

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE SUSPECTS:

Exploring how police officers and appropriate adults perceive and respond to vulnerability in police custody.



Chloe Macdonald, MSc

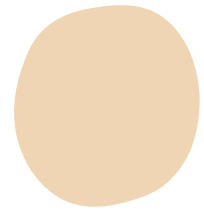


OUTLINE

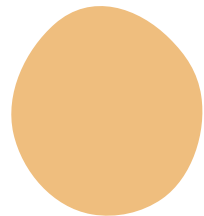
- Overview
- Research Aims
- Methodology
- Participants

- Results
- Impact
- Conclusion
- References

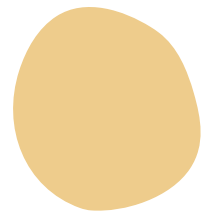
MY BACKGROUND



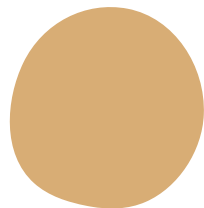
BSc Psychology



Volunteering / Youth
Work



Coordinator role / MSc



MSc / PhD



OVERVIEW OF APPROPRIATE ADULT RESEARCH

- AA effectiveness - Medford et al (2003)
- AA 'Voice' - Jessiman & Cameron (2017)
- AA experiences of role (Farrugia 2023)

Methods?

Types of
AA?

Whole
Process?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND AIMS

How do Police officers and AA's perceptions of vulnerability affect the interventions they make in custody on behalf of vulnerable suspects?

To explore how appropriate adults make interventions (or fail to) during processes at custody whilst supporting vulnerable suspects.

To explore how police officers make interventions (or fail to) during processes at custody whilst dealing with vulnerable suspects

RATIONALE AND METHODS

Rationale

- Active participants?
- Differences between police officers and AAs
- Inhibiting factors?
- Detainee type
- Whole process

Study

- Mixed Methods
- Phase one survey (questionnaire and vignettes)
- Phase two interviews

PARTICIPANTS - Police Officers



36

31 Male
5 Female

28
Youngest
54 Oldest

Other Demographics: Ethnicity, Area
of UK, Length of role

PARTICIPANTS –

Appropriate adults



42

29 Female
13 Male

21 Youngest
80 Oldest

Other Demographics: Ethnicity, Area of UK, Length of role

PHASE ONE

Methodology - Questionnaire

Assessing bias

‘JOSS’

- Biases held about young offenders
- ‘Most youths who commit crime understand legal procedures’.

(Haegerich et al 2013)

‘PATVO’

- Biases held about violent offenders
- ‘Violent offenders are more likely to reoffend than other types of criminal’

(Rogers et al 2011)

‘MEN-D’

- Biases held about mentally unwell offenders
- ‘most mentally disordered offenders are victims of circumstance’

(Ashworth et al 2021)

‘Strongly Disagree’ - 1

‘Disagree’ - 2

‘Undecided’ - 3

‘Agree’ - 4

‘Strongly Agree’ - 5

PHASE ONE

Methodology - Vignettes

Assessing Interventions

‘COVERT’

Juvenile

- ‘Age only’
- Acts confident
- Repeats information

Adult

- Previously ‘had an AA’
- Acts confident
- Repeats information

‘OVERT’

Juvenile

- ‘Additional’ vulnerability
- Verbalises confusion
- No response

Adult

- ‘Additional’ vulnerability
- Verbalises confusion
- No response

PHASE ONE

Methodology - Vignettes

Assessing Interventions



Private Chat / Rights



Getting a solicitor



Caution



Interview



Outcome



Going home

RESULTS - QUESTIONNAIRE

Assessing bias

‘JOSS’

- Police only
- Bias questionnaire predicted interventions for the ‘Rights’ stage
- Positive correlation

‘PATVO’

- AA’s only
- Bias questionnaire predicted interventions for the ‘Private chat’ stage
- Negative correlation

‘MEN-D’

- Police only
- Bias questionnaire predicted interventions for the ‘Rights’ stage
- Negative Correlation

Positive Correlation = Less stereotypes held (more help given)

Negative Correlation = More stereotypes held (less help given)

RESULTS – VIGNETTES

Assessing Interventions

Police

- Overt vulnerability
- Adults only
- Caution and Going home stages

AA

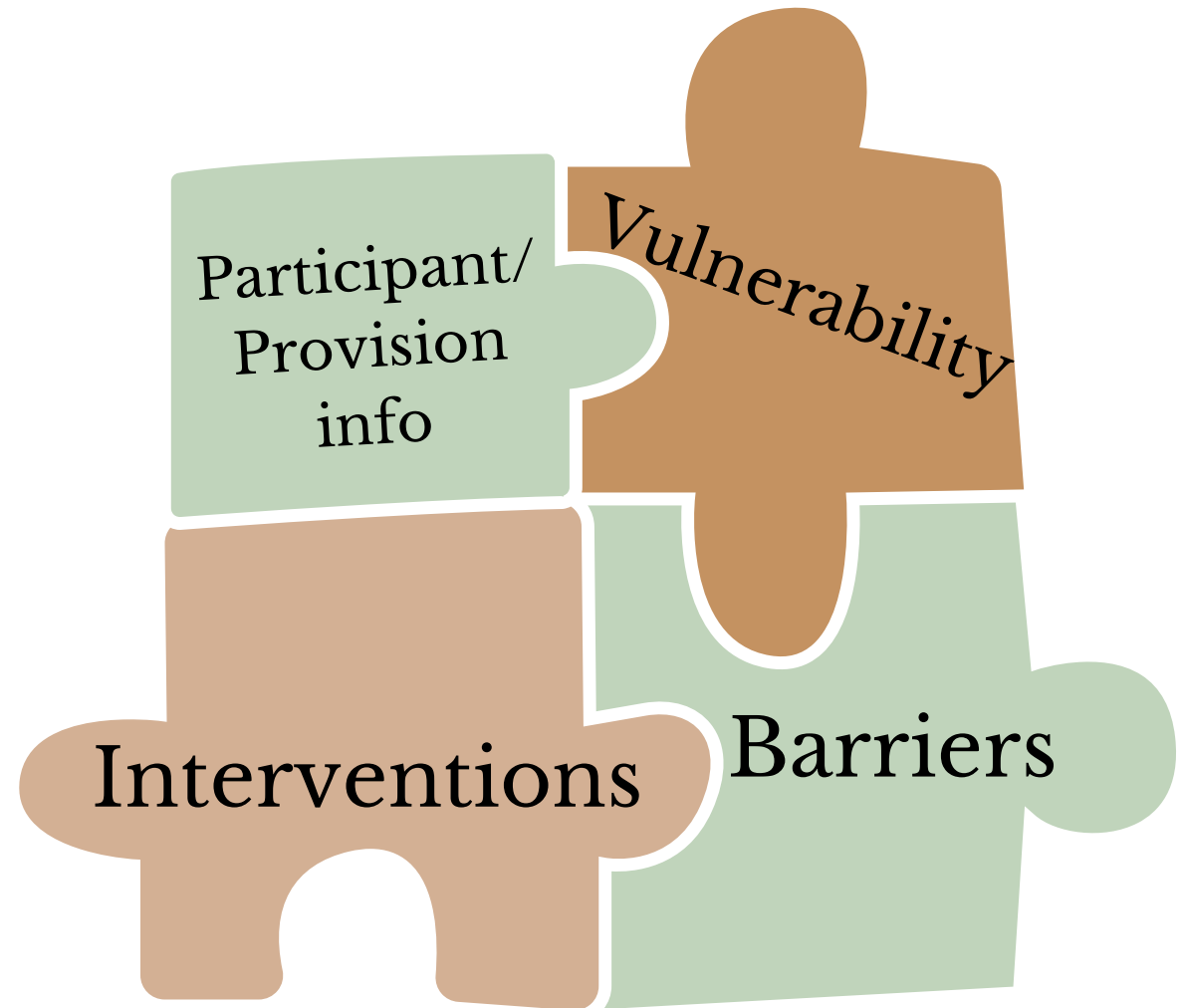
- Covert vulnerability
- Adults only
- Caution Interview and Bail stages

PHASE TWO

Methodology - Interviews

Constructing Vulnerability

- Participants recruited from survey
- Semi Structured Interviews
- Stratified sampling
- Interview guide created around perceptions of vulnerability and interventions
- Shortest 32 minutes - Longest 1 hr 16 mins
- 10 participants overall - 1 excluded



FINDINGS

Appropriate adults

It wasn't that I was made unwelcome, but it wasn't inclusive

If they saw us as trained professionals, then I'm confident they would take more notice of the things we say as they do with the nurses and the solicitors

there just isn't an exhaustive, [...], a limited number of interventions. They just all depend on the day. [...] Even getting, even getting their cell cleaned when they've made a mess, sometimes mm-hmm yeah. [...] but yeah, you know, it, the, the, there just, isn't a, a limited number of interventions

Safeguarding

FINDINGS

Police officers

The training is what I can only describe as woefully inadequate

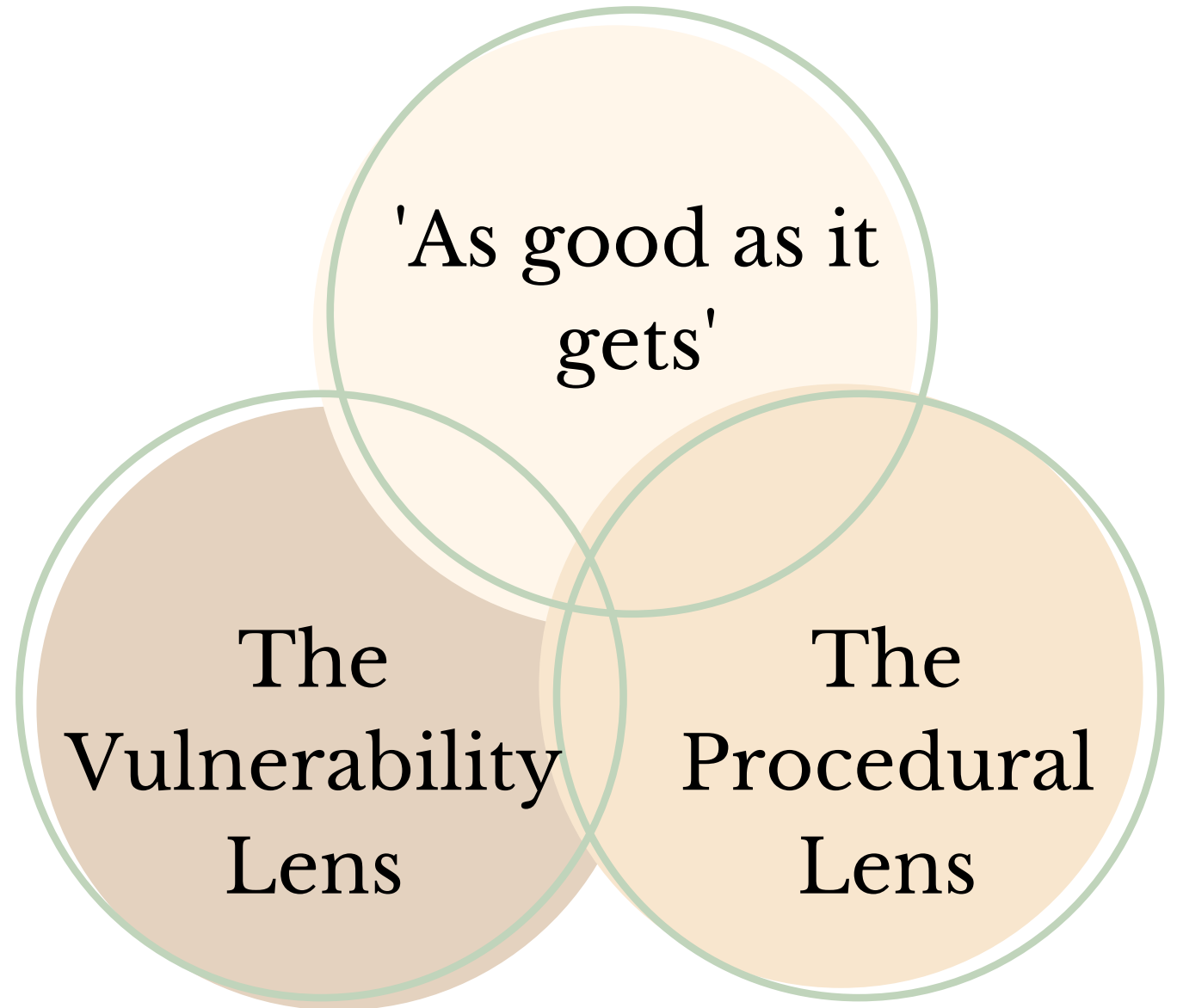
I've got this mental health issue, but I've also got powers of arrest

When we say vulnerable, do we mean vulnerable in as far as they are vulnerable by the fact that they would need an appropriate adult in custody or vulnerable by the fact that they have, um, sort of a mental health or learning disability?

Loss of Identity

DISCUSSION

Interpreting
the results



THE IMPACT...?

- Demonstrates differing levels of vulnerability and how they are responded to
- First study indicating the importance of attitudes and biases from AA (and AA with police) perspective
- Partnership working?
- Training needs?



CONCLUSION

- Novel study; Attitudes; Biases; Interventions; Mixed Methods?
- Practice and Policy
- Construction of vulnerability between officers and AAs

FUTURE RESEARCH..

Is the Appropriate adult safeguard effective?



ANY QUESTIONS



THANK YOU!

WANT TO STAY IN TOUCH?



CHLOE.MACDONALD@CANIERBURY.AC.UK



@CHLOEMACDONALDGMBPSS



@COFFEEANDPSYCH

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
MY WORK?

CHECK OUT MY BLOG POST!

SCAN ME USING
YOUR CAMERA
APP!



REFERENCES

- Ashworth, S., Mooney, P., Browne, K., & Tully, R. J. (2021). An exploratory analysis of a scale to measure attitudes towards mentally disordered offenders. *Journal of forensic psychology research and practice*, 21(1), 61-90.
- Dehaghani, R. (2019). *Vulnerability in police custody: Police decision-making and the appropriate adult safeguard*. Routledge.
- Farrugia, L., 2023. The Appropriate Adult: Their perspective working in the criminal justice system. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, p.17488958231193126.
- Haegerich, T. M., Salerno, J. M., & Bottoms, B. L. (2013). Are the effects of juvenile offender stereotypes maximized or minimized by jury deliberation?. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 19(1), 81.
- Jessiman, T., & Cameron, A. (2017). The role of the appropriate adult in supporting vulnerable adults in custody: Comparing the perspectives of service users and service providers. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 45(4), 246–252. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bld.12201>
- Medford, S., Gudjonsson, G. H., & Pearse, J. (2003). The efficacy of the appropriate adult safeguard during police interviewing. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 8(2), 253–266. <https://doi.org/10.1348/135532503322363022>
- Rogers, P., Hirst, L., & Davies, M. (2011). An investigation into the effect of respondent gender, victim age, and perpetrator treatment on public attitudes towards sex offenders, sex offender treatment, and sex offender rehabilitation. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 50(8), 511-530.