff and stakeholders have led to the development of 'programme theories' about how the intervention works, for whom, in what contexts and why. These programme theories are expressed as Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes (CMO) configurations. These CMOc inform the subsequent fieldwork with the intervention participants to test and refine these CMOc.

Possible Contexts Within Which the Intervention Operates

• Variables within the macro, miso and micro influences (above) will have affected and influenced the participants.

Potential Participant Reasoning Mechanisms

• Dependent on psychological problems or symptoms, functioning and risk. These may inhibit the ability to engage in the programme.
• Dependent on mental wellbeing and emotional wellbeing: feeling security and safety; attention received and given; control; feeling part of a wider community; having privacy and self-reflection; feeling emotional connected to others; having status and value; feeling competent; having a sense of meaning.

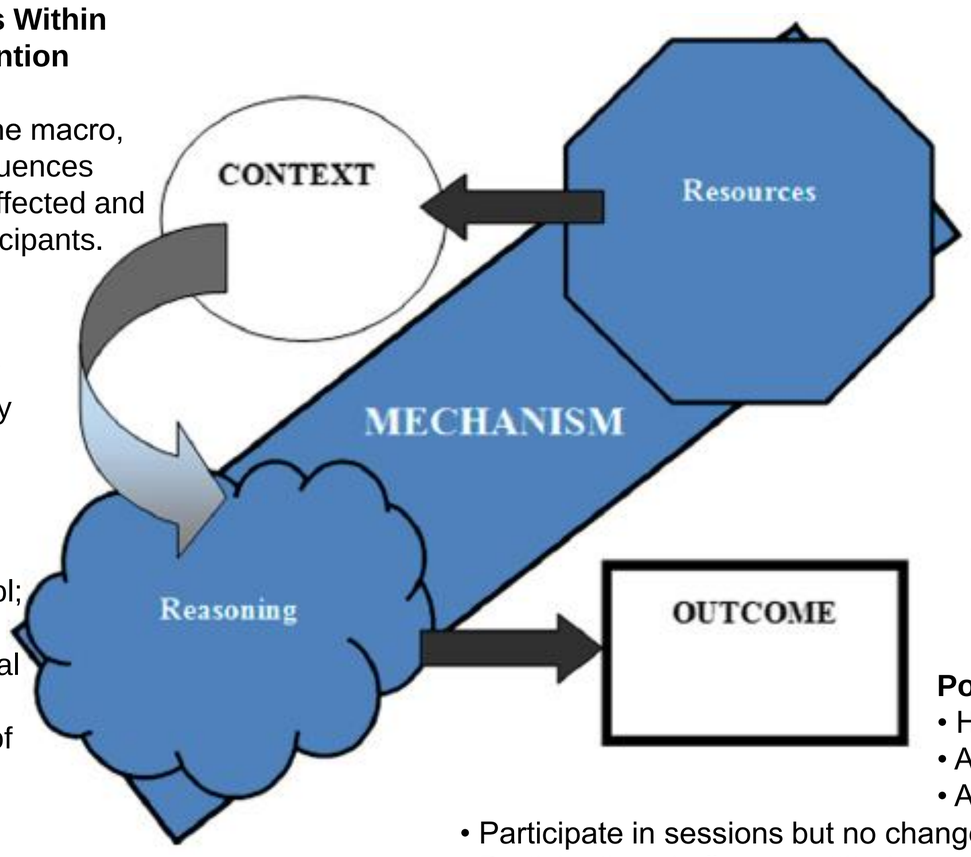

Diagram taken from Dalkin et al, 2015.

Possible Intervention Resource Mechanisms

• Participants have a safe place where they are encouraged to be themselves. The men receive non-judgemental attention and are encouraged to not judge themselves or the other participants. Facilitated peer support offers the creation of a community and feelings of connectedness to others.
• Psychosocial education sessions are designed to raise awareness regarding some of the macro, miso and micro influences. Skills training is designed to help support positive ways to mitigate against unnecessary anger and unwanted violent behaviour.
• There is encouragement to find more positive ways to exercise volition, be self-reflective, recognise competencies and a develop a sense of meaning.

Potential Participant Outcomes

• Have initial assessment, then drop out;
• Attend early sessions but drop out;
• Attend but do not 'engage';
• Participate in sessions but no change to attitudes and/or behaviour;
• Participation challenges attitudes and behaviour change;
• More than 12 sessions needed, participant drops out;
• More than 12 sessions needed, participant says engaged, attitudes and behaviour change.

To test these programme theories semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a number of the intervention participants. "Realist evaluation proposes - among other methods of data collection - the use of theory-driven interviews to 'inspire/validate/falsify/ modify' (Pawson, 1996: 295) hypotheses about how programmes and interventions work" (Manzano-Santaella, 2016:n.p.). During interviews the participants will first be introduced to the programme theories .The participating men will then be asked questions around these concepts.

Summary

Realism can be used to make sense of complex social interventions and to understand what works, for who, in what circumstances and why. It is suggested that the use of Realism as a methodology for this evaluation is useful to explore the effectiveness of this intervention within the complex context of social factors. Violent behaviour is problematic and damaging for all involved. Interventions to address such behaviours can be valuable in terms of helping victims, individual perpetrators and wider society. The research may have implications to practice in the disciplines of health, social care and crime in the reduction and primary prevention of violence.

References
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Markham, S. and White, A. (2016).
Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK
S.Markham@LeedsBeckett.ac.uk