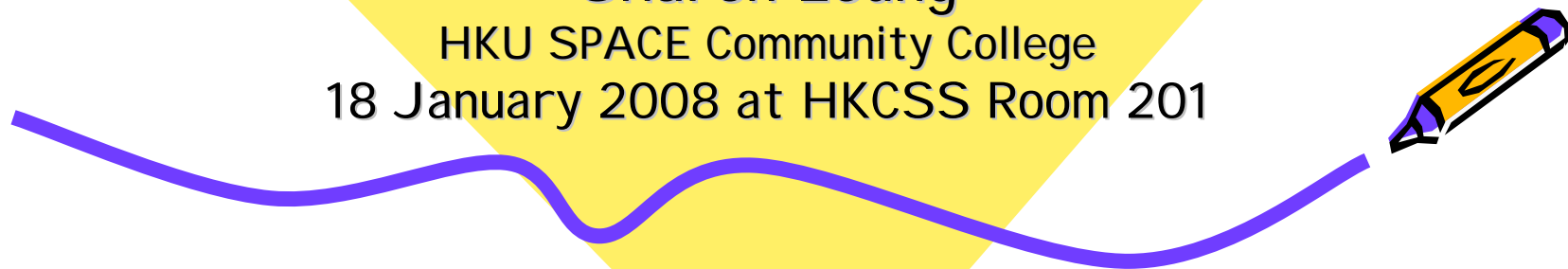


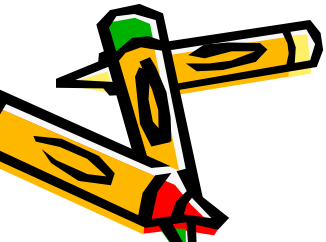
Surviving Substance Abuse : The Voice of Family

Sharon Leung
HKU SPACE Community College
18 January 2008 at HKCSS Room 201



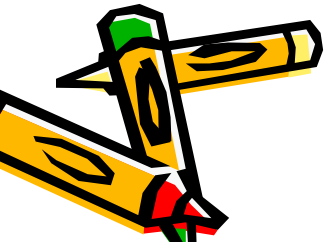
Outline

- Background of Study
- Research on SA Families
- Main Themes & Objectives
- Method & Profile of Families
- Stigma: Socially Constructed Identity
- Experience, Language, Gestures, Perceived and Management of stigma
- Construction & Reconstruction of Identities of SA families
- Subjective Meaning of Substance Abuse
- Special Issues for Families of Female SA
- Implications



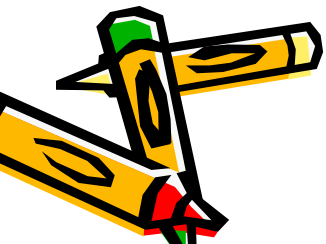
Background

- Difficulties working with families :
- Secondary treatment
- Don't want counselor to contact family
- Families refuse treatment due to stigma
- Rejection and mistrust
- Little research to understand families
- Lack of practical strategies to help families
- Families are hidden, neglected, misunderstood



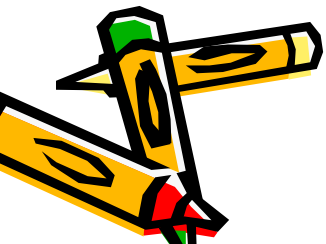
Research on SA Families

- **Structural Functionism**
- Family is the major cause
- Failures & dysfunction parenting
- Family malfunctions
- Family abnormality
- **Family is pathological & negative**



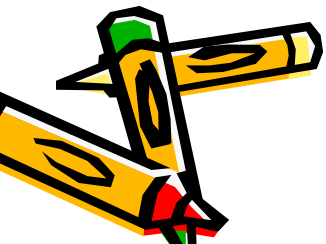
System Perspective

- Family is seen as a system
- Looks at relationships of family and other systems
- How families cope with family dynamic, conflict and crisis
- How families maintain boundary and balance
- Mother-child relationship: infantilized
- Family disequilibrium = Family Disorganization
- Change of family structure: Family Therapy



Family Stress & Coping

- Looks at stressors, resources, coping efforts & problem-solving skills
- Family resilience :how stress /adversity is adapted
- Less blaming, shaming and pathologizing



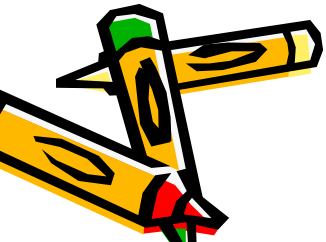
HK Research on SA Families

- Research commissioned by ACAN:

Studies of drug abuse trend	6
Characteristics of drug abusers	13
Drug treatment and rehabilitation	8
Preventive education	9
Medical effects & social cost	4
Service needs of children of drug users	1

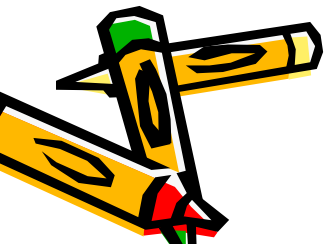
Other Local Studies

- BGCA (1994)
- Cheung, Y.W. (1997)
- HKCS (1997)
- Shek, D.T. L. (1997)
- Shek, D. T. L. (2004)
- Laider, Hodson & Day (2004)
- Sim, T. (2006)



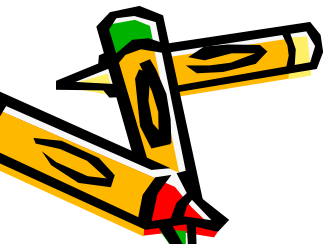
Conclusion

- Family studied as a sub-theme
- Many young drug users live with families
- Relationships between drug use & family conflict
- Families insensitive to child's drug use
- Poor drug knowledge
- Strong feelings of self-blame & helplessness
- Felt stigmatized
- Lack of support in community
- Family functioning improved with therapy



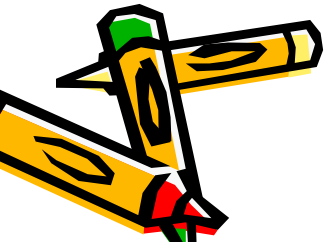
Symbolic Interactionism

- Understand social structure thro' the examination of personal day-to-day interactions
- Society is dynamic, interactive and meaning-making



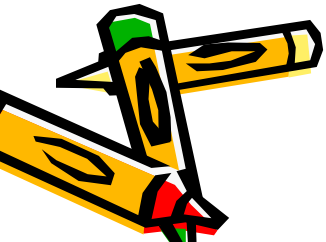
Main Themes/ Objectives

- The subjective meaning of lived experience : how families gain insight about the meaning
- Self-concept is learnt from how other sees & responds to us : how families are reflexive & evaluative to self and identity
- Roles & expectations of parents are socially constructed: how role making is possible in families



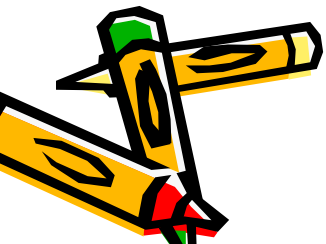
Methods

- Qualitative approach
- Semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted between 10/05 – 3/07
- Families of young drug abusers (under 29) either in treatment or completed treatment



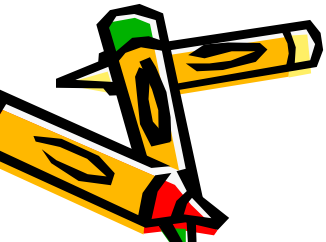
Profile of Families

Married couples	5	
Married mothers	6	
Divorced/separated mothers	7	18
Substance abusers (sons)	11	
(daughters)	7	18
Age range of respondents	43 - 62	
Age range of substance abusers	18 - 29	
Mean age of substance abusers	25	
Years of drug use (mean)	7.8	



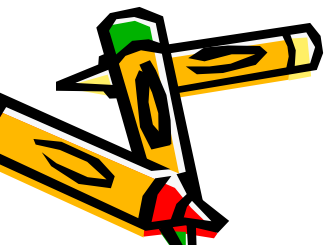
Stigma : Socially Constructed Identity

- Goffman (1963): stigma is an attribute & a stereotype
- Person is seen as of less value, bad dangerous
- A 'spoiled identity'
- A discredited person
- Family obligates to 'courtesy stigma'
- To avoid stigmatization : 'secrecy', 'control of identity information' and concealment
- Isolation, wider social division



Experience of Stigma

- **Language of stigma**
- 「直頭好感觸，好直接，呢個醫生好直接架，其實我都有諗到一個醫生會咁樣...咁佢就好直接嘅鬧我啊...即鬧我話唔識教仔囉。其實我哋之前已經講話我自己都唔知點樣去教仔，我自己夠知啦，唔使你去講啊？佢話：{你點樣教仔啊？教到個仔咁。}！」(C2, divorced mother)
- 「我記得有一次個差人講啊：{..你唔使擔心啊，俾佢入去戒啦。}咁啊個差人都仲係咁講：{你如果你...你而家啊...你同佢打官司啊即你幫助佢吸毒。}」(C6, married mother)
- **Stigmatized language creates overwhelming shame, devaluation and humiliation**



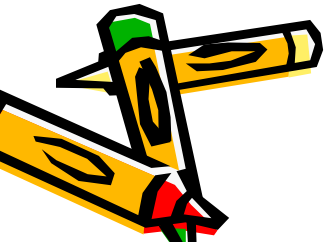
Gestures of Stigma

- C8 attended a wedding banquet with her son:

「即係人地嘅動作已經話左畀我聽喇已經，個訊號已經，咁他做亞媽嘅都自己有警惕啦，係咪呀？佢唔係當口歧視你啫，但係佢個動作行爲已經睇到啦...啲親戚朋友對佢有啲戒心啦」

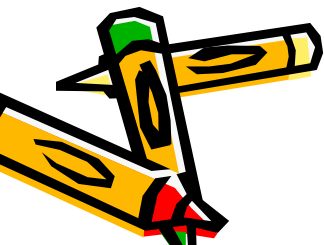
C6 met with a friend and felt upset:

「佢好似好驚...好驚會唔會你...你個仔會去偷嘢啊，佢個心會諗，你個仔食呢啲嘢實會去偷嘢，咁你會唔會因為咁樣都去偷嘢呢..佢個動作係好明顯，個銀包呢就佢摟得好實嘅，甚至乎佢坐對面嘅，佢唔敢坐你隔離嘅。咁我初頭唔會留意，但係去咗兩三次我會留意倒咁嘅情形。」



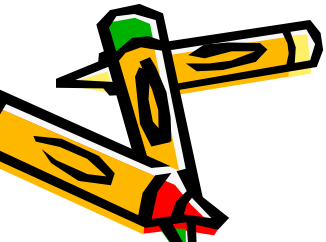
Gesture of Stigma

- 「之前細個隔離鄰舍好開心嘅。但係到佢大個，甚至乎隔離隔離知道佢(吸毒)，咁人哋唔講出嚟。但到佢戒完毒返嚟啊，見佢出出入入呢，人哋覺得係要保安嗰度門呢啊都一定要睇得好實咁樣，即係人哋嗰個動作啊...人哋個動作令到你自己個心唔舒服。」 (C6)
- Neighbors will peek from their flats to check if her son was back. To avoid embarrassment, she attached a small bell with her keys in order to inform her neighbors that she was home, not her son.
- Fear of contamination, see SA & families as potential danger – disrespect, avoidance and rejection



Perceived Stigma

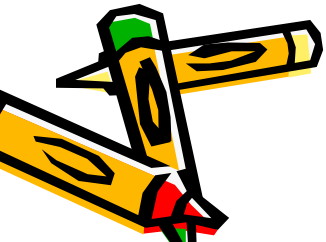
- Drug use is bad and evil
- 「吸毒者嗰啲呢，人哋覺得佢係...墜落啦...屬於黑社會嗰類啦，仲有話佢會去偷嘢...」(C6)
- 「好似我朋友話齋，你嫖賭飲盪吹，咁多樣最衰就係呢樣...我話你咁多樣唔掂，你係偏偏掂呢樣，真係啲野令你傾家蕩產，真係家破人亡架真係可以」(C10)
- 「一般人覺得呢班年青人應該冇乜機會嘅喇，爛底泥嚟架喇，冇乜機會嘅喇...呢班人渣係做唔倒嘅喇..」(C15)



Management of Stigma

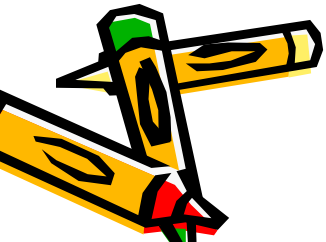
- **Concealing of drug use**

- Protect children from criticisms, low self esteem and loss of status at home
- Do not want to upset senior members of the family
- Worry that children will be judged negatively and unfavorably
- Avoid discrimination
- Disclosure of drug use is adaptive: only to people that they trust or unless it is helpful



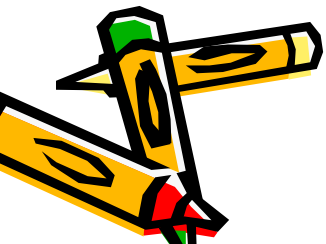
Avoiding Interaction

- Avoid making contact with friends, relatives, colleagues
- Avoid to talk about things that's too personal
- Change of topics



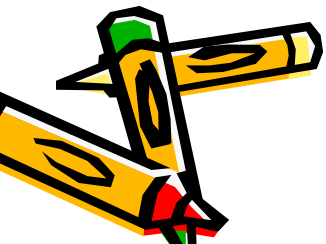
Ways to counter Stigma

- Concentrate on positive
- 「十隻手指有長短...比人睇D長嘅蘿...」(C6)
- Change one's mind: Don't mind how others see us
- 「你唔可以改變人哋嘅思想架嘛，人哋要咁你有辦法，你只可以改變自己嘅思想...」(C4)
- 「唉！個口係人哋度，由得人講囉，講到唔講為止囉...個阿婆 (neighbor) 成日教我：唔好理人講乜啦，er...咩啊...佢30日，31日就講多1日，30日就講少1日囉，唔好理人囉，自己揸正自己嚟做囉。」(C7)



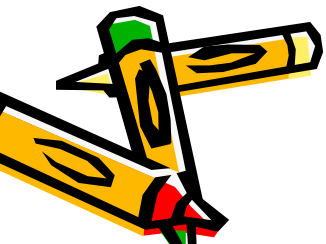
Ways to counter stigma

- Redefined the attribution of problem
- 「有時你唔開心呀，有時不停會炆下話自己唔識教佢，但係學我先生話齋，最緊要佢都係群埋嗰班人架啫，都唔關事唔好嘅，我先生成日都咁講呀」(C9)
- Accept stigma is a normal reaction
- 「我覺得(歧視)好正常嘅，你做一個行爲出嚟個社會公認係壞嘅啫嘛...呢樣野真係傷害身體嘅，佢歧視你即係提醒你...最緊要你要睇得起自己，你肯抬起頭，你肯去敲門，總有一度門爲你而開嘅...」(C15)



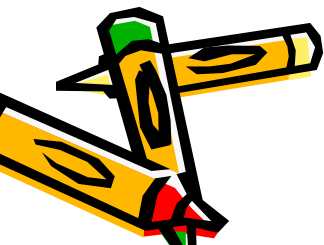
Socially Constructed Identity of SA Families

- 「開頭我係一個... 好怕人講，其實我前夫都講得我啱嘅：我係好怕事... 一個小女人可以咁講以前就係，同埋係一個好計較人哋講你... 係唔去面對」 (C5, divorced mother)
- 「我睇自己咪覺得我係咪好失敗，係咪真係我嘅錯囉...係咪我真係做錯咗...佢又喺度話我，話我有理佢，冇理到佢，冇照顧佢，咁係咪真係我責任呢？」 (C10, divorced mother)
- 「覺得我唔識得管教啲子女啦，做父母啲真係唔係好人啦，所以啲子女先咁樣啦。」 (C14, divorced mother)
- 「嗰時候呢我諗下...我有咁有自信呢樣野...同埋好懷疑自己係咪一個好妻子？係咪一個好媽咪？係咪我一手破壞呢個家呢個家庭啊？」 (C15, divorced mother)
- Self-blame, sense of failure, low self-esteem, no self confidence



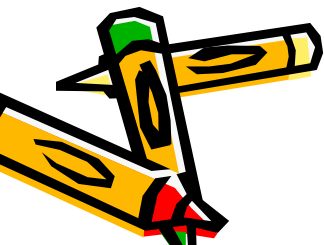
Reconstruction of identity

- **Stay strong and positive**
- 「我係堅強正面嗰隻，我就唔會話去賭、去打麻雀...去麻醉自己嘅。我仲有我仔要睇，仲有阿爺阿嫲又要我睇...我覺得我自己問心無愧！」 (C14, divorced mother)
- 「係啊，堅強...能屈能伸啊...我覺得我自己唔去怨天尤人！」 (C5, married mother)
- 「可能我自己比較開朗...即人講咩嘢，由佢講囉，我自己就是鬼但。自己個仔係咁啊，接受自己個仔囉，唔好理人哋講咩囉，我自己問心無愧！」 (C7, separated mother)



Reconstruction of identity

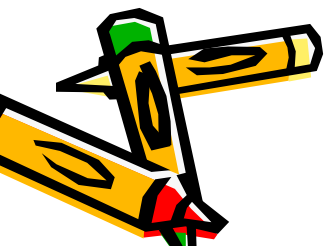
- From accepting help to helping others: creating new social roles
- 「咁到發生咗呢件事之後平靜咗，知道自己應該對呢方面要多啲認識，同埋知道原來自己身邊有咁多人幫自己，自己識得去幫返人... 真係好幸福囉...覺得自己好幸福。」(C4)
- 「有好多人都唔識得點樣去做...咁好彷徨啊，我哋就同佢講，叫佢唔使驚嘅，而且有好多個戒毒機構架...將我哋所知道嘅、我哋嘅心得、我哋嘅經歷講俾佢聽...其實呢去到呢睇見佢好淒涼，個個都喊苦喊怨...但係我哋將我哋所得嘅同佢講咗之後呢，每一次臨走佢哋都好開心嘅...自己幫倒人又幫倒自己！」(C11, married couple)



Reconstruction of identity

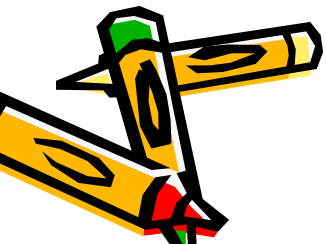
- Self-acceptance

- 「我以前不嬲對自己冇乜信心... 對自己有多咗啲睇法：係寬恕、接納、同埋理解囉... 佢有佢嘅人生喇，即係佢選擇好啊好，唔好啊都係佢自己嘅生命嚟喇！」 (C15)
- 「而家我睇自己，唉！唔好理人點諗囉，自己做自己個份囉，自己教得掂咪教，教唔掂，諗吓辦法囉，佢自己害自己，就要怪佢自己囉... 我盡晒能力囉，佢要變我都有計，佢要壞我都唔知點，由得佢囉。」 (C7)
- 「我覺得已經做左自己個責任！而係佢識d人學壞，只有發生左事，我去幫佢去補救，我堅持去做！我無做錯，因為如果我再覺得自己做錯，我咪重辛苦，我重唔開心，重難過，我覺得自己做左一百分... 不過佢好勝無辦法，好勝想試，試左唔緊要... 只有而家面對現實，去幫佢，大家去支持佢，做父母既支持佢，希望佢唔好再繼續再掂..」 (C18, married couple)



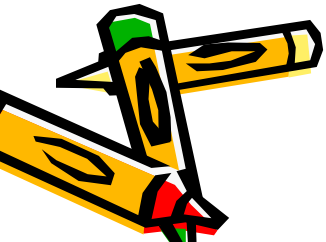
Subjective Meaning of Substance Abuse

- SA is not a sin, he/she is sick
- They are victims of addiction
- SA as a life challenge -learn and grow thro' pain would tough you up in adversity
- Accept the reality and find ways to change
- As long as he/she wants to quit, there's hope for a new start
- SA brings family together
- SA helps expand social network and life circle
- Motivated by sense of obligations and unconditional love
- Perceived as a long-term battle that their children are temporary taken over by 'drugs'.



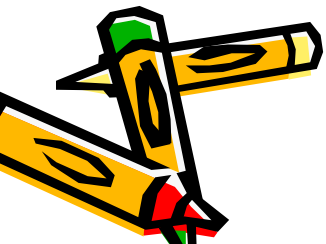
Special issues for families of female SA

- Crime and prostitution
- Slim and beauty myths
- Negative influence from partner
- Myths about not getting pregnant when using drugs / methadone
- Support and care for children of drug abusers before, during and after treatment



Implications

- Provide optimistic outlook for families to reconstruct their identity and redefine the situation
- Help families to gain insight about their experience despite years of distress & frustration
- Make connection to person's sense of personal quality provides motive for behavioral change



The End

Thank You !

