

# Measuring alcohol-related parenting problems in mothers

Sally Marlow

Institute of Psychiatry,  
King's College London

# What do we know about alcohol in the family?

## Research clusters:

- FASD
- Outcomes for children
- Intergenerational transmission
- Interpersonal violence

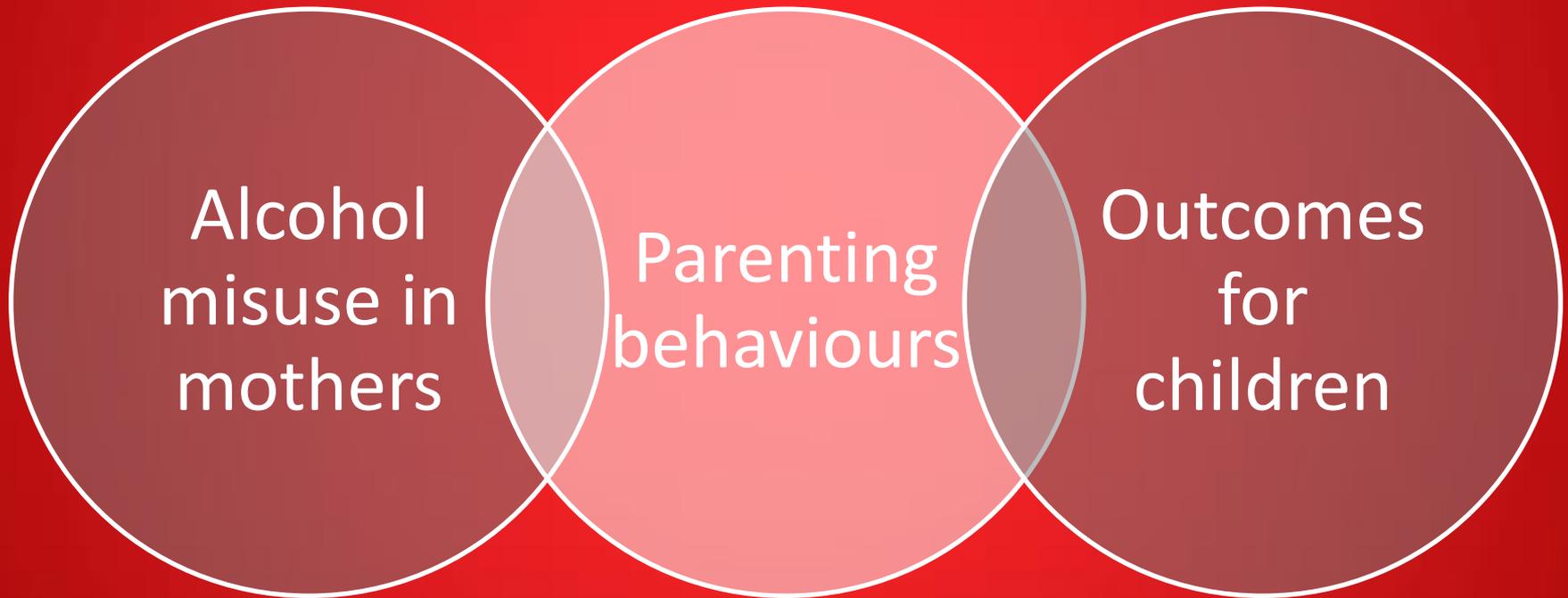
## Overlapping areas:

- Substance misuse in families

## Mothers?



# What gap does this study address?



Murphy et al 2003: “substance misuse in families is not tantamount to child abuse. Substance misuse will have an impact on the individual adult, which may have an impact on their parenting capacity, which in turn might affect the development of the individual child” p 355 (their emphasis)

*Alcohol use per se does not make you a bad parent.*

# Hypotheses

Alcohol misuse in mothers is related to specific alcohol-related parenting problems.

Individual and diverse maternal alcohol-related parenting problems are related to a central construct of maternal alcohol-related parenting problems.

# Aims

To develop the Maternal Alcohol and Parenting Problems Index (the MAPPI), a questionnaire to measure alcohol-related parenting problems in mothers

To test the MAPPI in a general population sample

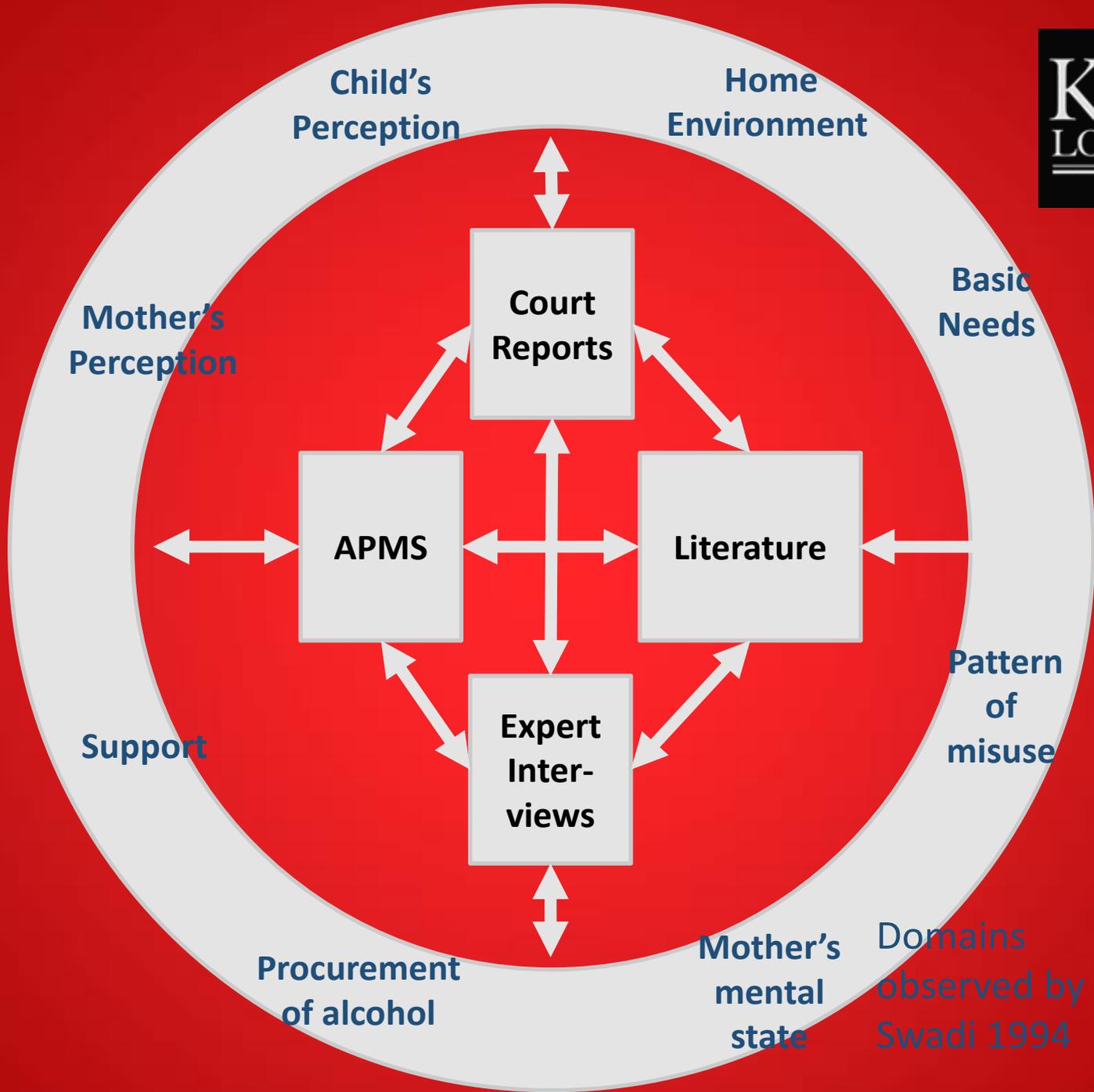
# Phase I: Development

Data from multiple sources mapped onto theoretically determined coding framework (Swadi 1994)

Synthesize

Refine, revise, refine, revise

Generate items (38, in 9 domains)



# Identified domains

- Basic needs
- Pattern of drinking
- Mother's mental state
- Support
- Risk
- Emotional availability
- Salience
- Help-seeking

# Phase II: Testing



In partnership with



325 mothers recruited through 5 parenting or alcohol websites.

Completed basic demographic info, AUDIT, selected Alcohol Problems Questionnaire, two parenting questionnaires, GHQ-12, and finally the MAPPI

# Sample

Mean age 37

Mean number of children 1.81

Married or co-habiting 89%

Location; 91.5% UK, but of those, 35.7% from London or South East

Alcohol misuse status: 66% no misuse, 27% misuse, 7% dependence.

# Phase II results

**Reliability:** Cronachs  $\alpha$  0.90

**Construct validity:** PCA revealed one factor “alcohol-related parenting problems. Items loading 0.5 or more on that factor were retained, resulting in 24 items. PCA on 24 item scale revealed one factor.

# The 24 item MAPPI

Drinking alcohol means that the child/children are **more likely to be left on their own.**

Drinking alcohol can put the children at risk from harm

Drinking alcohol leads to financial difficulties for the family.

Drinking alcohol makes it more difficult to **keep on top of the housework.**

Adult arguments in front of the children are more likely when drinking alcohol.

**The children express concern** about drinking alcohol.

Drinking alcohol causes irritability towards the children.

**Boundaries around the children's behaviour are more difficult to stick to when drinking alcohol.**

Drinking alcohol makes it more difficult to manage the children's behaviour.

Drinking alcohol makes it more difficult to take an interest in the day to day lives of the children.

Drinking alcohol means that the children have to occupy themselves more than they would otherwise.

The children witness adult tears and distress because of drinking alcohol.

Drinking alcohol means it is easier to forget to do things for the children.

**It is more difficult to function as a parent when you are hung-over**

More alcohol is drunk around children than should be.

Drinking alcohol can be emotionally harmful for children.

Parents who drink alcohol are worried about what other people think about them.

**Getting help and advice is difficult for parents drinking alcohol.**

Drinking alcohol adversely affects relationships with the children.

Drinking alcohol means that children's physical health needs might not be attended to as well as they should be.

Drinking alcohol sets a bad example for the children.

Drinking alcohol makes it more difficult to be involved in the children's learning and development.

Drinking alcohol makes it more difficult to do activities together with the children.

Drinking alcohol affects judgements on things to do with the children.

# Phase II results continued

**Convergent validity:** significant relationships with alcohol misuse (AUDIT, Saunders et al 1993) and alcohol-related problems (APQ, Drummond 1990)

**Discriminant validity:** AUDIT highly correlated with MAPPI  $r_s$  0.619. AUDIT correlations with general parenting problems questionnaires were low: Alabama Parenting Questionnaire  $r_s$  0.153, Brief Parental Efficacy Scale  $r_s$  0.062

**Utility:** 328 participants began MAPPI questionnaire, 3 withdrew. 24 item is 10 – 15 mins to complete

# Phase II results continued

**Face Validity:** assessed by researcher and supervisors

**Item by item analysis:** group comparisons of mothers not misusing alcohol, drinking hazardously, and alcohol dependent revealed all items were significant

**Other analyses:** MAPPI did not correlate significantly with age of mother, number of children, or relationship status. MAPPI did correlate with GHQ-12 score  $r_s 0.178$   
 $p=.0.001$

# Strengths and weaknesses

## Strengths

- Data from multiple sources contributed to development
- Convergence and divergence in those sources
- Successful, rapid recruitment online
- Navigation of complex ethical issues

## Weaknesses

- Development phase did not include contributions from mothers who misuse alcohol
- May have been bias in the sample in testing phase.

# Summary

Parenting behaviours are related to alcohol misuse in mothers.

Parenting behaviours in several domains contribute to a single construct “alcohol-related parenting problems” in mothers.

The MAPPI is a novel development which can measure alcohol-related parenting behaviours in mothers.

# Summary (cont)

Maternal alcohol misuse impacts parenting behaviours in the following areas:

- Accommodation and home
- Provision of basic needs
- Instability
- Neglect
- Risk of harm
- Emotional availability
- Other emotional areas

# Next steps

**Research:** Confirmatory factor analysis. Replication, testing on different populations, inclusion of fathers. Sensitivity and specificity against a gold standard/ Face to face, social workers delivering, not just online

**Policy:** Court reports findings will be shared with MoJ.

**Practice:** Possible identification tool for services, to start difficult conversations, and to contribute towards possible future parenting and alcohol interventions

**Dissemination of findings:** There will be submissions to people in this room.....

# Acknowledgements



## Participants:

- Cases from the courts
- Experts in alcohol and parenting
- Websites
- Survey respondents

## Studentships:

- Society for the Study of Addiction:
- Alcohol Research UK
- Alcohol Research Section, IoP, KCL

## Supervisors:

- Professor Colin Drummond
- Dr Matthew Woolgar
- Professor Simon Coulton

Colleagues at the Institute of Psychiatry in Addictions Department, and in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Colleagues in SLaM