
**VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND
THE GIRL CHILD**

FINAL REPORT



Submitted by

**The Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence
L'alliance des Cinq Centres de Recherche sur la Violence**

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VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND THE GIRL CHILD

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.
2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (November, 1989)

INTRODUCTION

In March, 1998, the Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence (AFRCV)¹ applied for and received a grant from Status of Women Canada (SWC) to undertake background research for the development of a national action plan on violence prevention for girl children. As innovative partnerships representing both academic and community sectors in different regions, the Research Centres are in a strategic position to undertake this research and provide a portrait of the range and types of violence experienced by girls and young women in Canada.

At the Annual General Meeting of the AFRCV in Manitoba in May, 1998, the Centres identified key issues pertaining to violence against girls and young women. The UN definition of the Girl Child was taken as a point of departure – as a female child between zero and eighteen years of age. Based on their previous work and the expertise gained from their partnerships with community

¹ The Alliance consists of the BC/Yukon Feminist Research, Education, Development & Action (FREDA) Centre; the RESOLVE Tri-Provincial Network, formerly known as the Manitoba Research Centre on Family Violence and Violence Against Women; the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children in London, Ontario; Le Centre de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur la Violence Familiale et la Violence Faite aux Femmes (CRI-VIFF), based in Quebec; and the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, in New Brunswick. The Centres were established in 1992 with a five year period of joint funding from Health Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

groups, the Centres delineated the range of issues and the types of violence experienced by girls in Canada. These included: poverty, homelessness, lack of knowledge about human rights, prostitution and trafficking, eating disorders, depression, suicide, self-harm, date-rape, the impact of witnessing violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, gangs and girl-on-girl violence, media violence, sexual harassment in schools, teen pregnancies, hate crimes, racism, homophobia, and cultural exclusion and insensitivity. Many of these issues have been identified in the UN Platform for Action outlined in Beijing, and in the work undertaken by the Working Groups on Girls (WGGs) which were formed at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993.

The Alliance members concluded that the multi-faceted experiences of violence confronted by girls and young women were best encapsulated under the theme of Socialization and the Construction of the Girl Child. It was further noted that the philosophical position underpinning the present research endeavour would embrace as a starting point the principle that the girl child should not expect and normalize the fact that she will experience violence in her life; and that girl children have the right to live in a non-violent society.

As a consequence of these initial discussions, each Centre undertook to:

- Produce a literature review mapping out the findings of existing research dealing with some of these issues;
- Compile an inventory of programs and services available to girls in their region; and
- Conduct four focus groups with service providers and girls where possible.

The findings of these different research strategies would serve to provide a comprehensive portrait of the types and range of violence experienced by girls in Canada, prevention and intervention programs and services that are in place; and the findings of current research in the area of violence against girls. These elements would form the groundwork for the development of a national action plan on violence prevention and the girl child.

The following sections detail the findings of this exploratory phase completed by the Centres. As the Quebec situation is different, the report of Le Centre de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur la Violence Familiale et la Violence Faite aux Femmes (CRI-VIFF) is presented in its entirety. Taken together, these findings provide a window through which Canada's performance as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child can be glimpsed.

THE CANADIAN GIRL CHILD

The specific areas of the literature that each Centre investigated were as follows: the BC/Yukon FREDA Centre examined the literature dealing with: (1) Violence and Eating Disorders; (2) the Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Girls; and (3) Experiences of Violence for Marginalized Girls. The RESOLVE Tri-Provincial Network focused on a review of the literature concerning child abuse, its effects, strategies of intervention, and prevention, and the legal issues informing this area. As well, this Centre focused its research on child abuse among Aboriginal girls. The Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children in London investigated the literature dealing with: (1) Violence Prevention Education in Schools; (2) Sexual Harassment of Girls (8 to 18 years of age); and (3) Gender Differences in Children's Responses to Exposure to Woman Abuse. The Centre de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur la Violence Familiale et la Violence Faite aux Femmes (CRI-VIFF), undertook a review of the French language literature on Violence Prevention and the Girl Child focusing on: (1) children who witness violence; (2) dating violence; (3) sexual violence; (4) socialization; (5) maltreatment of girls; and (6) sexual harassment. The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Research on Family Violence focused on: (1) Depression; (2) Foster Care; (3) Dating Violence; (4) Early Interventions; and (5) Rural Communities, in the Atlantic region. These reviews are presented in Appendix I.

The following sections summarize the general findings of the literature reviews, focus group analyses, and program overviews produced by four centres – the FREDA Centre, RESOLVE, the London Centre, and the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre. Quebec's detailed summary thereafter outlines the findings of the French language literature, focus groups with service providers, and analysis of programs and services.

FINDINGS OF THE CURRENT LITERATURE

An analysis of current research dealing with girls and violence prevention reveals a narrow interpretation of violence, concentrating on child sexual or physical abuse, child neglect, sexual exploitation, and the witnessing of violence. These factors were identified as contributing to the greater risk of girls to other forms of violence such as eating disorders, self-harm, depression, suicide, and delinquency. However, aside from specific areas surveyed, for example, eating disorders, delinquency and sexual exploitation, most of the literature on violence prevention tends to focus on “children” rather than girls *per se*. As well, Canadian literature dealing with the experiences of violence of girls from racialized groups, refugee and immigrant populations, Aboriginal communities, rural communities, working class or poor families, lesbians, or girls with disabilities, is scarce. The reviews draw upon other international studies to highlight future areas of investigation and suggest possible connections between various forms of violence and socio-structural conditions such as state imposed violence.

The Continuum of Violence

The Canadian Federation of University Women report on the Girl Child reveals that more than half (54%) of girls under the age of 16 have experienced some form of unwanted sexual attention, another 24% have experienced rape or coercive sex, and 17% have experienced incest. Of the sexual assaults reported to police, 63% involve girls under 18 years of age (Russell, 1996). These figures do not take into consideration girls who have witnessed violence at home or school.

For girls who are differently situated by virtue of their race, sexual orientation, disability and class, the situation is compounded by their marginalization and “lack of fit” within the dominant, white, heterosexual world. The situation of young lesbians has been documented in the US revealing a suicide rate that is two to three times that of the national average (Hunter, 1990; Savin-Williams, 1994). Stigmatized and subjected to verbal and physical abuse, these girls lead a socially isolated existence. Homophobic attitudes construct the closet. “Compulsory heterosexuality” ensures that they remain there (Rich, 1979/80). Similarly, girls with disabilities experience higher rates of sexual abuse (at four times the national average) because of their dependent status, isolation, and the negative stereotypes that prevail in the dominant society (Razack, 1994a). Afraid to report the abuse because of the fear of not being believed, many of these girls continue to lead lives that are jeopardized by threats and actual incidents of violence (Ticoll and Panitch, 1993).

The heightened vulnerability to violence experienced by Aboriginal/indigenous girls has also been noted. In Canada, 75% of Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have been sexually abused (McIvor and Nahanee, 1998). Furthermore, Aboriginal girls are hospitalized for attempting suicide at twice the rate of boys. These figures do not begin to tell the full story. State level violence as imposed through child apprehension and transfers to foster homes, allows the state to continue its practices of colonization. Confronted by racism, sexual abuse, physical, and verbal abuse, many girls choose to run away from foster homes and reserves. Homeless and destitute, they survive on the streets where their vulnerability to violence escalates. It has been noted that the mortality rates for Canadian girls and women on the streets is 40 times higher than the national average (Davis, 1994). Many of these are Aboriginal women and children.

Working Groups on Girls (WGGs) noted in its report that immigrant and refugee girls also experience higher rates of violence because of dislocation, racism, and sexism from both within their own communities and the external society (Friedman, 1995). Caught between two cultures, where their own is devalued and constructed as inferior, and where cultural scripts in both worlds encode patriarchal values, these girls face a tremendous struggle in trying to “fit.” When they don’t, they suffer intense backlash. Economic pressures force many of them to turn to the sex-trade, and to work that is devalued. Harsh immigration restrictions force many of them to use illegal routes to get into the country, the payment for that often being sexual exploitation. Many of these girls have often witnessed violence in the war zones of their countries, or in refugee camps in host countries.

Poverty is one of the major contributing factors to the violence experienced by girls. In the hierarchy of industrialized countries, Canada's child poverty ranks second to other nations. In Canadian cities, 1 out of every 3 children is raised in a home with an income below the poverty line. In rural areas, the rate is 1 in 5 (Welsh, et al., 1995). Poverty itself constitutes a form of violence, but that violence is compounded by the particular pressures of living in a society that values consumption and material wealth. Poverty and homelessness facilitates the sexual exploitation of girls and young women.

Attempting to "fit in" has severe consequences. Self-mutilation and self-hatred marks the lives of many Canadian girls. It often takes the form of addictions. Sexualized by the media, constructed as commodities and markets, trained to be nurturers and caregivers, and having their wants and voices trivialized and dismissed, Canadian girls need to have their realities recognized, and require support, resources, and programs which address their specific concerns.

The kinds of violence that Canadian girls encounter spans the entire continuum – from verbal, physical and psychological abuse, to sexual violence, homophobia, racism, classism, and poverty. While girl gang violence may be prominent in the public imagination, the reality is, as a recent Elizabeth Fry Society report reveals, that only 3.83% of violent crimes are committed by young female offenders (Schramm, 1998). Further, as Artz (1998) reveals, much of the violence enacted by girls on girls has its roots in child sexual and physical abuse.

Child Abuse and its Effects

Canadian studies reveal that girls constitute 84% of the reported victims of sexual abuse, 60% of physical child abuse cases, and 52% of cases of reported neglect (Department of Justice, 1992). Girls are two to three times more likely to experience sexual abuse than boys. The Correctional Service of Canada (cited in McIvor and Nahanee, 1998), found that up to 75% of Aboriginal victims of sex crimes are females under 18 years of age, 50% are under 14 years, and almost 25% are younger than seven. Similarly, the rate for girls with disabilities is quadruple that of the national average (Razack, 1994a).

Existing studies also suggest that girls tend to internalize the effects of violence, whereas boys tend to externalize their responses (Hughes and Barad, 1983; Jaffe, et al., 1986). Girls are reported to have more fear-related symptoms as compared to boys (Finkelhor and Kendall-Tackett, 1997). Further, girls are more at risk for physical and sexual violence from their parents or other family members, whereas boys are more at risk from stranger initiated violence.

Depression and Eating Disorders

Psychological abuse tends not to be defined in the literature, or is defined indirectly in symptomatic language to include eating disorders, suicide attempts, self harm, and depression (LaRocque, 1993; McEvoy and Daniluk, 1995; McGillivray and Comaskey, in press; Shkilnyk, 1985). A recent study

of Canadian girls found that 38% of 13-year-olds, and 48% of 15-year-olds, believed they were overweight (King, Wold, Tudor-Smith, and Harel, 1996). Research indicates that up to 61% of North American white girls with eating disorders had experienced sexual abuse in the past, with the average age at the time of abuse being 10 years (Miller, 1996). There is scant literature that makes the link between disordered eating and state-mediated violence, for example, in terms of the impact of forced relocation, ghettoization in reserves and camps, and other exclusionary measures (Moore, 1998). American studies (e.g., Robinson, et al., 1996) have revealed that Hispanic and Asian girls were at risk primarily because their body dissatisfaction levels were in some cases higher than those of White girls, yet these girls' views have tended not to be examined by Canadian researchers.

The effects of sexual abuse have also been linked to depression. Girls between the ages of 12 and 17 are diagnosed with depression at almost twice the rate as boys (Canadian Mental Health Association, 1995; National Health Population Survey, Statistics Canada, 1995). Moreover, girls also respond differently to depression than do boys. Nevertheless, it is clear that violence experienced by girls results in low self-esteem, low educational attainment, and negative self- and body-image.

Suicide

Girls attempt suicide 4 to 5 times more often than do boys, but use less lethal means to do so (Debold, 1995; Health and Welfare Canada, 1994). Girls are more likely to attempt suicide if they have experienced sexual assault and sexual harassment. The socio-structural situation of specific groups of girls also influences their vulnerability to depression, suicide, and other forms of violence. The suicide rate for Aboriginal girls is 8 times that of the national average for non-Aboriginal girls (National Forum on Health, 1997). It has been noted that girls in foster care, homeless girls, rural girls, and girls from stigmatized social groups are more vulnerable to violence.

Socialization

It is apparent that the abuse (sexual, physical and emotional) of girls not only results in gender-specific responses, but is inextricably tied to the sex-role socialization of girls *as girls*. It has been found, for instance, that girls who rated themselves as more masculine and whose parents' marriages were more egalitarian, tended to have lower rates of depression, and were more likely to have a greater sense of control and self-efficacy (Obeidallah, McHale, and Silbereisen, 1996). Yet, few studies have explored the links between gender-based socialization and vulnerability to violence, or the connections between violence against girls and societal valuations of girls. Studies of rural women and violence have though, alluded to the entrenched and pervasive patriarchal norms that prevail in rural communities (Websdale, 1998). Rather, child abuse has tended to be investigated from a gender-neutral and individualistic perspective, despite the fact that gender appears to be a key determinant.

Witnessing Violence

A significant component of the existing literature deals with children who witness violence. It is estimated that 40% to 100% of children in violent homes have witnessed some form of violence (Bard, 1970; Graham-Bermann and Levendosky, 1998). Observing violence contributes to the learning of violent behaviours and ways to handle conflicts in relationships, and to an increased acceptance and normalization of violence. Studies report that children who witness violence in the family suffer from various adjustment problems in their interactions with peers, their academic performance, and general social behaviour. There are some indications that these children are at further risk of being physically or sexually abused. The literature, however, does not focus on gender differences in children's responses to witnessing violence. Rather, the general findings suggest that externalizing problems are more likely to be reported among boys, whereas girls exhibit more internalized responses (Hughes and Barad, 1983; Jaffe, et al., 1986). Despite this finding, the differential socialization of boys and girls is rarely stated or analyzed to explain these differences. The negative impact of witnessing violence seems to be mediated by children's perceptions of the intensity and frequency of events.

Witnessing violence can lead to feelings of fear, anger, mistrust, and alienation in children. Existing studies on homeless and sexually exploited youth point to the occurrence of domestic violence as a causative agent. For many children, witnessing or being directly brutalized by violence in the home forces them to seek shelter and affection elsewhere. The literature on girl gangs suggests that girls tend to seek a sense of belonging in gangs as a result of the violence they either witness or experience in their homes (Artz, 1998). Evidence also suggests that boys who have witnessed violence are more likely to be violent in their relationships in adolescence and young adulthood (Carlson, 1990; Jaffe, et al., 1990; Mercer, 1987), whereas girls may repeat the patterns of victimization they have witnessed. However, methodological problems flaw the studies of child witnessing of violence beginning with the problem of definition: it is unknown what types of violence exposure child witnesses have experienced. This is an under-researched area and process/outcome studies are rare.

Systemic Factors

Sexual Harassment

The link between sexism and violence is rendered explicit in examinations of sexual harassment. Studies focusing on sexual harassment within schools identify the manner in which girls are inferiorized, stigmatized, trivialized, and abused because of their gender. A survey of 4,200 girls between 9 and 19 years of age, revealed that 80% had experienced sexual harassment in some form, and half reported encountering it daily (Stein, 1993).

The effects of sexual harassment are far-reaching. Girls often drop out of school, develop eating and other disorders, experience a lack of self-esteem, and suffer from depression and isolation.

Sexual harassment, in its multiple forms, is a poignant reminder to girls that they are not valued, and that they occupy a subordinate place in the patriarchal system.

Dating Violence

The literature reviews also focused on dating violence as a pervasive phenomenon experienced by girls and young women. One study that surveyed 800 girls in the Atlantic region found that 22% had experienced an incident of psychological or physical abuse. Another 19% had experienced sexual coercion, and 29% of the girls reported having experienced some form of dating violence (Byers and Price, 1997). A study of male students at the University of Manitoba found that 43% had perpetrated some form of violence in their dating relationships. The research suggests that males who adhere to traditional sex-role stereotypes and attitudes, and whose peers also support violent behaviour, are more likely to engage in dating violence (Barnes, et al., 1991).

More recently, eco-systemic approaches have been employed to include an examination of social, cultural, and societal influences which contribute to violence. This is particularly true of feminist investigations of body-image, eating disorders, and gender-biased messages perpetuated by the dominant media. These investigations highlight the role of power imbalances suggesting that girls by virtue of their age and gender are at increased risk for violence. This analysis is borne out when one considers that adolescent wives (between the ages of 15 and 19 years of age) are murdered three times more often than adult wives (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1994).

Sexual Exploitation

The issue of sexual exploitation of girls also highlights the intersecting effects of age and gender. Existing studies point to the connection between child abuse and teenage prostitution. More recent studies have also brought to light socio-structural factors contributing to the sexual exploitation of girls and young women. Contributing factors that have been identified include: previous experiences of violence in the home; poverty; un/under employment; homelessness; the devaluation and sexualization of women as commodities; urban-rural migration; and the use of prostitution as a vehicle by which to access basic resources such as shelter, food, money, and immigration status. Changes in law do not have the desired effect as they fail to address the basic, underlying causes of trafficking and exploitation. Existing laws tend to criminalize young women (Lowman, 1987; 1998). Additionally, girls are usually controlled by male pimps, whereas boys are not. The widely varied age restrictions on eligibility to programs and services compound the situation of street-involved and sexually exploited girls (Suleman and McLarty, 1997). Studies also underline the role of patriarchal and colonial attitudes as major factors underpinning the sex trade. As well, a key element in the international trafficking of girls and young women is the use of the Internet for advertising sex tours and pornography (Hughes, 1996; 1997). Poverty and lack of alternative economic opportunities however, remain significant factors contributing to the trafficking and sexual exploitation of girls and young women.

Marginalized Girls

The review of current literature dealing with marginalized girls illustrates the impact of systemic structures of oppression in terms of shaping the lived reality of girls. While the literature on sexual abuse collapses gender distinctions into the overall category of “children” and “youth,” similarly, marginalized girls’ concerns are collapsed into categories dealing with their specific community identities, or universalized into the general category of “girls” wherein white, middle-class girls are the norm. Alternatively, much of the literature focuses on marginalized girls within the framework of delinquency, most notably, their participation in gangs and criminal activities. Most of the latter literature tends to be American. However, its influence on Canadian studies is apparent in the references to Aboriginal and working class girls primarily within the context of sexual crime. More recent studies depart from this preoccupation by concentrating on the intergenerational transmission of violence and vulnerability to violence within the context of colonization and its legacy (Razack, 1994a; 1994b).

The specific interactions between race, class, sexuality, disability, and gender are rarely examined or acknowledged in most Canadian literature. Nevertheless, as European and American studies tend to suggest, the interlocking effects of sexism and racism, and/or sexual orientation combined with disability, racism, and classism, constitute complex interactions of multiple systems of domination. These systems constitute a form of violence unto themselves, and markedly shape the reality, life chances, and choices that are available to marginalized girls. That girls who are lesbians/racialized, have disabilities, or come from rural, poor, or working class backgrounds, and face unique barriers with respect to accessing services is well documented. Moreover, because of their marginalized status, many of these girls are more vulnerable to other forms of violence. The higher rates of suicide, sexual abuse, and addictions among girls from specific marginalized groups attest to their increased vulnerability and isolation. The multiple forms of oppression they experience undermine the development of a positive sense of self and social identity. Their lack of “fit” further isolates them. As targeted groups, they are particularly vulnerable to hate crimes, and more subtle expressions of homophobia, racism, classism and ableism. State mandated forms of violence such as forced relocation, child apprehension and adoption strategies, and official residency requirements, also impact on the lives of these girls and interact with other forms of oppression.

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE AND INVENTORIES

Prevention and intervention strategies were reviewed both in the context of current literature, and inventories of existing programs and services by the four Centres. A compilation of the regional inventories is presented in Appendix III. The review indicates that for the most part, interventions

and prevention strategies are not gender-specific. The exception is those programs that deal with teen pregnancy and parenting, with the majority being directed at adolescent girls. Further, most programs are framed as interventions, and through this avenue, communicate prevention strategies. Only a few of the reviewed programs present prevention in the context of promoting children's well-being.

Analysis of the inventories compiled by the different centres reveals that existing programs and services cluster around the following issues: (1) early childhood intervention in the form of parenting programs, adolescent pregnancy, prenatal care, and counselling; (2) children/adolescents who have witnessed or experienced violence in the family; (3) family counselling and prevention/intervention for families; (4) recreational programs for youth; (5) one-to-one counselling and drop-in support groups and shelters; (6) crisis intervention services; (7) conflict resolution programs, many of which also operate under the rubric of "youth crime"; (8) programs that facilitate egalitarian interactions; (9) self-esteem programs; (10) dating violence programs; (11) services for street youth; and (12) school-based programs which cover a host of issues, such as bullying.

However, many of these programs are reactive rather than proactive. Further, many school-based programs are implemented in isolation from other programs and educational initiatives. Community-based prevention and intervention programs tend to be similarly isolated, and operate on a project-by-project basis without continuity and with an over-reliance on voluntary labour. A cohesive, well-orchestrated anti-violence program which is gender-specific and integrates both service providers (including health, justice, and education) as well as communities, is lacking or seemingly not apparent in overviews of existing programs.

Programs which deal with violence as it is mediated by homophobia, racism, classism, and ableism are scarce. Just as most programs tend to be gender-neutral, existing programs tend not to account for the specificities of the experiences of the interlocking effects of race, class, ability, sexual orientation, and gender. Instead the realities and needs of Aboriginal, immigrant/refugee, racialized girls, young lesbians, girls with disabilities, girls in foster care, and poor or working class girls tend to be collapsed and universalized into a homogenous category of "girls" or "children."

Successful early intervention programs for at-risk teenagers or adult mothers begin during pregnancy or shortly after childbirth, and constitute long-term interventions. They are multi-dimensional, involving home services, parental education, and child-care services. They are aimed at developing parenting skills as well as general life-skills (employment qualifications, further education, etc.). These programs generally operate under the rubric of "community services."

Most programs for sexual abuse are directed at children, whereas most programs for physical abuse and neglect are directed toward parents. Programs dealing with psychological abuse involve both parents and children. Few of these programs are directed specifically at girls, and even fewer

consider the differential socialization of girls and boys. Nor have these programs been extensively or systematically evaluated. Most are self-evaluated in response to funders' demands.

It is apparent from the literature, that sexual or physical abuse programs need to incorporate a multidimensional perspective on child abuse and neglect, taking into consideration the impact of abuse on childhood development and children's ability to comprehend terms and concepts, interpret situations, and evaluate their safety. Programs that embrace a holistic perspective would be most beneficial to children between the ages of 7 and 12 years. However, the differential impact of programs on boys and girls needs to be carefully considered. The literature reviewed suggests that some prevention programs actually increase girls' fear of violence and responsibility. Girls with a history of sexual victimization respond differently to such programs, as compared with those who do not have such a history (Hanson and Gidycz, 1993).

A variety of school-based prevention programs have been introduced over the past few years. These programs tend to address myths about violence, victim-blaming attitudes, effects of date and acquaintance rape on victims, and resources that are available to victims. However, in many cases these programs assume a point of departure which stresses improving the communication skills of both genders, empowering girls to say "no," and teaching boys how to respond in these situations. They operate under the premise that if both genders are taught the right communication skills, the incidence of date rape would decline dramatically. Such a perspective fails to take into consideration socio-cultural factors, socio-political values, or the gendered nature of sexualized violence. In other words, they do not address the reality of male violence and the patriarchal beliefs and attitudes that underpin it. Nor do they tend to address the continuum of violence. Existing research points to the failure of such programs in changing male attitudes toward woman/girl abuse (Bohner and Schwarz, 1996; Gilbert, et al., 1991).

More recent primary prevention programs tend to incorporate a contextual analysis, highlighting the social causes contributing to violence against girls and young women. However, these programs tend to employ a gender-neutral perspective, i.e., they do not emphasize that perpetrators are usually males. They also tend to focus on issues of self-esteem, conflict resolution, and empathy. Studies note that girls tend toward empathic behaviour which impedes them from disclosing abuse and reinforces feelings of guilt and shame (Gilligan, 1982). The focus on conflict resolution in some programs is also problematic. As Gamache and Snapp (1995) note, violence does not typically stem from conflict. Instead of emphasizing the abuse of power and control, the conflict resolution model creates an illusory level playing field for all participants. The power and control that boys have over girls is completely ignored.

The literature underscores the need for differential, gender-specific violence prevention programs which are multi-dimensional and employ multi-disciplinary approaches. However, the regional inventories reveal a scarcity of such programs.

FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS

Each of the four centres conducted focus groups consisting of service providers, researchers, teachers, and advocates, and girls in its respective region. The BC/Yukon FREDA Centre held 6 focus groups, 2 at each of the following sites: Victoria, Vancouver, and Whitehorse, Yukon. The RESOLVE Tri-provincial Network conducted a total of 6 focus groups with service providers and 2 with girls. Service provider focus groups were held in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, and focus groups with girls were held in Saskatoon, and Winnipeg. The Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children in London, Ontario, conducted 5 focus groups with girls at the following sites: Ottawa, Toronto, and London, Ontario. Additionally, 9 focus groups with service providers, community leaders, policy-makers, researchers, and advocates, were conducted in Toronto, London, Thunder Bay, and Huron County, Ontario. In the Atlantic region, 8 focus groups were held, 2 in Newfoundland, 3 in New Brunswick, 2 in Prince Edward Island, and 1 in Nova Scotia. A full analysis of the regional focus group results can be found in Appendix II.

Common Themes Across Focus Groups

Girls, service providers, researchers, advocates and community leaders who attended these groups acknowledged the pervasive nature of violence against girls and young women. They noted the absence of gender-specific anti-violence programming, and the lack of safe spaces for girls. Media images and the general devaluation of girls and women, were cited as common factors impacting on the development of identity and self-esteem among girls. Prevention and intervention programs were identified as being inadequate both in terms of their continuity, scope, and approaches. Participants identified the need for programs to be well-funded, to have a broader scope in terms of involving community, parents, aggressors, and victims. The need for ongoing funding for such programs was identified as critical.

Awareness of the range of violence experienced by girls, as well as an understanding of its underpinnings, was identified as a major need by both service providers and girls. Focus group participants revealed that a narrow interpretation of violence informs popular understanding of the issue, as well as the more common approaches to prevention. It was noted that violence tends to be construed as physical abuse, and that sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence are often normalized and accepted both by girls and boys. Girls lack the language by which to identify such violence. It was noted that many girls are re-victimized when they disclose abuse. Their concerns and experiences are not treated seriously or considered legitimate by the authorities.

Lack of access to services and outreach to marginalized girls in particular, was a common theme mentioned by focus group participants. There is a critical lack of coordination and information sharing among service providers.

The sections below detail the common themes raised by focus group participants.

Programs and Services

- Very few programs are aimed at prevention. Most are aimed at intervention. Further, since prevention often takes place through intervention, service providers and experts argued against the use of these two mutually exclusive definitions. Instead, they suggested using a “harms reduction” conceptual framework.
- The lack of continued funding for prevention programs results in a built-in capacity for failure for many of these programs. This is due primarily to the intermittent implementation of these programs which is contingent on funding; the over-use of voluntary labour, or the reliance of the program on the presence of one core person; the tailoring of programs to capitalize on different but related issues in order to get funding; and, the piecemeal funding afforded to anti-violence programs where a multiplicity of organizations apply on a project basis to one funder and are allocated minimal amounts. Participants observed that programs aimed at young offenders, and applications couched in terms of crime prevention are given more substantial funding.
- There is a lack of coordination and information exchange among service providers. Service providers were often not aware of other programs being implemented in their regions. Partnerships and sharing of resources would alleviate this gap in knowledge. This lack of coordination is also manifested in the confusion surrounding the use of different terminologies about violence.
- Follow-up to prevention programs is lacking. Rather, most are implemented on a sporadic basis, and end upon completion of the program. Programs are not tied into existing community resources that can provide the necessary follow-up.
- Gender-specific programs are desperately needed in schools. There are very few such programs, and most fail to embrace a critical perspective. There is a tendency to present such programs in a gender-neutral manner, or as correctives for miscommunication.
- Positive role models, both male and female are needed. Boys and men also need to get involved in the struggle to end gender-based violence. However, the educational approaches for boys have to be different, and must be based on a recognition of the differential impact of gender-based socialization practices.
- Prevention programs need to be introduced at every level throughout the developmental cycle. Arbitrary age categories, i.e., 6-12, 12-18, cannot be applied, and when applied, tend to be divisive. Prevention efforts must be directed at the pre-natal, kindergarten, grade school, high school and university levels.
- There is a concentration of school-based prevention programs. However, there are no or few

resources within schools to deal with disclosures, and to provide counselling and support.

- Programs need to be made more accessible to girls. More outreach is needed, particularly to those groups of girls that are marginalized because of race, class, sexual orientation, disability and geographic location. The needs and realities of street-involved girls also have to be incorporated into prevention programs.
- Programs need to embrace a more holistic perspective, taking into account the differential realities of girls from marginalized communities, and using a socio-cultural analysis of the causes, consequences, and contributing factors of violence.
- A major systemic obstacle to preventing violence against girls and young women, is the current climate of conservatism and backlash. Public denial of gender-based violence has also influenced funders and their willingness to contribute to programs that are framed within a gender-specific and critical paradigm.
- Lack of confidentiality as a consequence of age-related criteria poses a major challenge to girls who are trying to obtain services. Service providers are caught between trying to find adequate resources and meeting the age-related eligibility criteria imposed by social, medical, and legal services.

Issues facing Girls

- Girls experience a continuum of violence, ranging from sexual harassment to rape. Societal acceptance of violence was identified as a major issue. Violence has become normalized. Self-esteem, self-image, and peer pressure are significant issues of concern to girls. Self harm (suicide, eating disorders, etc.), and the internalization of stereotypes and negative images of girls, have create a “girl-poisoning environment.” Depression in girls is a symptom of this environment, as is girl-on-girl violence. Girls talked about having to “watch their backs,” and living in a “war zone.”
- Media images were identified across the country as impacting on girls’ sense of self-esteem, body-image, and gender expectations. Focus group participants recommended that efforts be encouraged to challenge these images through media literacy, advocacy, the availability of positive role models and mentors, and through artistic expression.
- Girls overwhelmingly identified the need for “safe” and girl-specific spaces in schools, shelters, and services. Such spaces were viewed as being critical for reasons of safety, positive development of self, and identity formation.
- Girls expressed the need for: more gender-specific support groups; self-defence strategies; for boys and men to be educated about violence; systems for disclosing violence that are more

accessible and equitable; evidence of justice in dealing with perpetrators; and public education.

- Isolation of girls from rural communities and other marginalized communities (by virtue of race, class, sexual orientation, disabilities), was noted as a key issue and constitutes a formidable barrier to accessing services.
- For Aboriginal girls, the loss of spirit and culture, racism, and lack of a holistic approach to violence prevention, were identified as major issues. Larger social issues including oppression, lack of employment and educational opportunities, child-care, and residential abuse were also cited.
- There is a high degree of cynicism among girls with respect to their ability to access justice from various agencies within the criminal justice system. Girls reported having their experiences trivialized and dismissed when they approached different “systems.” They also reported experiences of being re-victimized by the justice system.
- Girls are confronted with a double-bind message concerning sexual abuse/assault. On the one hand, they are encouraged to disclose such abuse, and on the other hand, they are threatened with retaliation if they choose to do so. Peer pressure is one mechanism by which girls are silenced. The other is the dismissive attitudes they encounter when disclosing abuse to family and others.
- Girls who manifest violent behaviours tend to have either witnessed violence at home, or have personally experienced sexual abuse and/or sexual assault. This is one of the reasons why early intervention/prevention is so critical.
- Girls need to be involved in the planning of prevention strategies and programs. Programs based on research which examines the attitudes, skills, and beliefs of girls who have survived abuse and who resist violence are needed. Where girls have been involved in the development and intervention of programs, the success rate of these programs has been high.
- Poverty and substance abuse were other factors identified by focus group participants as contributing to a negative environment for girls. Growing up in poverty reduces the life-chances for girls, as does substance abuse (by themselves, or by parents/guardians). Poverty was also cited as contributing to the sexual exploitation of girls.
- Focus group participants identified education about violence as an urgent need. Girls need to be taught how to define their experiences of violence, where to seek support and assistance, and how to deal with the impact of such violence. Issues of power and control, both in relationships and on a systemic level, greatly affect the lives of girls. The misuse of power by others, and the powerlessness experienced by girls, were identified as key issues.

- Sexuality and sexual orientation were identified as significant issues for girls, as was teen pregnancy, and sexually transmittable diseases. The vulnerability of girls to coercive sexual relationships and the sexual exploitation of marginalized and street-involved girls was highlighted.
- For many girls, age and consent issues posed a major barrier to accessing services. Caught between the various age-related categories for eligibility for programs, girls often find themselves too old to be “children,” and too young to be considered adult “women.”
- Girls are unaware of their rights. Education regarding human rights would provide a necessary corrective to this situation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this research reveal that violence against girls is common and endemic in Canadian society. That such violence is becoming normalized and increasingly accepted as a way of life is indicative of the need for urgent action. Canadian girls are subjected to a continuum of violence, ranging from sexist remarks, sexual harassment, exclusionary attitudes and behaviours, to rape, battering, and murder. Safe gender-specific spaces, programs, and services for girls are necessary and more effective in the long-term.

The research conducted by four of the Alliance of the Five Research Centres on Violence (AFRCV) reveals that: (1) there are few violence prevention initiatives in place; (2) existing initiatives are under-funded, sporadic, and intermittent; (3) there is lack of coordination among programs and an integration of programs with existing services; (4) very few programs are gender-specific despite their need and demonstrated success of such programs; and (5) that the dichotomy between violence prevention and intervention is illusory. A more effective model would begin from the perspective of “harms reduction.” Current violence prevention strategies are concentrated in high schools and aimed at teens. A more holistic approach is required if the issue of violence is to be dealt with in an adequate manner. Strategies should begin at an early age and involve all parties. More importantly, current strategies need to employ a critical, gender-based perspective in locating and defining the causes and consequences of violence.

The research also reveals that effective programs need to be gender-specific as the outcomes and impacts vary for boys and girls. The differential gender-role socialization of girls and boys needs to be recognized and used as a point of departure for the development of programs and services. As well, the definition of violence requires broadening to include all of the subtle and explicit forms of violence to which girls are currently subjected. A critical, holistic, gender-based, and anti-exclusionary perspective is necessary. This would allow for the inclusion of other forms of violence, and for the relevance of programs to marginalized girls.

The issues confronting marginalized girls demand immediate attention. There is a paucity of Canadian research in this area. Hence, the needs of marginalized girls do not figure prominently in the literature, nor in the descriptions of programs and services outlined in the inventories. Nevertheless, the particular socio-structural conditions affecting the communities to which these girls belong, highlights the potential of their enhanced vulnerability to violence. This is a direct consequence of the interlocking nature of various forms of oppression and their cumulative impact on shaping the life-chances and experiences of marginalized girls.

The girls who participated in focus groups across the country voiced similar concerns. They identified media images as major influences, shaping their definitions of themselves and their gender, as well as expectations regarding normative, sanctioned behaviours and appearances. In order to counter the detrimental impact of media messages, it is critical to integrate media literacy and advocacy initiatives, and to encourage girls and young women to develop their own forms of alternative media and self-expression.

The devaluation of girls and women underpins the gender-based violence directed at them. However, girls and young women tend to internalize their responses which then manifest in forms that are highly detrimental to their growth and their potential. Eating disorders, substance abuse, self-harm, attempts at suicide, and loss of self-esteem are but a few of the myriad of forms through which responses to violence are internalized. Combined with racism, homophobia, classism, isolation and ableism, this devaluation can be extreme and can result in self-hatred and the ultimate destruction of self. Socio-structural factors such as poverty, unemployment, and restrictive immigration laws exacerbate the situation, forcing many girls to flee abusive homes and communities, and to seek refuge and relief on the streets where they are subjected to further abuse.

Girls and service providers hold little hope for change. Yet in order to begin the task of dismantling gender-based violence, primary and secondary intervention programs are a necessity. That some programs have been successful can be evidenced from existing research. In order to render current programs more effective, their scope, time-span, and sustainability has to be ensured. Further, programs have to be grounded in research and the lived experience of girls. However, given the historically entrenched nature of violence against women and girls, any form of prevention would, by necessity, have to employ multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary approaches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A clear, coordinated government mandate on violence prevention which embraces a gender specific and culturally sensitive perspective, is urgently required. Solutions and programs cannot afford to be compartmentalized, or operated on a piece-meal basis.
- Prevention and intervention need to be conceptualized within a “harms reduction” model as intervention often leads to prevention, and the two are not mutually exclusive categories in social life.
- There is a clear need for research and programs which are gender-specific, and which take as their point of departure, the reality that socialization practices differ for girls and boys. Girls respond differently to violence.
- There is an urgent need for safe spaces for girls. This includes “girls only” spaces within schools, as well as gender-specific shelters and services for street involved and high risk girls. Additionally, viable gender-specific exiting mechanisms need to be identified and implemented for street-involved girls, and girls who are sexually exploited. Sexually exploited girls must be given viable alternatives, economic compensation and employment training and opportunities.
- There needs to be a recognition by government and society at large regarding the oppression of Aboriginal and other cultural groups, and the need for culture-specific programming within a critical gender-based and structural perspective. This will enable a clearer definition and understanding of violence as it is manifested both within and against these communities.
- Violence needs to be understood and conceptualized as operating on two interconnected levels: the level of the individual within a family, and the societal level. There needs to be a recognition of the contribution of larger social forces such as racism, homophobia, poverty, unemployment, geographic and social isolation, and their intersection with patriarchal beliefs and values, which translate and shape the lived reality of girls and women.
- The impact of municipal, provincial, territorial, and federal policies on structuring and shaping the lives of girls in contemporary society needs to be examined. For instance, policies which have a direct impact on homeless girls, such as panhandling laws, need to be analyzed and documented. Similarly, the impact of immigration laws on facilitating the trafficking of girls as sex trade workers, domestic workers, and child brides, needs to be investigated.
- Psychological abuse needs to be defined both in the literature and in practice. Associated behaviours must be identified and taught to girls as well as service providers. Girls need to be taught the language to define abuse, and to be alerted to the resources that are available in their communities.

- There is an urgent need for more services, particularly to those communities that are isolated by virtue of geographic distance, cultural factors, and economic conditions. More emphasis needs to be placed on outreach strategies aimed at these groups.
- Services need to be coordinated, and service providers encouraged to obtain a gender-based and socio-structural analysis of the contributing factors and effects of violence.
- Anti-violence education must involve school administrators, teachers, parents, and community agencies. In order to be effective, such programs not only have to be gender-specific, but must also be integrated with other educational and community initiatives, and address connections between homophobia, racism, and sexism.
- Programs which have demonstrated success should be universalized and implemented in other geographic locations.
- Systematic evaluation is required and should be encouraged. Programs should be provided with funds to have such evaluations conducted.
- Institutional disregard of harassment gives implicit permission for it to continue unabated and publicly in schools, thus trivializing girls' experience, normalizing violence, and encouraging boys to move along the continuum of aggressive behaviours toward battering and rape. Intervention programs in schools therefore, need to be gender-specific, and schools need to publicly demonstrate their commitment by developing policies that outline the non-acceptance of sexual harassment and other forms of violence.
- Harms reduction strategies which are grounded in a critical socio-political analysis of violence are needed. Equal opportunity tactics do not work when gendered power imbalances exist. Rather, equity models that explore policies and practices which address systemic barriers need to be implemented.
- A community development approach needs to be implemented in order to ensure ownership of the issue by community groups. Ownership helps to alleviate mistrust and alienation.
- Incremental planning of programs needs to be used in order to facilitate formal evaluations at all stages of the program. Thus, stage one outcomes influence the planning and implementation of stage two, etc. This type of planning offers an opportunity for community participation.
- Family violence and dating violence prevention programs have tended to describe abuse without providing the necessary skills for the development of healthy relationships. There is a need for the dissemination of information about healthy relationships, and the portrayal of positive role models.

- Raising awareness about violence continues to be a priority. However, the definition of violence used needs to be broadened to include the continuum of violent behaviours that impact upon and affect the lives of girls, boys, and entire communities.
- The devaluation of women as it is communicated through the popular media needs to be challenged at every level. Despite existing policies and legislation, the media continue to portray women in ways that are unrealistic, and that have a detrimental impact on girls and young women. Media literacy and media advocacy initiatives need to be supported by all levels of government.
- Age and consent issues need to be clarified and researched with regard to their impact on the accessibility of services for girls.
- Communities should be funded to conduct safety audits. This would involve all sectors of the community, raise awareness about violence, and provide girls and women with critical information.
- Funding needs to be long-term and committed, not project-specific, if it is to make a difference. All types of violence that affect girls have been proven to be cyclical and in order to break that cycle, it is necessary to have ongoing programming. Long-term, ongoing programs covering the full spectrum of prevention through harms reduction, as well as various levels of intervention, are needed to make a significant difference.
- There is a paucity of research on violence as it affects Canadian girls. Additional research which examines the broad spectrum of violence (state-level violence, homophobia, racism, classism, ableism) needs to be encouraged.
- Health Canada's National Clearinghouse on Family Violence should be utilized as the site for the collating and dissemination of current academic and community-based research on violence against girls and models for harms reduction.

These recommendations do not fully reflect the range of concerns that were articulated in focus groups across the country. However, they do suggest areas of future investigation and immediate action.

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QUEBEC REPORT

QUEBEC CONTEXT

In Quebec today, the issue of violence against young people is very present. Wherever it appears, violence is a growing topic of debate: violence in the family, violence in schools, violence in dating relationships, sexual abuse in sports, etc. In November 1998, wide-spread concern about violence against young people and girls in particular was confirmed when the Quebec government launched an educational campaign with the theme, *Violence isn't always physical, but it always leaves scars*, and focusing on violence in dating relationships and sexual abuse. Early in 1999, the Quebec government is expected to announce its new governmental orientations against sexual aggression. Today no one doubts the importance of acting to prevent violence against children.

Furthermore, in the past few years there have been major restructurings in the Quebec health and social services, education (reform of the educational system and teaching programs) and daycare sectors (new structures, broader access to services, new programs). All these sectors are crucial when dealing with children and adolescents, whether girls or boys; they play particularly important roles in the effort to prevent violence.

These realities frame the specific Quebec context in which the research took place: on the one hand, the social infrastructures of health and education have undergone a number of shocks recently, and on the other hand, the issue of prevention of violence against children and teenagers is more important than ever. We structured the research according to the four other Canadian Centres on violence. The four steps were as follows: (1) literature review, (2) violence prevention programs inventory, (3) focus groups and (4) reports on our findings. We will elaborate on each step below.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Each of the five centres in Canada involved in the Violence Prevention and the Girl Child project, except for CRI-VIFF, was responsible for surveying the literature on a related topic. CRI-VIFF, the Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la violence familiale et la violence faite aux femmes [Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Family Violence and Violence Against Women], undertook to review all the literature in French on the six most important topics: (1) children who have witnessed domestic violence, (2) dating violence, (3) sexual assault, (4) socialization, (5) child abuse and (6) sexual harassment.

In a search for literature on the six subjects of interest, we queried a number of databases: PsycLIT, ERIC, SWAB, Sociofile, Familia, Repères, Bibliothèque nationale du Québec. We turned up about a hundred or so references, which enabled us to produce a picture of the current situation of French-language research in the field. We have also included the English publications of researchers who had produced their research in French. For the most part, we limited ourselves to papers that dealt with research results.

This report shows that there is little epidemiological research in French, except for a few studies on child abuse. The research in some of the areas – children who have witnessed conjugal violence, dating violence, sexual assault – was carried out largely in response to specific needs identified through practice. This explains the high number of evaluative studies in these areas. Other researchers, however, have examined factors associated with the various forms of violence or their consequences.

As we shall see, despite all the work that has been done demonstrating the difference between the violence experienced by girls and boys, we found little research in which results were broken down by the children's sex.

We also found that some topics, especially child abuse and sexual abuse, were more popular than others. In the 1980s, a great deal of work was done on sexual harassment, but essentially with regard to women. Other topics, such as children who have witnessed domestic violence or dating violence, are more recent additions to the literature. To our great astonishment, the relationship between socialization and violence was not addressed at all in any of the literature we reviewed.

In conclusion, although violence against girls has been studied extensively, a great deal of research still remains to be done, especially on the factors associated with the effective prevention of violence and on the socialization of girls and boys.

Children who Witness Domestic Violence

In cases of domestic violence, priority has been given to working with women battered by their husbands. But over the years, the realization has grown that this violence also harms the couple's children and that they have specific needs. Therefore, in recent years, intervention programs specially adapted for children exposed to domestic violence have been developed in Quebec (Gagnon, 1994; Garceau Durand, 1990; Grand'Maison, 1997).

Quebec teams have now begun to conduct both action-research and evaluative research in this area. Pâquet-Deehy, Proulx and Hamel (1997) evaluated a group therapy program at Batshaw Youth and Family Centres for children and teenagers exposed to spousal violence. A nonexperimental protocol involving seven therapy groups was used. The results revealed that group therapy helped young people feel less isolated and talk freely about the violence they had witnessed. The authors feel that the importance of maintaining therapy groups for children and teens exposed to domestic

violence cannot be overemphasized:

Groups let young people break out of their isolation, try out new behaviour in a safe environment, see that they are not the only ones in their situation or the only ones who feel the way they do, and give and receive help. Through this positive experience, they can develop empathic attitudes and supportive behaviour (p.266).

Another team, Beaudoin, Côté, Delisle, Gaboury, Guénette and Lessard (1998), evaluated two group therapy programs for children exposed to spousal violence. The first, “Re-Socialization,” was designed, and is led, by counsellors who work in shelters for battered women and their children. The other, “Ensemble ... on découvre,” was developed by the Sainte-Foy–Sillery CLSC [local health and social services centre] to meet the needs of young clients who had witnessed domestic violence. The preliminary findings of Beaudoin *et al.* (1998) indicate that improvements had been seen by the end of the two group intervention programs, in both helping the children feel less responsible for the violence done to their mothers and in resolving conflicts. The authors noted that the children who had been through the “Re-Socialization” program were more aware of what constituted violence, while those who had been through the “Ensemble ... on découvre” program were more aware of their own personal capabilities. Other authors (Lancup, 1995; Alarie and Rose, 1989) have also reported on experimental group programs for children who have either witnessed domestic violence or been victims of violence themselves, but the programs have not been evaluated.

The studies that have evaluated group therapy for children have used a pre- and post-test protocol without control or comparison groups. Future studies should be designed to include a control group so that results can be validated.

Interestingly, more and more programs for and studies of children who have witnessed domestic violence are now including adolescents. This is true of the program evaluated by Pâquet-Deehy *et al.* (1997) and the study by Manion and Wilson (1995), which analyses the relationship between five forms of abuse (including exposure to violence) and risk behaviour in adolescents.

In Quebec, several studies of children exposed to domestic violence are currently in progress. Turcotte, Pâquet-Deehy and Beaudoin are conducting a comparative analysis of types of intervention for children who have witnessed domestic violence. Fortin, Cyr and Lachance are analyzing protective factors for children exposed to spousal violence. And the Côte des Neiges CLSC and its collaborators are studying the consequences of exposure to domestic violence in children of various cultural communities.

In conclusion, some general observations can be made. First, it must be acknowledged that children who have witnessed domestic violence need therapy and services to alleviate the negative impact of these experiences. Second, efforts must be made to help prevent them from resorting to violence or becoming victims themselves. Last but not least, there is no doubt that more research is needed

on the subject, and that a partnership between research and practice must be established, for the sake of the children.

Dating Violence

In Quebec, over the last ten years, an increasing interest has been developed on the theme of dating violence. Although it is a serious matter that is much discussed, only Lavoie and her colleagues have done work on the issue. In 1992, in conjunction with a community organization that had developed expertise in the area of violence against women, they put together a project to prevent violence in young couples, VIRAJ (*Violence dans les relations amoureuses des jeunes*) (Lavoie, Vézina, Gosselin and Robitaille, 1994). It was the first of its kind in Quebec.

VIRAJ, which targets students in Grade 9 and 10, has three objectives:² (1) to change the attitudes and behaviour of young people (boys and girls) in their dating relationships (primary prevention); (2) to modify individual or social risk factors associated with violence; and (3) to detect young people in violent relationships and offer them services. The program is based on three key concepts: control, inequality in sex roles and peer pressure. A distinguishing feature of VIRAJ is “its exclusive focus on dating relationships and its handling of the themes of control and psychological, physical and sexual violence” (Lavoie, Dufort, Hébert and Vézina, 1997: 10).

After a two-year period in which the pilot project was designed and implemented, the researchers conducted a preliminary assessment (Lavoie, Vézina, Piché and Boivin, 1995), which found that the attitudes and knowledge of the young people in the program had changed. On the basis of the preliminary assessment, the program was modified. One major change was to have a young man and a young woman lead the program, in an effort to reduce the differential impact of the program on boys and girls.

The final assessment of VIRAJ was published in 1997 (Lavoie *et al.*). Its research protocol was more rigorous, controlling for the effect of using measurements (questionnaires), the effect of the participant selection, and the effect of personal history or other events that might explain the changes noted. The study was quasi-experimental and made use of comparison groups. A total of 817 teens took part in the research.

The findings indicate that VIRAJ was effective in changing attitudes toward dating violence. The change was notable for 4 to 12 months after the program had ended. Furthermore, the authors found no negative effects on the attitudes of girls and boys: no deterioration was seen and there was even a positive change in the teens who had had the most negative attitudes at the beginning of the program. In their conclusion, the authors pointed out that the “program does not, however, succeed in calling into question ingrained attitudes concerning the necessary subjugation of women held by some members of ethnic groups” (Lavoie *et al.*, 1997: 103).

² VIRAJ has undergone certain changes since it was started in 1992. The information on program content given here concerns the current program.

VIRAJ is now widely used in Quebec schools, chiefly in the personal and social skills course offered in high schools. In recent years, the VIRAJ program has been expanded to include school staff development (Lavoie, Vézina, Gosselin and Robitaille, 1994) and hotline volunteer training (Lavoie and Vézina, 1996). Since VIRAJ was implemented, many aids (mainly videos and plays) have also been developed by workers in the field. These aids have recently been catalogued (Mercier, Rondeau and Tremblay, 1998).

Lavoie and her collaborators are currently working on a study of factors associated with violence in teenage dating relationships. As far as we know, it is the first of its kind in Quebec.

Sexual Violence

Of the various forms of violence, sexual violence does not seem to be the ones that girls most commonly experience. Yet the issue has been written about extensively, and many studies have been done on the subject of sexual abuse and incest. Sexual violence is a phenomenon that has been addressed by various disciplines, so there are a number of approaches and views on this question.

The most comprehensive report published in Quebec is without a doubt the one by the Groupe de travail sur les agressions à caractère sexuel [Work group on sexual violence] titled *Les agressions sexuelles STOP* (Quebec, 1995), which looks at victims and abusers, lists available resources, and draws up guidelines and measures to prevent sexual violence. Earlier, Hamel and Cadrin (1991), in partnership with three institutions (Community Health Department, Rimouski General Hospital and Youth Protection Branch, Bas du Fleuve Social Service Centre), had published a review of the literature revealing the extent of the problem of sexual abuse of children. Also on Quebec's North Shore, Tiersen (1989) surveyed the literature from the region to get a picture of the problem locally.

Julien and Saint-Martin (Quebec Council on the Status of Women, 1995) studied incest, analysing it from a feminist perspective and highlighting the relationship between incest and violence against women and children. Other research work has also examined incest, but from different angles. We have also surveyed theoretical writings. In her book *L'éducation sexuelle, l'agression et la prévention chez les enfants et les adolescents* [Sex education and violence prevention for children and adolescents], Gaudreau (1991) addresses the problems surrounding sexual violence. Pauzé and Poirier (1995) published a paper titled *La relation incestueuse père-fille envisagée selon la perspective des théories de la complexité* [Father-daughter incest examined using theories of complexity].

There is also a considerable body of research examining other aspects of sexual violence. Charbonneau and Oxman-Martinez (1996) conducted a survey of the relationships between the problems experienced by children who have been neglected and sexually abused. They performed a statistical analysis of information obtained through questionnaires. For her doctoral thesis, Hotte

(1988) ran a study, with a control group, of the effects of prepubertal incest on girls aged 8 to 14 from families with multiple problems. Cyr (1996) looks at factors associated with the revelation of incest, while that of Lapointe (1998) deals with intergenerational transmission of incest.

A few papers deal with the prevention of sexual violence, such as those by Théberge (1995) and Nadeau (1996), who published a paper titled *Peut-on protéger nos filles sans stigmatiser les délinquants sexuels récidivistes?* [Can we protect our daughters without stigmatizing repeat sexual offenders?] Saucier (1985) suggests means of preventing incest. Some work has also dealt with the effectiveness of sexual abuse prevention programs. In 1997, Tourigny wrote a literature review on the effectiveness of prevention programs. Boucher, Wright and Lagueux (Association des centres jeunesse du Québec, 1995) wrote a report summing up practices dealing with the sexual abuse of children. Charest, Shilder and Vitaro (1987) conducted a critical analysis of one Canadian and four American programs to prevent child sexual abuse. Caouette (1988) assessed an action-research project for primary prevention of sexual abuse of children, while Hébert, Piché, Lavoie and Poitras (1997) recently evaluated a school-based sexual abuse prevention program designed for elementary schoolchildren. In another look at program evaluation, Gentles and Cassidy did a critical analysis of the philosophy and hypotheses underlying prevention programs as well as the methods used to assess them. Tremblay, Bégin and Perreault (1993) devised and tested an evaluation scale for the CARE sexual abuse prevention program.

In the area of program evaluation, Tourigny, Péladeau, Doyon and Bouchard (1993) evaluated the impact of a treatment program for children sexually abused. The program has a positive impact on all but one of the variables measured. Darveau-Fournier, Lindsay, Tessier and Beaudoin (1993) reviewed the literature on the effectiveness of group intervention for sexually abused children and teens, among other things. In France, Chemin, Drouet, Geoffroy, Jezequel and Joly (1995) did a five-year study assessing casework with incestuous families, based on an examination of individual cases and statistical investigation.

To sum up, the subject of sexual violence is broad, so we do not claim to have presented an exhaustive survey of the literature in French, but rather an overview of the situation. In conclusion, we should point out that despite the diversity and abundance of the literature, we found no population studies or studies on the identification of sexual abusers.

Socialization

It is difficult to review the literature on the socialization of children, for two reasons: first, authors do not agree on a definition of the concept, and second, some studies use socialization as a framework for analysis without actually saying so, which makes it hard to find them. We failed to find a single study that explicitly linked socialization and violence. Given the importance of the socialization process in the whole phenomenon of violence, however, we felt that it was worthwhile spending some time looking up the literature on it.

The socialization of children was a hot topic in the 1980s. At the time, many studies investigated the socialization of children in their various stages of development.

Essentially, the French literature on socialization focusses more specifically on the process itself, especially theories of socialization (Malewska-Peyre and Tap, 1991; Dumont, Jacques and Strayer, 1987), the principle places where socialization occurs (family, daycare, school), and sex-role stereotypes.

As we have mentioned, to our knowledge, there have been no studies devoted specifically to socialization and how it relates to violence. We do know, however, that research with adults has identified links between attitudes toward gender, on the one hand, and the phenomenon of violence, as attacker or victim, on the other. As Bouchard and St-Amant (1996) pointed out in their work on stereotypes and scholastic achievement in girls and boys: “When people believe in a set of sexual stereotypes, their judgments and actions are consistent with the social representations of sex that they have internalized and that influence their decisions” (p. 26). Chamberland, Théorêt, Garon and Roy’s recent work on the “Les Scientifines” program for girls, for instance, may help improve our understanding of the socialization of girls, sex-role stereotypes and the attitudes held by these girls with regard to violence, among other things.

Most of the papers concern both girls and boys, but some deal specifically with the socialization of boys (Roy, 1994; Chamberland, 1991; Chamberland and Côté, 1988; Côté, 1986), while others look at the socialization of girls (Lemieux, 1983).

Children are socialized within the family from the time they are born, so it is therefore not surprising that a great deal has been written on socialization in early childhood. Some basic work on the general concept of socialization in the family has been produced in French, including several papers by Quebec authors (Lemieux and Mercier, 1990; Quintin, 1982). As Leroux pointed out as early as 1983, there is still not enough valid, diverse empirical data on family dynamics and socialization, as published work tends to be theoretical rather than empirical. Some of the papers we found discuss fairly specific topics, such as the role and image of parents (Paquette, 1994; Caouette, 1980), sex roles (parents’ notions of gender and child-rearing practices) (Lavallée and Lavoie, 1990; Joyal, 1986), and sexual stereotypes (Chamberland, 1991; Chamberland and Côté, 1988; Côté, 1986; Joyal, 1986). A study by Pomerleau, Malcuit and Lamarre (1994) also examined socioeconomic factors as contributing to vulnerability in the socialization of children. Another (Royer and Bouchard, 1993) looked at parental stress as a factor in the socialization of 3- and 4-year-old children.

Studies on socialization in the preschool years, chiefly in daycares (now known in Quebec as “early childhood centres”), are numerous and varied (Pomerleau *et al.*, 1994; Chamberland, 1991; Provost, Garon and La Barre, 1991; Jacques, 1989; Chamberland and Côté, 1986; Dumont *et al.*, 1987; Côté, 1986). For many children, a daycare is the first formal place that they are socialized,

and there are quite a few studies on the topic, most of them done in the 1980s and early 1990s (Trudel, Strayer, Jacques and Moss, 1991). Some of the main areas of inquiry were sexual identity (Chamberland, 1991), sex roles (Chamberland and Côté, 1988), and children of immigrant families (Jacques, 1989). One interesting study (Provost *et al.*, 1991) approached socialization in terms of consistency between the family (home) and the daycare.

Several studies have also been done on schoolchildren, especially ages 6 to 12. The first work on the issue looked at stereotypes reinforced by schools and schoolbooks (Aubin and Forest, 1991; Dunnigan, 1978). A number of papers on socialization at this age have examined the links between socialization and success at school: scholastic achievement of girls (Bouchard and St-Amant, 1996) and attitudes (submissiveness and resistance) of girls and boys (Bouchard, St-Amant and Tondreau, 1996; Coulombe and Bouchard, 1993). In the early 1980s, a great deal was written on sexism in textbooks.

We did not find much on the socialization of teenagers, but some work has been done on school achievement (Bouchard and St-Amant, 1996) and submissiveness and resistance in Grade 9 students (Bouchard *et al.*, 1996), as well as young people's perceptions of their families and sex roles (Joyal 1986). Several studies have shown that at school, girls generally outperform boys and persevere more (Bouchard and St-Amant, 1996).

Some studies have also looked at other places where socialization occurs, such as summer camps (Pouliot, 1989). Socialization through the media was a topic addressed by Roy (1994) in a thesis on the social construction of masculine identity through television heroes.

Some recent studies (Bourrassa and Turcotte, 1998) based on interviews with children who had witnessed violence at home and using socialization theory as a framework for analysis have found that boys and girls react differently to violence. We feel that this type of research is well worth pursuing in future.

Maltreatment of Girls

An astonishing amount of research has been done on the subject of child maltreatment. Child maltreatment includes physical, psychological and sexual violence, as well as physical and emotional neglect. Neglect is not covered in this section, as it involves a different set of factors from violence against children; sexual abuse has already been treated in another section.

It should be pointed out that despite the abundance of literature on the issue, as far as we are aware, studies do not seem to distinguish between boys and girls, and this is an important shortcoming. We have therefore considered all the literature found, regardless of the children's sex.

Most studies that refer to the concept of maltreatment approach it from the point of view of physical abuse. A limited number of studies also deal with psychological abuse. Fortin, for

example, in a paper titled “Le mauvais traitement psychologique: une réalité mal connue” (1992), states that it is the most common type of child abuse.

Interestingly, very few of the studies we surveyed have focused on the experiences of the children themselves. Only Palacio-Quintin (1992) has investigated how children perceived themselves as well as their parents.

Another exception caught our attention: a unique examination of the issue of maltreatment with regard to ethnic origin by Tourigny and Bouchard (1990). They compared child maltreatment in French-speaking families and found that children of Haitian origin suffered mainly from physical abuse and behavioural problems, while high-risk situations, behavioural problems and sexual abuse were characteristic of the group of Quebeckers.

Some writings investigate factors associated with maltreatment, such as poverty and communities at risk (Massé and Bastien, 1996). In their study, Chamberland, Bouchard and Beaudry (1986) found a very strong correlation between the economic and social poverty of a neighbourhood and the incidence of child maltreatment in French-speaking areas of the Island of Montreal that confirm these links. They also performed an analysis to establish as rigorously as possible the incidence of child abuse in Montreal over a fixed period of time (Chamberland, Bouchard and Beaudry, 1989). Another risk factor for maltreatment, drug addiction, has been studied by Lacharité (1992). More recently, Fortin (1994, 1995) validated a new scale called the *Mesure de la justification de la violence envers l'enfant* (MJVE); she identified beliefs, attitudes and explanations that enable parents to justify violence against children.

Éthier and Piché (1989) summed up the most relevant studies on child maltreatment. More recently Tessier et al. (1996) brought together studies describing the phenomena. Researchers now conclude that preventing child maltreatment should now be the main concern (Chamberland, Dallaire, Fréchette, Lindsay, Hébert and Cameron, 1996; Chamberland, Dallaire, Fréchette, Lindsay, Hébert, Cameron and Beaudoin, 1996; Bouchard et al., 1994; Durand, Massé and Ouellet, 1989). In response to this prescription, more recent research has focused on evaluation of prevention programs as well as support programs for new parents Ouellet, Durand and Massé (1992) and early childhood programs MacMillan, MacMilland and Offord (1994a, b).

In conclusion, future studies of French-speaking populations should look at the variables of sex and the abuser's characteristics. Though relevant and often cited, the studies mentioned above leave many questions unanswered: Are boys or girls abused more frequently? Are boys and girls abused in the same way? Who are the abusers, and are they men or women? These questions will surely be addressed by future research projects.

Sexual Harassment of Girls

Not much has been written in French on the sexual harassment of girls aged 8–18. It does not take

long to discover that only two or three studies and a handful of magazine articles are all there is. Most writings in French on sexual harassment concern the workplace and university settings, and so their relevance to girls 18 and under is far from clear. For instance, are teenagers sexually harassed at work? At university, is sexual harassment of younger students more common? Some surveys conducted in Quebec workplaces and universities seem to indicate that younger girls are more often victims of sexual harassment than are older ones (Cantin and Proulx, 1995; Groupe Léger et Léger, 1994).

To our knowledge, no one in Quebec is currently working on the topic of sexual harassment of girls. It is therefore not surprising that the few articles that do exist on the subject were all published quite some time ago. In 1985, a special issue of *La Gazette des femmes* on teenage girls in Quebec discussed sexual harassment at school. In an article called “Dénoncer le harcèlement au cégep, à l’université” (*La Gazette des femmes*, 1985), Brochu examined manifestations and effects of sexual harassment of female students in community colleges and universities. She even offered advice on what to do in case of harassment, as did De Billy, in a 1985 article on legal recourse with regard to sexual harassment in school, in the magazine *Justice*. Boyer, in an article titled “Le sexisme et la violence sexuelle à l’école (1985), reported the results of a survey conducted in Quebec schools. The same is true of Beauchamp (*La Vie en rose*, 1985), who discussed the main findings of two surveys on sexual harassment in schools conducted by the Centrale de l’enseignement du Québec [Quebec federation of teachers, or CEQ] in 1984. In the same vein, D’Amours (*Vie ouvrière*, 1985) put together a report on the extent of sexual harassment in school and girls’ reactions to it.

With regard to girls in elementary and high school, surveys conducted by the CEQ (1985), cited in several of the above-mentioned articles, clearly demonstrated that school is a reflection of society and that sexist and sexual harassment is a reality for young girls and teenagers. The surveys revealed that the type of harassment at school changes as the girls get older. Up to about the age of 10, girls are intimidated by boys (threatened, punched, tripped, have their skirts lifted, and so on), and they react vigorously. The situation changes as sexually charged relations develop between girls and boys. Sexual harassment becomes considerably more frequent between the ages of 10 and 15. This escalation is accompanied by a change in the way the girls react. They are much less sure of themselves and react less aggressively, as if sexual harassment paralysed them more than sexist harassment.

At the same time, Ricard and Banville (1984) surveyed 1,572 female students enrolled in regular courses in Quebec community colleges on their experience of sexual harassment. The mean age of respondents was 18.5. The vast majority of them said that they had been sexually harassed at college and the authors observed that “the situations experienced by the greatest number of students are also the situations that a single student experiences most often” (p. 27). In this survey, students were also asked to say whether they considered their experiences to be sexual harassment. They identified six situations they considered to be sexual harassment, having nothing to do with

flirting: propositions with threats, propositions with promises, exhibitionism, touching, voyeurism and unwanted propositions. The study also provided information on a great many variables that shed some light on the process of harassment and its consequences (places where sexual harassment occurs, who harassers are, feelings experienced, immediate reactions, consequences, values, ways of raising public awareness, etc.).

Further to this extensive survey, one of the authors conducted an exploratory study on the perception of the causes of sexual harassment (Banville, 1988). He noted references to a historical component reminiscent of the male hunter mentality, little relationship to the upheaval in traditional roles, an emphasis on conformity to standards and the influence of advertising, and a certain amount of blaming the victim.

These studies all indicate a growing awareness of the existence of the problem. Building on this awareness, a paper titled “Les politiques de diverses institutions d’enseignement québécoises en ce qui concerne le harcèlement sexuel en milieu d’enseignement” (Bordeleau, 1990) discussed sexual harassment at school and listed the policies adopted by various institutions.

In short, the French-language literature on the subject is clearly scanty, but some work done in the 1980s tackled various aspects of the issue of sexual harassment of girls.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The inventory of violence-prevention programs in Quebec is not exhaustive. We preferred to concentrate on a diverse range of programs and activities. Particular attention was paid to programs that have been assessed or that are widely used.

Prevention programs and activities were identified by consulting a variety of sources. Directories of programs, activities and materials in the field of violence prevention, along with up-to-date reference works on prevention programs related to violence or discussing the assessment of implementation or the impact of certain programs were extremely valuable sources of information. At the same time, we were able to gather more information through contacts with key people in the field of violence prevention in Quebec, who either told us about programs or referred us to other resource persons. One thing led to another, and we managed to put together the inventory.

Although originally we wanted to cover what was happening in the various regions of Quebec, we have most likely achieved only part of this objective: CRI-VIFF’s geographic location – Montreal and Quebec City – certainly had an effect on our prior knowledge of some prevention projects or resources that could put us on to programs. The inclusion or exclusion of a project in the inventory therefore must not be seen as any form of judgment of its quality.

The inventory is organized into seven categories:

1. Parenting skills
2. Prosocial skills and conflict resolution
3. Egalitarian relationships
4. Self-esteem
5. Sexual, physical and other types of abuse
6. Children exposed to conjugal violence
7. Violence in teenage couples.

A wide range of projects focus on improving parenting skills as a means of preventing the neglect of small children. These programs are usually intended for parents at risk: economically disadvantaged families, single parents, very young mothers with little education. Most require the involvement of a CLSC [local health and social services centre] and the community. Activities are organized for children as well as parents.

The Central Montreal and Lower St. Lawrence Public Health Branches have taken stock of programs and activities throughout Quebec designed to prevent child abuse and neglect. The results have been published in 15 volumes, one per health and social services region.³ Most of the programs to improve parenting skills listed here are taken from that directory. Given the huge number of programs in the directory, we opted to include those that had been assessed.

In recent years, projects aimed at developing prosocial skills and conflict-resolution skills, and to a lesser extent, those promoting equality in relationships between men and women have grown in number. The first type ultimately aim to decrease and prevent violent behaviour by helping children develop prosocial skills and learn nonviolent methods of solving conflicts. The objective of the second type is to counteract sexism and suggest nontraditional sex-role models. Most of these projects are run in schools, usually at the kindergarten and elementary levels. Some, targeting preschoolers, are organized in conjunction with early-childhood centres (daycares).

We have included three programs that have the general objective of increasing self-esteem, based

³ D. Guay, M. Hamel, L. Brousseau, B. Stewart et al., 1996–97, *Prévention de l'abus et de la négligence envers les enfants: répertoire des activités et programmes québécois*, Directions de la santé publique de Montréal et du Bas Saint-Laurent, 15 volumes (one per health-social services region of Quebec, regions 01 to 09 and regions 11 to 16).

on the assumption that good self-esteem is a protective factor against violence. Two of these projects – *L'adolescence: Toute une aventure* and *Les scientifiques* – are just for girls, and except for the *Confidences* program to prevent sexual abuse, these are the only ones. All the rest are intended for both boys and girls.

The category “sexual, physical and other types of abuse” includes only one program that aims to prevent all forms of abuse. This is the *Espace* program, which is used widely throughout the province. The other projects listed in this category focus solely on preventing sexual abuse.

The issue of children exposed to domestic violence is getting increasing attention in Quebec. Interest is growing in the consequences of this exposure and in ways of working with children to reduce the harmful effects of their exposure. There are more and more programs of this type, and the inventory lists several of them.

Last but not least, work in the area of preventing dating violence includes a huge collection of materials: videos, plays, leaflets. *VIRAJ* is the most commonly used program of this type in Quebec. Many other projects are based on it, but they have not been included here.

It would have been impossible to list all the prevention programs, and choices had to be made: some rational, others dictated by time constraints. That said, we believe that this inventory provides a good overview of the work being done in Quebec to prevent violence.

FOCUS GROUPS

To fulfill our mandate to gain a better understanding of the current issues involved in prevention of violence against girls and teenage girls, we decided to hold consultations with experts through focus groups. The main goal of these meetings was to contact individuals with expertise in the area of prevention of violence against children in general, and girls in particular. Our invitation to participate in the focus groups was therefore extended to women and men who work in various settings: leading groups and programs, conducting research and acting as policy-makers.

A total of four meetings were held in Quebec. Given the population density of the Montreal area and the large number of organizations, coalitions, sectors involved, etc., two meetings were held in Montreal. A third meeting was held in Quebec City, where many provincial government and para-governmental organizations have offices. A final meeting was held in Rimouski, to consult those involved in the Lower St. Lawrence region. Other people, working outside Montreal and Quebec, were invited to participate in one of the four meetings.

In addition to these formal discussion groups, we also held a special meeting with representatives of the FIIQ – Fédération des infirmières et des infirmiers du Québec (Quebec Federation of Nurses), who were unable to attend the scheduled groups, but expressed a strong desire to take part

in the consultations. Others who were unable to attend meetings contributed via telephone interviews or by responding in writing to the main questions raised in the interviews.

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS

In the course of the discussions, a number of important recommendations emerged; they are presented in the following section. Essentially, they are separate recommendations formulated by specific individuals in the focus groups. Note that there was no consensus on these recommendations and that they are presented here solely as information.

On targets:

- The entire community should be concerned about preventing violence.
- The focus of prevention should be all children, both girls and boys.
- Groups that are more vulnerable should be given more sustained or specific attention.
- Work must not be limited to potential victims; potential aggressors should also be targeted.
- Programs should address children and teens, but should also reach out to parents and others who work with children. Effective intervention should target the entire community, including media.

On conditions for implementation:

- There should be a clear political will to support the program.
- A common action plan should be a basic part of any program to prevent violence against children.⁴ This plan should be flexible and allow for adaptation to suit specific circumstances: groups targeted (children, those who work with children, parents), age, the community (ethnic, First Nation's, culturally deprived), the level of schooling (regular vs. special program), etc.
- The work of different organizations must be coordinated, which would, among other things, make it possible to:
 - Avoid duplication when working with the same group of young people
 - Enrich the program
 - Agree on common objectives

⁴ Because one of the main recommendations that emerged from the focus groups was to target all children, girls and boys, we have chosen to use the term "children" here, rather than "young girls."

- Agree on common concepts and terminology
- Because community groups are most active players in projects to prevent violence, their contribution should be recognized and supported by the more institutional establishments.
- Men are as responsible as women for working to prevent violence, and should be involved in prevention at all levels, in order that children have good male role-models.
- The focus should be on a multidisciplinary approach.

On program structures and organization:

- Action plans should include measures to ensure continuity, which means, for example, that the process should begin early (e.g., in the prenatal and early childhood periods) and that interventions should be repeated regularly throughout the stages of child development.
- Some things should be addressed separately for the two sexes, whereas others can be shared (some themes, for example, are more difficult to discuss in mixed groups).
- It would be best if programs were conducted by adults of both sexes.
- Facilitators offering such programs must receive adequate training.
- Adequate education must be provided to all who are engaged in prevention of violence (teachers, educators, etc.), and especially those who will be conducting the program.
- Young people should participate in interventions, because this improves reception by their peers.
- There must be a plan for providing specific resources (personnel, contacts) for children who require support after a program has been implemented (e.g., exposing an aggression).
- Prevention programs must be rigorously evaluated.

On program content:

- The major theme of prevention programs should be the socialization of children.
- A central theme for prevention programs should be the promotion of non-violent values (egalitarian behaviour, the right to be different, etc.);
- Programs should use tools that reach young people. Methods should take into account their cultural environment (language, music, etc.).
- Young people, especially teenagers, should be consulted and participate in the development of

prevention programs.

- In a general prevention plan, all forms of violence could be addressed. However, certain specific concepts should be understood by all, and be agreed upon, such as the forms that violence takes.
- Fatherhood must be promoted and valued.

On financing:

- Funding must be sufficient to ensure that the entire prevention program can be offered.

CONCLUSION: BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MAJOR ASPECTS OF THE QUEBEC CENTRE'S LITERATURE REVIEW, INTERVENTION REVIEW AND FOCUS GROUPS

CRI-VIFF, the Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la violence familiale et la violence faite aux femmes [Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Family Violence and Violence Against Women], undertook to review all the literature in French on the six most important topics: (1) children who have witnessed domestic violence, (2) dating violence, (3) sexual assault, (4) socialization, (5) child abuse and (6) sexual harassment.

The literature review from Quebec's centre has focuses on: (1) theoretical or empirical papers that contribute to the description or the explanation of a specific violence-related phenomenon, namely physical, psychological or sexual abuse, children who witness violence in their family, incest, and dating abuse; (2) description and/or evaluation of programs aimed at preventing family violence or counteracting the negative effects of being victim of violence (physical, psychological or sexual abuse), or of witnessing family violence, preventing sexism or violence in the schools, preventing or counteracting the negative effects of dating abuse among adolescents; (3) description and/or evaluation of programs promoting children's well being.

It is shown that there is little epidemiological research in French, except for a few studies on child abuse. The research in some of the areas – children who have witnessed conjugal violence, dating violence, sexual assault – was carried out largely in response to specific needs identified through practice. This explains the high number of evaluative studies in these areas. Other researchers, however, have examined factors associated with the various forms of violence or their consequences.

Despite all the work that has been done demonstrating the difference between the violence experienced by girls and boys, we found little research in which results were broken down by the children's sex.

We also found that some topics, especially child abuse and sexual abuse, were more popular than others. In the 1980s, a great deal of work was done on sexual harassment, but essentially with regard to women. Other topics, such as children who have witnessed domestic violence or dating violence, are more recent additions to the literature. To our great astonishment, the relationship between socialization and violence was not addressed at all in any of the literature we reviewed.

Although violence against girls has been studied extensively, a great deal of research still remains to be done, especially on the factors associated with the effective prevention of violence and on the socialization of girls and boys.

The review of intervention programs has focuses on programs that have been implemented and evaluated in Quebec. Several interesting programs have been identified with regard to dating violence, sexual, physical and other types of abuse, children who witness domestic violence, the socialization girls and boys (namely egalitarian interaction, conflict resolution, self-esteem programs), early child intervention (namely parenting programs), development of prosocial behavior in preschool and school age children. Only three of these projects are just for girls. All the rest are intended for both boys and girls.

Nevertheless the intervention programs that are described or evaluated focus primarily on the individuals (children, adolescents or parents) rather than on the family system in an ecosystemic perspective. In most interventions for family violence, the target of intervention is the child or the adolescent, though some interventions target as much the child, the parents, and the family unit. Some interventions are implemented in the schools. Interventions aimed at the prevention of dating violence are mainly implemented in the schools. The literature search clearly indicates a change in focus in the target of intervention from parents in infancy, to children and parents at school age, to adolescents and their peers at adolescence.

Though several programs have been implemented services providers that were met during the focus groups emphasized the need to: 1) do primary prevention; 2) focus on more at-risk populations; 3) have an action plan that would address differentially the needs of children and their family on the basis of their developmental level; 4) offer a series of interventions that would allow for a continuing of these intervention across time and across social and educational services; 5) have a concerted plan of several actions to be implemented in different settings that children attend (family, school, community services); 6) develop differential interventions for boys and girls since their experience of violence and their relation to violence differ; 7) take into consideration the differential socialization of boys and girls; 8) evaluate the effectiveness of the programs; 9) develop programs that are also aimed at promoting children's well-being; 10) have a clear political desire to implement and offer continuous financial support to these programs.

On the basis of information gathered during this first phase, the CRI-VIFF has identified an action plan that would be a significant contribution to the issue of reducing violence against the girl child

and achieving social justice. The Centre intends to extend the efforts aimed at preventing violence against the girl child and at counteracting the negative effects of violence against the girl child by identifying factors that contribute favorably or that hinder the generalization of programs that have been evaluated as contributing to the aforementioned issue. Thus, the proposed action plan will focus on strategies for disseminating empirically supported interventions to service providers and for fostering the generalization of these interventions. The conclusions arrived at will be generalizable to the implementation process of interventions in all centres; it addresses major concerns identified by service providers in Quebec; and it complements and adds to the efforts already put forward in Quebec with regard to the prevention of violence.

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