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Preventing violence against girls.
Should programs be gender-specific?

Conference proceedings, Montreal, October 25th, 2002

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PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS.
SHOULD PROGRAMS BE GENDER-SPECIFIC?
Conference proceedings, Montreal October 25th, 2002

Edited by

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Presentation

Should Violence-Prevention Programs Be Gender-Specific? This was the question with which we opened a seminar held in Montreal on October 25, 2002, that gathered researchers form across Canada on the subject of violence prevention towards girls. The seminar was the result of five years' collaboration between the excellence centres, members of « The Alliance of Five Research Centers on Violence »[1], on the issue of violence against girls. These five were: The FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children, in British Columbia; the RESOLVE (Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse) centers, in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta; Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, in Ontario, the CRI-VIFF (Interdisciplinary Center on Violence in the Family and Violence Against Women, in Quebec; the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, in New-Brunswick. Also involved in the seminar was the Institute for Research on Social Development of Youth. Since 1998, with the financial support of Status of Women Canada, the five centers have been working together and exchanging information in an effort to prevent violence against girls.

The seminar was part of the third phase of the « girl child » project, started in 1998 with the support of Status of Women Canada, with the aim of developing a national strategy of violence prevention for the girl child. The Alliance started this strategy in 1998 by examining the existing professional and academic literature and by drawing up an inventory of intervention resources in each region, to identify both successful intervention strategies and gaps. In the second phase, the centers undertook research projects focusing on different aspects of the question. Within the general framework of violence prevention and the girl child project each center drew upon regional resources and concerns to create an original project on a particular theme. The seminar in Montreal constituted the final phase of the project, that is to say the dissemination of the Alliance's research on the subject. We did not limit ourselves to presenting the results, but asked the speakers to question and discuss the specificity of the girls' realities, and the relevance of taking this specificity into account in the violence prevention programs.

Moreover, the school has been a key environment for a large majority of programs which aim at preventing violence — in the family, in the school, or in dating relationships — reaching out to children and adolescents. Many violence prevention programs have been implemented in the school. However, some young people, including girls, are not reached by programs in the school environment; either they dropped out of the school system, or else the programs do not address the complex realities that these girls face , be it in the street, in gangs or in sex-work. We questionned ourselves on the violence these girls might experience and on the relevance, or not, of designing gender-specific prevention programs that would reach these girls. During the conference, these different realities were approached in two moments that we preserved while structuring the book: first of all, papers describing the violence experienced by girls in the school environment, followed by papers evaluating violence prevention programs in the school and in the community. In the second part, presentations describing violence experienced by young women in marginalized environments followed by a reflection on the types of intervention that would be pertinent in that context.

Because it is distinct from the family or the work place and has a unique aim to socialize youth from childhood to entry into adulthood, the school constitutes a natural environment for

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[1] The five Canadian centers of excellence were created in 1992 by the CRSH and Canada Health to counter family violence and the violence made to the women. They gathered in 1997 under the banner of "the Alliance of the five research centers on violence".

prevention programs which seek to reach young people as early as possible. But the school is also a dynamic social environment where girls can experience different types of violence. The first presentations exposed the violence experienced by girls in the school environment. Margaret Jackson presented the results of the research project from the FREDA centre in British-Columbia. She underlined the racism experienced in the school by immigrant or refugee girls of color, especially the newly arrived, scorned as FOB, « fresh off the boat », and the lack of support they received from the school administration.

Because of the feminist orientation of the project, most presentations focused on the girls' realities. Some, however, have compared the perceptions and experiences of girls and boys in regard to sexual harassment. This is the case in the research project carried out by the Research Center on Violence Against Women and Children, in Ontario. This school-based study is especially interesting in that it documents the point of view of both girls and boys from 8 years old on, using various methodologies such as focus group, journal completion and photo novella. The results of this study, presented by Janet Izumi and Helene Berman, show differences between the perceptions and the experience of sexual harassment on the part of girls and boys, and underline the significance of sexual harassment girls' experience in the development of their perception of themselves.

The papers which followed were mostly evaluation research of school-based or community-based programs aimed at preventing violence. Leslie Tutty presented the results of an extensive review she conducted for Justice Canada of over a hundred school-based violence prevention programs for which she could obtain empirical evidence. The results show that most programs do not differentiate between the sexes; she discusses the pertinence of such a differentiation. Sylvie Normandeau presented the results of the CRI-VIFF study on the diffusion of violence-prevention programs. Focusing on four shool-based programs reaching out to children or adolescents — *Espace, Les Scientifines, Vers le Pacifique et VIRAJ* — she described the factors which may help or hinder the diffusion of violence prevention programs. These factors can be related to the programs' content or form, or to the organizational structure of the school or policy. Ann Cameron presented the results of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson center's research, which evaluated violence prevention workshops held in six rural communities in Atlantic Canada. Onceagain the school was the base around which the community was mobilized. These day-long workshops provided the possibility of comparing the perceptions of girls and boys participating in gender-integrated or gender-segregated workshops.

The papers presented in the afternoon focused on the realities of young women involved in marginalized environments. Leslie Tutty presented the results of the RESOLVE Alberta project on the violence experience of young women of the Prairies who have been involved in prostitution since adolescence. She underlined the importance of the violence these young women experience, both in their youth and since they engaged in prostitution. This is also confirmed by the results of a study on young women from the Quebec city region, presented by Dominique Damant: the violence the young women experienced before precipitates their involvement in the prostitution world. Once they have entered this universe, the violence anchors them even more into it. Damant discussed the similarities and differences which might exist between the realities of these women and those of men involved in sex-work who do not fit the male standards. Marie-Marthe Cousineau presented the results of a research on young women affiliated with street gangs. Starting from young women's narratives, she described the process by which the gang, which initially met their needs for belonging, for self-esteem, for solidarity, for protection and for love, slowly transforms into a prison.

There is a consensus on the importance of the violence experienced by girls in marginalized environment. One can wonder though what challenges this represents for programs aimed at violence prevention. One can also ask whether these programs should be designed specifically for girls, or if they should be designed for both girls and boys? This is the question we asked a panel of practitioners working with young people in marginalized environments, at the forefront in addressing these challenges and bringin forth solutions in the community. Their answers, based on their practice, discussed complex, sometimes contradictory, realities, like those of youth in the custody of the Youth Centres, those of young women who easily perceive themselves as violent, or those of sex-workers whose « sex » is not so easily determined.

Although she agreed on the need for separate spaces, where girls can share with girls and boys with boys, Chantal Fredette underlined how the needs for belonging, status and protection are basically the same for girls and boys. For Claudine Laurin, on the other hand, the tendency by public services to propose undifferentiated programs does not permit young women to develop of a solid sense of who they are, a key element in violence prevention. Michèle Burque finally showed how complex the often taken for granted separation between men and women can be. Although Stella is a group by and for women, they also accept transsexuals or transvestites whose experience in sex-work is fraught with a violence similar to the one women experience.

To conclude, should violence prevention programs be gender-specific? Even if the points of view expressed during the seminar were varied, most suggest the relevance of taking into account the specific realities of girls and young women in the design of violence prevention programs. The Alliance of Five Research Centers on Violence intends to continue its work on the issue of violence against girls and young women in applying an intersectional perspective that aims to understand the complexity of the living conditions of girls and young women and of how those conditions can contribute to or help prevent violence.

I –Girls' violence experience in the school

Erased realities: the violence of racism in the lives of immigrant and refugee girls of colour[1]

MARGARET A. JACKSON[2]

> *In the street or in school, it's the same. I don't feel I belong.*
> *But I learned that if somebody beats me,*
> *I'd better fight back or I'll keep getting hurt.*
> *Actually, now I get respect because of it.*
> (Lena, young immigrant girl, age 14)

Lena's words capture the dilemma experienced by many young marginalized girls in Canada today, but which seem especially true for young immigrant and refugee girls. To fit in, to survive, they may turn to aggression; otherwise they may find themselves the target for aggression. Numerous authors focus upon individual risk factors to explain and/or predict why some girls are more prone to aggressive and violent behavior than others. In the present paper, the examination shifts to consider the social context within which the particular factors of race and gender can prove to be "risky" for girls.

Evidence that the social location of immigrant and refugee girls constitutes a form of risk in and of itself comes from a 1993 UN Working Group Report in which the members indicate that such girls "experience higher rates of violence due to the impact of racism and sexism in their communities and the host society and due to dislocation as the result of immigration" (Barron, 2001). As Jiwani (1998) comments, the girls are "caught between two cultures where their own is devalued and inferiorized, and where cultural scripts in both worlds encode patriarchal values…" (p.3). As well it appears that refugee girls are actually in a more vulnerable position than refugee boys are in this regard.

In some cultural contexts, girls are less valued than boys and, consequently, are at higher risk for neglect and abuse. Their participation in educational endeavors, for example, is frequently prematurely curtailed and they are subject to sexual abuse, assault, and exploitation in greater number than are boys (UNHCR Policy on Refugee Children, 1993, as quoted in part by Cameron, 2001:2). It will be the intent of this paper to give a closer consideration to the sociocultural factors which may contribute to and impact on the immigrant and refugee girl's vulnerability relative to aggression, especially in the school context. Framing the analysis throughout, the voices of the young women themselves serve as the data. In the attempt to make meaning of their experiences, the theoretical lens employed is anti-racist, feminist and rights-based. The rights-based perspective is appropriate as it is evident that these factors of race and gender "place the immigrant and refugee girl-child at greater risk for all forms of discrimination and human rights violations" (Cameron, 2001:3).

The concept of interlocking systems of domination forms one theoretical basis for the analysis (Razack, 1998). It is critical, as Razack argues, to consider in a historical manner the meaning of race, economic status, class, disability, sexuality, and gender as they converge to construct immigrant and refugee girls within hierarchical social structures (Barron, 2001:10). In this paper, the focus is limited primarily to the examination of the impact of race and gender, or more

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[1] The report entitled, *Erased Realities: The Violence of Racism in the Lives of Immigrant and Refugee Girls of Colour* was authored by Yasmin Jiwani, Nancy Janovicek and Angela Cameron. It was funded by Status of Women Canada.

[2] FREDA is one of five research centers across Canada originally funded by Health Canada and SSHRC (Social Sciences and the Humanities Research Council) to undertake research in the area of violence against women and children, Simon Fraser University.

accurately, the processes of racialization and gendering (Chan and Mirchandani, 2002:12) upon the aggressive outcomes for the girls.

The study of processes rather than static factors allows for a deeper appreciation of how these categorizations are constructed through continuous interactions in society, continuous constructions of "other" and "self" in hierarchial ways (Ibid.:12-13).

STUDY I: THE VOICES OF IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE GIRLS

Two interrelated FREDA studies are discussed. The first study involved 59 immigrant and refugee girls of color in 14 individual interviews and six focus groups. Their countries of origins, or their parents' cultures of origin, included 18 countries, such as, China, Ethiopia, Pakistan, and Zaire. The age requirement for the girls and young women was that they be between 14 and 19 years of age. The questionnaire was developed with input and feedback from a group of young immigrant and refugee girls. As well, young women of color led the interviews and focus groups.

The girls were asked to talk about their experiences in school and with family and friends. It is a "lived realities" approach which can then be used for comparison with the intended outcomes of relevant policies and programs developed to assist the girls. One question, for example, asked how the girls felt about their treatment in the school environment - safe, respected? Their responses could then be compared with what is attempted to secure that safety and respect by way of such initiatives as anti-bullying and multicultural programs.

Turning to the findings, the most prominent theme of note to emerge from the interviews and focus groups was what the girls described as a struggle for power among young people from different cultural groups (Jiwani *et al.*, 2002). Those struggles were often violent. Many, not all, girls pointed to racism as a key reason underlying violence in the schools and they recognized intercultural tensions as a feature of school life (Ibid.: 67). A quote from an interview with a Persian girl sets out the intercultural divisions that seem to underlie the tensions:

> You know in high school people are like that. They talk behind each other's backs. I don't know why. They hate them because of their culture, where they're from. Because people in this school hang out with each other…They just like hanging out with their own country people (Ibid.: 67).

Many of the girls talked about the difficulty of fitting into the dominant culture. It is true that girls who are located differently because of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and/or class generally are at greater risk of being taunted and targets for violent acts because our society tends not to value those who are different (Jiwani *et al.*:68). Among the most vulnerable appear to be those girls who have just arrived in Canada. In schools, recent immigrants are called FOB's, an acronym for "fresh off the boat" (Ibid.:68). One interviewed girl from Persia defined it this way: "FOB is like fresh off the boat. It means that you're really geeky and you don't know how to speak and stuff. You dress stupidly or whatever, right?" (Ibid.:68).

Assimilation is one answer for the girls but can entail a loss of identity with their own culture or negotiating a balance between the two, often competing, traditions (Ibid.:68). One interviewed girl described it this way, "(sometimes I feel like I have to lose my 'true' identify to fit in" (Ibid.:68). The process of identify formation then can clearly be problematic for these girls. Their sense of belonging is influenced by their particular location in a culture, on the one hand, and the disjuncture of that location from the dominant culture's norms, on the other.

From the interviews, it became evident as well that schools are often seen as sites of external control rather than serving as places of support or safety. Schools are where the tensions become crystallized, and where many girls expressed frustrations with what they experienced as discrimination against immigrant and refugee girls. A South Asian girl commented that, "from what I've seen, the kids fear it (racist acts in school) so they won't go and tell people about it. They'll just keep it inside. And I think that sooner or later, it's just going to make them explode. So if I could give advice, I'd tell them, number one, go to a person who you know you can trust. I wouldn't say first to go to somebody at school" (Jiwani *et al.*:71)

In addition to general challenges at school, the girls also identified problems with language as an obvious reason they felt marginalized in schools. Often these young women are streamed into alternative classes because they have not yet developed efficient language skills (Janovicek, 2001:11). A Thai girl, who lives in a small British Columbia Interior town, explained that for the first two weeks of school she did not understand a word that was said in class. When one of her parents explained this to the teacher, she was subsequently placed in remedial classes because English as a Second Language (ESL) classes were not available (Ibid.:11).

As well, the girls can be taunted for their accents and for the clothes that they wear. Their own parents, who encourage them to fit in, often do not have the economic resources to purchase designer clothes that are almost mandatory in many popular school groups (Ibid.:11). Thus another systemic factor which impacts strongly in the riskiness of the immigrant and refugee girl is poverty. It is already evident that there are links between poverty and discrimination against women and children (Working Group on Girls, 1995: 2, as quoted by Barron, 2001:19). These connections are proven here in Canada for immigrant and refugee women and their offspring. With their lesser economic status and restricted labor force involvement, they are vulnerable to being assessed as not ideal citizens (Cameron, 2001:19). One example to illustrate this situation is the one whereby the professional credentials of many immigrant and refugee women are not recognized in Canada. Or, at another extreme, the disadvantaged situation of domestic workers at risk is not resolved (National Association of Women and the Law, 1999; 8-12; Fitzpatrick and Kelly, 1998, as quoted in Cameron, 2001:20).

STUDY II: THE VOICES OF SERVICE-PROVIDERS WORKING WITH THE GIRLS

The second FREDA study examined the perceptions of service providers[3] who work closely with girls. It provides confirming information for the other project's findings.[4] Five roundtables were conducted with 38 service providers, 10 of whom work with street-involved girls, 10 with lesbians, bisexual, and transgendered girls, 8 with Aboriginal girls, and 6 with girls with disabilities. In addition, individual interviews were conducted with four service providers with immigrant and refugee girls (Janovicek, 2001:2). The goals of the roundtables were to gain an understanding of the girls' lives and to brainstorm around ways to support girls.

The participants were asked to comment on the factors influencing girls' identity formation, their vulnerability to violence, the barriers the girls face, and how they understand and respond to systemic disadvantage. Finally, the service providers also spoke to the question of how policies impact on girls' lives and made recommendations for reform (Ibid.:2).

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[3] The English text does not indicate the sex of these service providers. We can say however that it is a strong proportion of feminine service providers there.

[4] The final report of that project is entitled *Reducing Crime and Victimization: A Service Providers Report*, and was authored by Nancy Janovicek. The study was funded by the National Crime Prevention Centre, Community Mobilization Program, Ministry of Justice, Canada.

Those interviewed point out that a lack of services for these marginalized girls makes them more vulnerable to violence. Girls who do not meet the dominant societies' expectations will not be seen as fitting in. The participants argued that existing services are more often likely to be based upon models of social control and punishment than assistance and support (Ibid.:4). These responses appear to be derived from more general societal perceptions that the youth are out of control and need to be reformed. Improving services therefore would require a shift in how both service providers <u>and</u> the community think about young people from the margins (Ibid.:4).

One quote from a service provider nicely capsulates the general sense of the respondents with regard to the role the system plays in creating the disadvantaged state for these marginalized girls:

> I think it's set up though to alienate some children in the interest of others, the whole system…institutions, penal institutions. … They're creating it for those people who they've set up to put there. And most of them don't expect their golden children to be there and they end up there. This is where we have the therapists and all the psychologists and the psychiatrists justifying why this person's behavior would be like this. You never hear such justification for the poor kid or the racialized kids who get institutionalized. (Interview with Service Provider working with Immigrant and Refugee Girls) (Ibid.:5)

The service-providers also felt that conflicting cultural values between the family and the dominant society are a major problem for the youth. First there may be disciplinary measures taken in the immigrant or refugee home that conflict with Canadian norms. Spanking is only one example of that kind of unacceptable measure legally sanctioned in Canada, but not an uncommon practice in other countries. Sexual mores represent another common area of conflict (Ibid.: 11). Though sexuality can be a hidden issue in many immigrant and refugee communities, in the Canadian culture, women of color are often sexualized (Ibid.:11) in the media and other means of communication in the dominant culture. Therefore mixed messages get delivered to the girls but silence on the topic in their home does not allow them to understand the messages. Other issues such as HIV/AIDS, homosexuality and acceptable sexual practice can be similarly hidden (Ibid.:11). As a result, although most of the girls interviewed in the first study indicated they were proud of their heritage and family, the family itself does not evolve as the site for support or clarification on the sensitive issues which make the girls even more vulnerable to negative external influence.

The service providers interviewed also identified schools as a primary site of violence for the girls. Unfortunately, "…intercultural tensions among young people are seldom understood to be a manifestation of racist and patriarchal relations" (Ibid.:10). The media and teachers tend to emphasize bullying as the problem. Again, individual children are blamed with little attention paid to the sociocultural dimension (Ibid.:10). One reality though, is that the process of racialization in the school system is demonstrated in the negative experiences identified and the high drop out rate of young women of color (Fernadez *et al.*, 1989; Kelly, 1998; Mogg, 1991, as quoted in Barron, 2001:27). And this can trigger a downward spiral in which the girl drops out of school, becomes alienated from her family, hits the street and becomes targeted for prostitution and aggression.

It is true that power plays can be involved in the tensions resulting in bullying. Defending the pecking order protects a particular group's social location, and, power relations are also played out within cultural groups on the street as well as in school. As one service provider analyzed:

> I think there is an expectation that if you don't exert your power over somebody, then you are on the bottom of the pecking order… It's no different on the street but the level of competition then becomes physical because the only thing that you have left are your fist or

> your words…I think that we've created a population of young women who just believe that they need to victimize someone else to get their own power back because what they've been taught is you're either a victim or a victimizer (Janovicek, 2001:4).

Thus aggression which occurs within a peer group sorts out who possesses the control in the group, and this can happen within gender groups as well (Ibid.:16). The girls are the most vulnerable to the controlling behaviors from male peers. The service providers agreed that boys maintain control over groups of youth on the street. Through the employment of violence and sexual domination, they maintain power and control of the girls (Ibid.:16). One service provider explained this in the following way:

> In the squats, it's just a given. I've heard young women say, "Just choose now who you're going to have sex with because you're going to have sex with somebody to stay here because that's the way it's run. The guys are making that really clear. That's just the trade-off and that's the power in the squats" (Ibid.:16).

Teachers and the media tend not to acknowledge that fights and conflicts also often have a racialized edge (Ibid.: 10). When young people of color do defend themselves against racist slurs and/or bullying, teachers tend to blame them for provoking fights and being the bullies (Ibid.:10). The interviewees also commented that students often do not seem to find racism a problem. They indicated that they find students who are born here, whether Chinese, South Asian, or Black, seem to find an affinity with the mainstream dominant culture and see immigrant and refugee kids as "other" (Ibid.:10-11).

The most challenging issue for the girls, according to Janovicek (2001), remains the one of different sets of cultural values that frequently conflict with each other. Girls in abusive dating relationships, for example, may continue in the relationship just to defy their parents' cultural values (Ibid.:11). Because of this, they are particularly vulnerable since, as stated previously, they often do not feel they can turn to their parents for help and understanding. Intersecting with the other difficulties with language, gender, and poverty, it appears then that the tensions between cultural values which impact on how one is expected to behave in society create serious dilemmas for the girls.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In reviewing the findings from the two studies, through the theoretical lens initially set out, several common themes emerge:

First, the same systemic processes of discrimination can disadvantage the girls and make them more vulnerable both to becoming targets of aggression and for becoming aggressive themselves.

Second, it is clear that the racialization process for the immigrant and refugee girls can work both within the dominant culture and within the racialized culture itself. That is, the girls may come to internalize the dominant culture's racialized view of themselves as being inferior. Also, the girls provide evidence of feeling discriminated against, especially in the school setting, but they may not connect that same process with their own peer experiences in conflict situations. They recognize hierarchies amongst different "minority" cultural groups, but construct them as power hierarchies, not necessarily explicitly racial ones.

Third, tensions from conflicting cultural expectations make the girls more vulnerable, especially since many of the girls interviewed expressed mistrust of school authorities to assist in support and

counseling as well as the fact that their families were not necessarily seen as locations for clarification on troubling issues about sexuality and bullying.

Fourth, the girls' vulnerabilities arising from their social location can result in the girls being considered as "risky" from the dominant society's perspective.

Finally, when trying to come up with solutions, all of the above can be further analyzed through a rights based lens, whether it is through application of Section 15 equality provisions of the *Charter* or such instruments as the provisions of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.* It is evident that because of discrimination, their rights to well-being and safety are jeopardized, and should be available to legal remedies. Although it is also clear that this route requires advocates for the girls who would carry their case forward.

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Freda centre recommendations education

In his review of the situation of immigrant students in Canadian schools, Lam (1994) makes three recommendations which were also reiterated by focus group participants and interviewees:

- "Integrating a culturally diverse perspective in texts and curriculum
- Hiring teachers and counsellors who culturally represent the student community and who can act as role models to both immigrant and Canadian-born students
- Developing testing methods that are free of cultural bias
- Encouraging involvement from student's communities in work co-op programs, mentoring, and curriculum development
- Educating teachers about racism, and the effects that discrimination may have on student performance
- [Implementing] Peer mentor programs for recent immigrant students." In addition to these, focus group participants and interviewees mentioned the following of relevance to our discussion today about the role of schools:
- That popular education tools about women's equality rights and international human rights instruments for women's and girls' equality-seeking groups be developed and disseminated.
- That school personnel including principals, teachers, and support workers be trained to acknowledge and respond to racism. In other words, anti-racism training needs to be implemented with commitment. Anti-racist pedagogy needs to be incorporated into teacher training programs. Offering one course on anti-racism is not enough.
- That schools develop comprehensive strategies to increase awareness of human rights, especially children's rights, and particularly the rights of girl children.
- That zero tolerance policies on violence be scrutinized to ensure that they are not simply leveling the field and erasing differences between groups, but rather working towards embracing principles of substantive equality.
- That counsellors and others who are familiar with different cultural traditions be hired within schools and service organizations. It is critical to note that such counsellors need to be trained within an anti-racism paradigm so that their services are not mere cultural prescriptions but are framed within a knowledge basis that clearly recognizes the power relations underpinning the hierarchies of cultural preferences.
- That curricula which build children's ability to decipher, question, and resist the sexist, racist and homophobic messages of the media (especially the Internet) are developed and implemented in schools and other settings.
- That media literacy courses be made a mandatory part of school curricula and that initiatives toward this end be encouraged and funded within the non-profit sector, especially with regard to equipping young women from racialized communities to tell their own stories.

Sexual harassment: The unacknowledged face of violence in the lives of girls[1]

Janet Izumi[2],
Helene Berman[2],
Barbara MacQuarrie[2]
Anna-Lee Straatman[3]

Sexual harassment is one of the most prevalent and pervasive forms of gender-based violence routinely encountered by girls in their everyday lives. There has been growing recognition that sexual harassment begins early and is a common feature of girls' lives in their homes, their schools, and their communities (Staton & Larkin, 1993). As a form of sexual violence, sexual harassment is a fundamental way in which gender inequality is entrenched, expressed and reinforced in the lives of women and girls.

June Larkin (1994) has defined sexual harassment as "an expression of sexism which reflects and reinforces the unequal power that exists between men and women in our patriarchal society". It is unwanted and unwelcome sexual behaviour that interferes with one's life and includes put-downs or negative comments made about gender. According to Larkin, sexual harassment may be verbal (demeaning comments, insults, demands, threats, harassing phone calls), physical (grabbing, touching, flashing, fondling), or visual (leering, ogling, pornography, demeaning graffiti) in nature. The behaviours described above as physical sexual harassment may also constitute sexual assault. Left unchecked, sexual harassment usually escalates and more severe forms of sexual assault may occur. When a sexual assault occurs as part of an ongoing pattern of sexual harassment, it too is considered part of the harassment.

In one large survey commissioned by the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation (AAUW, 1993), it was reported that sexual harassment was experienced by 81% of girls, aged nine to fifteen. One third of the girls reported sexual rumours being spread about them, 2/3 told their harassers to stop, 1/3 used forced. Most harassers were male, most were peers and most harassing events occurred in public.

PRESENT RESEARCH

The Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence has conducted a national participatory research project related to violence prevention and the "girl child" (Berman & Jiwani, 2002; Jiwani *et al.*, 1999). The Alliance consists of: The FREDA Centre in Vancouver, BC; the RESOLVE Centre in Winnipeg, MB, Saskatoon, SK and Calgary, AL; the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children in London, ON; the CRI-VIFF in Montreal, QC; and the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre in Fredericton, NB. The Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children focused its research on sexual harassment and the Girl Child. Based on findings from focus groups conducted with girls and community leaders during the first phase of this project (Berman *et al.*, 2000), it became evident that sexual harassment is one of the most prevalent and widely tolerated forms of violence affecting young girls. The current research was informed by the principles of feminist-based action research and was designed to hear first hand how youth define, understand and respond to violence. The primary objective was to examine the diverse ways in

which girls and young women are socialized to accept or expect violence in their lives, and the strategies they use to negotiate the violence they encounter. It was anticipated that differing social identities, including race, class, ability, sexual orientation, and age, would significantly influence the way in which violence is experienced and understood.

In this research, the girls and boys told their stories in their own words. Their accounts confirmed that gender is a central construct that shapes how everyday violence is defined, interpreted, and handled.

METHOD

The sample consisted of 252 girls and boys, aged 8-18 years who were from a variety of ethnic, religious and socioeconomic groupings. Recruitment was primarily from schools, neighbourhood settings and community organizations. There was a variety of families types, i.e. parents married, separated, divorced, same sex. Some participants were involved in focus groups (104 females and 63 males). Some continued to participate in the research and completed either a semi-structured written journal (N=44) or a photographic journal (N=57). Before proceeding with either of these options, youth responded to a semi-structured questionnaire administered by one of the researchers. This interview elicited demographic data as well as information about participants' daily living, health habits, school experiences, nature and quality of peer and family relationships, ideals about girls and boys, interests, and safety concerns. Approximately 60% of participants were girls.

Focus groups consisted of gender specific groupings of 10-14 youth. The purpose was to explore how they defined and experienced sexual harassment and where they would seek help.

The written journals were semi-structured, including questions and open-ended statements. Examples include: "I feel like I am part of the crowd when…"; "I feel left out when…"; "I feel harassed when…"; "I feel happy when…"; "I feel sad when…"; "Girls are nice/mean to me when…"; "Boys are nice/mean to me when…"; "Respect is…"; "What things aren't fair?" and "People tease me about…and that makes me feel…". Participants could skip pages if they were uncomfortable or unsure of their response. Several blank pages allowed the participants to be creative and to add any other information they wanted to share. Some chose to write poetry, draw pictures, or paste pictures from magazines. When they finished, an interview was arranged to discuss their entries in detail and to elaborate on their experiences of violence.

Those who chose the photographic journal (photo novella) were given a disposable camera with instructions to take pictures of people, places, events and things that were meaningful to them. During the follow-up interview, participants could choose which photos to include or exclude. As with the written journals, researchers discussed the participants' lived experiences with them, focusing attention on how they related to sexual harassment.

LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF GIRLS

Drawing on the research findings, the discussion will focus on three main themes: 1) Understandings of Sexual Harassment; 2) Experiences of Sexual Harassment with sub themes: i) The unacknowledged face of violence in the lives of girls, ii) Girls bodies, boundaries, and a diminishing sense of self, iii) Life in the "boy kingdom", iv) The discourses of risk and dare; and 3) The Everyday Struggle to Survive or How Violence Becomes Normalized in the Live of Girls.

Understandings of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment was not discussed as a legal concept, as it was apparent that from the youth's perspective it was not relevant to their daily lives. The youth were able to determine that sexual harassment had something to do with unwanted sexual activity or blatant sexual behaviour. It was evident that their understanding of sexual harassment matched their developmental stage.

Eight to 10 year olds had great difficulty defining sexual harassment. The concept seemed removed from their experience. The focus of their discussions was on sibling violence and schoolyard violence, such as bullying, being picked on and teasing. The 11-13 year olds were more able to differentiate between physical, emotional and verbal harassment. They could provide hypothetical examples that usually involved extreme forms of bullying, harassment or aggression. One participant in this age group said:

> Being bugged is like when your friends occasionally tease or rag you for one thing, but being harassed is like you really don't like it and it happens all the time and you feel really bad about yourself. That's what I think.

Fourteen to sixteen year olds had a more sophisticated understanding of sexual harassment. Several mentioned the concepts of unwanted and unwelcome in their discourse. Sometimes girls felt responsible if they had engaged in flirtatious behaviour. Girls were able to provide numerous examples of sexual harassment, e.g. persistent phone calls from boys, touching and grabbing around the waist, being kissed when they did not want to be, fondling breasts. However, they tended to minimize the seriousness of the problem. Unless the behaviour was sustained, physical and long-term in nature, it was generally not construed as harassment. Thus, many forms of aggressive behavior and unwanted attention remained unnamed.

Experiences of sexual harassment

The unacknowledged face of violence

From the girls' and young women's stories, it became clear that sexual harassment occurred in both the public and private realms, it was pervasive and pernicious. They experienced sexual harassment at home, in their neighbourhoods, on the schoolyard and in the classroom. A 14 year old girl noted, "If they touch me, I'm afraid they're going to carry through if I say no. And I'm scared shitless of that…They don't understand how much it ruins your life." Perpetrators were not only peers but teachers and other adults as well. A young woman stated, "A male teacher said, 'you have nice thighs, I wish my wife had thighs like that".' Other reports of teacher harassment included instances of a teacher massaging a girl's shoulder, looking at a girl's chest not her face when speaking to her, put-downs like 'you'll never amount to anything', and racial prejudice.

Girls' bodies, boundaries and a diminishing sense of self

Clearly, young women were preoccupied with their image. They wanted their bodies to be "perfect", and described them as "public property", or open to comments about breasts (too small/too big), facial features, skin colour, hair, and height (too tall/too short). Girls also endured unwarranted gossip about their sexual activity. The girls struggled to fit in with their peers and reported the need to challenge gender stereotypes. A 16 year old girl said:

> If you look at society and the way girls are treated, that's probably why people are anorexic, and have all these disorders and, you know, go crazy, because I don't know, guys are focused on this one image of a girl and if you don't have it, then you kind of don't cut it. Nobody does anything about it. Nobody.

Relational aggression (inflicting harm by using tactics such as the silent treatment, spreading lies/rumours or name calling to manipulate peer relationships) was reported frequently. Girls attempted to negotiate their relationships to regain personal power and to determine what would be 'acceptable degrees of violence' or degrees of violence they felt they could tolerate. Many girls commented on how they would change in order to accommodate the conditions of a harassing environment. Sometimes they restricted their movements, e.g. would not walk down certain hallways at school. In the questioning of their experiences and who was responsible for them, girls experienced a diminished sense of self. They asked themselves if their perceptions were real and if they had encouraged the harassing behaviours. Self-esteem decreased as they began to doubt the validity of their own interpretations of their experiences and as they found that those in authority minimized their experiences. As a result the girls and young women were left feeling disempowered and demoralized.

Life in the boy kingdom

Male participants were more aware of power imbalances based on physical size, age, authority, and sporting skills. Bullying, aggression and harassment were frequently used as a means of gaining power and control over others. Male participants regarded power differentials as "a cycle of life". Protecting and safeguarding their macho image was important to them and boys developed strategies to manipulate power to their own advantage. A 10 year old boy noted:

> The older kids can bully because they are bigger and stronger than you, so they can beat you up or whatever they want and they know better insults. They think that since they are older, they can do whatever they want to.

Some young men emphasized their role of being the "great protector" of girls who needed to be protected from other guys. They said that you need to buy things for girls and feed them and take them out. Some lacked respect for girls and made remarks like, "It's like having a dog". Some would brag about their weekend "conquests" and noted it was permissible to joke about the girl they went out with to her face and to others.

The Discourses of risk and dare

Girls in this study described many behaviours that placed them in situations of danger, daring and risk. Although they knew that some of the activities they engaged in were risky (alcohol consumption, doing drugs, engaging in unprotected sex), young women felt that they had strategies in place that would protect them from any negative repercussions. They had a sense of invulnerability as evidenced by one who said, "Like I know what I can do when I'm drunk, like I never do anything dumb". Again, there was an illusion of 'safe risks'. For example, in a focus group, one young woman said she would only go out with guys she knew and trusted. Her trust is in stark contrast to research that indicates that most women are sexually assaulted by someone they know and that date rape is most common in the adolescent and young adult age group. Another sixteen year old in the group stated that she would protect herself by making sure a girlfriend was with her at parties. Another young woman underlined the potential ineffectiveness of this strategy when she

reported that she went looking for her girlfriend at a party in a bedroom and was forced to watch her friend being sexually assaulted. These young women stated that acts of violence often were not reported because the repercussions to them were too severe and the helping responses inadequate. If incidents were to be reported, then girls would have to admit to their parents that they were drinking alcohol or they were not at the place they had said they would be.

The everyday struggle to survive or how violence becomes normalized in the lives of girls

Girls reported that their experiences of harassment were minimized in overt and subtle ways, both by themselves and by others. One sixteen year old girl had difficulty naming the experience:

> I think the one guy who touched me when I didn't want to be touched, I think that was sexual harassment. I don't think the one that…I kind of think it might be sexual harassment but it only happened once so I'm not too sure what that would be. But I don't think I've really been harassed. I've been made fun of but that is difficult kids' stuff.

Girls considered harassing comments made within their own peer group as acceptable. Girls would play along or laugh it off. The phrase "it's just a joke" was commonly used to justify harassing behaviour. They reported that reacting to it would be making it a bigger deal than it was meant to be. This common practice served to normalize the violence. A lone dissenter in the "just joking" theme was a thirteen year old in a focus group, who said in tears:

> They used to make fun of me over ten months. And I cried ten months every day. Cried and they made fun of me. I was new here, new in Canada. They make fun of me a lot. And right now I can't find a place that I want to live. I can't find a place that is peace to me.

Some girls developed a sense of "inner badness" believing that they were somehow responsible for the violence directed toward them. Some choose to ignore the behaviour hoping that it would just stop. Some girls reported thinking that if they could change themselves, they could change the harassing behaviour, as if they were responsible for it.

When asked about reporting the sexual harassment, it was evident that they perceived few consequences for perpetrators. Comments like "boys will be boys", or "just ignore it", or "just don't play with them" served to silence the girls. Such responses convey the message that these harassing behaviours are not serious and are acceptable. If they were able find their voices and talk about the harassment, girls were labelled as "rats" or they were picked on even more frequently. From a focus group of 11-15 year old girls:

> …and parents think that kids can just walk away from it. It's pretty hard when it's all over the school and you're standing right in the middle of it and guys can jump on our backs and grab our breasts. We told the office and we got in trouble…What are you supposed to do? Just sit there and let it happen?

This lack of intervention conveyed the message that adults in positions of trust and authority condone these behaviours. Adult's failure to respond disempowered girls and instilled a sense of futility in them.

ENCOURAGING RESISTANCE

Girls can be encouraged to resist sexual harassment. It is important to stress that this is not the same as placing responsibility for the sexual harassment on girls and young women. These are ways for them to feel less helpless and more in control as they face unremitting attacks on their sense of self.

It is critical that girls and young women speak about their experiences and give voice to their own truths. Hiding their stories and keeping secrets will keep them trapped in situations where they are diminished and disrespected. We need to teach girls and young women to be "wisely" resistant. They cannot afford the naïveté of believing in the notion of invulnerability. It is also incumbent upon us to acknowledge harsh social and political realities and to teach girls and young women how to recognize and name the subtle and overt workings of a patriarchal society where boys and men are accorded more privilege and power.

Providing more safe spaces for girls will encourage resistance. In spaces where they are in control and free to share their feelings and common experiences their stories will be validated without judgement. In spaces like these, they can devise strategies for resisting and overcoming the violence in their lives.

SUMMARY

The pervasive and gendered nature of harassment in the lives of girls was clearly evident in our findings. Girls do articulate a vision of an alternative way of living. They suggest that mutual respect in relationships is the key to change. The journal entries of two young women speak poignantly to this point. A thirteen year old wrote:

> Respect is when someone listens to you and when someone likes you for who you are and not for what you have or what kind of clothes you wear. Respect is when you don't cross the line. Respect is when someone does not make you feel uncomfortable. Respect is when someone does not put you in a bad situation.

A sixteen year old used respect as an acronym:

R	Reflected from person to person
E	Earned
S	Sacred connection between humans that allows us to interact peacefully
P	Positivity needed for respect to be shown
E	Essential; without it we can't communicate
C	Caring is needed
T	Told (obviously it is not told enough)

CONCLUSIONS

Our study demonstrates that gendered harassment is everyday violence. It can be expressed in a multitude of different ways but it always acts to reinforce an oppressive structure of dominant cultural norms that assign people value based on their social identity. Male dominance is an accepted standard in this structure. So is racism. These are the truths that echo in the words of the youth who gave us a small window into their lives.

Youth, girls and boys, are learning that our society sanctions the idea of using "acceptable degrees of violence" in order to negotiate personal and social power. Whether or not one becomes a victim or a perpetrator of "acceptable degrees of violence" is largely, but not exclusively, determined by gender. In this hierarchy, being defined as "other" in any way at all creates vulnerability to harassment. Being a girl and being outside of the dominant cultural norms in any way creates an even greater vulnerability.

Our study begins to unveil a tyranny of judgements that operate in tandem with gender to determine where each girl and each boy will be positioned in an invisible, but operational hierarchy of assigned worth. Race has emerged as a significant factor in this schematic ordering. It will be important to further explore how characteristics such as disability and sexual orientation influence how girls and boys are perceived by their peers and how they affect girls' and boys' sense of self worth.

In focussing on gender, this study has shown that all girls' ability to fulfill their economic, social, political and cultural potential as they grow into women is inhibited by the unequal treatment they encounter daily in the form of gendered violence. Not much has changed since the time when Simone de Beauvoir wrote her classic treatise on the feminine condition, "The Second Sex". Boys are still being socialized to view and to treat girls as "other" and girls are still internalizing this view of themselves. The need to accept the qualities embodied in "the other" and the need to respect diversity lies between the status quo where we deny girls the opportunity to fully embrace themselves for who they are and the ideal of gender equality.

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II- School-based and community-based violence prevention programs

Preventing Violence Against Girls and Young Women: Should Programs Highlight Gender?

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Boys and girls, men and women can all be victimized by violence. No one deserves to be abused and we must continue to explore ways to prevent all violence. However, girls and women are the primary targets of many forms of abuse including dating violence, sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. The National Crime Prevention Centre of Canada (2000) describes these forms of violence as "gender-based". Gender-based violence occurs in both private (family, intimate relationships) and public spheres (school, community) (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2000) and cuts across racial, socio-economic class, and ethnic groups.

What causes violence? A power imbalance is the primary factor in all forms of interpersonal abuse (Roher, 1997; Sudermann, Jaffe, & Schieck, 1996). The National Crime Prevention Centre (2000) suggests that gender-based violence flourishes when societal attitudes, behaviours and institutions uphold traditional male power. Such a power imbalance between men and women leaves women and girls vulnerable to crimes of violence and abuse. The fear that many women and girls experience tends only to reinforce the gender inequality in Canadian society; reinforcing a sense of powerlessness and limiting the effective functioning of girls and young women in both private and public realms (Berman, Straatman, Hunt, Izumi, & MacQuarrie, 2002).

This presentation provides an overview of school-based violence prevention programs with research evidence and questions whether and how gender should be addressed and acknowledged in violence prevention strategies.

SCHOOLS AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Violence prevention programs are one important way to address and intervene in abusive situations so that violence either does not occur or its effects are minimized. Prevention programs can be directed at a total population (universal or primary prevention), at a group considered 'at-risk' (secondary prevention) or at a group already experiencing violence either as victimizers or victims (tertiary prevention). Our primary focus in this presentation is universal, school-based violence prevention programs, that is, those directed at all children/youth and delivered in the school setting. Stopping violence before it occurs is the major goal of universal prevention programs. School-based violence prevention efforts for children/youth are generally based on the principle that education can change awareness, knowledge and teach skills (and maybe change behaviour) as well as empower children and youth.

A proliferation of school-based violence prevention programs, developed in the past thirty years, address school violence, bullying, sexual abuse, dating violence, discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault and the sexual exploitation of children and youth. However, it is often difficult for school personnel and others to identify what programs are effective. In a recent survey to Calgary school staff (Tutty & Nixon, 2000), while about half of the 354 individuals who responded did not perceive problems or gaps in choosing prevention programs, the other half (179 respondents)

reported a number of concerns including a lack of information on violence prevention programs (58 responses). Other problems were a lack of co-ordination (18 responses); too many programs to choose from (14 responses); and little information about what is effective and appropriate (13 responses).

OUR PROJECT

The primary purpose of the project was to develop a resource manual to assist schools and community agencies. We searched for school-based prevention programs with research evidence through a variety of sources: academic journals, the internet, over 100 Canadian school-boards, teacher associations and word of mouth, receiving information on over 200 programs. Although our primary task was identifying programs with research evidence, we were also interested in those that were offered in an innovative manner or targeted a marginalized population such as children with disabilities or from specific cultural groups. We found 79 prevention programs with research evidence in total. This presentation focuses on those designed to address dating violence, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment and sexual assault, all gender-based forms of violence.

Some research is stronger than others. The best is published: The process of publishing involves peer reviews by knowledgeable academics; often articles are revised or otherwise strengthened through the review process. Strong research evaluation designs include the use of pre-tests and post-tests, so that one can assess that the student's attitudes, knowledge or behaviours changed after the programs. A further important design feature is the inclusion of control or comparison groups (with students that did not participate in the program) so that one can assess that it was the program that made the difference. We also include evaluations with less-clearly interpretable findings such as pretest-posttest evaluations with no control groups. Consumer satisfaction surveys provide important program information but are so often highly complimentary that they are not good evidence that the program worked. Nevertheless, we have included programs with such "process" evaluations. The programs highlighted in bold in the tables 1 and 2 are Canadian. In-depth descriptions and contact information for all programs are available on the web-site (footnote 1).

Each of the following sections identifies one type of gender –based violence providing information on the extent to which it is gender based its effects and an overview of the format and research on school-based prevention programs developed to address it.

YOUTH DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Violence in dating relationships is not uncommon. Teen dating violence parallels adult intimate partner abuse in that it exists on a continuum extending from verbal and emotional abuse to sexual assault and murder. In a Canadian study conducted by Lavoie, Robitaille and Hebert (2000) dating violence included death threats, psychological abuse, denigration and insults, jealousy, excessive control, indifference, threats of separation and reprisals, damaging reputations and harassment after separation. Although both young men and women may behave abusively, the abuse of young women by men is more pervasive and usually more severe.

Price and colleagues (2000) studied dating violence among approximately 1700 English- and French-speaking New Brunswick youth (11 to 20 years old). They reported significant differences between the percentages of adolescent girls and boys experiencing psychological and/or physical abuse, 22% and 12% respectively, and sexual abuse, 19% and 4% respectively. Overall, 29% of adolescent girls and 13% of boys in the sample reported some abuse in their dating relationships.

The goal of most dating violence prevention programs (see Table 1) is to increase knowledge of the dynamics of dating violence and what might be done to avoid such abuse. Presenting knowledge of and skills for developing healthy relationships are a focus in many programs, however these outcomes are rarely assessed. The results of the research on the effectiveness of dating violence prevention programs in changing inappropriate attitudes that support violence and to reduce physical, sexual and emotional abuse in teen dating relationships have been mixed. Changing attitudes appears to be more challenging than other outcomes targets. Often significant attitude change does not occur until the second year of the program for young women and the third year for young men.

Dating violence prevention research has taken a leadership role in examining the impact of programming on the sexes. When compared to young men, young women tend to have higher knowledge and attitude scores at pre- and sharper, faster improvements in appropriate attitude scores, use more emotional abuse at pre-test but showing a greater reduction at post-test. Young women are also more resistant to peer pressure and pressure to conform than young men at post-test and follow-up.

Not all dating violence prevention programs are effective. For example, Wisdom, Belamaric, Rohrbeck and Dutton (August, 1999) studied the High School Domestic Violence Workshop Curriculum. In this well designed study with over 300 students, that used reliable and valid outcome measures, students in the program condition did not differ significantly from control group students on scores of knowledge, attitudes, or behavioural intentions to intervene in dating violence situations.

Table 1: Youth dating violence prevention programs

PUBLISHED CONTROL/COMPARISON GROUP DESIGNS
Dating Violence Intervention & Prevention for Teenagers
Expect Respect: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships for All Youth
Safe Dates
Skills for Violence-Free Relationships: (no difference between control and prevention group)
STOP/VIRAJ[2]
UNPUBLISHED CONTROL/COMPARISON GROUP DESIGNS
Healthy Relationships: A Violence-Prevention Curriculum
What's Love Got To Do With It? (Canadian Red Cross)
Women and Violence: Education is Prevention (SWOVA)
PUBLISHED PRE/POST DESIGNS OR PROCESS
STOP! Dating Violence Among Adolescents
S.T.A.R. (Southside Teens About Respect)
The Fourth 'R'

[2] Programs in "bold" are Canadian.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Child sexual abuse is using children for sexual purposes. It takes many forms, from the least intrusive, voyeurism, to the most intrusive, vaginal or anal intercourse. Child sexual abuse is a serious social problem that cuts across all income, racial, religious and ethnic groups, as well as rural, suburban and urban communities. Children with a physical or mental disability are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse (Health Canada, 1997).

The research on child sexual abuse is extensive and fits the description of "gender-based" violence. Retrospective self-reports from large survey samples cite prevalence rates from 7% to 36% of girls and 3% to 29% of boys (Finkelhor, 1994). Victims may be very young, even infants, with estimates that as much as 33 to 50% of abuse occurs before the age of seven (Wurtele & Miller-Perrin, 1992). The Health Canada 1997 document noted that among adult Canadians, 53% of women and 31% of men reported being sexually abused as children. Offenders are most often known to the victim, male, and are adolescents in 25% of the cases.

School-based sexual abuse prevention programs (see Table 2) have become the mainstay of prevention efforts responding to the high rates of sexual abuse of children and the detrimental short- and long-term effects on children (Tutty, 1991). The goal is to reduce the incidence of child sexual abuse through arming children with the knowledge and skills to resist inappropriate touching or what to do if abuse has occurred.

What we know about child sexual abuse prevention today is based on 30 years of experience and research. Reviews suggest that children learn a statistically significant number of concepts after participation (Tutty, 1996; Wurtele & Miller-Perrin, 1992). The increases are typically very small, on average only one or two concepts.

Educational programs may increase the conceptual awareness of school-age children about sexual abuse and teach children how to report actual or potential abuse. However, not all children learn from these programs. Nor is the learning all-inclusive (Daro, 1994). As noted by Tutty (2000), the few studies that compared children from different developmental stages consistently found statistically significant differences in knowledge, with younger children knowing less to start with and learning less.

Tutty's review (1996) noted that five studies evaluating the effects of gender in learning sexual abuse prevention concepts found no significant differences in the average knowledge of boys and girls after seeing programs. Another two studies reported that girls learned and maintained more concepts. Finkelhor, Asdigian and Dziuba-Leatherman (1995) found that girls reported more client satisfaction with the programs.

Table 2: Child sexual abuse prevention program

PUBLISHED CONTROL/COMPARISON GROUP DESIGNS

> Body Safety Training (BST)(Wurtele)
>
> Child Abuse Prevention Program (CAPP)
>
> **Child Assault Protection/ESPACE (French version)**
>
> **Feeling Yes, Feeling No**
>
> Good Touch, Bad Touch
>
> Project Trust: Teaching Reaching Using Students and Theater
>
> Red Flag, Green Flag People
>
> Safe Child
>
> **Touching: A Child Abuse Prevention Program**
>
> **Who Do You Tell?**

UNPUBLISHED CONTROL/COMPARISON GROUP DESIGNS

> **C.A.R.E. (Challenge Abuse through Respect Education) Kit**
>
> **It's Not Your Fault (Canadian Red Cross)**
>
> Talking About Touching (Seattle Committee for Children)

SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Sexual harassment intends to demean, embarrass, humiliate or control another by slurs against their gender or sexual orientation (Boland, 1995). Most of the literature on sexual harassment has focused on women in the workplace or university students, with questionable relevance to girls and young women (CRI-VIFF, 1999). As with dating violence, it took some time to acknowledge that girls and young women experience such abuse long before reaching university or college. Berman and colleagues (2002) characterize sexual harassment as one of the most omnipresent and rampant forms of gender-based violence, which many girls face daily.

Some program developers acknowledge sexual and other forms of harassment as extensions of teasing and bullying behaviours and preludes to teen dating violence and woman abuse in adult years (Stein, 1995). Sexual harassment has been characterized as the gateway or training ground for children and youth into legitimating and normalizing the domination and violation of females by males and the submission of females to this victimization (Berman *et al.*, 2002), that is, gender inequality becomes articulated, reinforced and firmly established. The message to girls is that they are less valued and hold a subordinate position in the grand scheme of a male dominated social system (Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence, 1999).

Some prevention programs addressing sexual harassment start as early as grade 5, but the majority is offered to high school students. Several programs that primarily concentrate on dating violence and bullying also include components on sexual harassment prevention. The objectives in sexual

harassment programs are fairly consistent: to increase knowledge of what sexual harassment is, how it impacts individuals and the school community, the attitudes and dynamics that support this form of violence and strategies to deal with it when it occurs. There is also some attention to school-wide plans to change aspects of school culture that supports, overtly or covertly, violence in its many forms. This objective reflects the understanding that the school environment is a mirror image of society with the attitudes or norms that prop up violence spills over (CRI-VIFF, 1999).

Few sexual harassment prevention programs have been evaluated, so we do not yet know what works and what does not. The only program with research evidence that we identified was "Expect Respect: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships for all Youth" for students in grades 5 to12 (Sanchez, Robertson, Lewis, Rosenbluth, Bohman & Casey, 2001). Other promising but, as yet, unevaluated programs include: "Flirting or Hurting?" (Gr. 6-12), "Sexual Harassment: Intermediate Curriculum", "Sexual Harassment in Schools: Recognize It, Prevent It, Stop It" and "The Joke's Over: Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Secondary Schools", a Canadian program.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Sexual assault is non-consensual sexual touching or intercourse achieved through physical force, threat, intimidation and/or coercion. It takes many forms: flashing, voyeurism, or forced sexual touching, fondling, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration (Mathews, 1995). We do not know the full extent of sexual assault in Canada. According to Statistics Canada (2000), almost 24,000 sexual assaults were reported to the police in 1999. However, like many forms of violence, this number represents but a small fraction of the actual incidents occurring on a daily basis in the lives of many women and girls.

While sexual assault includes child sexual abuse, sexual harassment and dating violence, as well as assault by a stranger, prevention programming in this area most often focuses on sexual assault as a discrete entity. The audiences have traditionally been college and university students with few programs for middle and high school students. Some are now recognizing that sexual assault prevention should include students as young as Grade 5 or 6. Sexual assault prevention is sometimes incorporated into dating violence and/or sexual harassment programs or can be dealt with as a separate programming topic.

Schewe (2002) suggests that increasing awareness of sexual assault is a necessary objective in prevention programs, but is not sufficient. The programs include teaching personal safety skills (usually self-defense) aimed at reducing the risk of being sexually assaulted by avoiding high-risk situations. These are most often directed at girls and young women. Communication skills are also taught in sexual assault prevention programs; however, there is no evidence that this is effective in preventing sexual assault (Schewe, 2002).

Sexual assault prevention programs have been designed for young women-only, young men-only and mixed-group audiences. The program content for young women usually focuses on the ways that perpetrators behave; addressing peer pressure, bystander issues, and victim-blaming attitudes; and enhancing assertiveness and self-defense skills (National Rape and Sexual Assault Prevention Project, 2000). The all-women group provides opportunities to more freely discuss feelings and experiences.

In young men-only groups, sexual assault curricula generally addresses: 1) peer and societal pressures that promote abusive behaviours, including attitudes that tacitly and/or overtly condone

sexual assault; 2) sexual assault myths and stereotypes; 3) men and boys as victims; and 4) how to respond to girls and boys who have been victimized (National Rape and Sexual Assault Prevention Project, 2000).

Similar to sexual harassment programs, none of the sexual assault programs directed to high school students or younger have been evaluated. Canadian programs include Riposte and the Young Women's Anti-Violence Speakers Bureau, both from Ontario. American programs include Project Respect, Sexual Harassment in School: Your Rights and Responsibilities and Teen-Esteem.

SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

The major question for this presentation is whether gender should be acknowledged or addressed in violence prevention programs. Given our focus on identifying violence that is gender-based, our conclusion will perhaps not be surprising. We clearly advocate that violence prevention strategies be implemented in a gender-sensitive manner. In schools, this sensitivity should address two aspects: identifying gender differences in who perpetrates and who is victimized by violence and assessing the possible differential impact of violence prevention programs on boys as compared to girls.

The majority of prevention programs do not identify that girls and young women are the most likely victims of many forms of violence (Thurston, Meadows, Tutty & Bradshaw, 1999). Secondly, as mentioned previously, several recent evaluations have suggested that boys and young men have a different reaction (typically poorer attitudes, less knowledge) than girls or young women after participating in the same program. We will elaborate on each of these points.

When describing the different forms of violence, one should clarify the gender differences in victim-victimizer rates, especially for adolescents. Nonetheless, it is important to note the fact that boys and men are also victims of abuse. Presenters should avoid blaming men in general or stereotyping either men as perpetrators or women as victims. This can be accomplished by stressing the impact of socialization in our culture in which the overwhelming messages about being male or female set the stage for violence. Traditional sex-role beliefs that women should be subservient to men and that women and children are essentially the property of the partner/father are examples of such messages. Providing youth an understanding of the gender socialization in our culture could increase both girls' and boys' awareness of these detrimental messages and helps them to understand how such attitudes can lead to violence. We recommend that all violence prevention and conflict resolution programs with youth incorporate some information about gender-role stereotyping and gender expectations.

When gender analyses have been conducted on the impact of various violence prevention programs, the evidence often shows differential effects on girls and boys. In several evaluations of dating violence prevention programs, boys and young men had worse attitudes after the prevention program than before. This "backlash effect" likely results from young men feeling blamed by descriptions of gender-based abuse.

Research conducted by Artz and colleagues in 2000 showed that girls and young woman score higher in appropriate knowledge and attitudes in topics such as dating violence both before and after prevention programs than do boys in the same classes. This suggests that anti-violence programs for girls may need a different focus, if young women already know much of the

information. Young women and girls may also need different approaches at different developmental stages than do boys.

Preventing violence should focus on all children, both girls and boys. We must make a concerted effort to better engage young men in preventing violence against girls and young women that alleviates a perception of being blamed for all violence, without shifting to a gender neutral presentation. At this time, we have no research evidence that changing the content and/or the presentation style would lead to more positive results for boys and young men in reaction to violence prevention programming.

Recently, however, several researchers and educators have advocated conducting violence prevention programs in gender-specific groups since the situations and ways in which girls and young women are violent differs from boys (Artz *et al.*, 2000; Cummings & Leschied, 2001). Further, girls and young women rate separate gender groups as more positive than mixed gender groups for topics like dating violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault (CRI-VIFF, 1999). Anecdotally, representatives from several Canadian dating violence programs have had positive reactions from young men when they shifted to separate gender groups in which the boys learned about the effects of traditional sex-role gender stereotypes on young women. Programs such as "Making Waves" from New Brunswick then bring the groups back together for a joint discussion, again with very positive feedback.

We are not suggesting that all prevention programs be offered separately by gender, but rather that we provide both gender-specific and mixed-gender discussion groups, especially for adolescents. This may address the differing needs of girls and boys, while providing opportunities for each gender to also learn about the concerns and experiences of the other.

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Factors in Dissemination of School-Based Violence-Prevention Programs

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Violence is a topic of growing concern and no one doubts the importance of acting to prevent violence against children. Health and social services, schools and daycares, all play important roles in the effort to achieve social justice by reducing violence against children. In Quebec, violence-prevention programs have been set up in schools and community organizations, prime settings for the socialization of children and teens, thanks to the diversity of people they meet and the time they spend there. A great deal of importance has been attributed to the development of prevention or treatment programs with sound theoretical and empirical bases, as well as assessing the implementation and effects of such programs (e.g., Vitaro & Gagnon, 2000). A number of violence-prevention programs have been, or are, being assessed with regard to their implementation or effectiveness in improving children's awareness, attitudes and behaviour with regard to violence. What happens to these violence-prevention programs once they have been implemented and assessed? Some never go any further than the few places where they were first implemented, while others are widely adopted. The goal of this study is to describe the factors that help or hinder the dissemination of school-based violence-prevention programs for children and teens.

Over the past 20 years, the number of studies on innovation diffusion has been growing, but more often than not they concern health-promotion programs. Very few studies have looked at programs to prevent social problems, and even fewer at school-based programs. To help us understand the factors that promote or hamper the dissemination of prevention programs, we devised a conceptual model (see Figure 1) that combines four theoretical models widely cited in the literature on the dissemination of treatment programs: the standard diffusion model (Rogers, 1983, 1995), the environmental approach (Scheirer, 1981), the social marketing model (Martin, Herie, Turner, & Cunningham, 1998) and the linkage model (Orlandi, Landers, Weston, & Haley, 1990). Our program-dissemination model is thus based on those four models and empirical studies on the subject.

Program dissemination involves many players. First, there are those who develop, support and promote the program. In some cases, the same people assume all three roles. Then there are those who decide whether or not to adopt the program: the potential users. Successful dissemination depends on the interaction between these two groups and the quality of the linkage system created. Earlier studies identified a number of factors that could help or hinder the dissemination of an innovation, and in our case, violence-prevention programs in schools: the characteristics of the program (e.g., scientific quality, length, cost, complexity); the way the information is conveyed (information strategy, content, messenger); the implementation support offered to potential adopters; the characteristics of potential adopters, both organizations and the individuals that constitute them (e.g., attitudes, type of decision-making process); and the sociopolitical environment (Figure 1 gives a more detailed list of factors cited by the various authors consulted). According to Rogers (1983, 1995), potential adopters of an innovation make a decision on the basis of their perception of (1) the relative advantages of the innovation over existing programs, (2) its

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compatibility with the values, experiences and needs of the organization, (3) the complexity of implementation, (4) its trialability, that is, the possibility of testing the innovation on a limited basis, and (5) its observability, that is, the degree to which the results of the innovation are visible to others.

Dissemination takes place in a series of stages, described from either the point of view of developers, disseminators and promoters or the point of view of potential adopters. For example, the social marketing model (Martin *et al.*, 1998) takes the perspective of promoters who want to disseminate the program and implement it in different contexts. Promoters assess the needs of target groups by consulting social agents involved with similar problems to identify more precisely the needs of potential adopters of the innovation. They identify the target groups most likely to be receptive to their innovation and adapt their strategies to persuade the target groups to decide to adopt their innovation. Before diffusing their innovation widely, promoters work with people in an organization to field-test the program, offering support and monitoring throughout the implementation process. Successful trials pave the way to dissemination to the target group. Promoters also offer training, feedback and consulting services, not only to facilitate implementation of the innovation, but also to assess its success.

Rogers's model (1983; 1995) describes a five-stage process in which potential adopters become aware of an innovation, gather more information about it and then form a personal opinion of it. They eventually make a decision on whether to adopt the program, and if so, take action to implement it. Their *post-hoc* analysis either confirms their previous decision to adopt the program, so they institutionalize it, or leads to its final rejection.

Scheirer (1981) highlights the organizational changes that result from the implementation of an innovation and the capacity of the organization to withstand these changes. Once an organization has reached the decision to adopt a program, time, money and human resources must be allocated accordingly. During the implementation phase, roles and functions must change to adjust to the innovation. Implementing an innovation requires continuous adjustment among those directly involved and regular feedback and monitoring. Scheirer (1981) emphasizes the role of the organizational context of potential adopters as a major determinant in the decision on whether to adopt an innovation. He distinguishes three aspects of this organizational context: (1) the complexity of the organization, the structure of the decision-making processes (decentralized or centralized), the characteristics of the control processes in the organization, and the available human and financial resources; (2) the everyday environment of the organization, including the expectations of supervisors or co-ordinators, the standards of practice, and the technical or scientific training of employees; and (3) the individual characteristics of adopters, including their job satisfaction and the way the goals of the innovation fit with their beliefs and attitudes.

Our innovation-diffusion model incorporates the points of view of all the actors involved in the process of disseminating programs, whether developers, promoters and disseminators, or potential users. It underscores the importance of taking into account the many different sorts of influences (program characteristics, dissemination strategies, implementation support, sociopolitical environment, personal characteristics and organizational characteristics) that affect the quality and scope of the dissemination process (Figure 1).

OBJECTIVE

The goal of this study is to describe, from the dual perspective of developers, disseminators and promoters, and schools as potential program adopters, the factors that help or hinder the dissemination of four school-based violence-prevention programs for children and adolescents.

PROGRAMS STUDIED

The programs studied all have the prevention of violence as their direct or indirect goal, and all have been studied for effectiveness. They are *Espace* (e.g., Hébert, Lavoie, Piché, & Poitras, 1997, 1999; Hébert, Piché, Poitras, Parent, & Goulet, 1999), *Les Scientifines* (e.g., Cameron, 1991; Chamberland, Théoret, Garon, & Roy, 1995; Théoret, 1988), *Vers le pacifique (Pacific Path)* (e.g., Moreau, 1999; Rondeau, Bowen, & Bélanger, 1999) and *Viraj* (e.g., Lavoie, Dufort, Hébert, & Vézina, 1997; Lavoie, Vézina, Piché, & Boivin, 1993, 1995).

The goal of *Espace*, which is based on an American program called CAP, is to prevent physical, sexual and psychological abuse of children. The program is designed to make preschool and elementary school-aged children less vulnerable by teaching them to identify abuse, defend themselves verbally and physically, and report abuse and attempted abuse. Only people from the Espace organization can run the program (three 20-minute sessions for preschoolers and one 90-minute workshop for elementary school children). The means used are role-playing, discussions and teaching self-defence techniques. The program has two other components — one for parents and one for school staff — to sensitize them to the problem of child abuse, teach them to recognize the signs and help them in their work. After all the activities, the facilitators prepare a report and deliver it to the principal. Schools pay for the workshops, but there may be subsidies available so that some workshops are free. The facilitator's guide is not available and schools without a branch of Espace in their area cannot run the program.

Les Scientifines indirectly prevents violence by empowering underprivileged girls. The objective of the program is to develop some of the skills that girls have not learned because of the way they have been socialized and to get them interested in continuing to study science. The program takes the form of girls-only scientific recreational activities, in which the girls apply and develop their curiosity, perseverance, judgement and problem-solving skills. The free after-school activities are offered to 9-to-12-year-old girls in a community centre near their school (Monday to Thursday for two-hour periods). In the summer, eight weeks of activities are offered Monday to Friday (9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.).

Vers le pacifique (*Pacific Path*) aims to prevent violence among young people by training elementary and high school students in peaceful conflict-resolution techniques and getting them to use peer mediation as a way of solving their interpersonal conflicts. The conflict-resolution component of the program consists of classroom workshops given over several weeks. It promotes the acquisition of understanding, communication, judgement and negotiation skills in situations of conflict. The first step in the peer-mediation component is to strike a co-ordinating committee (made up of administrators, parents and teachers, for example) to supervise activities and train mediators. Then a team of peer mediators is set up to help resolve conflicts at the request of fellow students. Training for mediators takes about nine hours spread over a week or two. The program is run by school staff, who have received prior training at the school's expense from the organization that promotes the program (International Centre for Conflict Resolution and Mediation) or from

the facilitator's guide (available in bookstores). The school is also profiled to make it easier to implement the program and measure its impact.

The goal of *VIRAJ* is to prevent dating violence. The program is intended for Grade 9 and 10 students. It consists in two classroom workshops of 60 to 75 minutes run by two facilitators, preferably one man and one woman. The aim of the workshops, involving essentially role-playing and discussions is to heighten awareness of dating violence and promote non-violent attitudes and behaviour. Two other independent components of the program are designed for teachers and hot-line volunteers. The program can be delivered by school staff, in which case, the school must apply to the Quebec Department of Education for free staff training, or by outside consultants. In that case, people from community organizations usually go into the schools to run the program, but the schools must pay for the service. The facilitator's guide is available free of charge from the Department of Education to any school that requests it.

METHOD

We decided that case studies would be our chief research strategy (Yin, 1984, 1993). We conducted semistructured interviews with 28 participants involved in the dissemination of these programs: 4 program developers, 8 promoters and disseminators, 12 adopters and 4 non-adopters of the programs.

Interview checklists based on theoretical models and prior studies were developed and adapted to the different categories of interviewees (e.g., program developers, promoters, schools that adopted programs, schools that did not) and to the different programs, as each has its own particular characteristics. The information gathered was subjected to a qualitative analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984). All the interviews were transcribed and then coded according to a mixed model (L'Écuyer, 1985) using predetermined categories based on the conceptual model or inferred from the data.

RESULTS: FACTORS INFLUENCING PROGRAM DISSEMINATION

To paint a general picture of the factors that influence the dissemination of violence-prevention programs, we have summarized our findings regarding the four programs. A fuller report of the results is available on request (Normandeau, Damant, & Rinfret-Raynor, 2002). Our findings confirm that the dissemination of violence-prevention programs involves a number of actors with differing points of view on the factors that help or hinder the dissemination of a program. The results also show that respondents identify factors consistent with our conceptual model, confirming the need for a multifactorial model of innovation diffusion that takes into account the characteristics of programs, dissemination strategies, support provided by innovation promoters to adopters, the organizational characteristics of the settings likely to adopt an innovation and the personal characteristics of the people who constitute the organization and the social and political context.

Program Characteristics: Both groups of actors (developers and promoters, and respondents who either adopted the program or did not) emphasized that *scientific quality* (theoretical basis, evaluative studies) and *compatibility* with program objectives and the school's needs are factors that favour dissemination. Yet from the point of view of school respondents, the *observable positive impacts* in the schools where the program has been implemented carry more weight than evaluative studies. Developers consider the *social relevance* of the target problem (violence) and the *program's flexibility, popularity and observability* (results can be seen) to be factors favourable to

dissemination. School respondents felt that the *specific characteristics* of the program, that is, its *objectives*, the *quality of the teaching aids* (attractiveness), *educational value*, *length* (number of sessions) and *ease of use* (need for lengthy training period or not) enter into their decision on whether to adopt a program or not. Program *cost* has a negative effect on their decision.

<u>Characteristics of Developers</u>: Both groups of respondents shared the view that the *reputation* of the program's developers or promoters, the *quality of the promotional materials* and, above all, the *quality of the interactions* initiated by promoters help ensure the dissemination and adoption of the program. Developers are more likely to identify the importance of expressing a *real interest in preventing violence*. They also note the importance of obtaining the *support of groups* (community groups, funding agencies, key promoters) to promote the program. From their point of view, *financial support* plays a crucial role at all stages of a program's existence, not just during the development phase. For school respondents, the availability of *technical support*, *supervision* and *consultations* during implementation of the innovation and afterwards have a favourable impact on the decision to adopt a program.

<u>School Characteristics</u>: Although developers did not systematically identify the characteristics of schools that influence the decision to adopt their program, a number of school respondents did. In their view, *personal attitudes towards the prevention of violence*, *interest* and *commitment* play a key role in the decision to adopt a program. School respondents also emphasized the importance of *support from the school administration*, and the real *means* that it uses to facilitate implementation of the program. They also mentioned a *lack of time*, which explains their apparent lack of involvement in implementing a program. Schools that have designated someone to be responsible for the program at the school (*program advocate*) have made implementation smoother and favoured greater involvement on the part of the school.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the exploratory nature of the study, our results confirm that although developers and users share some opinions, their perceptions are different in other regards. The results also confirm the need for a theoretical model that incorporates the points of view of both developers and potential adopters in the same analysis. These findings have led us to make the following recommendations to decision makers, program developers and schools.

Some respondents have underscored the need to approach violence prevention differently, depending on whether the program is intended for girls or for boys, and feel that it is important to have programs adapted to each group. Yet there is only one program designed for girls, despite the fact that respondents feel it provides them with an unrivalled learning opportunity with regard to building self-esteem and self-confidence.

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"She said…": Girls' Voices Against Violence

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In 1998, Status of Women Canada invited the Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence to explore factors involved in the reality of violence in the lives of Canadian girls. The first phase of this girl-child investigation made clear the need for community-based provision of safe spaces for girls, and in particular, rural girls, to explore their needs in creating violence-free lives. The socialization of girls and young women often results in victimization, violence tolerance, and even violence promotion, and so the Alliance recommended community-based interventions to ameliorate such social factors. In agreement with these findings, the Creating Peaceful Learning Environments Team of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research (Cameron & Team, 1998), called for safe spaces for girls to discuss issues of importance to them, and for gender-appropriate opportunities for violence-prevention work, to be conducted with both females and males. Consequently, the Team proposed to examine the Alliance recommendations. It offered to evaluate the efficacy of gender-sensitive initiatives in both single-sex and co-educational contexts, assuming that evaluating new approaches to girls' issues in both single-sex and gender-integrated formats was important.

Gilligan represented the voices of young females as they expressed their particular experiences and needs (Gilligan 1982), and Pipher (1994), called for girl-friendly community action. However, most youth violence-prevention implementations have not been gender specific, nor have their evaluations been gender-differentiated. A relatively new literature has explored the parameters of relational or indirect aggression, especially among females who are affected, both as victims and as perpetrators (eg., Bjorkqvist , 1994; Crick, 1995). In Canada, Artz (1998) addressed the systemic roots of violence in girls' lives and has recommended gender-differentiated solutions (Artz, Riecken, MacIntyre, Lam, & Maczewski, 1999). These perspectives on female violence, its experience, and its prevention, including that of our Team (Cameron & Team, 1998; Dodsworth & Cameron, 1996), informed the programme of research described here.

These findings highlight the information given us by the girls who participated in the evaluation of community-based workshops delivered between 1999 and 2001 in rural Atlantic Canada. Workshop participants were ninth to twelfth grade adolescents. The first year, students and all-girls' urban community high school piloted the work. In the second year, teens from two co-educational rural schools were involved, in addition to the above girls. Half of the sessions in the co-educational schools were gender-segregated, and half, gender-integrated. In the third year, six communities were included: three additional, isolated, rural communities participated as well as the initial three. The communities are primarily Caucasian, and are socio-culturally, relatively homogeneous.

Prior to the second and third years, the adolescent and adult leaders in each community congregated in advance at UNB's Family Violence Research Centre for a planning and facilitator training day. Participants, who subsequently facilitated the implementations, included approximately a dozen volunteer teens from each community, and a number of volunteering adults who work in health care and legal professions or youth organizations. Community and student

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participants gained experience with the issues addressed and practiced group facilitation skills that were designed to promote leadership confidence.

Our research team's major role was in the evaluation of the implementations. We examined the relative efficacy of gender-segregated as opposed to gender-integrated discussion-group formats, and solicited feedback on gender-appropriate topics for discussion, given the gendered nature of violence experiences. Participants responded to batteries of questionnaires on a day prior to and during one of the following the workshops. Several members of the Schools' Team, accompanied by research students, attended the workshops in each location to document participants' responses. With participants' permission, the researchers tape-recorded workshop sessions to enhance interpretation of participants' pencil and paper questionnaire responses.

Pre-workshop measures included a *Violence Experiences Questionnaire (VEQ)* (Dodsworth & Cameron, 1996), developed for other Team implementation evaluations, the *Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachments(IPPA)* (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), the *Multidimensional Anger Inventory (MAI)* (Siegel, 1986), and a modified *Readiness for Change Questionnaire (RFC)* (Artz, Reicken, MacIntyre, Lam, & Maczewski, 1999) specifically directed to violence prevention, and a *Knowledge Questionnaire* involving content of the up-coming workshops, developed by workshop facilitators. Following the workshops, participants responded once again to the *RFC,* the content *Knowledge Questionnaire*, and to a *Workshop Evaluation* questionnaire.

Participants reported their experiences of both *physical and verbal violence* as perpetrators and well as victims, using our *VEQ.* These rural girls reported relatively few violence experiences. Approximately 25% of girls said that they never experienced verbal aggression (e.g., being threatened, put down, called names, or degraded) (see Figure 1). More than 10% said that they verbally aggress (that is, threaten, put down, call names, etc.) on a daily basis, and almost 25% reported that they are the victims of verbal aggression every day. Approximately 50% had never experienced physical aggression (e.g., being hit, pinched, punched, kicked, slapped, or grabbed) as either perpetrators or victims. Further, almost 10% reported that they were physically aggressive daily (by hitting, pinching, punching, etc.). Approximately 7% reported being the victim of physical violence every day. The report of verbal victimization is slightly independent of the other forms of violence experience, but victimization and perpetration were significantly related. The relationship between verbal and physical aggression was also significant. While the majority reported little to no personal violence experience, a small but significant segment of these female participants reported regularly experiencing violence in their lives.

Regarding verbal abuse, this is a sample of what the girls said during workshop discussions: "You hear verbal abuse, "females are meaner than males", "You don't see it in school; it is definitely there, but people hide it." Other relational aggression includes: "Sometimes people just give you looks," "snickering", "cliques", "the odd bully", "pushing, butting in line". There was a division of opinion on violence prevalence, presumably based on individual experiences. One girl said, "For me, I don't see cliques in this school", but in response, another said, "In our class, people are really bad. It is like I looked at her the wrong way, or the way that I was dressed; I talked to the guy that she likes, and now she hates me." The majority indicated that the sort of relational or indirect aggression reported in the literature by Crick, Bjorkqvist, and colleagues prevails in school hallways, tolerated by some as a norm, but seen by others as a situation requiring change.

MEASUREMENTS OF ATTACHMENT TO THE PARENTS AND THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE PAIRS

Intimate *attachment* experiences have been related to aggression in many recent studies (eg., Lyons-Ruth, 1996; van IJzendoorn, 1997). The girls reported about their relationships with their mother, father, and peers, via the *IPPA,* that probes adolescents' communication, trust, and alienation from parents and peers. Girls reporting positive maternal trust and communication, and low levels of alienation from their mothers, typically reported similar associations with their fathers. Their peer relations also mirrored their relationships with their mothers. Alienation from fathers were reflected in peer alienation and positive associations with fathers predicted low peer alienation. Thus we see that positive emotional associations between girls and their mothers appear to be protective factors leading to more positive associations with others, whereas alienation from their fathers is associated with alienation in other relationships.

Attachment and violence experience associations were also explored. Girls reporting low trust in father, also reported perpetrating verbal and physical aggression, as well as victimization in both realms. Verbal perpetration and victimization reports related most highly to negative paternal attachment. Girls reporting alienation from mother also reported more physical and verbal aggression and victimization. Negative maternal attachment, while not quite so strong a correlate also related to more violence experiences, especially physical aggression. Girls who reported more trust in their fathers and little alienation from their mothers, were most likely to report that they were seldom the victim or aggressor of verbal or physical violence. Peer associations did not relate to the anger reports of these girls, except in alienation from peers, where anger becomes a significant concomitant. Peer-relational reports, thus, tell us little about girls' violence experiences.

The *MAI* has nine subscales. Paternal attachment correlated powerfully to girls' self-reported *anger,* with alienation relating positively, and communication and trust, negatively, to anger (Table 3). While five anger subscales related to maternal attachment, all nine anger subscales related highly significantly to girls' attachments to their fathers. There was little in girls' anger experiences that related to their peer relations beyond some positive associations between anger and peer alienation. Girls appear to model positive intimate relationships on their relations with mother, and their frustration and anger aggression on their affective associations with father.

Girls' self-reported anger was the strongest correlate of the violence experiences of physical and verbal aggressors, especially in girls' perpetration of violence. The more anger a girl reported experiencing, the more often she reported being both an aggressor and victim of physical and verbal violence. The less anger a girl reported, the less she reported being a victim or perpetrator of violence. On balance, the majority of participating girls did not express anger and experience aggression on a regular basis, and they also reported relatively healthy attachments to parents and peers. It is this majority of girls who were the most receptive to the violence prevention messages delivered during the implementations.

Prochaska and DiClemente (1992) reported that programmes designed to change behaviour succeed with those who have achieved a certain stage in the process of readiness for change (RFC). The girls' RFC with regard to violence, as measured by Artz, Reicken, MacIntyre, Lam, & Maczewski (1999) was significantly related to their reports of maternal attachment relationships. Positive maternal attachment was a critical factor in positive change motivation, and alienation predicted negative motivation to change experiences of violence. Paternal and peer attachments were not related to motivation to change in this area. Violence experience, as a physical victim or verbal aggressor was negatively associated with a readiness for change. When we asked the girls about their readiness for change, approximately 10% were classified as pre-contemplative, or had

little motivation for change, whereas about 90% were categorized as being in some process of change regarding violence.

Of these, about 60% fell into the contemplative category: They were thinking about taking steps with regard to their violence experiences. About 20% reported actively trying to change events in their lives, and approximately 10% were classified as maintaining some change that she had already initiated. A variety of variables were associated with motivation for change, the strongest association being with current attachment relationships, especially those with mother (McKay *et al*, 2001).

The majority of girls reported relatively low levels of violence in their lives, relatively good relationships with parents and peers, relatively low levels of associated anger, and moderate levels of readiness for change regarding violence in their lives. It is their responses to the violence prevention sessions that are presented next.

THE EVALUATION OF WORKSHOPS UNISEXES OR MIXED

Workshops were typically facilitated by pairs of teen and adult leaders. Sessions included such topics as healthy relationships and media effects on teens. Participants were often quite vocal, and this was especially the case in single-sex groups.

Although girls' sessions were striking often for their sensitivity and apparent honesty they were often marked by a lack of analytic sophistication. Discussions appear to have effected post intervention knowledge gains for many girls. Quotations to follow represent pervasive themes.

Girls saw needing to be in *romantic relationships* as critical to social success. The social need to be known as having a boyfriend is a driving force for many girls, as reflected in the following statements:

> "If a boyfriend is mean to you, that's one person to be embarrassed in front of, but if you don't have a boyfriend, you're embarrassed in front of everybody."

A girl's social network is often based on her heterosexual relationship status:

> "I'd sacrifice my happiness and stay there if it meant I wouldn't lose all my friends."

Many workshop discussions seemed to encourage girls to examine the importance of their *same-sex friendships*, and some responded by noting the dangers of focussing so heavily on relationships with boys. Certain girls moved some way (as indicated in their knowledge gains) in their awareness of the social pressures attendant upon self-identification being synonymous with other-gender relationships.

One twelfth-grade participant in the all-girls' school did voice in a final plenary, after three years of participation in workshops, which she now believed that she was "too young to be in a committed relationship." She said that she was glad for the opportunity to learn from such discussions her limitations. She thought she would be better prepared in future to have more satisfying relationship experiences.

Girls acknowledged the ubiquity of the meanness girls inflict on each other and recognized that popularity can be synonymous with meanness (Merton, 1997). Sessions on "How not to be mean" were especially popular among the girls.

> "Control doesn't just happen with a boyfriend. Friends do it too. I do it with my friends. Like if my friend is supposed to go with me to the movies and then she goes to her boyfriend's house, I get mad and say, 'you like him more than me.'"

Many sessions on the *media* and sexual stereotyping generated enthusiastic responses. Participants were not consistent in their analytic stances. Some seemed very critical:

> "I hate it when I look at a magazine and the whole page is breasts and then you look in the corner and find out they are selling shoes. That makes me feel like they insulted my intelligence."

However, the critical edge was tempered by ambivalence about social expectations, as is reflected in this comment:

> "She only focused on the bad parts of the media. Why can't you be attractive and show it off? You can look like those girls if you try hard enough."

Overall, the girls' post-intervention questionnaire responses indicated that they perceived themselves to be quite impervious to media influences.

What's sauce for the goose may not be sauce for the gander. We questioned participants as to their reactions to single-sex versus co-educational programme-delivery. Most girls in single-sex sessions confirmed that they thought co-ed sessions would have been more fun, informative, and interesting, but only a minority thought it would have been easier to share experiences in the presence of boys. Girls in co-ed sessions reflected complementary views. For a minority it would have been more fun, informative, or interesting in a single-sex discussion, with many more believing that it would have been easier to share sensitive issues in a single-sex session. Whilst most girls saw gender-segregated discussions as safer places to share perceptions and experiences, they were keenly eager to hear boys' perspectives as well, as illustrated by this comment:

> "I would love to hear what they are saying but I also love that it is separate because then we can really say what we think. I just want to know what the guys think too."

The feedback of the young people involved in this programme evaluation suggested that community-developed implementations provide a positive context for the validation of and response to adolescent personal and social challenges in gaining violence-free lives. Community sponsored workshops that are sensitive to the specific needs of girls to have an opportunity to communicate with each other about personal and social impediments to violence prevention, contribute to the development of feelings of confidence in addressing these issues. Girls and young women with positive personal relationships, and fewer aggression and anger experiences will be on the front line of efforts at social change. Relational aggression among girls was confirmed as critical, deserving redoubled efforts. The opportunity to join with committed males as well as females of like mind will scaffold broader efforts to confront issues as they arise, and move the whole community to a greater awareness of the possibility of adolescents' deploying their strengths in addressing their own issues.

In sum, community sponsored violence prevention initiatives were highly valued by female participants. They reported appreciating the opportunity to exchange ideas on their experiences that might contribute to violence acceptance, and gained confidence that there were things that they could do to reduce violence in their communities. Those most motivated for community change were those reporting the least personal experiences of violence and aggression and those same girls also reported the most positive attachment relationships.

The girls confirmed that relational aggression was a major issue for them. They not only appreciated safe time for single-sex discussions but they also wanted time to engage in violence prevention discussion with boys, and recognized the value of having adult community leaders also supportive of their efforts. Community leaders and teens alike requested further facilitator training. Skills in facilitating group dynamics were seen as of value to the community in many areas. The youth desired groups to be led by peers, but requested the backing of teen-friendly adults who would be supportive, but not intrusive.

On the advice of the participants, the Creating Peaceful Learning Environments Team developed with participating communities a motivational and training video with an accompanying handbook on gender sensitive programming in violence prevention for teens and other community leaders, entitled, "Worlds apart…coming together."[3] These materials highlight the need for such programming as that including provision of safe spaces for girls to share their experiences and that supports discussion of topics of personal interest to youth of both genders. This resource was designed to motivate and train members of community groups to join with teens in working together for community sponsored violence prevention. Teens, and especially girls, wish to take action on their own behalf, but they need experienced adult support for sustainability in social development.

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[3] This resource is available free of charge to not-for-profit community organizations from the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, 678 Windsor Street, Fredericton, NB, E3B 5A3; or by request to fvrc@unb.ca.

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III – Girls' violence experience in marginalized environments

"Disposable Lives": Preventing Violence against Girls Exploited Through Prostitution

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> *The dangers of living out on the street never got me.*
> *I was never afraid because I don't think*
> *I cared if something ever happened to me.*
> *I really did not care.*

The sexual exploitation of children through prostitution is a serious problem in Canada. Previous research has identified that women exploited through prostitution experience considerable violence in their lives, both as children living with their families of origin and during their involvement in prostitution. A history of childhood abuse is common (Farley & Barkan, 1998; Lowman, 2000; McIntyre, 1999; Nadon, Koverola & Schludermann, 1998; Pyett & Warr, 1999). In Canadian research by Benoit and Millar (2001), almost 90% of the study participants reported a history of some physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Canadian researchers agree that youth exploited through prostitution generally have a higher than expected history of childhood sexual abuse. In McIntyre's 1999 study, 82% of the youth had been sexually abused prior to their involvement. Sexual and physical violence continue into adulthood for many (Lowman & Fraser, 1995: McIntyre, 1999). In Benoit and Millar's 2001 study, almost all of the adult women involved in their research had experienced at least one violent incident. In Canada from 1992 to 1998, Lowman (2000) noted that at least 86 women had been murdered while involved in street prostitution.

The quote in the title of our presentation, "disposable lives" was taken from the narrative of one of the women interviewed for our study. It graphically represents the sense of stigma that the respondents experienced from those in mainstream society. The presentation highlights the violence and abuse that pervades the lives of young women who became sexually exploited through prostitution as young teens. Our research documents the experiences of 47 women from the Canadian prairie provinces who had become involved in prostitution as girls and adolescents. We also identify strategies that the women used for protection and suggest implications for policy, practice and prevention.

METHODOLOGY

The research uses a mainstream qualitative research approach (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). We interviewed adult women who had become involved in prostitution before age 18. The respondents were contacted through their past or current involvement with specialized services for either prostitution or substance abuse. The analysis of the interview transcripts employed established qualitative methods (Coleman & Unrau, 1996). We utilized a feminist perspective in looking at the respondent's experiences (Miller, 1993).

The interviews included questions about the entry into prostitution, patterns of involvement, service needs and the impact of involvement. Notably, we did not ask questions specific to abuse and violence; this information emerged in response to questions such as "how did you become involved in prostitution?" and "what services and resources did you find helpful or not helpful?" The extent to which the narratives describing violence and abuse emerged was startling.

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RESULTS

The research team interviewed 47 women from across the three Canadian prairie provinces who had been involved in prostitution before age 18 (one individual is transgendered [male to female], however worked the streets as a woman). A higher percentage was of Aboriginal descent (26 or 55.3.7%) than Caucasian (20 or 42.6%) and one respondent was of African-Canadian origin.

At the time of the interviews, the women ranged in age from 18 to 36: 8 (17.4%) were 18 or 19, 16 (34.8%) were aged between 20 and 24, 13 (28.3%) were between 25 and 29, and 9 (21.3%) were 30 or older (one respondent did not specify age). With respect to the age at which they became involved with prostitution, 17 women (36.2%) became involved between 11 and 13; 16 (34.0%) between 14 and 15, and 14 (29.8%) were aged 16 to 17. Thus, over two thirds of the women began their involvement when they were 15 years old or less. Almost half (20 or 45.4%) of the women had been involved for five years or less, almost a third (13 or 29.5%) for over 11 years, and 25% (11 women) had six to ten years of involvement. The respondents were almost equally divided between those who had left the streets (21 or 44.7%) and those who were still involved (22 or 46.8%), with two women involved only sporadically.

Aboriginal youth are over-represented among those sexually exploited through prostitution (First Call and Youth Coalition, 1996; McEvoy & Daniluk, 1995; Kingsley & Mark, 2000). Because race has a significant impact on how one is treated and can affect access to resources, we compared the demographic characteristics of the Aboriginal and the Caucasian women. No statistically significant differences were found on current age, age starting or length of involvement in prostitution. However, the Aboriginal respondents were significantly more likely to still be working (16 or 66.7%) than the Caucasian women (5 or 25%). We also analyzed the qualitative categories themes based on whether the respondent was Aboriginal or Caucasian. The racial background of the women made no notable difference in the qualitative themes.

Violence: the everyday occurrence

The women disclosed rates of childhood sexual abuse. Only five women specified that they had not been abused in their families; the rest reported childhood abuse. The majority of the abuse was sexual. Several were repeatedly victimized by numerous offenders. Fathers/step-fathers and other male adults or boyfriends were the most common perpetrators of the sexual abuse. As one participant commented that, "I'd been molested all my life." Several women had been raped by peers when they were children:

> I got raped when I was about eleven by one of my really good guy friends and after that, I felt like crap about myself.

> After the grade eight dance, I ended up getting really drunk and that's the night I lost my virginity … I was gang raped.

As children, almost two thirds of the women were taken into care and resided in foster and group homes, often for many years. Three were physically or sexually abused by caretakers while residing in out-of-home placements.

The violence and abuse continued after the girls became involved in prostitution, similar to the previously described research examining violence and prostitution. The level of violence that the

women described is extreme. Many had friends or acquaintances who had been murdered while prostituting.

> I've come close to dying a few times.

> You get raped, you get beat, you get killed. I lost my partner because of the streets.

> I figure I probably should have been dead at least ten times.

The women perceived this serious violence as normal or to be expected.

> I have seen girls thrown into fences, licks from their boyfriends … I have grown to think that it's common. We see that down here all the time.

> If something bad happened, I wouldn't have known the difference. That to me would have just been normal.

A number of the women became numb or desensitized to the violence:

> A police officer showed me pictures on top of pictures of dead girls, and I still worked for eight years after that. You're numb to that after a while.

> I've had plenty of bad dates. I probably should have quit before I saw the things I've seen. I was only out there for two and a half years, off and on, but you get to know people and you see things, and you become cold inside. It just doesn't faze you anymore.

Violence from pimps and intimate partners

Half of the women reported violence or threats of violence from pimps while involved in prostitution. Only one participant had never been threatened or assaulted by her pimp. A number were severely beaten if they refused to prostitute themselves. One participant commented, "They came to me and said, 'We want you to make five hundred bucks in two hours.' I said that was impossible and so they took my arm and broke it."

Some women were frightened to leave prostitution because their pimps might retaliate, representing a major barrier to exiting. One woman commented that, "He threatened us [that] if we ever left, he'd show us big rifles. He had other men with him, so if you tried to escape, his other buddies would go looking for us." Another participant noted, "If I could [leave] safely, I would."

When young, the women were often afraid to access services because they would be punished if their pimps found out:

> The pimp I was with at the time was very controlling. It [accessing services] would have been dreadful for me. It didn't matter where you went, in any big city, there was a family member there, so there was nowhere to hide to talk to someone.

Twenty-two women reported having been physically, sexually, verbally and financially abused by their intimate partners. Eleven were coerced into prostituting by men that they identified as boyfriends rather than as pimps.

> I just got sick of the abuse and I'd be getting a punch in the face and [he] told me not to do anything to piss him off that day and he went out and told me to go to work.

> He [boyfriend] was beating me … standing at the corner my eyes were just black and he made me stand there. I couldn't get picked up. He was going to beat the shit out of me right there.

The abuse and exploitation that the women experienced from their intimate partners closely resemble the controlling tactics used by pimps. Both used brutal tactics such as physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, financial exploitation and isolation to ensure women's compliance. Interestingly, the women rarely referred to their intimate partners as pimps.

Violence from customers

More than half of the women reported experiencing violence, "bad dates", from customers or "johns." Only three women never had a bad date; most described numerous incidents. One woman commented, "I had a lot of bad dates. I got raped quite a few times. I've got beaten up quite a few times." Another mentioned, "I've been hit by a car. I've been raped at gun point."

The assaults included stabbings or cuts, rape, gang-rape, rape at gun point, being forced to engage in degrading sexual acts, choked/strangled, beaten, kidnapped, stalked, guns held to the head, being tied up, tortured, beaten with objects such as baseball bats or crowbars, and run over. Several women constantly feared bad dates, not knowing if they would come back alive. One commented that, "You never know who you are going to jump in with or if you were going to come home." Another mentioned, "You're always thinking about the bad dates or the rapes or whatever. I have a real hard time shaking that off."

Numerous women needed to be intoxicated or high while prostituting because their fear was so overwhelming.

> At first for me it was kind of scary and I needed to drink to bring out the courage in me to go out there.

> I used to go on the street but I had to have a drink or smoke up. I'd be right out there. I wouldn't be scared of nothing.

One third of the women were abused not only by pimps, johns and intimate partners, but also by other women involved in prostitution who physically assaulted, threatened, robbed or forced them "off stroll." One woman described, "When I was younger, this one girl was jealous of me. [I] got my ass beaten. They all jumped in and I ended up getting kicked almost 12 times right with a steel-toed boot. I had a crack in my bone, my cheek bone."

Several women acknowledged that their pimps protected them against violence from other women and their pimps. One participant admitted, "If you don't have a pimp and you try to stand around there, you'll get beaten up … the girls attacked a girl."

VIOLENCE FROM POLICE AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS

Women also reported violence from service providers, most commonly the police. Although a number of women had good relationships or were neutral about the police, nine respondents were

assaulted, sexually assaulted or propositioned by police officers. As one woman noted, "I've been raped by a police officer … I don't trust them." Another described:

> I got arrested and the police grabbed me, they banged my head on the paddy-wagon. … they beat me up real bad.

Not surprisingly, a number of women commented that they would not seek help from the police, fearing criminal charges, arrest or being assaulted. As one respondent commented, "If you have a bad date on the street, the cops won't offer you much. They'll jack you up and haul your ass down to the police station."

Professionals had sexually assaulted two women who were in institutional care as children. One participant recalled her experience, "One of the teachers raped me a few months before I went there. The system is trying to protect me, yet they put me in a place where a rapist was. That's why it's hard for me to trust any government organizations."

Violence against others and self-directed abuse

Seventeen women disclosed physical violence against others such as intimate partners, other women involved in prostitution, customers and police. Five had criminal records for serious assaults or weapons offences. Some attributed their aggressive behaviour to drug use or becoming hardened by their time on the street.

> Even with the solvents … I get very aggressive when I'm on that stuff. I want to fight everybody around me.

> My anger and abusiveness became a real problem. Some women will take abuse for the rest of their life. I went the total opposite. I became very angry. I tried to kill a guy.

However, they more often directed their violence internally, reporting self-harm, self-mutilation and suicidal ideation. Seven had attempted suicide; three reported multiple attempts. One woman commented:

> Just before my eighteen birthday I tried to kill myself. I still have problems thinking about where I'm gonna be in six months. There was no future. It was day by day by day.

Protective Strategies

The women revealed that they were not simply victims, but were often resourceful and resilient. In the face of pervasive violence, most adopted protective strategies to keep themselves safe from violent customers. Traditional means of ensuring personal safety, such as requesting assistance from the police, were not seen as options; rather, the women rely on themselves and a system of "street smarts".

Rarely did women leave prostitution in response to violent experiences. Instead, these incidents motivated them to adopt strategies to deal with the expected violence that comes with their work. Securing control of possibly dangerous situations became critical. For example, eight women remained sober while working to protect themselves and ensure that they could escape if they felt threatened. As one told us, "I think I'm more aware of what's going on when I'm straight." Another

mentioned, "I'd rather be able to get out of the situation than fall over because I'm too drunk or stoned."

Several women described being good judges of people and using their instincts to discern whether a customer might turn violent.

> I can read people very well and if I don't like the way I feel ... I don't need the money that bad to get high. [I'd] say, 'sorry, buddy let me out of here.

> It's a feeling. You got to have the feelings if you're on the street. If you don't got them, you die.

Following the "rules" was another protective strategy that women used to keep themselves safe from violent customers.

> I followed the rules. There was [sic] no vans, not more than one person. I did not go out of the downtown area.

> I wouldn't go with young guys or big, muscular people. I'd go with older guys. If a young guy was too quick to say 'yes' to a price, I'd be like, 'take a hike.' He's going to try and beat me up or give me the money and then after, take it back.

> I won't go with you if you're drinking, if you're stoned, if your car has garbage all over.

The women often stayed in pairs or groups to keep themselves safe from bad dates, or they carried weapons. One described how, "We wouldn't leave each other. We'd take each other's [license] plates." Another commented that, "They [stiletto heels] were my weapon and my keys. I always have keys in my hand. They're a great weapon."

Preventing violence to girls sexually exploited through prostitution

Given the preceding discussion about the extent to which violence permeates the lives of girls and young women once involved with prostitution, it seems clear that the best prevention strategy is to intervene before the girls start on the streets. We asked each woman, "What could have prevented you from becoming involved in prostitution?" Seven responded that nothing could have been done:

> I knew I would end up on the street. As soon as that night when I was there and was drugged up, the next night I was on the street. I knew there was no turning back, I knew I would be out there.

> I was too caught up in the glitter and the glamour. I wasn't willing to listen to anybody. I got raped when I was about 11 by one of my really good guy friends and after that, I felt like crap about myself. It just went down hill from there. I made choices based on how I was feeling. Once you start down that road, it's hard to stop.

> I don't think there's a damned thing they (society) can do to prevent this

The most common response, from 16 women, was to change their family of origin:

> A loving mom and dad

Having normal parents. Society thinks it's society's problem. It's not though, it's family, it's parents. Society can support, can put in place the foundation, like all these group homes and good quality drug rehabilitation. [But] there's something about you when you grow up in an unhealthy environment and when you don't feel loved by your parents. Why does that screw up a person's life? I don't know, but it does.

My whole life (laughs). If my parents had been different then I wouldn't have gotten involved. I would still be living at home.

Three blamed child welfare for intervening in their families:

I have good parents but they gave up too quick. They put me in homes and I didn't have their support and that just screwed up everything.

If child welfare had minded their own damned business and left me where I belonged.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

While we did not explicitly ask most of the respondents about historical or current victimization, the women disclosed rates of childhood sexual abuse consistent with those reported by other Canadian researchers. Further, the violence and abuse continued after the girls left home and became involved in prostitution (Benoit & Millar, 2001; Lowman & Fraser, 1995; McIntyre, 1999; Nadon, *et al.*, 1998; Schissel & Fedec, 1999).

The violence was often serious, frequently resulting in painful and life-threatening injuries. Although violence from pimps or johns prompted many to contemplate leaving prostitution, few actually did; the women viewed this as a normal and even expected "part of the job." Several women expressed relief that they only had "two or three" bad dates. A readiness to accept violence in sex work has previously been noted by Pyett and Warr (1999) who found that "street workers were prepared to accept violence as a condition of working in an illegal and socially marginalized occupation" (p. 194).

The women's narratives highlight the importance of creating better strategies to address violence against girls and young women exploited through prostitution. Successful programs will likely utilize different approaches than services for adult women working in the sex trade. The earlier that we intervene with young girls who have fled to the streets, the more likely we prevent the violence and the serious negative effects described by the women we interviewed. The history of services for battered women has taught us that leaving abusive relationships is a difficult process that often takes years. A similar perspective needs to be adopted for working with girls and young women sexually exploited through prostitution.

Programs to prevent the sexual exploitation of children have recently been developed and marketed to school systems, primarily at the high school level. None have been evaluated with respect to their efficacy (Tutty, Bradshaw *et al*, 2002). Such primary prevention may be misguided given the high proportion of women in the current study that started before the age of fifteen. While prostitution prevention programs challenge the myth of prostitution as glamorous, as portrayed in movies such as "Pretty Woman", and may change the attitudes of both young men and women towards those exploited through prostitution, the majority of high school students are beyond the age at which they are vulnerable to the lure of the street life.

Rather, a secondary prevention approach targeting the "at risk" young adolescents in foster care and living group homes would be more appropriate. Further, a tertiary prevention approach of providing treatment to children who have been sexually abused could address the serious long-term effects of such abuse and prevent the development of trauma symptoms and leaving for the streets.

While the extent of the violence experienced by girls sexually exploited through prostitution has been documented previously, understanding its everyday context and pervasive nature is critical in developing more effective services and strategies to assist girls and adolescents to exit the streets.

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Is Sex-Work a Gendered Reality?

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This presentation will use two sources of information to answer the central question of the day: « should violence prevention be gender specific? ». We will use the results of a former project *Women, violence and STD-AIDS* (Trottier, G., Damant, D., Noël, L, et Lindsay, J. CQRS 1999-2001) and a literature review we have done for our actual research project on HIV, violence and the social regulation of gendered street prostitution (Damant, D., Trottier, G., Dorais, M., Noël, FQRSC, 2002-2004).

As a start, we want to stress that there is a difference between biological gender and social gender (Mathieu, 1991, 1994) and that we need to take into account at the same time, both biological sex and social sex (Descarries, 1998). This is what I will try to do in this presentation. Even though this aspect has not been discussed today, it will be the focus of what I will present today.

Our first research project on the theme of *Women, violence and STD-AIDS* asked the following question: How does violence contribute to AIDS transmission between heterosexuals and to the feminization of the epidemic? To answer this question, we collaborated with our project partners to interview 25 women living in what we have called a « social risk environment ». The indicators for inclusion in this category were: lifestyle, drug use, activities such as prostitution, delinquency (theft, possession of stolen goods), drug trafficking, associating with people or places like shooting parlors, sometimes homelessness, and the consequences of this lifestyle (losing custody of their children, trouble with the law and prison stay).

The participants were between the ages of 21 and 43 years old; eight were between 21 and 25 years old, five between 26 and 30 and only one was older than 40 at that time of the interview. In general, they had a low level of schooling. Only 5 had completed high school. The majority (20 out of 24 participants) were mothers of one or two children (17) or of 3 to 4 children (3). All these women have had until recently an important drug consumption problem, often cocaine (injection or free base). The majority of these women also indicated that they had been a sex-worker (dancer, escort or street prostitute).

Starting with these women's narratives of their lives, two levels of analysis were performed. The first distinguished two moments in the lives of these women, before and after their entry into the social risk environment. This environment, without being absolutely closed, was the context of their life: it defines their life conditions, structures their daily activities, their decisions and has to be taken into account if we want to understand the way these women act or think. At this level of analysis, their experiences of violence were categorized and classified according to the moment of entry into the social risk environment. On a second level, the analysis focused on sexual activities, their link with their experience of violence and the risk of contracting STDs.

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The women we met described to us the types of violence they experienced. This violence encompassed all their lives: their childhood, their love life, be it adolescent or adult, their conjugal relations and their lives as a parent and a worker.

These women experienced all types of violence, physical, emotional, sexual, economical. To this list, we have added another form of violence which we called « deadly violence » in which a person feels a strong death feeling. They also witnessed a lot of violence as a young girl such as domestic violence or incest experienced by an older or younger sister. A third party always committed this violence, be it a parent, a partner, a child, a colleague or an institution (social or judicial services, etc.). These women also exerted violence against themselves (mutilations, suicidal attempts). Finally, they were violent against others (children, partner, pimp, etc.), especially in their work as a sex-worker.

These quotes illustrate the types of violence they told us about. A woman mentions her mother's violence towards her, cruel moments which touch her a lot:

> My mother; it was cruelty incarnated, all along my childhood. No communication; no love that was not paid for; no compassion. She would beat up my sister, torture her, hide her in her room for weeks on end…

Another young woman had been exposed to a similar experience. Her mother, a violent junkie, who would "blow her fuses":

> She grabbed me by the arm, she put me in the bath (and) pushed me under. It took a long time. She held me a long time under water. I became weak. I remember, I struggled for a long time and then, at one point, there was nothing more I could do.

Another tells of an aggression by a client:

The guy took me in. It was full daylight. He had s strange kind of face, really not beautiful and even scary. In spite of this I got in the car, I was in withdrawal, I needed a shot. It was by luck that I was sober or else I could have died. He took me into the woods and there, he gives me 25$ to do him a blow job. So I do it. Then, he takes a knife out and he decides that he wants more. He's really threatening, he stuck a knife under my throat and called me every name in the book. I was in a state of panic, I realized he was crazy. At one point, we left. He said he would bring me back but I saw that he was taking a detour back into the woods. I was freaking out; I was trying to open the door. He punched me in the face. We stopped at a red light, his window was lowered. There were two cars next to us and I screamed for help real loud. He punched me in the face and when he looked the other way, I managed to unlock the door. He put his foot on the gas and the door was open and he had grabbed me by the arm, He was going almost 80 to 90 kilometers an hour. I had to jump out of the car. Then he tried to back up to get me back in the car but I was running and running, Jesus I was scared, I was sure he would try to hit me with the car.

In the light of the information given by the participants, two violent processes were identified. The first one is the way in which violence accompanies entry into the social risk environment. Each one of the types of violence they lived, all the blows and all the words that were aimed at their body, their sex organs and at their soul, led them to this universe of risk. Once in this universe, another process begins, which we have called anchoring in the social risk universe. Once part of the universe of violence, of drug abuse, etc., the victimization process precipitates the anchoring and leads to the adoption of a junkie's conduct and to a rise of violence: the more I prostitute myself

and the more I will adopt strategies so as not to feel; the more I experience violence, the more I need to numb myself so as not to suffer, etc….

The results of this research show that, in this specific sub-group, there exists unquestionably multiples links between violence and vulnerability to HIV. Afterwards we asked ourselves whether the situation of the male prostitutes with regards to violence was similar to that of women prostitutes. We wondered moreover, if the regulation of male street prostitution differs from female street prostitution and if the impact on the vulnerability to HIV was comparable. It will take two more years before the results of this project are out, but certain elements of reflection, which I will present here, influenced the development of our grant proposal. They are based on a gender analysis, i.e. an analysis which uses at the same time the concept of biological sex and that of social sex.

Prostitution does not imply a uniform and homogeneous way of life. There is a hierarchy in this work that can take on a variety of forms. A woman may be a dancer, an escort, etc, For instance, street prostitution, which accounts for 20% of all the sex-work in Canada, is at the lowest echelon. It is the riskiest and the most dangerous because of the physical and sexual violence experienced by these sex-workers. Police repression is also important here as well as physical violence, harassment, etc. Finally, we know that street prostitution and serious drug-addiction often go hand in hand.

What do we know about the differences between male prostitution and female prostitution? Male sex-work is not as well documented as female prostitution. Our literature review informs us that there are differences according to biological sex. We know that there are fewer men than women among sex-workers. We also know that the social positions that male and female prostitutes occupy are gender structured: the career of the male prostitutes is shorter, most of these men do not do this work on a full time basis, they experience more frequent interruptions in their career. Most of male prostitution is homosexual in nature although this does not presume that it reflects the sexual orientation or the identity labels claimed either by the clients or by the sex-workers.

Male prostitutes experience less violence in their work than women from clients and pimps. The violence experienced by men is often of a homophobic nature; in general they experience fewer police arrests and less harassment than female prostitutes. On the other hand, male prostitutes are not all identical: transvestites and transgender - who do not have the physical appearance of a "true man" - will experience much more violence than other male prostitutes. It is here that the notion of social sex or social gender intervenes: these men - who are men and not women - experience a violence that is extremely similar to the violence experienced by women because these men do not meet social standards or norms.

To conclude, prevention strategies regarding sex-workers must take into account biological sex differences, because there is a difference between female and male prostitute. These strategies must also take into consideration the social sex differences. More specifically, they must consider the fact that transvestites, transgendered etc., all of these groups of men who do not meet the heteronormative standards, are as much, if not more so, victims of violence than women.

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Girls and Street Gangs: When the Dream Becomes a Nightmare[1]

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There is nothing new about street gangs. Trasher's work, published in 1927, is proof of that. But interest in gangs seems to be booming now, with the number of papers on the subject growing at an exponential rate. Many facets of street gangs have been studied: their prevalence, characteristics, members, hierarchical structure and the associated violence and criminality (for a review of the literature, see Hamel *et al.*, 1997).

Yet despite the abundance of work on gangs published in the past few years, interest in girls' involvement— their role and experiences — in gangs is still marginal. The few studies that have been done on the topic indicate that a growing number of girls are playing an increasingly large and significant part in street gangs, and that their experience, in this context, is specific. This leads Campbell (1984) and Taylor (1993) to say that efforts to work with teenaged girls associated with street gangs may be misguided if we simply transpose to them our knowledge about boys in gangs. Moreover, the few studies that have looked at girls and street gangs have almost all been done in the United States. Although the United States and Quebec are geographic neighbours, the street gang situation is not necessarily the same in the two places (see Hamel & Cousineau, in press). As a result, to get a good idea of the reality of girls' involvement in street gangs in Quebec, data specifically on girls must be gathered and analysed here. That was the task we set for ourselves.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

Our objectives were to
- Understand the path that lead girls to join a gang
- Find out about their experiences in the gang
- Attempt to find out whether they had been victimized before or during their affiliation with the gang
- Understand the motivations and process of leaving the gang

METHOD

The study, as designed, sought girls' views on their experiences with street gangs. For that purpose, we used a strictly qualitative approach based on girls' narratives of their experiences. Unlike life stories, which concern a person's entire life, from first memories to the period preceding the interview, an account of an experience focusses on a specific aspect of a person's life, in this case, association with street gangs. The accounts are organized chronologically. They were prompted by a broad initial instruction—"I'd like you to tell me about your experience with gangs"—and continued in answer to questions such as "Before that, what happened?" or "After that, what

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[1] Most of the data presented here are taken from Michèle Fournier's master's thesis, *Jeunes filles affiliées aux gangs de rue à Montréal: Cheminements et expériences* [Girls affiliated with Montreal street gangs: Journeys and experiences] for the School of Criminology at the Université de Montréal, written under the direction of Marie-Marthe Cousineau.

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happened?", in an attempt to locate the facts around a particular event or series of events. Then, once the account seemed to be chronologically complete, more thematic questions were asked, with a view to examining in greater depth certain predefined aspects of the issue that had been covered insufficiently or not at all during the retrospective interview.

The analysis followed the same logic. It was first vertical, looking at the chronology of events related in each interview, then transversal, focussing on recurrent topics in all the interviews and comparing what the girls had to say.

SAMPLE

The sample was constituted using the expert screening technique, in which a qualified social worker was asked to identify clients who met the sampling criteria, approach them and talk to them about the study and its objectives. The social worker then asked them if they would be interested in participating in the study. If so, they were put in touch with the researchers. This technique has both advantages and drawbacks (see Pires, 1997).

PARTICIPANTS

The 13 girls interviewed had a mean age of 15.9 years; the youngest was 14 and the oldest 24. The mean age at which they joined a gang for the first time was 12.5 and they quit at a mean age of 14.8. Four of them were of Canadian origin, three of mixed origin (one Canadian parent, the other of different origin), and six were of an origin other than Canadian. When we spoke to them, the mean length of time they had been in a gang was 17 months; 9 of them had left the gang, while the other 4 said they were still associated.

Although most of the girls interviewed said they did not really know much about their parents' economic situation, their accounts suggested that the majority of them were from economically disadvantaged families who were also experiencing other difficulties: the girls suffered psychological, physical or sexual abuse at home; or their parents' drug addiction or mental or physical health problems meant that the girls had to take on heavy family responsibilities, or were totally left to themselves. Ten of them were living with only one of their biological parents.

At the time of the interviews, 9 of the 13 girls were one to four years behind in school, depending on the subject. Some had learning disabilities or behavioural problems that resulted in their being expelled and some had dropped out. All but one had been placed in a youth centre under the Youth Protection Act, but never under the Young Offenders Act. For seven of them, it was not the first time they had been taken into care: they had already been in a foster family, group home or even a rehabilitation centre, always under the Youth Protection Act, most often under section 38(h), which provides that children may be placed in an institution if they have "serious behavioural disturbances." We interviewed all but one of them, the last and oldest, in a youth centre.

It turned out that most of the girls who became involved with gangs had been victimized in a variety of ways before joining. In the interviews, they mentioned various forms of neglect, which they felt had marked their childhood:

> When I was a kid, I never really felt like my parents loved me […] I felt unloved. My father left when I was four. I didn't feel good about it. […] They gave me the love they could, but I needed more than that. Of course, the more I think about my parents, the lower I sink and the more problems I start having again. I do stupid things so they know that "Yoohoo!

Here I am!" That's why I used to do a lot of stupid things, too, to let my parents know I was there. [Nancy, 15]

They also confided that they had suffered psychological, physical and sexual abuse at home, at school or elsewhere.

My mother and father both beat me. It started with my father, and my mother said, "That's it. Enough's enough." So they split up and she took off with us, then after that *she* started. I don't know. It's because she was depressed, and probably she thought the only way we'd really understand and all that was to hit us. [Eva, 16].

JOINING THE GANG: THE HONEYMOON

How It Begins…

According to the girls' accounts of joining the gang, it usually starts with seduction rather than coercion, and the process varies in length. Some of them naturally followed the footsteps of an older sister, or more often, an older brother, who was already a gang member:

I grew up with street gangs, that's why I joined. Because I saw how it worked and my brothers were in it, and my cousins […] There were a lot of them in it who knew that sooner or later I would join […] No girl can tell me that she grew up with those guys and isn't like them. [Cassandre, 17]

For many others, like Laurie, it was a real "love story." Before meeting her boyfriend, Laurie knew nothing about gangs. When they first started seeing each other, he was very considerate: he was courteous and attentive. After a few weeks, Laurie realized that strange things were happening when she was with him: he was in several fights, girls came out of his roommate's bedroom crying, and he often mentioned the names of gangs. When she questioned him about it, he admitted that he was in a gang, and that because she was his girlfriend, she was also considered to be affiliated with it. She told the interviewer that she got involved without really knowing what she was getting into:

At first I said that I wasn't in it and all that, but since I was going out with him, it was just as if I was in it. So then girls he knew started lending me clothes, headbands. They fixed me up. So that's how I got into it, without even realizing it was happening. [Laurie, 15]

We heard the same story, with a few variations, from a number of girls.

Why…

For many girls, the main reason for joining a gang is as a way out of a difficult situation, especially with respect to their families:

I was safer where I was staying than at home. I had less to worry about. At home, I was always trying to get away from my father, but when I was out, I didn't have to get away from anyone. [Cassandre, 17]

Cassandre, sexually assaulted by her father on a regular basis, chose to turn to gang members not just to escape from that situation, but also because she felt that they were the only ones who

believed her and, from her point of view, offered her the kind of protection she was seeking, from her father and from the consequences of running away from home. Many of the girls felt safe joining the gang, at least at the beginning:

> They treated me like the girl who couldn't be hurt. I don't know how to say it, but if anything happened to me, I could tell them and they'd protect me. They said: "That guy's never going to touch you." [Helen, 16]

> I like it like that. I feel protected because I know that with them nothing bad can happen. Something bad might happen to me, like taking drugs or something, but if I have a problem with a guy who wants to break my legs, I call my friends and they help me. [Sophie, 14]

The need for appreciation and popularity is the second most common reason girls give for joining gangs:

> It gave me something I was missing—love, attention … When you don't get any attention and you're a teen, you want to talk, you want to do stuff, and no one has the time to listen to you and everyone shouts dumb things at you … You go and see those guys: "Shit, you're cool, you're hot, you're a riot!" It's a nice change. I felt appreciated for once. [Marie-Pierre, 24]

The same girls are also looking for "real friends":

> When you're in a gang, you've got friends, girls and guys—not fake friends, real ones. Real friends, for real. You say to yourself, that person likes you for what you are, not for what you have. (Cassandre, 17).

And some like the risk:

> I like danger, I like fear. If anyone ever says "No, don't go there," I'll go. It's the danger … I'll go to prove that I can do it.

Finally, some cite the need for money, no matter where it comes from:

> My mother had no money. Try taking any kind of course—everything costs money. What do you do then? […] Everyone's got Polo when Polo's in fashion, and everyone wears this and that, and what do you wear? Stuff from Croteau [cheap chain store]. It really pisses you off. Or everyone's going around with five hundred bucks in their pockets and you've got a couple of loonies. Let's just say money helps. You see everyone in their big cars, with their wads of cash and their jewellery, and eventually it seriously pisses you off. [Marie-Pierre, 24]

> I liked the fact that they made lots of money, very easily. It was dirty money, but they came by it easily. [Cassandre, 17]

Gang membership especially enables young runaways to survive while on the run, or until they become adults.

Generally speaking, it seems that what all the girls interviewed have in common some sort of vulnerability in a number of areas: dissatisfaction, even neglect or abuse at home, so that they want to get away, the need for appreciation and belonging, the need for a roof over their heads, a place to hide out and money to live on.

Yet if at first the girls think they have found shelter with a gang, they soon realize that there is a heavy price to pay.

GIRLS' GANG EXPERIENCE: HARSH REALITY

The first thing we observed from the girls' accounts of their experiences with gangs is that they could never really be part of them. In some cases, although they are associated with gangs, usually as a girlfriend of one of the members, they are not full members themselves:

> It's "You're my girlfriend, my woman: look good and shut up. You're with me on breaks, you have a smoke, you cling to me, you kiss me, and then you get out." It really worked like that: "Stay home, don't go out." Some girls didn't go out at all. The guys went out on weekends, the girls stayed home […] The girls were there as ornaments […] They were more like gang girls, good for screwing, keeping quiet and looking good: look good and shut up. [Marie-Pierre, 24]

> You have to be lower than them […] Sometimes, too, there are guys in gangs who'll say: "You're my girlfriend, my business is none of your business, it's my shit, my life and none of your business." [Cassandre, 17]

Even if they are accepted in the gang in some way, they never achieve a status greater than that of hanger-on. In fact, except for a few rare cases, including one of the girls we interviewed, girls never acquire any power within the gang. They do take part in some activities, however, such as drug and weapon trafficking, because they are less likely than boys to be caught:

> I started hanging out in clubs, and I often brought weapons in. It really doesn't look as bad for a girl […] But basically, how stupid can you get? How can a girl get away with it? At first, bringing in weapons, they only used the metal detector on guys, not on girls. A girl with a long skirt—who would ever guess that she has a gun strapped to her thigh? [Marie-Pierre, 24]

> He was dealing coke and one time, the police were in the building, plainclothes police, and he told me to put it in my bra, my socks. He knew the police wouldn't look there. [Cassandre, 17]

By their own admission, they engaged in delinquent activities to please the male members of the gang, to prove their value in their eyes, to repay their debt to the gang that took them in when they were in deep trouble and to ensure their survival when they were on the run. From that point on, their lives revolved around looking for ways to please the boys in the gang (especially their boyfriends) and ways to escape from the authorities.

> I had to prove that I was strong, that I could defend myself, that no one could beat me. I had to keep proving it, proving it to them … Prove that I could beat anyone, prove that I could dress right, prove that I could do all kinds of things, that I was the best. You want to keep outdoing yourself, getting away with more, more, more. [Eva, 16]

Given the girls' subordinate, marginal position in the gang, the situation that they had been led to believe soon began to deteriorate, as they were assaulted, battered or sexually exploited by the gang members themselves or by others in connection with gang activities. Disillusion, fear and bitterness soon set in.

> They give you drugs, they get you onto strong drugs that you can't stop taking, that you get hooked on. Then you ask them for some, and they'll be nice and give it to you. They give you everything, but then they say: "Pay." Then you have a choice, prostitution. So you get into prostitution […] It's just a question of fear, because if they weren't afraid, I'm sure they wouldn't go back. [Nancy, 15]

Girls affiliated with gangs have many and varied experiences as sex objects. First, in the form of sexual abuse by their boyfriends:

> Sometimes he forced me to do things I didn't want to, like me and other guys, or me and other girls. If I ever said no, it was: "Do it, and that's it—you're staying home." [Laurie, 15]

or in the form of a kind of trafficking among gang members:

> That's the way it was. "He's my best friend, and tonight he's into it, so go to the bedroom with him." I'm really embarrassed about things like that. I even have trouble taking off all my clothes in front of my own boyfriend. But he really said: "You're going!" And if I said no, he said, "You want to go, or you want a smack in the face?" [Laurie, 15]

> He got girls to toke up, then he brought his friends over and his friends did whatever they wanted with them, and then he collected the money [Sarah, 14]

or they were asked to be seductive to get information from members of rival gangs.

The sexual exploitation of girls can also be more organized. It is a major source of income for gangs, many of which organize virtually all their activities around operating escort agencies, nude dancing or prostitution. Girls do not always consent to take part in these activities, but they are soon made to understand that they have a debt to pay, a role to play in the gang (see Nancy, quoted above).

CONTROL, ISOLATION AND VIOLENCE

The lives of girls affiliated with gangs are also marked by various forms of control and isolation, in addition to the violence they are subjected to. The boys' possessiveness, which expresses itself in efforts to control the girls, is obviously not exclusive to gangs. But it is exacerbated by the boys' lack of trust of the girlfriend, especially with regard to the consequences to the gang of a loss of control over what she says and does, because she often knows something about gang activities and membership. New technologies, especially pagers and, more recently, cell phones, are widely used as means of control, as they can be used to get hold of the girl at any time and demand what she is doing. Yet even these types of control are eventually not enough anymore, and violence as a purely physical constraint begins to be used, as Laurie explained:

> I could almost never go out because if I did, they beat me or things like that, it was really getting crazy. [Laurie, 15]

The girls are not controlled solely by their boyfriends. In this respect, the situation of girls affiliated with gangs is different from that of other girls controlled by their boyfriends. Supervision and control can be exercised by any gang member just as easily as the boyfriend, for they see her as a threat to the gang if what she says and does is not controlled. The girls get the feeling they are constantly under surveillance:

> They're always watching, always there, everywhere. If I go somewhere, there they are. There's always one somewhere. They are everywhere and nowhere. They are incognito, they can find out everything about me. I could go to a party, and the next day they'll call— they know about it. I'm best off not doing anything stupid, that's what they told me. [Eva, 16]

Another way to ensure total obedience of the gang rules is to cut the girls off from any outside influence:

> I wasn't allowed to talk to anybody else, practically—just them. Them, and no one else […] Every time my mother called, he [the boyfriend] always gave some excuse why she couldn't talk to me: "She's taking a shower, she's gone to get some bread," but I was really there. And I'd be, "Who were you talking about?" when he hung up, and he'd go, "It was one of my friends who called to talk to her boyfriend, and I told her he wasn't in." [Laurie, 15]

> You're a girl, a gang girl, you stay in the gang and you don't go anywhere else. That's the way they think: "You're not going out with him anymore, you have to go out with one of us." […] You can't choose anyone outside the gang. [Marie-Pierre, 24]

The girls also have to abide strictly by the law of silence, *omertà*, that governs the lives of gang members and is, in their eyes, a *sine qua non* of the gang's survival. The rule is clear: girls associated with gangs, the same as the guys, must not say anything, under any circumstances, about the gang, how it works, its activities or its members; if they do, they'll suffer the consequences. Threats like this are directed not just at the young gang members, but their families and friends, too. Although *omertà* does not apply solely to girls, it affects them in particular because from the outset, they are trusted very little, if at all:

> I can't say that they trust me a hundred percent, because to them, I'm a girl and you can't trust a girl. They're always afraid that you'll go out with another guy. Once you break up with your boyfriend, you can easily go anywhere and tell everything. They only trust guys. [Eva, 16]

WHY STAY?

As we have seen, many girls have left home, have run away from home or the rehabilitation centre because they didn't feel right there, sometimes even because they felt they were in danger. The gang took them in, gave them a place to stay, food, and in many cases, living conditions that, although definitely not ideal, seemed more tolerable than those they had had before. Furthermore, in fleeing their earlier living conditions and circumstances, they are exposed to possible punishment or a kind of custody that they dread. To them, being in a gang seems like the only way out:

> They said, "That girl wants to be with us," and they did everything to me, they raped me. And I was traumatized, but I stuck with them because I had nowhere else to go. [Helen, 16]

In other cases, isolation and gradual cutting off from former friends, family, school after joining the gang, creates a vacuum so that the gang is now the girl's only support network:

> My friends who stayed out of trouble, my old friends—things deteriorated with them. I talked to them less and less, spent less and less time with them. It even got to the point where I said they were real idiots, they had nothing to do, they had no life. I was really blind, I couldn't see a thing. [Eva, 16]

> I focussed totally on the gang, nothing but the gang. I had to go to the park after school. I had to go straight there […] One day I didn't go to the park, and I said, "Oh my God, I didn't go, I have to go, if I don't go, they'll be mad, they'll say I've forgotten them." They were all I thought about. They were my entire life. [Helen, 16]

Leaving the gang, in these circumstances, meant having to live with a big void, mainly emotional. For some, the reign of terror established by the constant repetition of a whole series of threats may keep them from leaving. And even if the threats are only rarely carried out, in the opinion of the girls who confided in us, the intimidation is enough to create a paralysing fear, preventing any move away from the gang:

> You have to keep your mouth shut because otherwise you'll suffer. Because you're safe in a gang, but at the same time, you're not. Say something happens to you, they'll come and defend you and everything. But if you say anything, they'll kill you […] I never got beaten up. I know how to keep my mouth shut, I don't go around blabbing everything to everyone. But if I had said anything, they'd have found out and they'd have come to see me, that's for sure. Basically, they beat you up so you're afraid, and the next time you know anything, you really keep your mouth shut. [Sophie, 14]

> [If a girl talks and gets found out], they'll threaten her, beat her up. And if she wants to get out and tell what happened to her, they'll go to her house and burn it down or steal stuff from it. [Yanie, 14]

GIRLS' PERCEPTION OF GOOD SIDES OF GANGS

It must be acknowledged that for some girls, joining a gang does have its positive aspects, despite all the problems, suffering and abuse that they experience. Those who at first sought a feeling of belonging in a gang, a kind of appreciation, a new family, real friends, in large part feel that they found all that. They provide some telling examples:

> It was like a family, an inseparable family. It was like a family, like a mother, a father and the rest of them were like my brothers. I was their sister and they were my brothers. And when I had problems, I told them everything. And if I needed anything, they tried to find it for me. [Helen, 16]

> The only people I knew I could trust were the guys and girls in the gang. Because I told them what my father did to me and they believed me […] And they gave me love and time, they believed everything I told them. It wasn't like talking to a brick wall. It wasn't like I said something happened to me and they took it lightly. They took it personally, as if he had done it to them, as well. [Cassandre, 17]

Other good sides of gangs are also heavily emphasized: mutual help and sticking together :

> The parties we organized for someone's birthday or at Christmastime. Everyone helped each other out: your family's poor, needs this or that. New people came who had nothing, we helped each other. Apartments got furnished, and there was room for everyone. There were apartments for everyone in the gang. If things aren't so good at home, you come here, there's room. We really helped each other out, it was great. [Marie-Pierre, 24]

and fun:

> It wasn't just for illegal stuff, we were a bunch of friends. We went out drinking with friends, a whole gang of us would go to the movies. It was wild! We had a great time. We played stupid games, we were really wasted, playing kick the can in the park, totally drunk—just wild. We did all kinds of stupid things, we really messed around [laughs]. [Marie-Pierre, 24]

To many teenaged girls, the gang became central to their lives. Belonging to the gang led to the disintegration of already rocky family relationships, alienation from school and friends, and gradual isolation from everything except the gang. For a while, at least, the girls lived for nothing but the gang. Leaving would mean losing their entire social support network.

WHY LEAVE?

Various things lead up to the process of leaving the gang. Most often there is an event or a series of events that alter the girls' perception of the gang as a safe place to be. A friend might be hurt or arrested because of gang activities. The girl may suffer a particularly violent beating or assault at the hands of the gang, or in connection with the gang's activities, chiefly prostitution. She may be growing increasingly aware that gang affiliation leads to places where she does not want to go, that she must cross a line that she does not wish to cross, that she is being asked to do a job she does not want to do. She may be arrested or placed in a rehabilitation centre. Perhaps she meets someone who has a positive influence on her life (boyfriend, caseworker, hero) or quite simply starts to feel that it is time for her to move on to other things.

Leaving is not usually easy. First, if her boyfriend is a gang member, she has to deal with the inevitable heartbreak. Then she has to rebuild her social network, fill the gaps in her schooling or job history, and often, too, cope with health problems resulting from poor nutrition, too many psychotropic drugs and unprotected sex while in the gang.

SUMMARY AND INTERVENTION

Is specific intervention needed for girls who decide to leave gang life? Any intervention must at least be adapted to girls. It must take into account the light shed by the accounts of those who have experienced life in a gang. It must be inspired by it. These accounts tell us that we are dealing with girls already vulnerable before they even begin to flirt with gangs, girls seeking appreciation, a feeling of belonging, safety, and who feel that they have found it, at least for a time. They are first coddled, made welcome, listened to and protected by the gang and its members, or at least that is how they feel. Then the dream—sometimes suddenly, sometimes gradually—turns into a nightmare. The girls have to pay. They are made to pay by threats and force. They are made to do things that remind them that they "aren't worth much." But while the gang is there to take care of them initially when they are discouraged, rebelling, running away, they are later cut off from any contact except with the gang, in which they may well still have friends, confidantes, and a boyfriend who is hard to forget.

From all the accounts we heard from the girls we interviewed, clearly the greatest need each of them had, beyond the need for appreciation, belonging and safety, was the need for love, which they attempted to fulfill by associating with a gang, and often more intimately with a gang member who became their boyfriend. This relationship is troubling to us, but vital to them.

The web spun around the girls through control, isolation and threats, but also treats and things necessary for survival and protection, is not easy to untangle. It takes time and a great deal of encouragement. Leaving must be seen as a gradual, often slow process, which sets the pace for healing based on rebuilding self-esteem, acquiring skills, rebuilding a support network, mutual help, friendships and even family relationships: in short, rebuilding a life. That is the only way to compete with the gangs, at least in the eyes of these girls.

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IV – Panel[1] :
Should violence prevention programs in marginalized environment be gender specific?

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[1] Contrary to the university researchers who submitted a written paper, this is not the case for the panel where the practitioners were invited to give a short speech on the question. The text of the panel was worked up from a verbatim transcription, thus keeping an oral quality, conveying the dynamism of this last part of the seminar.

PRESENTATION OF CHANTAL FREDETTE, CENTRES JEUNESSE DE MONTRÉAL (MONTREAL YOUTH CENTRES) - INSTITUT UNIVERSITAIRE.

When I was asked to participate to this panel on the question « Should prevention programs directed toward girls in marginalized environments be gender-specific? », I took some time to ask myself how I would personally answer this question. First, I want to point out that what I will be saying here is not the official position of the *Centre Jeunesse of Montreal* (Montreal Youth Centres) – Institut Universitaire. Rather, it is my personal opinion, based on my professional practice and on my involvement in research projects at the Centres Jeunesse -Institut Universitaire. In my practice, I have the opportunity to work with boys and girls involved in the phenomenon of street gangs — as witnesses, victims, or assailants — and I am called upon to intervene directly with these adolescents, boys and girls. I am therefore inevitably confronted with the similarities and the differences between boys and girls and I wonder at times whether their needs are the same.

I think that programs in marginalized environments should not be specifically directed toward girls. I agree that the activities or the clinical instrument that are developed should be sensitive to sex differences. It is generally agreed that boys and girls do not feel the same, react or experience the same way different life events. I remain convinced thought that the needs for protection, belonging, self-actualization, relationships, are the same for boys and girls. It is their way of expressing their pain and suffering which may sometimes be different.

Although there are some very good programs, especially those based on a cognitive behavioral approach that can readily be implemented to work with boys or girls, I believe that it is a good idea to work with homogenous groups, girls with girls and boys with boys, and plan for periods when both groups will be together. I still think that some subjects are more easily discussed between girls, others between boys and again other subjects between boys and girls. The program structure should be sensitive to these needs and allow for different moments for different needs.

A question that has not been raised by today's speakers is the question of service providers' training, a dimension that I consider to be fundamental. We have mostly been talking about the girls' needs but we shouldn't forget the needs of boys. In the institutional environment, a difficulty one is confronted with is the fact that some service providers are not necessarily comfortable or prepared to work with a female clientele. They can easily hold on to stereotypes, for example: « girls are more hysterical, boys are more violent », « a girl who hits is a girl that defends herself, a boy who hits is a boy that initiates fights » ; such stereotypes can unintentionally hamper the therapeutic approach taken with these young women. I also think there should be a debate on the paternalistic approach we have, at least in the social service system, towards taking young women into custody. For « equal behavior », young women will be more often than not taken into custody under the *Child and Youth Protection Act* and the boys under the *Young Offenders Act.* For me, this can have unwanted effects on protection behavior in young women who have been severely victimized.

I believe that, before thinking about specific programs, we should plan for ways of assuring adequate training to service providers who, as we all know, represent a critical factor that can affect the success or the failure of a program. The first and foremost tool of a worker is him or herself; so it is important to take care of this service worker and to prepare him or her to intervene with a clientele who they may not necessarily feel at ease with.

PRESENTATION OF CLAUDINE LAURIN, BUREAU DE CONSULTATION JEUNESSE.

Should we offer programs based on a socially gendered analysis? At the *Bureau de consultation jeunesse* (Youth Consultation Bureau), this question has been part of our preoccupations and our thinking for the past five years. And, for us, it is becoming clearer and clearer that the answer is yes. At the *Bureau de Consultation jeunesse* we are in contact with more than 120 young mothers, eighteen and under. Our analysis is based on our work with these young women as well as our work with youth in low-cost housing, with street youth, and with young people coming out of youth centers whom we support through our supervised apartments.

Wanting to know more about their policies and practices we conducted an exploratory investigation with a hundred young people, between 18 and 20 years old who were coming out of youth correctional centers. What was very very troubling for us was the realization that young women often forgot why they were taken into custody in the first place, namely the fact that they were victims of abuse. Instead, most of them would talk about their violent or delinquent behavior. When asked directly « But why were you there? », they would tell about the incest and the abuse they experienced. But on the questionnaire form, what they would first mention was their own violent behavior. This made us wonder how quickly we, as women, internalize the idea that we are violent. This was and still is very questioning for us.

We are also asked to do workshops in specialized schools for young people from youth custody centers. In these schools, a zero tolerance policy is in place that does not take gender into account. For example, if a young woman responds with a slap in the face to a guy who has smacked her bottom, both of them are called in for a disciplinary measure. Now, I do not know how this young woman — who had been raped three times before — understood this intervention; nor what she made of it, what analysis she brought to it or how she may have internalized it. Neither do I know how the young man has interpreted the fact that she was brought with him into disciplinary measure. We are very concerned about this issue, especially in our work with marginalized young people.

This is also the case with the young mothers we work with. More than 90% of these young women have been victims of violence or of heavy control tactics from their partner. We notice an evolution among these young women who are now less likely to tolerate abuse, will go for help faster or will quickly seek community shelters. They might also defend themselves faster than women would have done fifteen years ago. But they are just as much victims of violence. What is different is that they have internalized that their defense responses are violent. So we're here with young girls, who are sent to groups for violent girls, which have been initially designed for violent men. All this is very questioning for us and we are wondering what will happen in the long run. We are living in a world where the issue of violence in intimate relationships has not been solved, where violence against women is still pervasive. In such a world, to start de-gendering programs appears somewhat risky. What we are risking is an increased internalization on the part of women, along with a increasing acceptation of violence as commonplace on the part of young men, as illustrated in the phrase : « we are both suffering and we are both violent ».

And this is exactly what we see among the marginalized young people we are working with. In one school for young drop-outs we work in, for example, we were told that there is such a thing as a « consenting rape »; and this we have been told by the girls and by the boys. When asked how come, the girls answered: « because, you guys have to hassle us because we don't want to say yes right away ». And these are girls saying this in front of guys and calling this a consenting rape.

What is happening here is that the seduction rapport that these young women engage in has not been acknowledged and has not been worked on. The young woman never had a solidarity group where she could work on and learn different ways of relating; she comes in with the same archetypes that she has to please. Again, de-gendering approaches and programs runs the risk, in our view, to deepen this gap even more. And this is the reason why we, at the *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse*, no longer accept to do workshops on men-women relationships in mixed classes. We do it in separate groups instead.

There is a program that is very dear to my heart. It is called *Programme de soutien aux jeunes parents* (Young parents support program), of course not a gendered title, and it is designed for young mothers, with children, under twenty. The ministry of health and social services created this program with the goal of promoting delinquency prevention in the crib; which some people, including myself, call « prevention of the negligent ovum ». In that type of program, almost everything rests on the mother: nobody mentions the father's absence, or fathers' non-participation. Have we tried to reach those fathers : we reach them, they leave, we reach them, they leave; responsibility rests again on the mother. The danger with that type of program is that it does not encourage, in fact discourages young men from taking their responsibility in intimate relationships. The program *Soutien aux jeunes parents* illustrates this very well. By placing young women and young men on an equal footing — although we are still a long way from this — these programs actually contribute to the hiding of the inequalities that are present To conclude, for us, at the Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse, it is not sufficient to create ungendered programs with a sprinkle of gendered activities. What we need are programs which take gender into account in their very conception.

Presentation of Michèle Burque, Stella.

Should prevention programs be gender specific? We at *Stella* have always thought the answer is yes. *Stella* is a program « by and for » women, more specifically « by and for » sex workers. *Stella* works globally within a feminist agenda, taking into account the reality of women's experience : the reality of a woman's life, the reality of a woman's experience of violence, the reality of a woman sex worker's experience of violence, the reality of the « slut » label which is present for women sex workers but is also present for all women. This being said, certain situations, which we have encountered in our work with transsexuals and with transvestites, have brought us to question gender.

Even if our programs are directed towards women and designed for women's realities, when one starts talking about male prostitution, transsexual prostitution, or transvestite prostitution, one enters into a grey area. Our work at *Stella* is directed towards women, but we also work with transsexuals and transvestites because they work as women in the sex industry and because their experience in this industry is, for all accounts, more similar to the women's experience than to men prostitutes' experience. The areas where transsexuals and transvestites work are often closer to the areas where women work than to the areas where men work; the violences they experience are often similar to the ones women experience.

So we work with transsexuals, on the street and in their milieu; they can come to the drop-in, use our services, etcetera. In the case of transsexuals, this has never been a problem: these persons identify as women, so, for us, they are women. We do not ask whether they have had an operation or not. What is important to us is how they identify themselves. It is when we try to refer them that we meet obstacles. Battered women shelters, for example, are for « biological women » only; so

transsexuals can't stay at those shelters like the other women we work with. They also do not want to go to men's shelters because of the homophobic violence they often encounter.

But we also work with transvestites whom, if they identify as women in their work, do not in the course of their daily life. When they are note working, these are finally men who want to participate in our activities, use our services, take self-defense or violence prevention courses. Their requests to come to our programs brought us to question ourselves as a team. We asked ourselves how close their realities were to those of women and to what extent we were ready to offer services to women and to men. We finally decided that men could come and use our services, at the same time maintaining our feminist orientation « by and for women ». Transvestites thus started to come to Stella and we try to integrate them into our activities. Here also, some problems crop up, in particular their request to take part in feminist self-defence programs who are designed only for women and to which, in this perspective, men should not have access.

At the same time, working more closely with men prostitutes made us realize that some violence they experience is similar to the violence women, transsexuals or transvestites sex-workers experience: discrimination and institutional violence, for example, police or health and social services, etcetera. So, if, for us, specific programs are fundamental, some programs could be run that are aimed at the same time at women and at men sex-workers who live similar realities.

Enven though this issue gave rise to a lot of discussions in our team, it also opened a space for a rich reflection. Our questioning on the subject is not finished and we do not know yet where it will lead us : if men want to come in our group and use our services, should we then hire men workers to provide those services ?

To conclude, yes, we think that prevention programs should be gender specific, but there may be some nuances. There are differences but also similarities between men's and women's experience in the sex work, and insofar as those realities are similar, programs addressing those realities can be the same. We also feel that it is the same thing with regards to men participating in our activities. *Stella* offers women-only programs, but we think that it is possible to have some flexibility in the case of transsexuals' or transvestites.

Presentators

Helen Berman is an associate professor at the University of Western Ontario, School of Nursing, and a board member with the Centre for research on violence against women and children in London. She holds several nationally funded grants related to violence in the lives of women and children, with a particular interest in the girl child in Canada.

Michèle Burque has been working with women sex-workers for more than 10 years. At Stella, she worked as a street-worker, as coordinator and, assumed the responsibility for the general direction. She works now in a shelter for young women in the sex-trade. She is also interested in sexual identity issues.

Catherine Ann Cameron works with the Creating Peaceful Learning Environments Team of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research (FVRC) at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, and the Psychology Department at the University of British Columbia. Her ongoing work at the FVRC includes violence prevention from kindergarten to twelfth grade in New Brunswick schools, and the development of a provincial strategy for dating violence prevention in New Brunswick. Other research includes cultural approaches to development of cognition and communication.

Marie-Marthe Cousineau is a researcher with the International Centre of compared criminology and a professor at the School of criminology of the Université de Montréal. She is also affiliated with the Institute for Research on Social Development of Youth and with the CRI-VIFF.

Dominique Damant is a professor of social work at the School of social work of the Université Laval. She is co-director of the CRI-VIFF (Interdisciplinary Research Centre on Violence against Women and Violence in the Family). Her research interests are the interactions between different types of violence, understanding the consequences of violence on the physical and mental health of the victims. Her recent works focus on prostitution and overlap domestic violence and family violence.

Chantal Fredette has a master's degree in criminology and works at the Centre jeunesse de Montréal – Institut universitaire, where she is responsible for intervention, training and research on street gangs. She works with adolescents confronted with the phenomenon and with practitioners who intervene with them.

Janet Izumi has a master's degree in counselling and works as a counsellor with Family Service London. She is working as a research assistant with the London team of the girl child project.

Margaret Jackson is a professor of criminology at the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University and a co-founder of FREDA. Her research interests are in the areas of violence against women and children, criminal justice policy analysis, and women offenders.

Claudine Laurin has had a long experience (25 years) of working in the community, first with mental health community organizations, and with youth community organizations. She is the coordinator of the Youth Consultation Bureau, a large community organization covering greater Montreal. Her interests are especially with marginalized youth, 16-25 years old, coming out of youth centers, and adolescenst or young mothers.

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<u>Leslie Tutty</u> is a professor of social work at the University of Calgary and serves as the Academic Research Coordinator for RESOLVE Alberta (Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse), a research institute for family violence issues affiliated with six Prairie universities. Most of her research is with abused women, groups for children, women and men affected by domestic violence and child abuse prevention.

Collection Réflexions

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