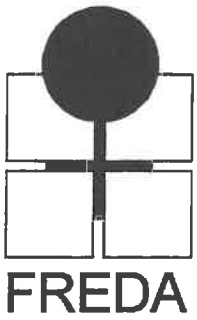


Feminist Research, Education, Development & Action Centre

The Feminist Research, Education, Development and Action Centre (FREDA) is one of five violence research centres established in 1992 with an original grant from Health Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Since its inception, the FREDA Centre has worked with numerous groups in British Columbia on various aspects of violence against women and children. The Centre has also published a report dealing with violence against women in the Yukon.

FREDA is a collaboration of community groups, and feminist academics from Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia. The Centre's mandate is to undertake and promote action-based research on violence against women and children. As well, the FREDA Centre works with community groups to forward recommendations for action to relevant policy makers and mandated agencies.

For more information, or to order other publications, please contact the FREDA Centre at the following address:

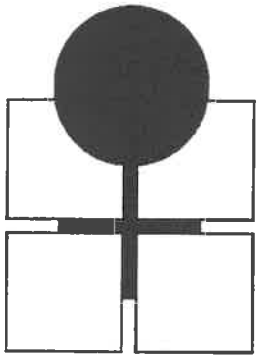
The Feminist Research, Education, Development and Action Centre (FREDA)
515 West Hastings Street, SFU Harbour Centre
Vancouver, BC, V6B 5K3

Telephone: 604-291-5197 Fax: 604-291-5189

E-mail: freda@sfu.ca

Web Site: www.harbour.sfu.ca/freda/

Feminist Research, Education, Development and Action Centre



Mapping Violence: A Work in Progress

Yasmin Jiwani, Ph.D.

ISBN 1-896885-05-5

National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data

Jiwani, Yasmin
Mapping violence : a work in progress

Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 1-896885-05-5

1. Violence--Social aspects. 2. Violence in children.
3. Violence in men. 4. Violence in women. I. FREDA. II. Title.

HN110.Z9V5 2001 303.6 C2001-901076-1

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the course of a week in mid-November 2000, major newspapers reported on two very telling instances of extreme violence. One story covered the latest developments of the school shootings in Taber, Alberta. The article went on to describe the condition and the experiences of the boy who committed the murder. The boy had used a .22-calibre semi-automatic rifle to shoot his school-mates. The *National Post* provided the following background:

> Lonely and isolated from the time he entered school in rural Ontario, the youth – youngest of nine children – suffered from a form of dyslexia and never learned to properly read or write, even though he had superior intelligence. He was a bed wetter until he was 12 and was often beaten and bullied by schoolmates both in Ontario and Alberta, where he moved for Grade 6.
> In Grade 1 he was doused with lighter fluid by schoolmates who threatened to set him on fire. After one beating, a girl took pictures of his bloodied face. He became afraid to go outside. Kicked in the groin by a Taber classmate in Grade 6, he withdrew even further. He never fought back.
> One week before the shootings in Taber, he was suffering from depression and "ready to explode," according to psychologists. (*National Post*, November 18, 2000)

Another story focused on bullying, this time involving girls at a high school in Mission, British Columbia. One girl was suspended for instigating the suicide of another. The girl who committed suicide, Dawn-Marie Wesley, was 14 years old. In her note to her mother, she wrote:

> It's killing me mom. I'm sorry. I love you so much but I can't live anymore.

The Vancouver *Province* account went on to describe why she couldn't live:

> [Name deleted] has too many people after me and the one who will kill me [name deleted]. Please give this message to them and ask them if they are happy now.
> I never knew it would get this far, but I'm so depressed. If I tried to get help it would have gotten worse. They're always looking for a new person to beat up. If I ratted on them I would get kicked out of school and then there's nothing stopping them. (*Province*, November 17, 2000)

While these stories illustrate the despair, fear and death generated by violence among young people in school today, the sentiments they express echo those of women who have experienced violence in relationships, as well as those of children who have been abused by their families. The stories further demonstrate the gendered nature of the response to violence. Boys tend to externalize the violence, whereas girls tend to internalize it. This usually takes the form of eating disorders, depression, self-mutilation and suicide (Jiwani et al., 1999).

DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE

Webster's dictionary defines violence as: "A use of physical force so as to damage or injure; intense natural force or energy; an abusive use of force; passion, fury; distortion of meaning; desecration."

These definitions embrace the physical, psychological, and discursive dimensions of violence and underline the use of force and the abuse of power that are inherent in all forms of violence. What they don't define are the various levels at which violence occurs and the different ways in which violence is sanctioned by society. Violence occurs within intimate relationships, between peers, at the societal level, within institutions, and within and between states. Some forms of violence are sanctioned, others more indirectly endorsed, and some are just not tolerated. For instance until recently, violence in hockey was perceived to be part of the game. However, that view has been contested and there is increasing opposition to open displays of violence on the ice. Nonetheless, sports such as wrestling depend on violence or stylized violence for their appeal. Video games, television shows, and popular sports all embody forms of violence which are celebrated as testaments of strength and power. State-imposed violence is yet another example of the use and abuse of power. The internment of various groups of people during particular historical periods, and the containment of First Nations peoples on reserves are just two examples of State-imposed violence.

According to some, we live in a violent society and the violence that takes place within the intimate context of the family in effect mirrors the violence that surrounds us (Lynn & O'Neill, 1995). While this view has some legitimacy, particularly if one observes the ways in which violence is tolerated, glorified and normalized in some contexts, it fails to address the complexity of social relations and institutions that tolerate violence and those that prohibit the use of violence, or the factors that contribute to the vulnerability of some groups of people to violence. Nor does such a view allow for an understanding of how particular forms of violence are sanctioned while others are not. What makes violence in sports acceptable and violence against the elderly unacceptable? What makes economic exploitation as a form of violence possible and acceptable in some contexts and not in others? In other words, how do certain forms of violence benefit some people at the expense of others?

UNDERPINNINGS OF VIOLENCE

Violence is about power, inequality and dominance. Power is relational and multifaceted. It depends on context – both intimate and social, and it depends on the normative structures, values, attitudes, and beliefs that govern society. Yet power is also material – rooted in the material structures of society in terms of the kinds of resources one possesses and the material wealth and social capital one has. In a hierarchical society, some groups have power over others. This power is predicated on social values and material wealth, as well as on historically embedded structures defining the powerful and the powerless. Thus power can be defined and coded economically (as in social class), racially (in terms of the racial privileges that are accorded to members of the dominant racial group), by sexual orientation (as in the acceptance of heterosexism as the norm), and by ability/disability (in terms of being able-bodied). In terms of gender, power is encoded with respect to how males and females are seen, treated and ascribed

different traits. These different kinds of power are not necessarily exclusive. Rather, they intersect and form clusters of power so that one can be both rich, heterosexual, racially privileged as in white, able-bodied and male. Or alternatively, these lines of power can intersect to increase the vulnerability of particular groups, for example a First Nations woman, a lesbian with disabilities, a person of colour who is economically disadvantaged, and so forth. In the school system, power is often attached to those with social capital and membership in an "in group." This group has dominance which it achieves largely through coercion and subjugation.

In wider society, the kind of power one has influences the kinds of vulnerabilities to victimization one experiences. It influences the kinds of power to which one may be subjected or oppressed by – or who has power over whom. A poor person is oppressed by the class structures of society which define and ascribe certain values to him/her and which limit his/her life chances. Similarly, the intersections of different kinds of oppressions impact heavily on the kind and degree of victimization to which one is vulnerable. These structures of power can be better understood as structures of dominance. It is the normative grounding of these structures that lends them legitimacy and dominance. They are taken for granted, historically entrenched and normalized through daily interactions.

Power then depends on a number of factors. Implicit in social relations of power are concepts of legitimacy, dominance and control. Thus, a teacher has power over students. This is construed as a legitimate form of power based on notions of the teacher's expertise, age and authority. The latter is derived from our historic notions of the roles of teachers and students as premised on mentorship and transmission of wisdom, as well as obedience on the part of students. Similarly, other legitimized forms of power include the relations between patients and doctors, again premised on the expertise of the latter and the compliance of the former. Under-girding these legitimized forms of power is the implicit view that those in power will respect the integrity of those who are subordinate to them. Violence in this context is most easily understood as the violation of this integrity and trust. Violence is an abuse of power – where power is used to coerce and mislead others, resulting in the violation of their integrity and respect. What permits an abuse of power is inequality in status.

Other legitimized forms of power are also historically entrenched – the power of adults over children and youths for instance. Similarly, the power of men over women has been legitimized historically through religion and law. The unequal status of different groups in society has also been legitimized through laws, State interventions and historical lore. Social norms, values and assumptions constitute major elements of the processes of legitimization. For instance, our notions of childhood are predicated on assumptions about child development and lack of maturity. These assumptions are now supported by empirical research. However, childhood was not always considered to be so. In fact, children were historically often viewed as "little people" who had the same or superior mental faculties and capabilities as adults (Postman, 1982).

Similarly, women's subordinate status was legitimized and ascribed in both religious law as well as in social norms and assumptions about women's place in the world. Not only were women considered to be evil, but their inferiority was ascribed to their having been created from Adam's rib. That women were manipulative temptresses and the progenitors of all sin and suffering is an iconic image we are all familiar with. Similarly, early laws held that women could not own property and were the chattels of the men they married. This sanctioned male control over women – and it is now documented that the witch hunts and the massacre of thousands of women

in the Middle Ages who were accused of being witches was itself predicated on their assumed proclivity to evil – as well as notions that they must not hold property or wealth or be financially or socially independent. Notably, many of those who were burned or tortured were unmarried and possessed wealth which was subsequently appropriated by the church (Denike, 1999; Faith, 1993).

Not all women are the same. In a hierarchical society, the power and privilege attached to one layer is predicated on the lack of power and privilege of those belonging to a lower level. In the plantocracies of the southern United States, the status, power and privilege accorded to the white woman placed her apart and at a higher level than that of the black slave woman. The chasteness, femininity and purity of the white slaveowner's wife contrasted to the dominant conceptions of the slave woman as a Jezebel or an Aunt Jemima (Davis, 1983; Jewell, 1993). The one set of norms raised the status of the white woman, while the other set of norms and representations made the slave woman more vulnerable to violence and violations. The unequal status of different groups of women in society is apparent in the struggle for suffrage, with white women getting the federal vote first in 1918, followed by women of colour in 1947 and then Aboriginal women in 1961 (Mandell, 1995). For both Aboriginal women and women of colour, suffrage was granted to their communities as a whole.

What allows for violence then, is power and inequality which are both normalized and legitimized in a hierarchical society. What also permits violence to exist are social norms, values and assumptions about powerless or subordinate groups, as well as notions about violence itself – that is, violence as a means by which to exert control and maintain dominance, and alternatively violence as the last resort by which to retaliate in defence against the powerful.

THE FAMILY

The family has long been viewed as a "haven in a heartless world," to use Christopher Lasch's term (Lasch, 1977). However, the same power relations and inequalities that underpin society as a whole are mirrored within the family. What makes the family a more potent context for violence is that it is a closed world. It is not open to scrutiny, direct regulation, or external control. Families are private, and at the core of the family is the intimate relationship. Whether it be heterosexual or gay, the intimate relationship is the bond that holds the unit together. It is a bond based on emotional ties and intimacy. Within such a context, power and inequalities exist in many forms and can assume different shapes.

The power relations inherent in the family not only mirror those of the external society but also intersect with the power lines that cut across society and are supported by the values, norms, and inequalities inherent in society. Thus, the patriarchal ideology of the family intersects with and is supported by the patriarchal ideology pervasive in society. However, unlike other social institutions in society, the family functions in the private domain. Patriarchal relations are normalized and in many cases tolerated because of bonds of love, respect, and mutuality. However, the private domain of the family shields signs of abuse and impedes legal and social intrusion.

Violence against women is a symptomatic outcome of patriarchal ideology and patriarchal relations in the family. Patriarchal ideology has been defined as:

> (a) a set of beliefs that legitimizes male power and authority over women in marriage, or in a marriage-like arrangement, and
> (b) a set of attitudes or norms supportive of violence against wives who violate, or who are perceived as violating, the ideals of familial patriarchy. (Smith 1993:263, cited in Lenton, 1995:314)

Attributes of patriarchal ideology in the family have been variously defined by researchers as consisting of the wife's obedience, sexual fidelity, loyalty, dependency and conformity to traditional female roles, and the husband's sense of ownership and sexual access to his wife. Patriarchal ideology also pervades and structures society, contributing to and maintaining women's devalued status. Violence is one of the most obvious ways in which women are "kept in their place." Fear of male violence and sexualized violence act as forms of social control over all women, impeding their mobility and autonomy (Lakeman, 2000).

However, not all families are violent and not all intimate relationships show signs of violence. In part, this is because of the very nature of the relationship between partners and family members, as well as the absence of other external stressors such as poverty. In part, the absence of violence may be due to the various ways in which individual members of the family have learned to cope with external stressors.

Researchers have found that egalitarian marriages for instance, show the lowest levels of abuse as compared to asymmetrical marriages where power resides in one partner. However, even within the latter category, wife-dominated marriages show lower rates of abuse while husband-dominated marriages show the highest rates of abuse (Lenton, 1995). Women's dependency in marriage has been associated with violence, and marital conflict has been identified as a key risk factor for violence.

From an economic perspective, it has been estimated that the health-related costs of violence against women amount to $408,357,042 nationally. These include the costs of emergency visits, consultations with doctors, ambulance services, psychiatric ward care, and some treatments. They do not include the costs to patients of transportation, prescription drugs, time off from work, child-minding, or other expenses incurred while obtaining medical services. The criminal justice costs amount to $872 million (Greaves et al., 1995).

DIMENSIONS OF VIOLENCE

Within intimate relations, violence can assume different dimensions. The Canadian Panel on Violence identifies five different dimensions of violence, "physical, sexual, psychological, financial and spiritual" (Marshall & Vaillancourt, 1993:7).

Physical violence is the most commonly understood form of violence as its impact is sometimes visibly evidenced on the bodies of the child or woman. Its tangible form means that injuries can be photographed and presented as concrete evidence in court or treated by medical practitioners. Physical violence spans a continuum of poking, shoving, slapping, beating and choking, to injuries that cause long term disabilities – and physical violence often culminates in murder.

Sexual violence can take the form of rape, different levels of sexual assault, or child sexual abuse. It involves non-consensual and forced sex within marriage or dating relationships. It can also involve the withholding of sexual intimacy, and sexualized violence in same-sex relationships.

Psychological violence in contrast, is not so apparent and yet its effects are more far-reaching and long-lasting. Psychological violence consists of constant undermining, taunting, jeering, and ridiculing. Over time, the individual woman or child comes to internalize these taunts and believe themselves to be inferior to their partners and others around them. Women in violent relationships are often told that they are unsuitable mothers, wives and sexual partners, and that no one else could want or love them. Psychological terror keeps women from leaving abusive relationships. In fact, fear for their own safety and the safety of their children often compels women to submit to the abuser. Addictions, suicides, eating disorders and chronic illnesses are often outcomes of psychological violence.

Financial violence is a common practice wherein women are deprived of their inheritance, not told of financial matters, restricted from employment opportunities, and where husbands control all the money or refuse to provide adequately for women and their children. It can also take the form of making women and children work for no pay, overdrawing on joint credit cards, hiding resources, and reneging on repayments. Financial abuse is also prevalent among senior women and men and is often perpetrated by their children or caregivers.

Spiritual violence takes the form of denying women access to the practice of their faith, ridiculing their faith and excluding them from participating equally in the practice of their faith. Not allowing women to assume positions of leadership within their faith communities is one example of spiritual violence cited by the Canadian Panel on Violence. Similarly, the practice of the residential schools and the Indian Act in prohibiting the observance of native spirituality is also a form of violence.

II. VULNERABILITIES TO VICTIMIZATION AT THE JUNCTURE OF INTERSECTING OPPRESSIONS

Gender, age, race, class, sexuality and disability are all factors that contribute to the vulnerability of specific groups of people in society to violence.

GENDER

I have partly explored the issue of gender in the previous chapter. However, the full extent of gender-based violence is most apparent when we look at the statistics. These statistics reflect what Liz Kelly (1988) has called the "continuum of violence." From maltreatment to assault, harassment, and wife battering, women are victimized by a range of abuse. Women are also more vulnerable to sexualized violence than men. As Heise et al. (1999:1) state, "Around the world, at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Most often the abuser is a member of her own family." In Canada, 51% of women have experienced some form of violence since the age of 16. Women and girls are most vulnerable at home. Systemic violence in the form of sexual harassment also impacts on women more severely. The Berger Prospectus shows that 25% of working women experience workplace harassment as compared to 20% of men. However, studies show that women tend to under-report the violence directed against them for fear of retaliation, dismissal, and a lack of faith in the accountability of institutions mandated to protect them (Chambers, 1998). The 1993 Violence Against Women survey revealed that only 28% of violent incidents were reported to the police, leaving 68% of assaults and 90% of sexual assaults unreported (Rodgers, 1994).

The recently released General Social Survey on Spousal Violence (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2000) indicates that the impact of violence is more severe and long-lasting for women than it is for men. The General Social Survey revealed that:

- Four times as many women as men reported being threatened, harmed or having someone close to them being threatened or harmed;
- More than twice as many women as men reported having their property damaged or their possessions destroyed; and,
- Four times as many women as men reported being denied access to family income.

Severity of Violence Experienced by Women and Men

Type of Violence	Female Victims	Male Victims
Beat [beaten]	25%	10%
Choked	20%	4%
Used or threatened to use a gun or knife	13%	7%
Sexual assault	20%	3%

Extracted from Table 2.1, GSS, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2000*, p. 12.

The most extreme form of violence against women is murder. Homicide statistics reveal that on average over a twenty-year period, there were 3.4 wives killed for every one husband.

Rates of Spousal Homicide, 1979-1998

	Wives	Husbands	Ratio
Canada	1,468	433	3.4:1
British Columbia	187	76	2.5:1

Adapted from Table 5.2 (Locke, 2000:40).

Consequences of Violence

Consequences	Women	Men
Fearful	34%	3%
Afraid for children	14%	2%
Sleeping problems	14%	4%
Depression/anxiety attacks	21%	10%
Lowered self-esteem	23%	6%

Extracted from the GSS, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2000*, p. 18.

The risk factors associated with gender have been recognized in other areas as well. For instance, Health Canada has acknowledged gender and culture as determinants of health. Also, the National Crime Prevention Council has recognized the vulnerabilities associated with gender.

The vulnerability of girls and women to violence from partners, ex-partners and other family members is also reflected in statistics compiled by Gill and Brockman (1996) in their analysis of the impact of anti-stalking legislation. On the basis of an examination of 601 cases spanning a 3-year period (1993-1996) in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Montreal and Halifax, Gill and Brockman found that: 91% of the accused were men, and 88% of the victims were women. Further, 57% of the cases involved partners or ex-partners, 28% involved friends, acquaintances or co-workers, and 12% involved strangers. More recent statistics released by Statistics Canada indicate that rates of criminal harassment have increased, with women accounting for three-quarters of all victims. BC ranked third in Canada with respect to the incidence of stalking.

Accused-Victim Relationship in Criminal Harassment Incidents

	Male Victim		Female Victim	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Accused				
Current Spouse	3	0.3	115	3.7
Ex-spouse	98	10.9	1,134	36.3
Current or ex-dating relationship	49	5.5	482	15.4
Other Family	59	6.6	111	3.6
Casual Acquaintance	396	44.1	782	25.1
Business relationship	107	11.9	146	4.7
Other known relationship	44	4.9	24	0.8
Stranger	104	11.6	225	7.2
Unknown	37	4.1	101	3.2
Total	897	100.0	3,120	100.0

Source: *The Daily*, Statistics Canada, November 29, 2000.

While these statistics portray the extreme vulnerability of girls and women to violence, they do not address the social context which permits gender-based violence to occur. What is it about social institutions and the family, or what factors exist in society, that allow for the victimization of individuals on the basis of their gender? Why is it that violence against women increases substantially when a woman leaves or threatens to leave a relationship? The above statistics indicate that ex-spouses fall into the highest category of stalkers. This is indicative of how women are viewed and treated – as possessions to be owned. A common threat articulated by abusive partners is that if they can't have the woman, no one else will.

Women's position historically has been circumscribed to a subordinate position. This position has been reinforced by media portrayals of women as wives, mothers, and sex objects – a portrayal that is now beginning to shift, albeit still retaining the vestiges of some of these old roles. Much of the work women do is unpaid and underpaid, and women's status is devalued.

Existing studies have also amply demonstrated women's unequal status in most countries around the world. Inequality has several dimensions – social, economic, political, religious, and familial. Certainly, within Canada we have heard about women's economic inequality and the struggle for pay equity. In fact, recent statistics released by the BC Ministry of Women's Equality identify a significant gender-gap between women's and men's earnings:

- In 1997, women working full-time, full-year in BC earned an estimated average of $32,849 or 72.9% of men's earnings. The Canadian gender-gap in earnings averages 72.5%
- 23% of Canadian families with children at home are single-parent families headed by women.
- In 1995, 52% of single-parent families led by women fell below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) line.
- In 1997, the average income of BC women over 65 years was $17,382 compared to $27,961 for men.
- Women account for 59% of individuals working in BC at minimum wage rates.

  (Figures from *Women's Economic Security and Pay Equity Discussion Paper*, BC Ministry of Women's Equality, Summer/Fall 2000.)

Economic inequality is one dimension that rests on a foundation of historical and contemporary beliefs, attitudes, norms and practices regarding women's position, status, and role in society. The power of these ideological beliefs cannot be underestimated. If women are perceived to be dependents of men and to be taken care of by men, then their poverty, lack of access to employment and under-employment can be rationalized. Mother-work and child-rearing are unpaid and yet they are highly demanding, stressful and exceed the normal hours of paid work. However, if women are to be accorded their human rights, then structures and barriers that limit their life-chances have to be dismantled. Women's work has not only to be equally valued but also equally remunerated. Popular stereotypes and conceptions of women have to be challenged continuously whether these occur in the realm of the media or in the political arena.

Tracking the representation of women in key decision-making positions has allowed us to gauge changes in the improvement of the status of women. Certainly, the situation in British Columbia has changed considerably from a decade ago when the representation of women in politics, the

judiciary, in schools and elsewhere was markedly lower than it is today. (See for instance, *Women Count 2000*, a publication of the BC Ministry of Women's Equality.) However, although the level of representation has increased in many instances, it is not on par with the actual population of women. Thus, women now have 27% representation in the provincial political arena but constitute over 50% of the population, and this does not apply equally to all groups of women.

AGE

The vulnerability associated with age – young or old – is again amply demonstrated by statistics on violence, but also by the particular positioning of young and elderly people. Certainly, as the previous statistics have shown, age combined with gender compound the vulnerabilities associated with each group.

For instance, adolescent wives between the ages of 15 and 19 are three times more likely to be murdered as wives who are older (Rodgers, 1994). A survey of secondary school students in British Columbia revealed that an average of 32% of girls and 15% of boys have experienced a history of physical and/or sexual abuse. It has been found that girls are likely to be sexually abused in their teen years between the ages of 11 and 14, and boys between the ages of 4 and 6. Research also suggests that 94 to 100% of the abusers are men in cases of child sexual abuse involving girls, with men accounting for 85% of the perpetrators in cases involving child sexual abuse involving boys (Duffy and Momirov, 1997).

The vulnerability associated with gender in the context of family violence is also reflected in the following statistics which demonstrate that girls and young women are more at risk for physical violence from family members as compared to boys, and equally at risk for sexual violence.

Assaults

	Females	**Males**
Sexual assaults committed by family members	31%	29%
Physical assaults committed by family members	30%	16%

Source: Daisy Locke. "Violence Against Children and Youth by Family Members." *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2000*, pp. 31-37. Statistics based on police reports.

There are many factors that contribute to the vulnerability of children and youths to violence, and principal among these is their dependency on caregivers. The literature suggests that older boys are better able to protect themselves against sexual abuse by expanding their sphere of influence and spending more time outside the home. With girls however, the dependency in the home continues and is reinforced by gendered notions of what it means to be a girl. As well, girls are more vulnerable to sexual violence because of their gender – as girls and young women. The vulnerabilities of girls to violence can be partly attributed to their subordinate position as girls, but also to the associations of innocence that are tied to their young age, as well as the knowledge among abusers that young women and girls are not likely to be believed and can be threatened to remain silent.

Witnessing violence in the home is yet another factor impacting on children and youth. It is estimated that more than one million children have witnessed violence against their mothers. Research indicates that witnessing violence is a significant predictor of perpetrator behaviour. In other words, boys who witness violence are likely to grow into men who abuse. The same pattern does not hold for girls who witness violence (Lenton, 1995).

SENIORS

Dependency is also a factor in old age. Research supports the finding that older women are vulnerable to violence particularly from members of the family who also provide care. Older women are particularly at risk of psychological and financial abuse. They are often infantilized by caregivers, treated in a paternalistic manner and subjected to verbal abuse. Recent research completed by the BC Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors (BCCEAS) dramatically illustrates the stereotypes with which elder women are confronted when they try to escape the abuse. These stereotypes cohere around a notion of the elderly as senile, unreliable, and as lacking advocates and supports who can confront an abuser on their behalf.

Poverty is a major factor influencing the lives of older women. It has been estimated that 45% of older women live below the poverty line. As the BCCEAS report (Stewart, 2000) indicates, this often translates into women living in poor areas which do not have adequate lighting, transportation, and which enhance their fears about safety.

In terms of violence, Statistics Canada reports that older women are more likely to be killed by their spouses, and older men are more likely to be killed by their sons.

Percentage of Older Adult Victims of Violent Crime by Sex of Victims and Family Relationship, 1999

Victim		
Relationship of Victim to Accused	**Female**	**Male**
Spouse	34	17
Parent	5	8
Adult child	37	53
Sibling	10	9
Extended family	14	13

Adapted from Table 3.3. Valerie Pottie Bunge. "Abuse of Older Adults by Family Members." *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2000*, p. 29.

RACE

While gender and age are associated with commonly accepted vulnerabilities, race and racism has not been examined in the same way. In reality, there are no defined biological races. However, in social reality, people are defined by the colour of their skin. The sociological value of race as a construct is that it draws our attention to the phenomenon of racism at the institutional and individual level. It alerts us as to how people are treated differently on the basis of their ascribed or physical differences. There is a considerable body of research that details the racialization of specific groups and that attests to the racism prevalent in Canadian society (Fleras and Elliott, 1996; Henry et al., 1995). Aboriginal peoples, people of colour, and many new immigrant groups are racially marked and subjected to institutional and everyday racism.

Racism can be defined as a form of systemic violence which is often expressed in daily reality through acts of exclusion, stigmatization and devaluation, and institutionally through exclusion, ghettoization and genocide. The intersection of racism and sexism compound the vulnerabilities of Aboriginal women, immigrant and refugee women, and women of colour.

Considerable research exists with regard to the vulnerabilities of Aboriginal peoples. Up to 75% of victims of sex crimes in Aboriginal communities are female under 18 years of age, 50% of those are under 14, and almost 25% of those are younger than 7 years of age (Correctional Service of Canada, cited in McIvor & Nahanee, 1998:65). The Ontario Native Women's Association study on violence against women in Aboriginal communities reports that 80% of women and 40% of children are abused and assaulted (Lynn & O'Neill 1995). In 1991, 23% of federally sentenced women were Aboriginal. Of these, 90% had backgrounds characterized by physical abuse, and 61% had been sexually abused (Canadian Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, 1991, cited in Comack, 1996). In addition, many were adopted or placed in non-Aboriginal foster homes where they experienced intense racism from the dominant society (Shaw et al., 1991).

The story of Aboriginal peoples is not new. As with most indigenous cultures around the world, the legacy of colonization has wreaked havoc and served to destroy many of these cultures and communities. Forced assimilation through child apprehension strategies, adoptions, residential schools and other coercive means implemented through the Indian Act, have had drastic consequences in rending apart the traditional fabric of indigenous societies. These effects have been documented extensively by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in its many reports, as well as by researchers (for example, McGillivray and Comaskey, 1999).

The Aboriginal story portrays how the devaluation of women impacts on their vulnerability to violence. In many traditional societies, Aboriginal women were accorded high status and key leadership roles. With contact and colonization, their position was devalued to suit the value systems of the colonizers. A clear example of this process can be seen in the writings of Paul Le Jeune, a Jesuit priest intent on "civilizing" the indigenous people in what was then called "New France" (Leacock, 1980). Through the imposition of marriage, the subordination of women to men, and the removal of authority and leadership from women elders, Le Jeune succeeded in destroying the Montagnais-Naskapi cultural fabric. The devaluation of women led the way to the introduction of violence against women and children in the community.

The destruction of indigenous cultures and communities has resulted in an intergenerational cycle of violence which is marked by the high levels of sexual abuse within Aboriginal communities, and the internalization of violence among those who are affected. This internalization is evident in the high levels of substance abuse and suicide rates within the communities. However, the situation is also compounded by the extreme poverty experienced by Aboriginal peoples both within and outside of reserves, as well as their sense of disenfranchisement and dependency.

For Aboriginal women, the experience of violence within their communities leaves little choice. Faced with the lack of available services and resources, many women leave the reserve to escape the abuse. They come to urban areas in search of safety only to be further victimized by poverty and the abuse they face on the streets. Many turn to prostitution as a way of survival. It is estimated that the mortality rate for girls and women in prostitution is 40 times the national average (Davis, 1994). The suicide rate for adolescent Aboriginal girls is 8 times the national average of non-Aboriginal adolescent girls (National Forum on Health, 1997).

For immigrant, refugee and Canadian-born women of colour, racism and sexism intersect in different yet similar ways to increase their risk of gender-based violence. Racism functions to impede the integration of people of colour into Canadian society. It permits and rationalizes barriers to services, housing and employment. It further legitimizes the stigmatization and devaluation of racialized peoples. Racism forces communities to turn inwards in order to find safety in a hostile environment. It also silences women within these communities for fear that calling attention to acts of violence will further stigmatize, penalize and criminalize their communities (Flynn and Crawford, 1998). The stakes are high and are made even higher by the fact that the media and public opinion often attribute the violence to particular cultures rather than recognize the systemic and endemic nature of gender-based violence. Sexism from within the community and the external society combine to further accentuate the plight of immigrant women and women of colour.

For immigrant women in particular, current legislation facilitates their dependency. As dependents, women have to rely on their sponsoring partners for support and are vulnerable to threats of deportation even though these may not be legally viable. In many cases, women do not have the dominant language skills to be able to access services or support. Fear of external authorities and the police also contribute to women's silence about the abuse. This fear is reinforced by the threat of being ostracized by their communities. To call attention to the abuse often means that women have to leave their communities and fend for themselves in a strange and often hostile society. It also often means that women have to give up their children as they are unable to support them, or their husbands have legal sponsorship power over them.

CLASS

Although gender-based violence cuts across all classes in society, being poor and/or unemployed influences the likelihood of violence. Poverty and unemployment are significant stressors in and of themselves. Combined with other factors such as stigmatization, stereotyping and inadequate social support systems, poverty and unemployment have been shown to be significant predictors of violence. However, the unemployed and the poor are also most likely to elicit State scrutiny and police intervention. Thus, though violence may be equally prevalent among the upper

classes, it is the lower classes that are usually criminalized and stereotyped as violent. They are usually penalized for behaviour that goes unpunished in other classes. Violence among the rich rarely comes to public attention except in cases of attempted murder or manslaughter involving a high profile individual as victim or accused.

Class considerations also directly and indirectly influence victimization. For one, poverty or the threat of poverty impedes women from disclosing abuse for fear that they will not have a place to live or that their children will be apprehended. Additionally, leaving an abusive relationship often means that women and their children will have to depend on the State for support, and this support is hardly sufficient. Government mechanisms such as the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program can be more dangerous for women who are leaving violent relationships. Ex-partners often threaten the woman to prevent her from seeking support. In many cases, abusers use the courts to vary their support payments and to continue to harass women beyond the intimate relationship (Goundry, 1998).

Poverty increases the vulnerabilities of Aboriginal women to abuse. Leaving the reserve often means that women have to survive economically on their own. Inadequate welfare payments leave them not only dependent on the State but also living in poverty, which increases their risk of abuse from the men to whom they turn for support or survival (Janoviček, 2000). Turning the hurt inwards often results in addictions and self-mutilation.

Social class also impacts on the effectiveness of laws and sanctions which are designed to deter gender-based violence. Existing research demonstrates that strategies such as mandatory arrest were more effective in deterring men from middle- and upper-class backgrounds who had a "stake in social conformity" than their lower-class counterparts (Moore, 1997).

SEXUALITY

In a heterosexual society where dominant norms discriminate against gays and lesbians, sexual orientation becomes a site of vulnerability. Violence in same-sex relationships has often been used to discount the high incidence of violence against heterosexual women. Some argue that the existence of same-sex relationship violence means that women are not the only vulnerable group in society and men are not the only perpetrators of violence. Yet, a power-based understanding of violence explains the co-existence of both same-sex and heterosexual violence. Further, such an analysis actually serves to highlight the similarity of dynamics that are inherent in both forms of relationship violence and thereby sheds light on how gender and sexuality become the fault lines contributing to the vulnerability of specific groups in society.

American research indicates that the rates of violence in same-sex relationships vary between 20% and 27%. The rates for heterosexual relationship violence vary from 25% to 33% (Chao, 1997). Chesley, et al., (1992, cited in Ristock, 1991), found that 20% of the Toronto-based lesbians they surveyed had experienced some form of violence in their relationships. Ristock maintains that lesbian violence is grounded in the internalization of patriarchal and homophobic values and attitudes that abound in dominant society and inhere in its institutions. This is apparent in the sheer level of violence directed at lesbian, bisexual and gay youth by members of the dominant, heterosexual society (Hunter, 1990; Savin-Williams, 1994).

In looking at heterosexual relationship violence, the most striking factors appear to be dependency and isolation. The latter is mediated by the abuser who limits the victim's contact with the outside world and to external forms of social support. Economic, social and psychological dependency are underlined by other factors such as the presence of children. In same-sex relationships, dependency and isolation are also present. However, it is the latter variable that provides the most insight into the dynamics of violence. The homophobia of the external society contributes to the isolation of same-sex partners. Not having a sense of acceptance and belonging marginalizes gay, lesbian and bisexual youths and adults. The turning inward to find a sense of belonging and acceptance is also fuelled by the social costs that may be incurred should one's sexual orientation be revealed.

While we may think that tolerance for gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgendered people has increased, in reality this tolerance is nowhere near acceptance. Homophobia still remains the closet constraining sexual orientation and contributes significantly to violence within same-sex relationships. Isolation, homophobia, and inadequate social supports for victims of gay and lesbian relationship violence increase the potency of dependency within these relationships and in combination amplify the vulnerabilities to victimization.

American studies have shown that gay, lesbian and bisexual youths are the targets of intense violence stemming from homophobia (Chasin, 1997; Savin-Williams, 1994). In his survey of the literature, Savin-Williams discusses the high rates of suicide and attempted suicide, substance abuse, school problems and problems with the law among gay, bisexual, cross-gendered and lesbian youth, which are direct results of the violence and hostility they have encountered. Many are runaways (and "throwaways" – teens who have been thrown out of their homes by parents), as a result of violence in their homes. This is not to imply that all gays, lesbians and bisexuals lead problematic lives, but rather that the chronic harassment and violence they experience is intense and can result in tragic outcomes.

Drawing on existing literature, Savin-Williams notes that, "suicide is the leading cause of death among lesbian, gay males, and bisexual youths, primarily because of the debilitating effects of growing up in a homophobic society" (1994:266). This suicide rate is two to three times that of heterosexual adolescents. For many lesbians and gays, the social isolation experienced as a result of their difference is the most difficult to deal with (Martin & Hetrick, 1988, cited in Savin-Williams, 1994). Often, this results in hiding their sexuality for fear of physical and verbal abuse. This situation is heightened in the context of schools, universities and colleges where organized hate groups often openly recruit students (Harris, 1997; Kinsella, 1994; Prutzman, 1994; Sidel, 1995).

For Aboriginal lesbians, lesbians of colour, lesbians with disabilities or lesbians from working-class backgrounds, the situation is compounded by the interlocking forces of racism, sexism, classism, ableism and homophobia. Not only do they face the task of creating a viable lesbian identity in the absence of any societal support (Griffin, 1996; Nava, 1992; Tolman, 1994), but they are also forced into a situation of choosing between identification with their racial/ethnic group or other reference group, and their sexuality (Savin-Williams, 1994).

DISABILITY

Current studies on women with disabilities point to their higher vulnerability to violence (Lynn and O'Neill, 1995; Razack, 1994a). Much depends also on the visibility/invisibility of the disability (Stone, 1993). Mandell found that "53% of women who have been disabled from birth have been raped, abused, or assaulted" (Lynn and O'Neill, 1995:278). They are mostly abused by family members and caretakers. However, these figures do not represent the true extent of violence as it is experienced by women with disabilities. Razack (1994a) cites figures showing these rates as being four times those of the national average. Many cases are unreported for fear that women will not be believed because of the discriminatory attitudes of the police, courts and agencies mandated to deal with violence (Ticoll and Panitch, 1993).

The Violence Against Women Survey (1993) found that women with disabilities or disabling illnesses were more likely to have experienced abuse from their partners and in their lives. As compared to 50% of women who had experienced at least one form of violence (as defined by the Criminal Code), 60% of women with disabilities had experienced such violence. Further, 29% of women without disabilities had experienced violence from their partners, while 39% of women with disabilities had experienced such violence (Roeher Institute, 1995).

Females without Disabilities	Females with Disabilities
29% have been physically or sexually assaulted by their partner	39% have been physically or sexually assaulted by their partner
	74% have experienced physical violence
	38% have experienced sexual violence

Source: Statistics Canada, Centre for Justice Statistics, 1994. (Roeher Institute, 1995:10).

Ticoll and Panitch (1993) identify a number of factors that heighten the vulnerability to violence of girls and women with disabilities. These include their segregation from others through living conditions, education, and employment; lack of decision-making power, and often forced dependency on others; low self-esteem as a result of stigma attached to the disability and dependency on others; lack of access to services; and poverty (1993:85). Women and girls with disabilities are often treated in a paternalistic way and constructed within legal discourse as objects of pity rather than respect (Razack, 1994a). Underpinning this attitude is the ableist preference for perfect bodies, productivity, efficiency and so on. In contrast, the disabled body is treated and constructed as the "negative" body (Wendell, 1989). Girls with disabilities from different ethnic backgrounds are often expected to privilege their connections to their own ethnic group, or class (Fine, 1992).

In their study involving 1,249 children with and without disabilities in the United States, Sobsey, et al. (1997) found that girls were more likely to be sexually abused, while boys experienced more physical abuse and neglect. In their regional study of sexual abuse among young people

with disabilities in British Columbia, the McCreary Centre found that "just over half (54%) of the service providers have encountered, in the past year, children or adolescents with disabilities who allegedly have been abused" (1993:5). The Roeher Institute found that Canadian girls with disabilities are more likely to be abused than their male counterparts (Roeher, 1995).

Poverty, economic dependency, isolation, marginalization and exclusion contribute to the vulnerabilities to victimization of people with disabilities. Race, gender and sexual orientation heighten this vulnerability. The Roeher Institute found that women from ethnocultural groups who had disabilities were more likely to be poor, isolated and dependent on institutional caregivers. Institutional violence is yet another layer that they face.

III. RISK FACTORS

Existing research identifies a number of risk factors for violence. These include – but are not limited to – dependency, isolation, stigmatization, marginalization, devaluation, and poverty. Within this overall framework, researchers have also identified alcohol and substance abuse, television violence, marital conflict and a host of other conditions as risk factors of violence. However, previous experience of violence is a key factor. Previous experiences of violence can traumatize individuals and make them feel as if they do not deserve any better. A major impact of violence is low self-esteem and low self-worth. The accompanying sense of powerlessness is often reinforced by the kinds of responses that victims of violence receive.

DEPENDENCY

As the preceding discussion reveals, dependency is a key risk factor. Dependency may be psychological, financial and/or physical, as in having a caregiver. Dependency may also be mandated by the State as in immigration sponsorship criteria, and/or age-related legal obligations such as the mandatory care of young children. Dependency gives the abuser power over those who are in his/her care or those who are reliant on him/her. In many cases, financial dependency is a significant factor in deterring women from leaving abusive relationships.

ISOLATION

In a study of rural women and violence, it was found that many of the women who had experienced abuse in their relationships had been moved to rural isolated areas by their partners (Jiwani et al., 1998). Isolation can also take many forms ranging from geographic isolation, psychological and social isolation, to institutional isolation (that is, away from institutional help) (Websdale, 1998). In most cases, women who are abused experience a combination of different types of isolation. They are discouraged from maintaining contact with friends and family or disclosing violence to institutions that might intervene.

STIGMATIZATION

Stigmatization is a major factor in influencing the ability of individuals to disclose abuse and seek help. Groups that are stigmatized on the basis of race, class, ability, age and sexual orientation are well aware of the potential for having their concerns dismissed, trivialized or erased. Young women, for example, often know that their experiences of abuse are likely to be dismissed by police and other persons in authority (Suleman and McLarty, 1997).

MARGINALIZATION

Groups that are stigmatized are also often marginalized. However, as the Taber example poignantly demonstrates, individuals within a dominant group may also experience marginalization. As marginalized groups or individuals, they feel a sense of alienation, a lack of belonging and a profound sense of isolation. There is a sense of not being believed and of not having any place to turn for help. However, there is also a sense among some of these individuals that they do not count or will not be taken seriously until and unless they engage in dramatic and often harmful actions toward others or against themselves.

DEVALUATION

Both stigmatization and marginalization presuppose devaluation. However, systemic and institutional devaluation are often internalized over time. The person or the group begins to believe that they are less worthy than others and that they deserve to be mistreated, or that it is their fate or role in society, or that they are simply not good enough to warrant attention or access to goods and services.

POVERTY

Poverty is a major structural factor that cuts across different categories of race, age, sexual orientation and ability/disability. Poverty is a major risk factor on several accounts. For one, without access to the resources that money allows, individuals are unable to leave violent relationships. They are unable to secure adequate housing or provide sufficiently for themselves or their children. Poverty allows for dependency on others and on institutions that can perpetuate violence. Further, without economic power and the social status that comes with it, those who are poor are more vulnerable to criminalization. In a class-based society where wealth and social status are valued, the poor become the devalued. Their human rights are constantly violated and there are few advocates left to defend them.

Poverty has also been identified as a risk for child abuse (National Crime Prevention Council Fact Sheet on Risk or Threats to Children). The Campaign 2000 report card on poverty reveals that one out of every five Canadian children lives in poverty. Within this group, Aboriginal children, children with disabilities and children from racial minority groups have the highest rates of poverty.

Child Poverty in Canada

Total Children	Aboriginal	Visible Minority	Children with Disabilities
23.4%	52.1%	42.7%	23%

Source: Campaign 2000, *Child Poverty in Canada, Report Card 2000*, p. 5.

All of the above factors cohere around a lack of power and resources – institutional and individual. A significant component of powerlessness arises from the inability to secure employment. Many of the groups that are stigmatized and marginalized face barriers in employment. These barriers are predicated on stereotypes and notions about employability, qualifications, and credibility. The following table illustrates the representation and workforce availability of designated groups as defined by Employment Equity legislation which was passed in 1986. Fourteen years later, the rates of representation still fail to reflect the work force availability of the various target groups, with the exception of women both federally and provincially, reflecting once again the power and currency of normative standards and structures of dominance.

Representation and Work Force Availability of Designated Group Members in the British Columbia and Federal Public Services (in percentages)

	Women	Aboriginal	Persons with Disabilities	Visible Minorities
British Columbia				
Representation	53.8	1.7	6.0	5.9
Work Force Availability	46.1	3.0	5.3	16.3
Federal Public Service				
Representation	50.5	2.4	3.3	4.7
Work Force Availability	45.9	2.0	4.8	10.4

Source: Abigail B. Bakan and Audrey Kobayashi. *Employment Equity Policy in Canada: An Interprovincial Comparison*. Status of Women, Policy Research Fund, March 2000, p. 72.

IV. INTERSECTING OPPRESSIONS: INSTITUTIONAL AND INTIMATE FORMS OF VIOLENCE

The various vulnerabilities outlined so far are based on societal, institutional and individual responses to differences. How differences are defined depends implicitly on what they are compared and contrasted with, as well as the valuations attached to them. The dominant normative standard against which differences are measured is male, heterosexual, white, able-bodied, and middle-class. This measure is accepted, valued and taken-for-granted. However, even within various categories of difference, there are valuations and degrees of acceptability. Thus, within the category of woman, the standard of preference is based on being of the white/dominant race, heterosexual, able-bodied, and of middle-class background. Within communities of colour, similar standards prevail cohering around the greater acceptance of certain kinds of behaviour from heterosexual and able-bodied males from particular class backgrounds. Yet, these standards are not autonomous. They intersect and are internalized through socialization. They are underpinned by social norms and historically entrenched. They are communicated through language, stereotypes and exclusions both normative and institutional. They are in effect, institutional structures of dominance.

When institutional structures of dominance intersect with intimate forms of violence, the result is one of compounding oppression. For example, the intersection of race, class and gender as it occurs in the situation of Aboriginal women exemplifies the intersecting and interlocking impact of multiple forms of oppression. Aboriginal women already confront the legacies of colonization in terms of the profound impact on their communities. They are confronted with poverty and with their own devaluation as women in communities, which have become increasingly patriarchal as a result of colonization. Men now hold more power than women in Aboriginal communities. Young Aboriginal women's powerlessness is accentuated by their age and dependence on family and caregivers. Their devaluation as women and as Aboriginal, impedes their access to services, the provision of adequate services and the recognition of their human rights.

For the woman with disabilities who is also from a different racial group, the intersections of race, class and gender combine with the institutionalized oppression predicated on ableism. Her worth is devalued because of her status as a woman, a racial minority, her class, and as a person with disability. These forms of oppression intersect and interlock to further increase her vulnerability to violence. She is more readily identifiable as a person who can be abused without punitive sanctions as she lacks credibility, may be unable to report the abuse, is dependent, and has few social supports or advocates that could defend her safety. These are all conditions made possible by a society which values able-bodiedness and devalues people with disabilities.

Similarly, for the woman of colour who is a lesbian, the intersecting and interlocking oppressions of sexism, racism and homophobia significantly increase her vulnerability to victimization. Stigmatized by her community and the dominant society for her sexual orientation, she has few places to turn to should she experience violence in a relationship. Her vulnerability is predicated not only by her status as a woman from a racial and sexual minority, but by the reality that her experiences of abuse are likely to be dismissed and that reporting these would further endanger

her life by forcing her to disclose her sexual orientation in a homophobic society. Her inequality is underlined by the lack of adequate services, supportive legislation and recognition of her human rights.

For an immigrant woman, the intersecting oppressions of gender, race, class, and legal status come into effect and in combination, increase her vulnerability to violence. Her dependency on the sponsoring spouse combined with her isolation from social supports and advocates, as well as the fear of poverty that she confronts, force her to endure the violence. The threat of being ostracized by the community in which she lives combined with her fear of further criminalizing that community, work in concert to silence her.

The intersecting oppressions made possible by the interlocking structures of dominance have a profound influence on women's ability to seek help and disclose the violence they are experiencing. However, these intersecting oppressions themselves contribute to the violence women experience. Without racism, classism/poverty, homophobia, ableism and sexism, women would not be in as dangerous a situation as they are. This is not to suggest that individual personal conflicts do not occur – they do and are amply evident in the barroom brawls that we often see. But the critical factor is that these structures of dominance and oppression are imbued with power and privilege – they are used as leverage to subordinate women and children, to limit their choices, silence their voices and reduce their safety.

V. INTERVENTIONS

In a context marked by inequalities and imbalances of power, recognition of the reality is a necessary first step toward intervention. Violence prevention education seeks to impart an understanding of this reality. However, education is not enough. Structural change is necessary in order to balance unequal power relations. Structural change is only possible when structures that are inherently discriminatory are dismantled – these are the structures of dominance which heavily influence who is considered acceptable and unacceptable; deserving and undeserving; credible and non-credible. The standards by which individuals and groups are assessed also need to be interrogated and changed in order to accommodate differences. And finally, social values and normative structures have to be changed in order to be inclusive and valuing of differences. Education about human rights is vital to empowering individuals and groups. However, access to affordable housing and adequate financial support are equally important for survival. The implementation of human rights is an even more critical matter than education by itself.

Economic and Social Empowerment are the foundations for a strategy toward eliminating violence. Economic empowerment can serve to raise the status of women, thereby reducing their dependency on abusive spouses and families. Economic empowerment means valuing women's paid and unpaid work. Such empowerment also serves to give women and other victims of abuse, a measure of autonomy which is absolutely necessary in order for them to regain their sense of self and self-esteem. Social empowerment can work toward increasing the social status of

women as women. It can also be expressed through the provision of additional supports and services for women who are in or leaving abusive relationships, but fundamentally recognizing women's rights as human rights. The provision of adequate housing, employment programs, and support services are some of the ways in which women can be empowered.

Support and Solidarity are similarly vital in enabling victims of violence not only to leave abusive relationships but to have their experiences and perceptions validated. A critical element in the dynamics of violence is to blame the victim for the violence. Without support and solidarity, victims often feel that they are responsible for the violence. They internalize the blame. As a result of the isolation they experience, the abuser often becomes their sole reference point. Support and solidarity are critical in providing the victim with an alternative way of perceiving the situation and of determining viable safety plans by which to exit a violent relationship.

Empathy and Advocacy. Many victims of abuse return to the abusive relationship. In part, this is a function of the emotional ties that constitute a relationship. Moreover, there is always the hope that things will change for the better. Empathy is therefore paramount in dealing with victims of abuse. Taking their perspectives seriously while providing continuing support is essential.

In a context of unequal power relations, advocacy is often the only way in which those who are powerless can have access to some kind of leverage and support. Unfortunately, advocacy has become a loaded term with connotations that are inaccurate and founded on false assumptions. Without advocacy, there are few means by which to hold powerful individuals and institutions accountable. While advocacy is not a way of restoring egalitarian relations, it is one way in which to impede the further victimization of those who have little or no economic or social power.

Eliminating Inequalities. This is by far the greatest challenge that we face in society today. Recognizing that inequalities result in the stigmatization, marginalization and consequent victimization of individuals, it becomes incumbent to identify the means by which we can level inequalities. Economic, political and social empowerment are significant ways in which this can be done. However, inequalities are underpinned by social norms and stereotypical perceptions about individuals and groups. Changes in law are one significant means by which to challenge inequalities and dismantle them. Nevertheless, creating a climate of intolerance for inequalities is just as necessary. Dismantling the barriers to participation, involvement and access to resources is essential.

Inclusion and Valuing Difference. The inclusion and positive valuation of difference are ways by which to reduce the marginalization and stigmatization that contribute to victimization. These are also avenues by which to increase support for those individuals whose differences have been used to exclude them. Including diverse perspectives and realities ensures that support services are reflective and effective and that policies are developed in consultation with those who are most directly impacted. Inclusion also provides a sense of belonging to those who have historically and contemporarily been denied access and equality.

VI. CONCLUSION

This presentation has focused on the dimensions and realities of violence in intimate relationships. My purpose has been to outline the particular factors that contribute to vulnerabilities to victimization and to outline ways in which these vulnerabilities can be reduced. I have sought to present an overview of the particular ways in which race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation and disability increase the vulnerabilities of specific groups of people. These vulnerabilities anchor around structures of dominance, which define the standards by which people are assessed and treated in ways that influence their life chances and autonomy. The key risk factors that I have identified include, but are not limited to, poverty, isolation, dependency, marginalization, stigmatization and devaluation. These risk factors are apparent when one examines the lives of women who are differently situated by virtue of age, race, sexual orientation, disability, and poverty. I have attempted to show how systemic forms of violence such as racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism and classism interact with and influence women's vulnerabilities to intimate forms of violence.

In attempting to address possible interventions, I have concentrated on issues of structural change through economic, political and social empowerment and have emphasized the need for support and solidarity, empathy and advocacy, and the elimination of systemic inequalities. Valuing difference and including different voices are ways by which to limit the marginalization and stigmatization of individuals and groups. Additionally, patterns of socialization need to be changed in order to eradicate historically entrenched inequalities. We need to embrace a crime prevention framework that emphasizes human rights and social development.

While the long-term goal is to eradicate violence, the short term goal remains one of increasing safety and reducing the vulnerabilities of particular groups and individuals in society. Safety is only possible when women and other vulnerable groups know that there is a way out of the violence and that there is support for leaving violent situations. We need to think about how we can effectively implement these "ways out" of violence both with respect to our individual behaviour and actions, as well as the goals and policies of our organizations and departments. How do we increase the safety of those who are directly affected by violence? What can our respective organizations do to facilitate the exit of women from violent relationships, and to support those who are in these relationships because of financial concerns, concerns about their children, and concerns that their experiences will not be taken seriously? How do we make those institutions that are mandated to intervene in situations of violence, aware of these concerns and of the many ways in which women who are at the juncture of multiple forms of systemic and institutional oppressions are more vulnerable to victimization? What measures of accountability can we implement in order to ensure the safety of women and children? In short, how do we ensure that there is no abuse of power?

When we think about the boy in Taber, or of Dawn-Marie Wesley who committed suicide, we need to ask how we as a society could have intervened. When we think about the ninety-odd women who die every year at the hands of violent partners and ex-partners, we need to ask ourselves what we as society could have done to stop them from being killed. And when we

think about Aboriginal women who are fighting to have some say in the policies that govern them, we need to ask how we can facilitate their autonomy.

In closing, I would like to turn to an example of a Muslim community with very low levels of violence against women. This community lives on a small island between Madagascar and Tanzania. The low prevalence of wife battering in this community was found to be associated with women's equal status, their particular role in society, their economic independence, and their proximity after marriage to their own families. Women and their natal families had full custody of the children. Families actively intervened in cases of violence and often evicted the abuser from the community. There was little tolerance for physical violence though verbal insults were commonplace. Both men and women could be equally as insulting (Lambek, 1992).

This example highlights how the status of women, when it is socially, politically and economically valued, insulates them from violence. It also underlines the ways in which active intervention by families and the community as a whole can deter violence from occurring. And finally, the example underscores how egalitarian social norms can serve to protect women rather than render them vulnerable to victimization.

VII. REFERENCES

BC Ministry of Women's Equality. *Women Count 2000.* Available online at: www.weq.gov.bc.ca/women-count/2000/index.stm

Bolaria, B. Singh and Peter S. Li. *Racial Oppression in Canada.* Toronto, ON: Garamond Press, 1988.

Campaign 2000. *Child Poverty in Canada, Report Card 2000.* Available online at: www.campaign2000.ca

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. "General Social Survey on Spousal Violence." *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2000.* Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, 2000.

Chambers, Susan. *An Analysis of Trends Concerning Violence against Women: A Preliminary Case Study of Vancouver.* Vancouver, BC: FREDA, 1998.

Chao, Sanette. "The Closet Within the Closet: Domestic Violence in the Lesbian Community," Slugwire City on a Hill Press, November 13, 1997. Available online at: www.slugwire.org/weekly/archives/97Nov13/abuse.html

Chasin, Barbara H. *Inequality and Violence in the United States: Casualties of Capitalism.* Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997.

Comack, E. *Women in Trouble: Connecting Women's Law Violations to Their History of Abuse.* Halifax, NS: Fernwood, 1996.

Currie, Sue, Nancy Laliberté, Sylvia Bird, Rose Noelle, and Cornelia Sprung. *Assessing the Violence against Street-Involved Women in the Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Community.* Vancouver, BC: Ministry of Women's Equality, Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society (DEYAS), and Watari Research Society, 1995.

Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race & Class.* New York: Vintage Books, 1983.

Davis, Sylvia with Martha Shaffer. "Prostitution in Canada: The Invisible Menace or the Menace of Invisibility?" 1994. Available online at: www.walnet.org/csis/papers/sdavis.html

DeKeseredy, Walter S. and Linda MacLeod. *Woman Abuse: A Sociological Story.* Toronto, ON: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997.

Denike, Margaret and Sal Renshaw. *Legislating Unreasonable Doubt: Bill C46, Personal Records Disclosure and Sexual Equality*, ed. Donna Robertson and Yasmin Jiwani. Vancouver, BC: FREDA Centre, 1999.

Duffy, Ann and Julianne Momirov. *Family Violence: A Canadian Introduction.* Toronto, ON: James Lorimer & Company, 1997.

Faith, Karlene. *Unruly Women: The Politics of Confinement and Resistance.* Vancouver, BC: Press Gang Publishers, 1993.

Faulkner, Ellen. "Woman-to-Woman Abuse: Analyzing Extant Accounts of Lesbian Battering." In *Unsettling Truths: Battered Women, Policy, Politics and Contemporary Research in Canada*, ed. Kevin Bonnycastle and George S. Rigakos, 52-62. Vancouver, BC: Collective Press, 1998.

Fine, M. *Disruptive Voices: The Possibilities of Feminist Research.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992.

Fitzgerald, Robin. *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile.* Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, 1999.

Fleras, Augie and Jean Leonard Elliott. *Unequal Relations, An Introduction to Race, Ethnic and Aboriginal Dynamics in Canada.* Second Edition. Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall, 1996.

Flynn, Karen and Charmaine Crawford. "Committing 'Race Treason:' Battered Women and Mandatory Arrest in Toronto's Caribbean Community." In *Unsettling Truths: Battered Women, Policy, Politics, and Contemporary Research in Canada*, ed. Kevin Bonnycastle and George S. Rigakos, 93-102. Vancouver, BC: Collective Press, 1998.

Gill, Richard and Joan Brockman. *A Review of Section 264 (Criminal Harassment) of the Criminal Code of Canada.* Working Document. Ottawa, ON: Department of Justice Canada, 1996.

Goundry, Sandra. *Final Report on Court-Related Harassment and Family Law "Justice."* Vancouver, BC: Vancouver Association of Women and the Law, 1998.

Greaves, et al. *Selected Estimates of the Cost of Violence Against Women.* London, ON: Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, University of Western Ontario, 1995.

Griffin, Christine. "'See Whose Face It Wears:' Difference, Otherness and Power." *Feminism & Psychology*, 6, 2 (1996): 185-191.

Harris, M. *School Experiences of Gay and Lesbian Youth: The Invisible Minority.* New York: Harrington Press, 1997.

Heise, Lori, Mary Ellsberg and Megan Gottenmoeller. "Ending Violence Against Women." *Population Reports*, Series L, No. 11, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Population Information Program, December 1999:1. Available online at: www.jhuccp.org/pr/l11edsum.stm

Henry, F., C. Tator, W. Mattis, and T. Rees. *The Colour of Democracy: Racism in Canadian Society.* Toronto, ON: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1995.

Hunter, Joyce. "Violence Against Lesbian and Gay Male Youths." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 5, 3 (1990): 295-300.

Janoviček, Nancy. *On the Margins of a Fraying Social Safety Net: Aboriginal, Immigrant and Refugee Women's Access to Welfare Benefits.* Vancouver, BC: FREDA Centre, 2000.

Jewell, K. Sue. *From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond: Cultural Images and the Shaping of US Social Policy.* London: Routledge, 1993.

Jiwani, Yasmin and Lawrence Buhagiar. *Policing Violence against Women in Relationships: An Examination of Police Response to Violence against Women in British Columbia.* Vancouver, BC: FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women & Children, 1997.

Jiwani, Yasmin, Kelly Gorkoff, Helene Berman, Gail Taylor, Glenda Vardy-Dell, and Sylvie Normandeau. *Violence Prevention and the Girl Child, Final Report.* Ottawa, ON: Status of Women Canada, December 1999.

Jiwani, Yasmin with Shelley L. Moore and Patricia Kachuk. *Rural Women and Violence: A Study of Two Communities in British Columbia.* Vancouver, BC: FREDA, 1998.

Johnson, Holly. *Dangerous Domains: Violence Against Women in Canada.* Scarborough, ON: Nelson Canada, 1996.

Johnson, Holly and Vincent Sacco. "Researching Violence against Women: Statistics Canada's National Survey." *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, 37, 3 (July 1995): 281-304.

Kelly, Liz. *Surviving Sexual Violence.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Kinsella, Warren. *Web of Hate: Inside Canada's Far Right Network.* Toronto, ON: Harper Collins, 1994

Kong, Rebecca. "Criminal Harassment." *Juristat*, 16, 6. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, 1996.

Lakeman, Lee. "Why 'Law and Order' cannot End Violence against Women; and Why the Development of Women's (Social, Economic and Political and Civil) Rights Might." *Canadian Woman Studies*, 20, 3 (2000): 24-33.

Lambek, Michael. "Like Teeth Biting Tongue: The Proscription and Practice of Spouse Abuse in Mayotte." In *Sanctions and Sanctuary: Cultural Perspectives on the Beating of Wives*, ed. D.A. Counts, J.K. Brown and J.C. Campbell, 157-171. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992.

Lasch, Christopher. *Haven in a Heartless World.* New York: Basic Books, 1977.

Leacock, Eleanor. "Montagnais Women and the Jesuit Program for Colonization." In *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock, 25-42. New York: Praeger, 1980.

Lenton, Rhonda L. "Power versus Feminist Theories of Wife Abuse." *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, 37, 3 (July 1995): 305-330.

Locke, Daisy. "Family Homicide." In *Family Violence in Canada; A Statistical Profile, 2000*, 39-44. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, 2000.

_____. "Violence Against Children and Youth by Family Members." *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2000*, 31-37. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, 2000.

Lucashenko, Melissa. "Violence against Indigenous Women: Public and Private Dimensions," *Violence Against Women*, 2, 4 (Dec 1996): 378-390.

Lynn, Marian, and Eimear O'Neill. "Families, Power, and Violence." In *Canadian Families: Diversity, Conflict and Change*, ed. Nancy Mandell and Ann Duffy, 271-305. Toronto, ON: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995.

Mandell, Nancy, ed. *Feminist Issues, Race, Class and Sexuality*. Scarborough, ON: Prentice Hall Canada, 1995.

Marshall, Pat Freeman and Marthe Asselin Vaillancourt. *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence – Achieving Equality*. Final Report of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Supply & Services, 1993.

McCreary Centre Society. *Sexual Abuse and Young People with Disabilities Project: Results and Recommendations*. Richmond, BC: New Leaf Computer Publishing and Printing Corporation, 1993.

McGillivray, Anne and Brenda Comaskey. *Black Eyes All of the Time: Intimate Violence, Aboriginal Women, and the Justice System*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

McIvor, Sharon D. and Teressa A. Nahanee. "Aboriginal Women: Invisible Victims of Violence." In *Unsettling Truths: Battered Women, Policy, Politics, and Contemporary Research in Canada*, ed. Kevin Bonnycastle & George S. Rigakos, 63-69. Vancouver, BC: Collective Press, 1998.

Moore, Angela M. "Intimate Violence: Does Socioeconomic Status Matter?" In *Violence Between Intimate Partners: Patterns, Causes, and Effects*, ed. Albert P. Cardarelli, 90-100. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1997.

National Crime Prevention Council, Economic Analysis Committee. *Money Well Spent*. November 2000. Available online at: www.crime-prevention.org/English/publications/economic/invest/index.html

National Forum on Health. "An Overview of Women's Health." *Canada Health Action: Building on the Legacy*. Ottawa, ON: National Forum on Health, 1997.

Nava, Mica. "A Girls' Project and Some Responses to Lesbianism." In *Changing Cultures, Feminism, Youth and Consumerism*, ed. Mica Nava, 39-70. London, UK: Sage, 1992.

Postman, Neil. *The Disappearance of Childhood*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1982.

Prutzman, Priscilla. "Bias-Related Incidents, Hate Crimes, and Conflict Resolution." *Education and Urban Society*, 27, 1 (Nov 1994): 71-81.

Ratner, Robert. "In Cultural Limbo: Adolescent Aboriginals in the Urban Life World." In *Not a Kid Anymore*, ed. Gary M. O'Bireck, 185-202. Toronto, ON: Nelson Canada, 1996.

Razack, Sherene. "From Consent to Responsibility, from Pity to Respect: Subtexts in Cases of Sexual Violence involving Girls and Women with Developmental Disabilities." *Law and Social Inquiry*, 19, 4 (Fall 1994a): 891-922.

_____. "What is To Be Gained by Looking White People in the Eye? Culture, Race and Gender in Cases of Sexual Violence." *Signs*, 19, 4 (1994b): 894-923.

Renzetti, Claire M. "Violence and Abuse among Same-Sex Couples." In *Violence between Intimate Partners. Patterns, Causes, and Effects*, ed. Albert P. Cardarelli, 70-89. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1997.

Ristock, Janice L. "Beyond Ideologies: Understanding Violence in Lesbian Relationships." *Canadian Woman Studies*, 12, 1 (1991): 74-79.

Rodgers, Karen B. "Wife Assault: The Findings of a National Survey." *Juristat*, 14, 9. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, 1994.

Roeher Institute. *Harm's Way: The Many Faces of Violence and Abuse against Persons with Disabilities*. North York, ON: Roeher Institute, 1995.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. *Choosing Life: Special Report on Suicide among Aboriginal People*. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Supply and Services, 1995.

Savin-Williams, Ritch C. "Verbal and Physical Abuse as Stressors in the Lives of Lesbian, Gay Male, and Bisexual Youths: Associations with School Problems, Running Away, Substance Abuse, Prostitution, and Suicide." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 62, 2 (1994): 261-269.

Shaw, Margaret, Karen Rodgers, Johanne Blanchette, et al. *Survey of Federally Sentenced Women: Report to the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women on the Prison Survey*. User Report #1991-4. Ottawa, ON: Solicitor General Canada, 1991.

Sidel, Ruth. "Battling Bias: College Students Speak Out." *Educational Record*, 76, 2-3 (Spring-Summer 1995): 45-52.

Sobsey, Dick, Wade Randall and Rauno K. Parrila. "Gender Differences in Abused Children with and without Disabilities." *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 21, 8 (August 1997): 707-720.

Stewart, Donna. *Older Women and the Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy in British Columbia*. New Westminster, BC: BC Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors, September, 2000.

Stone, Sharon Dale. "Must Disability always be Visible? The Meaning of Disability for Women." *Canadian Woman Studies*, 13, 4 (1993): 11-13.

Suleman, Zara and Holly McLarty. *Falling Through the Gaps: Gaps in Services for Young Women Survivors of Sexual Assault*. Vancouver, BC: FREDA Centre, 1997.

Ticoll, Miriam and Melanie Panitch. "Opening the Doors: Addressing the Sexual Abuse of Women with an Intellectual Disability." *Canadian Woman Studies*, 13, 4 (Summer 1993): 84-87.

Tolman, Deborah L. "Doing Desire: Adolescents Girls' Struggles for/with Sexuality." *Gender & Society*, 8, 3 (September 1994): 324-342.

Websdale, Neil. *Rural Woman Battering and the Justice System: An Ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Series on Violence against Women, 1998.

Wendell, Susan. "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability." *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 4, 2 (1989): 102-124.