

Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre's Webinar

Violence, Resistance, and the Power in the Language

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Violence is the most urgent problem of our times.

- 70 – 90 % of people diagnosed with serious “mental illness” report significant violence and trauma histories.
- Violence in childhood, combined with other adversities is the best predictor of diagnosis of “mental illness”.
 - e.g., ADHD. ASD. Attachment. Anxiety. Depression.
- Homelessness, poverty.
- Eating disorders, dangerous drug use, “self-harm”, health problems . . .
- Prostitution, “porn”, “human trafficking”.
- Criminal activity, convictions, incarceration. (90% of prison populations)
- 70 to 90 % of child protection cases, depending on the jurisdiction, involve violence.

Understanding Violence and Related Facts is Essential

But . . . what training in interpersonal violence is given to professionals?

- School teachers
- Medical doctors
- Lawyers and judges
- Social workers
- Police

. . . and so on?

Facts First

"A sense of the unique, specific and concrete circumstances of any situation is the first indispensable step to solving the problems posed by that situation."

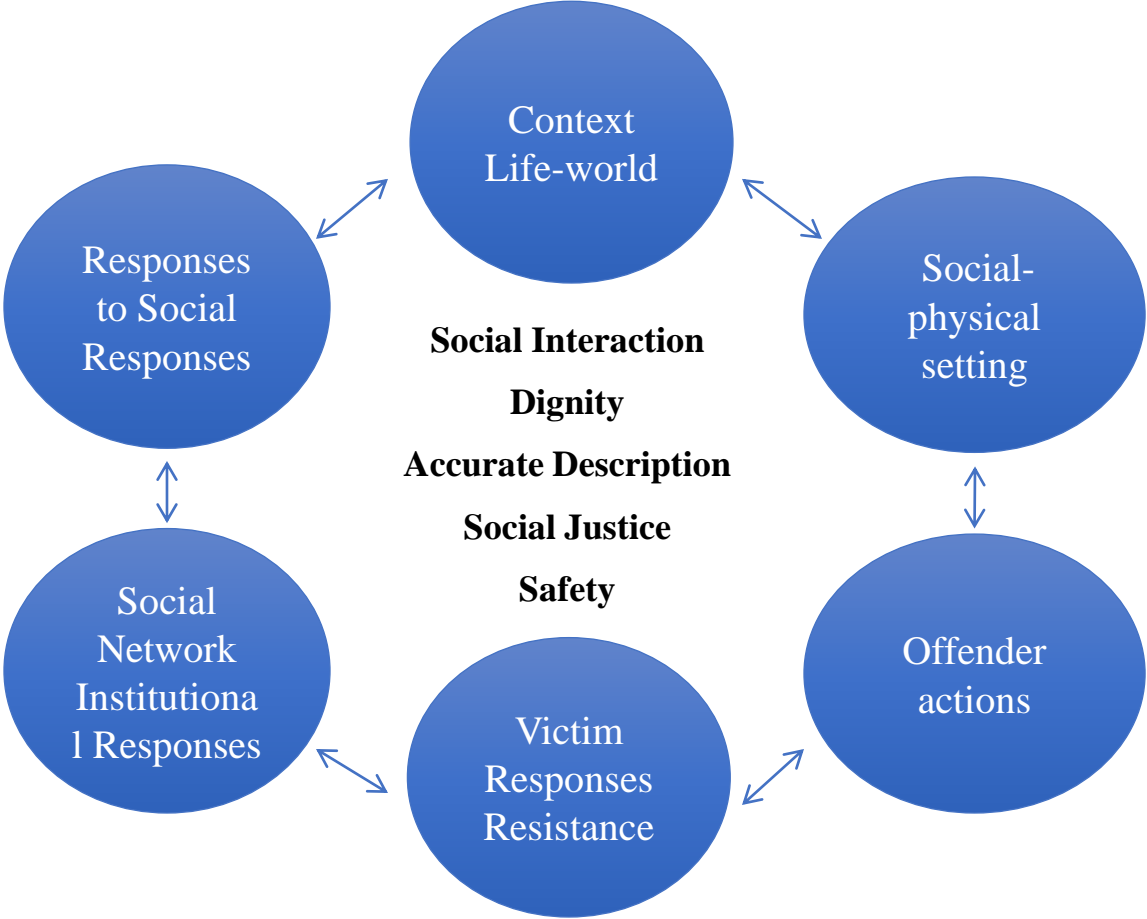
(David Trimble, 1998)

Context in Cases of Interpersonal Violence?

Jen - 14

Tim - 8

Evelyn - 12



Karin (15)

Carolina: Can I ask in those situations when you were scared and felt like something was wrong, did you feel like you could do something then?

Karin: No, that was the thing. I was so little and had so many feelings. Sometimes I could say to daddy, please dad please be quiet, don't be bothered by what mummy says. I played along with him for a while and played along with him and thought this will help and pretended that mummy was the one who was sick. So I said that if you could only be quiet don't be bothered by what she is saying you know she is wrong (pause) so be quiet and go outside and be angry.

Lars

T: Do you remember him hitting Mummy?

L: Definitely!

T: Did that happen a lot?

L: Yes. It was always in the evening.

T: Where would you be?

L: [Drawing] This is the living room and this is my bedroom. My bed is here, and they'd be fighting right here! They didn't think about the fact that I'd wake up.

T: You never went to your sister's rooms?

L: No, I couldn't, they were on the second floor. They would have heard me from the living room. I'd hear them and go and say, "Mummy, someone has thrown eggs at the window".

Lars cont'd

T: So you interrupted them?

L: Yes. Other times I said I had a bad dream. That was the best trick to make them stop. Mummy would come into my room and sleep in my bed. I liked that.

T: And where would your stepdad be?

L: He'd stay outside.

T: So you helped solve the problem.

L: Yes.

T: That was very clever of you.

L: Thanks!

T: I think you'll become an inventor.

L: Yes, that's what I want to be.

Previous examples from:

“I said I had a bad dream”. An animated documentary.
A film by Annika Ernst. Illustrated by Robert Nyberg
Produced by Eureka. Vickleby, 2008
Based on quotes and comments by Lotta Molander.

Maria (DVSM Participant)

When he knew I was pregnant he beat me to a pulp and I miscarried twice. Publicly he would be saying to friends that he wanted to have kids.

When I suspected I was pregnant again I hid it from him. I produced the pregnancy test with him and my mum in the same room together. I knew that if the pregnancy was public that he would have to go along with it and this would keep my daughter safe.

Mum took a photo of us with the pregnancy test. It was public. I had been able to manage his violence towards me, not accept it, but manage it.

So for the nine months I was pregnant the physical violence stopped.

Understanding the Forms of Resistance

Resistance is ever present: Where there is violence, there is resistance.

Resistance can be open and direct or subtle and disguised depending on the dangers and opportunities of specific situations.

Open defiance is the least common form of resistance.

Resistance is a response to violence, not an effect or impact of violence.

Violence is social

. . . in that there are at least two people involved, a perpetrator and a victim.

It follows that complete and accurate descriptions will include the actions of both people, in context.

First account of sexualized assault

He followed her down the sidewalk. He sped up to catch her. He grabbed her by the shoulders and threw her to the ground. He dragged her toward the bushes. He overpowered her and dragged her into the bushes. He held a rock over her head and threatened to kill her if she screamed. He called her degrading names. He forced his mouth onto her face. He tried to undo her belt. He grabbed at her pant legs to pull them off. He overpowered her and vaginally raped her.

Second account of sexualized assault

He followed her down the sidewalk. **She sped up.** He sped up to catch her. **She moved to the side.** He grabbed her by the shoulders and threw her to the ground. **She rolled on the ground to get away.** He dragged her toward the bushes. **She grabbed the roots of a tree so he couldn't drag her into the bushes.** He overpowered her and dragged her into the bushes. **She started to scream.** He held a rock over her head and threatened to kill her if she screamed. **She stopped screaming.** He called her degrading names. **She said, "You don't want to do this. You don't want to hurt me."** He forced his mouth onto her face. **She averted her face.** He tried to undo her belt. **She stuck out her stomach so that he could not undo her belt.** He grabbed at her pant legs to pull them off. **She crossed her ankles so that he could not pull off her pants.** He overpowered her and vaginally raped her. **She went to limp to avoid injury and went elsewhere in her mind.**

Strategies of Violence and Tactics of Resistance

Offenders anticipate and work to suppress victim resistance.

- If the offender tries to isolate the victim . . .
- If the offender tries to humiliate the victim . . .
- If the offender tries to conceal the violence . . .
- If the offender tries to blame the victim . . .
- If the offender hates and debases the victim . . .

Etc.

Resistance is as “real” as violence and central to the fact pattern:

. . . not a reframe

. . . not only a “strength”

. . . not only a an expression of “resilience”

. . . not an effort to be positive

The victim’s resistance most directly reveals the deliberate nature of the violence.

If we do not see the victim’s resistance, we cannot ask how the perpetrator worked to suppress and conceal that resistance.

Violence and Language:

Close Analysis, Accurate Descriptions and Social Responses

“Language is . . . inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world”. (Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 1986, pp. 15-16)

“All prescriptions about what to do imply descriptions about what is [already] the case”. (Terry Eagleton, 2003, p. 87)

Commonly Used False Terms

“comfort women”

“settlement”

“abusive relationships”

“unwanted intercourse”

”sex with a minor”

“child prostitution”

Violence is Unilateral (Coates, 1994)

- Violence consists of actions by one person against the will and well being of another
- Mutual Acts vs. Unilateral Acts
 - Hand-shaking vs hand-shaking
 - Boxing
 - Kissing
- Mutual acts imply and entail consent, co-action, co-agency, joint activity
- “If you hit someone on the head with a frying pan, you don’t call it cooking.” (Anonymous Canadian genius)

Unilateral Language and Property Crimes

- Car theft is not “auto sharing”
- Bank robbery is not a “financial transaction”

Similarly . . .

- Wife-assault is not a “dispute” or “argument” or “abusive relationship”
- Child rape is not “sex with a child” or “child prostitution”

Unilateral

- forced his mouth on hers
- wife-assault, beating
- forced vaginal penetration
- beating, attack, assault
- workplace bullying
- invasion, genocide
- international child rape

Mutual

- kiss
- abusive relationships
- sex, intercourse
- fight, conflict, argument
- personality conflict
- war, conflict, historical relationship problem
- sex tourist, sex with minors

Colonial Discourse

Colonization has always been based upon the existence of need and dependency. Not all people are suitable for being colonized; only those who feel this need are suitable. In almost all cases where Europeans have founded colonies . . . we can say that they were expected, and even desired in the unconscious of their subjects.

(Mannoni, 1947, cited in Macey)

Wife-Assault

The partners' characteristics hold them together. . . . As abused partners adapt and become more compliant . . . the partners' characteristics make them increasingly dependent on one another. After prolonged abuse they develop complementary characteristics: aggressive/passive, demanding/compliant, blaming/accepting guilt.

(Anonymous Family Violence Project, 2008)

Mutualizing: EPO

C: Okay. And – and right from the start he's been aggressive and sexually abusive?

A: No. He was okay until August. Then one night we started to kiss, then I wasn't -- I didn't want to. Then he didn't listen, then (too quiet to hear).

C: Okay. Was that reported to police?

A: No.

C: No. Now, was that – that was the — was that then the first time that **you two** had – had **relations? Had sex?**

A: That was the first time I've ever **had sex.**

Criminal Code of Canada: Sections on sexualized violation of children

“151 *Sexual Interference* - Every person who, for *a sexual purpose*, touches, directly or indirectly”

“152 *Invitation to Sexual Touching* - Every person who, for *a sexual purpose*, *invites, counsels* or incites a person under the age of sixteen years to touch, directly or indirectly “

Washington State U.S.A.

Rape of a child in the second degree.

(1) A person is guilty of rape of a child in the second degree when the person has **sexual intercourse** with another who is at least twelve years old but less than fourteen years old and not married to the perpetrator and the perpetrator is at least thirty-six months older than the victim.

New Zealand

Several sections of the New Zealand Crimes Act (1961) deal with sexualized violence against minors. Section 131B is titled, “Meeting a young person following sexual grooming”.

“132 **Sexual conduct** with child under 12”

(1) Every one who has **sexual connection** with a child is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years.

(2) Every one who attempts to have **sexual connection** with a child is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

CTV News Program on Prostitution in Winnipeg, Canada.

Journalist: “This problem is a lot younger these days. Child prostitutes are on many street corners”.

Interview with woman “prostitute”.

Journalist: “How did you get started in this work . . . ?”

Woman: “Well, I was 12 years old and my neighbour took me into the back room of his house and bent me over a table and did me from behind. Then he threw 50 bucks at me. And that was my first sexual experience. And that’s when it started.”

Resistance is ever-present.

Where there is violence, or any humiliation of human dignity, there is resistance.

Resistance is a *response to violence*, not an *effect or impact of violence*.

Thanks to the pervasive focus on effects and impacts, resistance is widely concealed or ignored.

Who is asking:

“What is the dignity centre of the brain?”

“How do children protect loved ones even when they are terrified?”

Consequently, victims are portrayed as passive and dysfunctional, even as attracting or going along with the violence they endure.

“Mutual” language further conceals victim resistance and perpetrators’ efforts to overcome and suppress that resistance.

Public Service Announcements: Whitehorse, Yukon Renee-Claude Carrier and Kaushees Place

Scenario 1

I asked you to stop

I tried to negotiate

I screamed for help

I turned my face away from yours

I crossed my legs

I stuck out my stomach

I clutched a tree

Then I went limp to avoid the pain

And went to a safe place in my head

Do you really question my resistance?

The judge decided I consented.

Nobody asks to be raped

Stand with us for dignity and non-violence

What changes?

passive, affected	----->	active, responding
object position	----->	subject position
I am incapable	----->	I am competent
I have no boundaries	----->	They ignored my boundaries
I need skills	----->	I responded skillfully
I'm hypervigilant	----->	I have good radar
I'm depressed	----->	I'm sad at being oppressed
I am responsible	----->	the offender is responsible
I failed	----->	I did what I could
I let it happen	----->	I couldn't make it stop
I went along with it	----->	I opposed it
I choose abusive guys	----->	I choose decent guys
I re-enacted my trauma	----->	I re-enacted my resistance
I'm sick, abnormal	----->	I'm normal, healthy
I'm odd, pathological	----->	I'm understandable, sensible
I am the problem	----->	violence is the problem
an inner problem	----->	a social problem
self-doubt, blame	----->	self-respect

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