

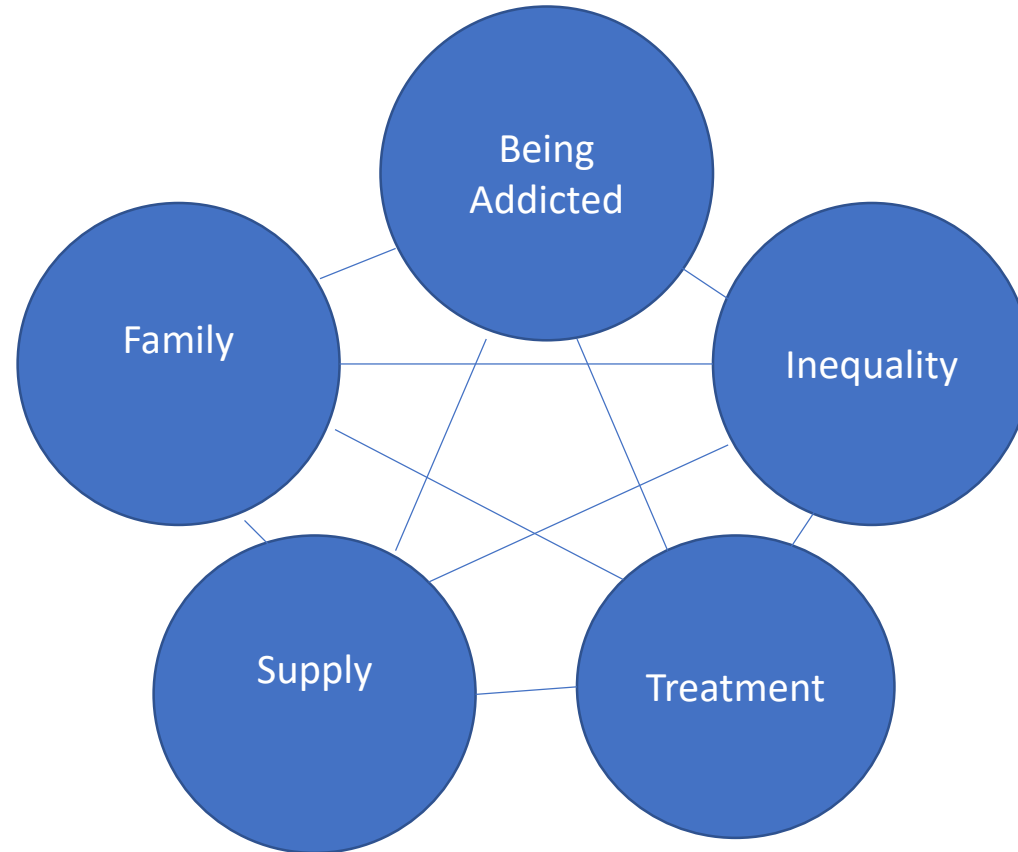
Power, Powerlessness and Addiction

Jim Orford

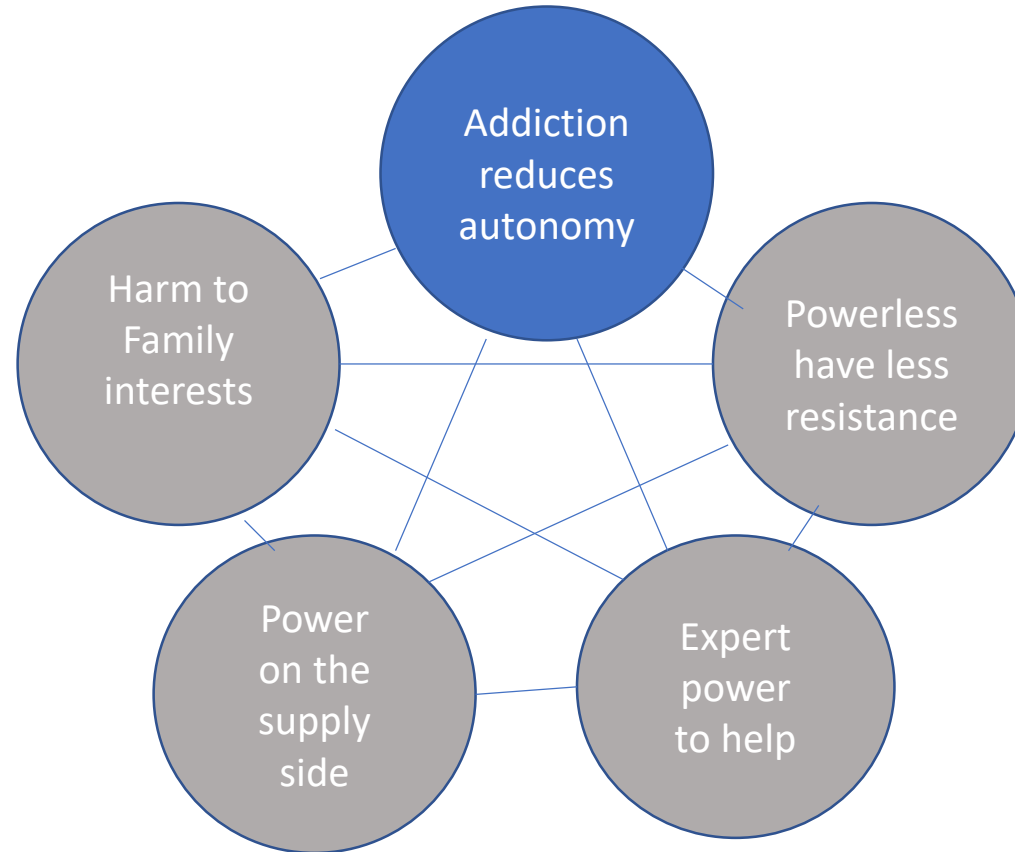
School of Psychology, University of Birmingham, England

Suchtkongress2017, Lübeck, Germany, 19 Sept 2017

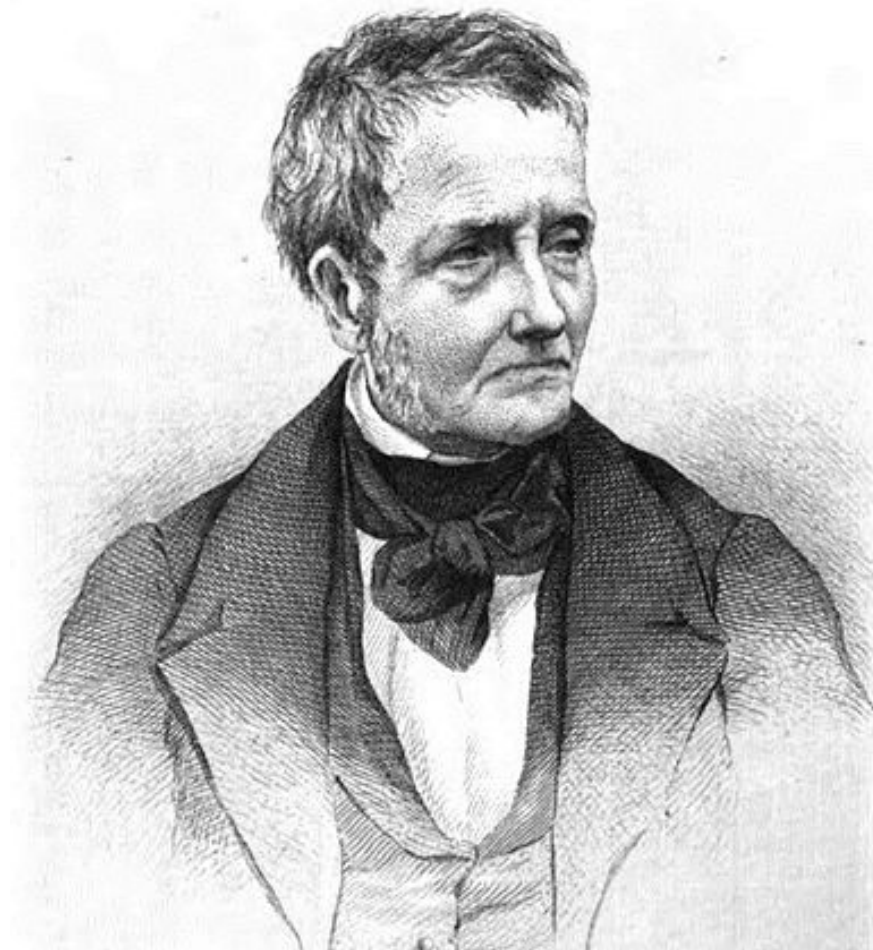
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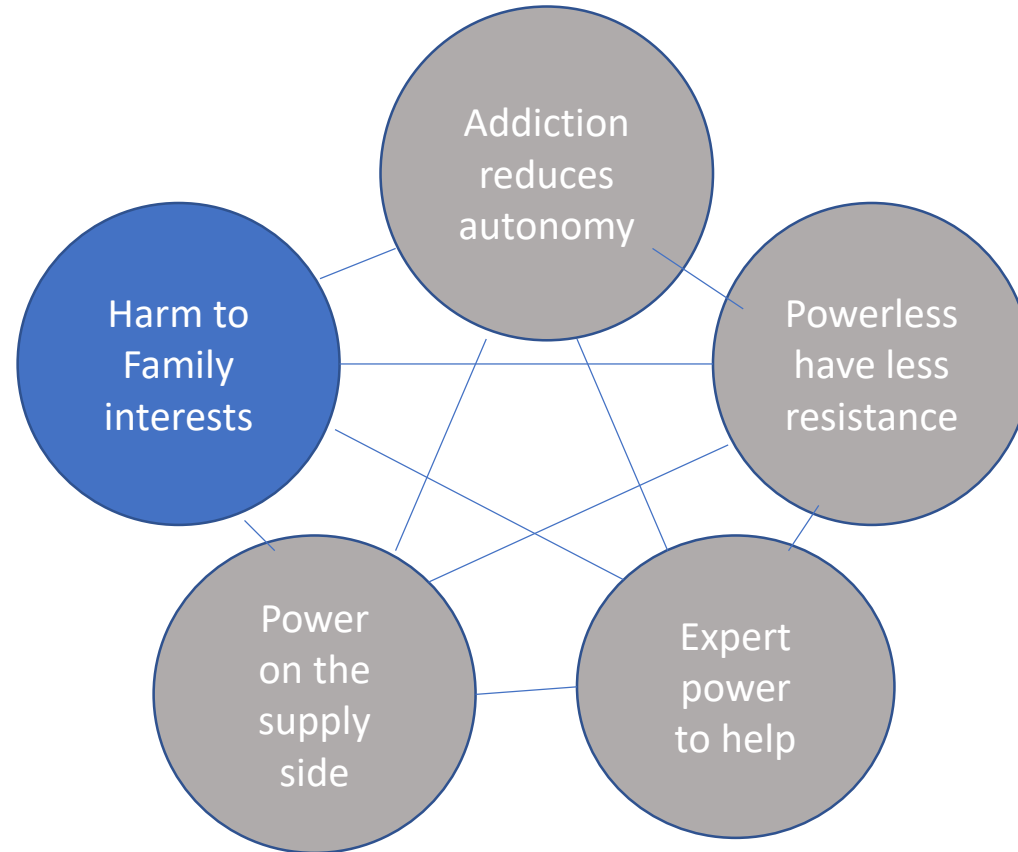
Thomas de Quincey: Opium Eater



Addiction reduces personal autonomy

- Dissonance; approach-avoidance conflict
- Conflict of interests; interference with 'real' interests
- Fragmented autonomy, loss of capacity to make longer term plans
- Loss of coherent identity
- Loss of agency, sovereignty, mastery

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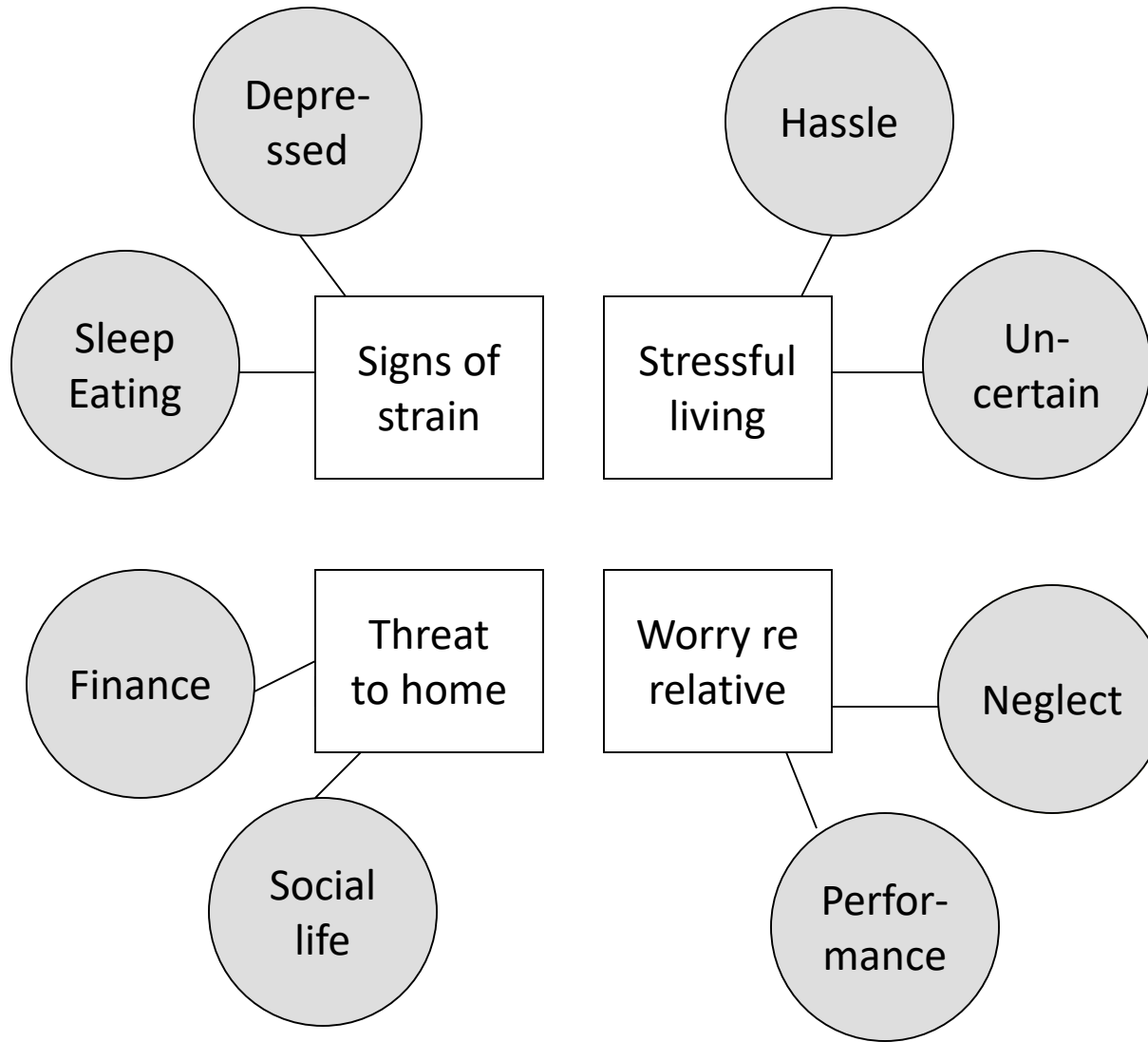


The most common and damaging misunderstanding about drug dependency is that it only concerns the person using the drugs.

Fergal Keane, 2007

Caitlin and Dylan Thomas

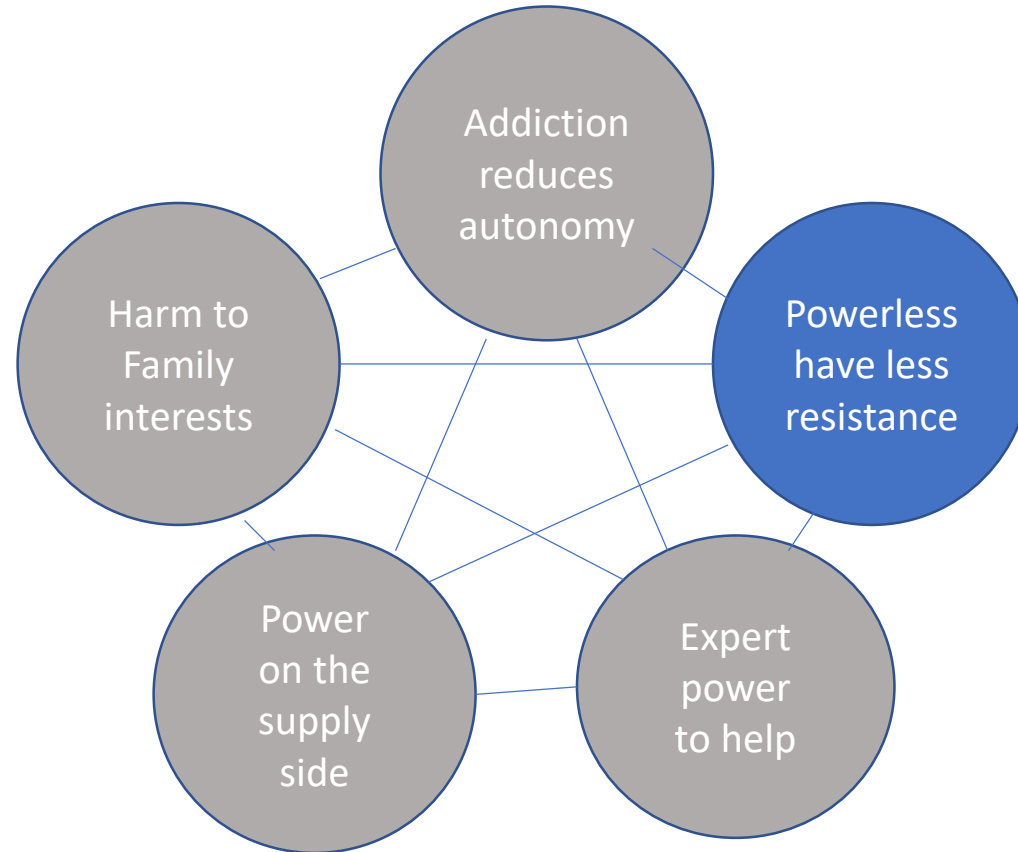




Addiction subordinates the interests of family members and friends

- Affected family members are disempowered
- Family life is threatened
- Family members interests are subordinated
- The family is colonised
- Family members are abused
- Family members' capabilities (Sen; Nussbaum)are reduced

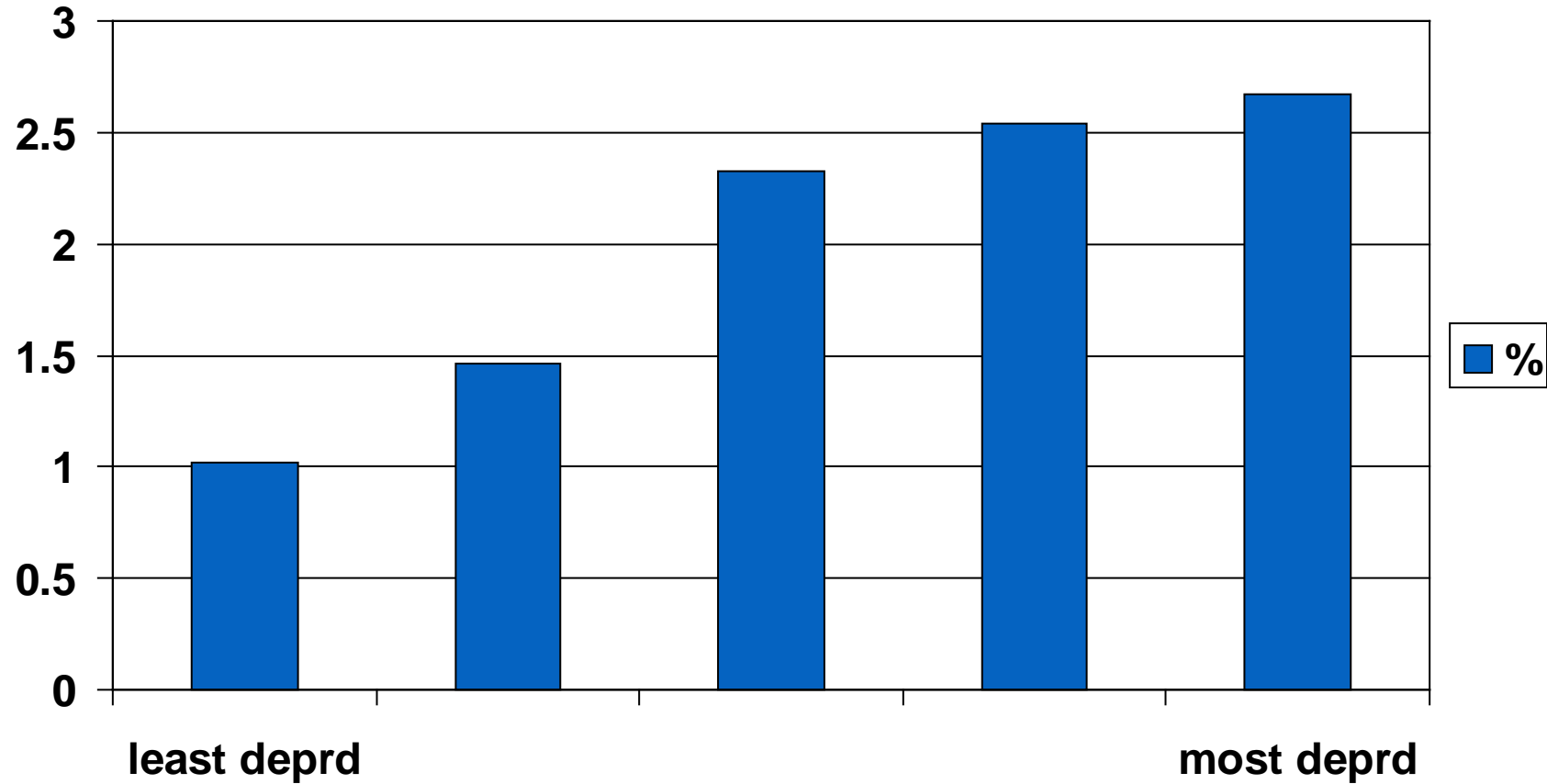
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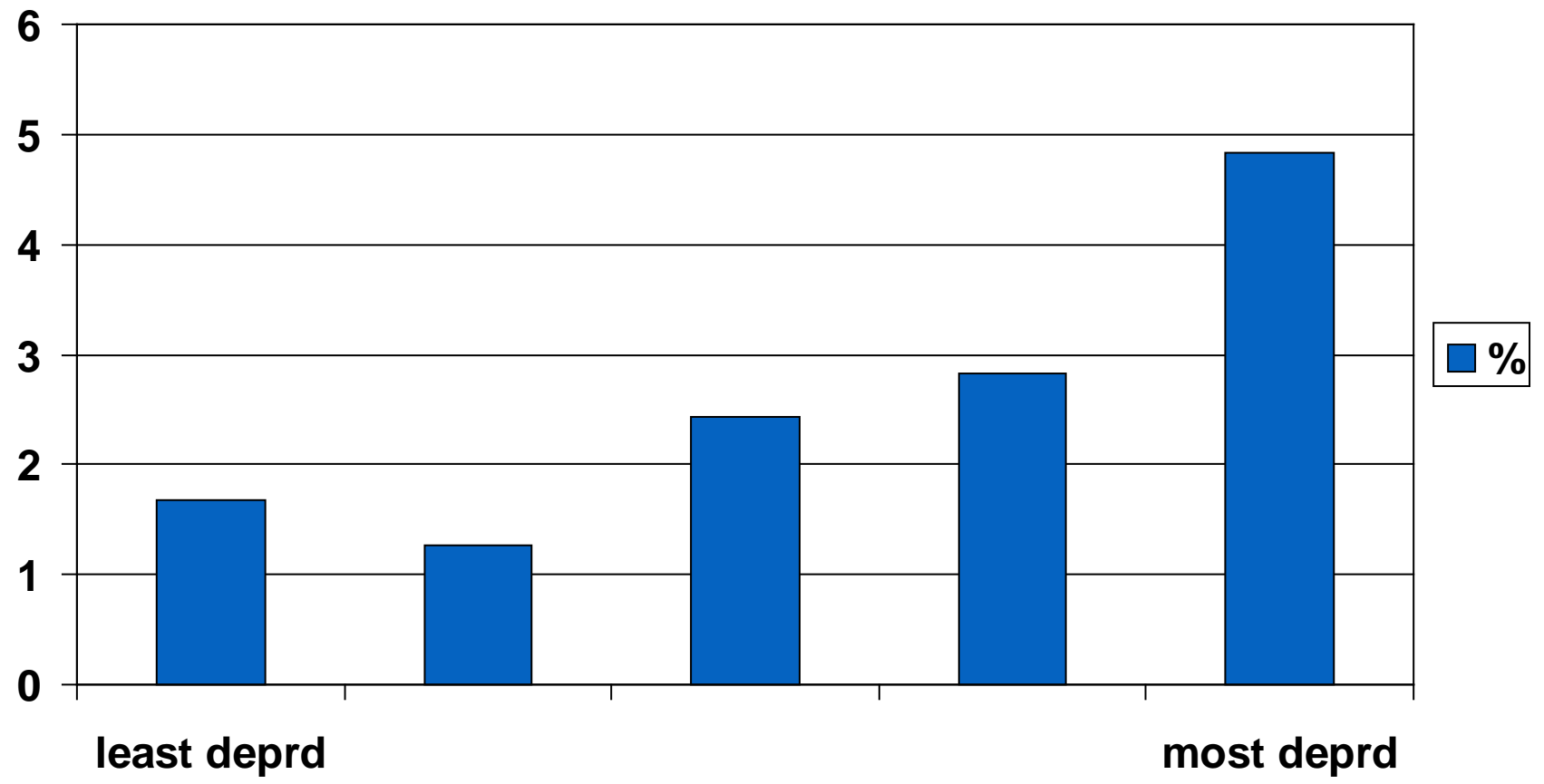
Inequality in the power to resist addiction

- Negative socio-economic status gradients
- The vulnerability of indigenous and minority groups
- Loss, trauma and deprivation
- Social advantage in quitting addiction
- Concentration of sales of addictive substances/activities in poorer areas
- Risky drug injecting environments
- More 'distal' influences of social structure

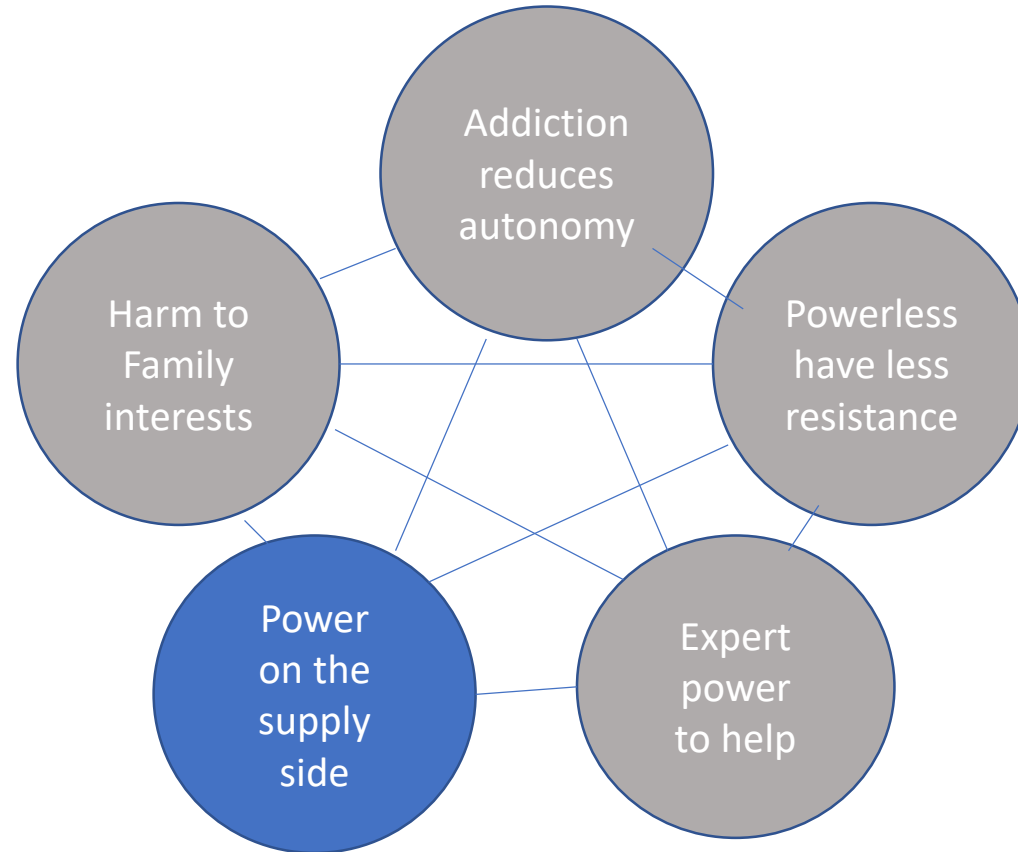
Problem/risk gambling by area deprivation (*British gambling prevalence survey, 2007*)



Close relatives with gambling problems by area deprivation



Power, Powerlessness and Addiction



The power of the addiction supply industries

- 'Big alcohol'
- 'Big gambling'
- The power to co-opt scientists and practitioners
- Discourses that support power
- Power and powerlessness in the illegal drugs trade

The Four Faces of Power (Lukes, Power: A Radical View, 2005)

- Overt power – control by powerful others
- Agenda power – control by keeping things off the agenda
- Ideological power – we accept things as they are
- Self-disciplinary or ‘under the skin’ power – we control ourselves

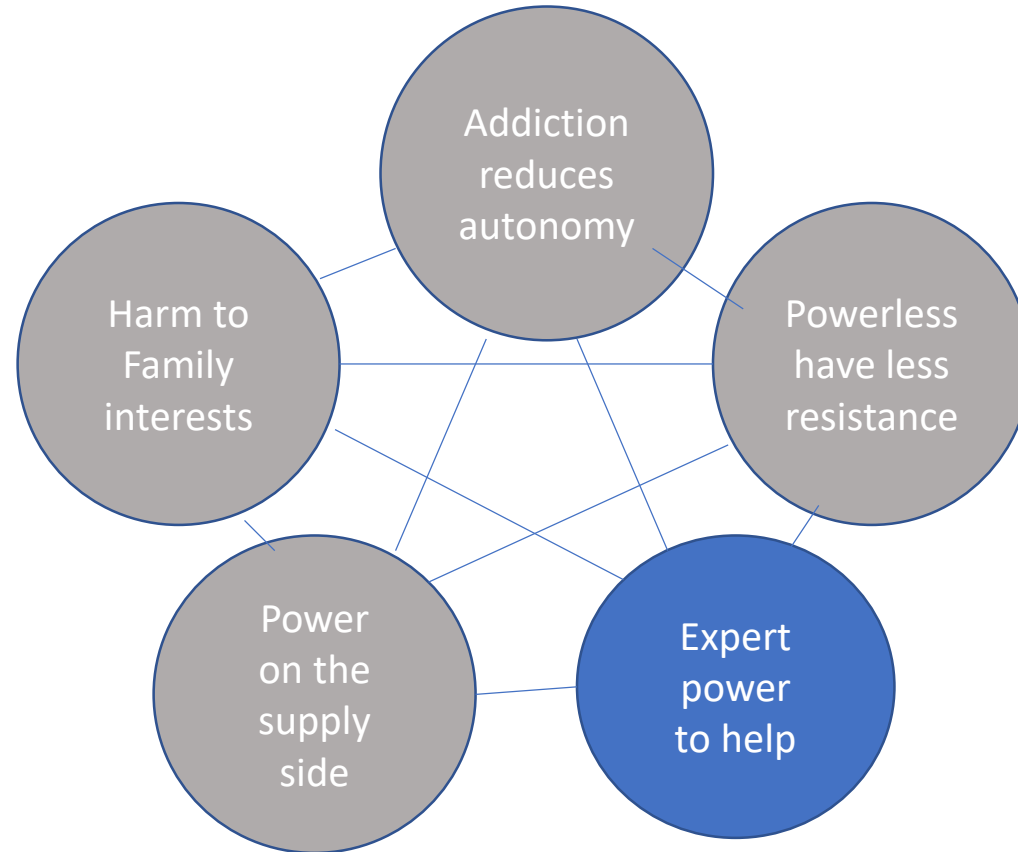
The Four Faces of Power

- 1 Control by coercion
- 2 Control of the agenda
- 3 Control of ideology and knowledge
- 4 Control by self-discipline

Discourses that Support Power in the Alcohol and Gambling Establishments

- The leisure entertainment discourse
- The ordinary business discourse
- The cultural and economic enhancement discourse
- The harmless product discourse
- The freedom to choose discourse
- The personal responsibility discourse

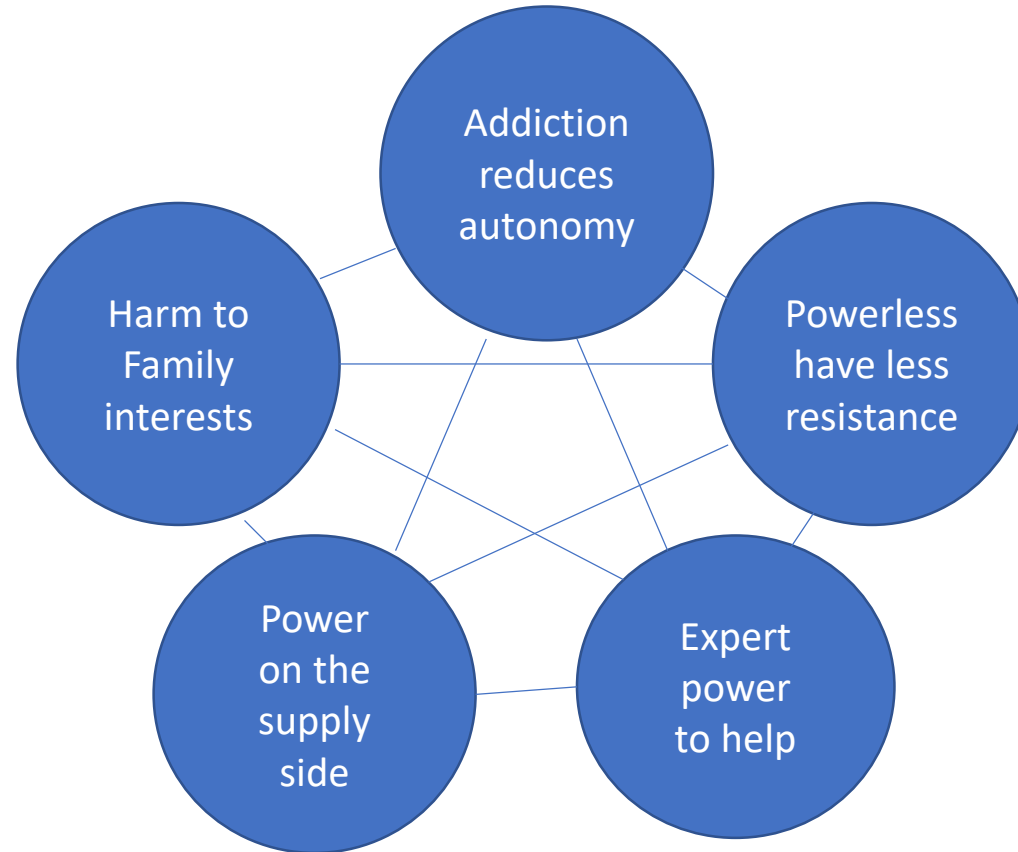
Power, Powerlessness and Addiction



Regaining control and power over addiction

- Appealing to a higher authority (Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-Step groups)
- The use of expert power (even Motivational Interviewing)
- The use of reward and coercive power (contingency management; family drug courts)
- Standing up to addiction (the power of others)
- Self-liberation, one of the processes of change
- A human rights issue

Power, Powerlessness and Addiction



The consequences of not seeing the bigger power picture

- Power hidden, power differences maintained
- No collective voice, no 'class' consciousness
- Individualistic, privileges bio and psycho characteristics
- Supports 'safe' research, education and treatment
- Attributions of responsibility and blame

A Drug User

(Eddie, quoted by Pearson, 1997)

There's no one to blame for it. It's yourself. You're the one who decides to get into it, so it's on your plate. It was no one's fault. I just got into it. It was sheer, 'Oh that's nice like, I'll get into that like ...' If yer can say no, well fair enough, you're laughing aren't ya? If you can't say no, it's just hard shit. I'm not blaming anyone for my addiction, it's my own fault like. I accept that.

Heroin addicts in Karachi, Pakistan

(cited by Primrose and Orford, 1997)

- I feel I did much wrong. I wronged myself, and I wronged my family. I still feel bad about that... There has been forgiveness, but I have never forgiven myself. What I did was very wrong. I should never have done what I did. This failing is with me even today.
- Even a dog is worth more respect than I am.

A British Gambler

Of course it was all of my own doing, no-one forced me to do this. But these machines are dangerously, dangerously addictive - if I could outlaw them I would, I think they're absolute poison, but I know it's not that simple. But morality has to step in somewhere here, where the bookies are concerned. They're making their money but at what cost?

So, What is Addiction?

- A brain disease?
- A form of deviance?
- A spiritual disease?
- A strong and harmful habit?
- A disorder of choice?
- A form of powerlessness, of exploitation?