

Girls/Young Women and Violence Project

An initiative of the National Council of Women of Canada

Funded by Status of Women Canada

Prepared by the Core Advisory Committee:

Ruth Brown, Joyce Ireland, Annette Werk, Helen Saravanamuttoo (Chair)

The Forum, generously sponsored by Status of Women Canada, occurred on 5 June 1999 in Winnipeg, in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC). The intention of the Forum, the first step of a national initiative, was to gather together NCWC members, youth representatives from across Canada and informed professionals for a one day event which would inform members on issues of girls and young women as victims and perpetrators of violence.

September 1999

Why Advocacy/Program Support and Development are Necessary

We live in an increasingly violent society. The consequences for girls / young women experiencing violence are, invariably long lasting and devastating to their life chances. The socialization of girls and young women, combined with the frequent portrayal of violence and objectification of girls / young women in the media, may result in a negative or poorly developed sense of identity.

The result for some young women is that they are conditioned to not to pay attention to their own needs and experience. This can result in depression, low self-esteem and a learned sense of powerlessness. Harassment and other forms of violence affect not only victims of abuse, but also have long standing consequences for bystanders.

This project addresses the needs of girls and young women, who are much more likely to be victims of violence. Research shows that girls/young women who are perpetrators of violence share the common characteristic that they have been victims of violence themselves. There has been little gender-based research on perpetrators of violence and the programs that have been developed are not generally viewed as filling the needs of these girls and young women. There are, therefore, gaps in service in this area.

What is Violence?

There are many different ways in which violence can be experienced by girls and young women. The following are some of the most common.

- § Verbal abuse
- § Gender intimidation or harassment (domination of boys / young men over girls / young women)
- § Exclusion from their peer group
- § Bullying
- § Sexual violence, including rape and dating violence
- § Physical violence

Project Goals

We hope that your council will be part of this project by undertaking advocacy on this issue or developing a community program. The goals of your project may include some of the following:

- § To build awareness and understanding of the issue among council and affiliated organization members, as well as among the general public;
- § To ensure that local community programs address the distinct and different needs of girls / young women experiencing violence in their lives;
- § To improve services for girls / young women involved in violence;
- § To forge new ties and partnerships between councils and community agencies and professionals.

Getting Started

Below you will find several categories of programs to help you better assess what exists where you live and where you might want to put some efforts. Since abuse exists on a continuum from verbal harassment

and bullying to physical and sexual violence, different programs are required to address different problems. There are three general phases of the process:

- § Violence prevention
- o Treatment to deal with behaviour resulting from exposure to violence
- o Crisis intervention
- § School Programs that exist at all levels from elementary to college and university, including:
 - o Classroom programs emphasizing ways to get along with each other
 - o Assertiveness training
 - o Conflict resolution and anger management programs
 - o Peer mediation programs
 - o Same sex small group discussions on such topics as violence, sexual harassment
 - o Harassment and date rape prevention
 - o Counselors who are trained to help, both victims and perpetrators deal with the consequences of violence, are an important resource
- § Community Agencies:
 - o Agencies include YM-YWCA, Youth Services
 - o Prevention programs, teen groups
 - o Counseling for victims of violence
 - o Youth shelters and safe houses
 - o Hospital emergency programs
 - o Rape Crisis Centres
 - o Education programs
 - o Individual and group counseling
 - o Crisis lines
 - o Police Services
 - o Education programs

At the same time, it is necessary to change attitudes. The following are examples of initiatives in this category.

- § Education programs for the public and for service providers
- § Public service announcements and pamphlets on taking violence against women seriously
- § Police/physician awareness training designed to ensure professionals respond to the needs of women and girls.

The foregoing are only a few of the main categories. Perhaps you know of others.

People to Involve

- § Councils, NOSs have been asked to name a local project representative to coordinate contacts
- § Youth delegates to Forum, other interested young women from your area and young women's groups
- § Local professionals working in the field

Project Parameters

- § Projects may include community support of existing services, development of new services or sponsoring of education programs (e.g. a discussion series in your community).
- § Status of Women Canada funding is conditional on the continued involvement of young women.
- § We encourage councils to engage in a project between now and June 2000. This project may be on-going after the 2000 AGM, but we will need to report to Status of Women Canada by that time.
- § Jenny Robinson, Project Coordinator will be available to work with you in the early stages of your project. In addition, there will be a small sum (up to \$200) available to reimburse out of pocket expenses that you incur in running this project. Receipts will be required.
- § A short report will be necessary on the activities your council / organization takes part in and how the goals are met.

We hope that your local council will choose to develop an advocacy or action program to address abuse that best suits the needs of your community. Good luck!

SUMMARY FORUM REPORT: GIRLS / YOUNG WOMEN AND VIOLENCE PROJECT

An initiative of the National Council of Women of Canada
Funded by Status of Women Canada
Prepared by the Core Advisory Committee:
Ruth Brown, Joyce Ireland, Annette Werk, Helen Saravanamuttoo (chair)
September 1999

Who Attended

There were 160 participants: 95 Council members, 20 youth from across the country, 15 youth from Winnipeg and 30 public attendees. In addition, there were a number of presenters. Volunteers helped to pull the day together.

Also in attendance were Barbara Riley, Program Officer from Status of Women Canada, and the Honourable Hedy Fry, Minister for the Status of Women, who took part in a news conference and was interviewed by several media representatives, and who met many of the youth delegates at the luncheon.

Goals of the Forum

The goals of the Forum have been met, as follows:

1. To give participants (members, youth delegates and general public) a knowledge base about girls/young women as victims and perpetrators of violence.
 - a. Resource material was included in the program.
 - b. The keynote presenters, Dr. Sybille Artz from the University of Victoria and Kelly Gorkoff from RESOLVE (one of the Alliance of Five Research Centres involved in a project on violence against women) gave brilliant presentations on the very complex issues of girl/young women and violence.
 - c. Experienced and well-informed facilitators led participatory workshops.
 - d. Dr. Hedy Fry delivered an impassioned and informative speech.
 - e. A youth panel discussed their first hand experiences of violence and the need to heal.
 - f. The Forum evaluations showed that these presentations were effective. Respondents reported that their understanding had been increased.
2. To listen to and record regional concerns of council members from across the country.
 - a. Small group discussions, grouped by region, enabled all participants to share their views.
3. To raise energy levels, awareness and commitment among participants on issues related to girls/young women and violence.
 - a. Ninety percent (90%) of respondents indicated that they were interested in participating in further action. This number is very significant in view of the fact that 50% were not currently involved in the issue of girls/young women and violence.
4. To develop material on which action and advocacy by local councils will be based.
 - a. The recommendations developed by the small groups will be sent out to local and provincial councils, grouped by region.

The youth delegates who completed this questionnaire indicated awareness of the issues re violence although most were not involved in initiatives in this problem area. They stated that their ideas that violence perpetrated by girls/young women was on the rise came from the media, mainly TV, and not from their own experiences. Since only 9 of the 30 youth delegates completed the questionnaire it is impossible to generalize from these data.

There was almost universal agreement that the day was a resounding success with excellent presentations and workshops, which led to increased understanding and awareness of this serious problem area. A number of respondents stressed the importance of having the opportunity to share ideas with others, to hear from the youth delegates and to participate in inter-generational dialogue.

A fairly significant number of respondents felt that there were important topics, which had not been discussed at the Forum. These included Aboriginal and Gay and Lesbian issues. Several delegates also felt that sessions on strategies for intervention, solutions and causes of gender-based violence would have improved the Forum. One interesting response suggested that a clearer definition of National Council's mandate including funding issues was needed.

Recommendations By Province

Top Two Selections from each Province with the numbers signify the ranking given by the total Forum Assembly.

Manitoba

1. Provincial council to provide a forum for young women to speak out about experiences and concerns. ASK THEM WHAT THEY WANT - solution based
2. Identify at risk children and provide early intervention

- 30 Provide a haven for young girls in your own neighbourhood
9. Provide opportunities for youth. Run programs run by youth
10. Encouraging educational system to provide resources and time - to include in its curriculum age and developmentally appropriate life skills (listening and communication skills toward peer supporters) - including healthy sex education and abuse awareness
11. Need appropriate preventative programs dealing with anger, self esteem, self worth, the justice system and everyday living for youth and by youth
12. Support childrens programs through media and school to value qualities attributed to women in girls and boys (IE. Trusting intuition compassion and love and community service respect)
15. Listening and mentoring
- 160 Council to include young women in activities discussion and decision-making (personal invitations to young women)

Ontario

4. Develop youth councils in High Schools that mirror the model of Council and act in partnership with the local council
5. Facilitating workshops with young women in partnership with YW +20 in partnerships with other community groups, IE. School boards to 3, RAFT (youth drop ins)
6. Link girls and young women with mentors
7. Advocate for programs in school to facilitate children revealing abusive situations
8. Have speakers at council meetings to help us to know how to recognize symptoms of abuse
- 180 Implement a viable policy against harassment in the school
20. Council support - Head start programs - for children at risk with parental involvement.

Maritimes

13. Local sessions/meetings every 2 months
14. Consult and listen with young people about what they would do in a violent situation and offer choices

Quebec

17. To inform young women of services help available in Montreal in both languages, (collect and publish).
19. An integrated program in the schools - starting at an early age - to promote gender equality and respect

British Columbia

21. Formal and informal celebrations and instruction and mentorship programs for girls moving into adolescence
22. Build high self esteem among young women)
23. Develop theatre program written and performed by students for community
24. School program as part of curriculum that involves youth working with youth including all children addressing violence, anger management, drugs and alcohol, empowerment of youth

Final Tally

First Choice: 10. Encouraging educational system to provide resources and time - to include in its curriculum age and developmentally appropriate life skills (listening and communication skills toward peer supporters) - including healthy sex education and abuse awareness (Manitoba)

Second Choice: 19. An integrated program in the schools - starting at an early age - to promote gender equality and respect (Quebec)

Third Choice: 22. Build high self-esteem among young women (British Columbia)

Understanding the Connections: Girls and Young Women as Victims and Perpetrators of Violence

Prepared for the National Council of Women of Canada
Prepared by Jenny Robinson, Forum Co-coordinator
907 Dominion Street
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Funded by Status of Women Canada

August 15, 1999

Dear Advisory Committee Members,
Re: National Forum Report - Understanding the Connections: Girls and Young Women as Victims and Perpetrators of Violence

I am pleased to send you the attached report, Forum Report – Understanding the Connections: Girls and Young Women as Victims and Perpetrators of Violence. You requested this report in our meetings in Ottawa in June of 1999.

This report reiterates the key areas of this issue as they were presented at the Forum on June 5th, 1999, in Winnipeg by the invited experts. It then offers a description of the evaluation and an analysis of the data collected through those processes.

You will also find attached recommendations made by the regions of your organization, concluding with suggestions for the Next Steps, the second and third phase of this project.

I hope that the report will be helpful to you and your colleagues in guiding the future plans for this project.

Sincerely,

Jenny Robinson
Forum Co-coordinator

Summary

In 1999, a girl in Canada has a one-in-two chance of experiencing some form of violence against her before she reaches the age of sixteen. Does this have a connection to the rage and anger that we see in the faces and actions of so many girls and young women in Canada? Is the continued objectification of females and constant public sexism in our culture working to deplete the self-respect of the young women and girls of this nation? Are these issues all tied together in a culture that does not value the experience of women?

The keynote presenters at the National Council of Women's Forum – Understanding the Connections: Girls and Young Women as Victims and Perpetrators of Violence – said an emphatic yes, there is a clear connection between all of these things, and that we must unravel this picture through solid gender-based research and a concerted public education and advocacy program that will turn the tables on violence of all forms.

This report attempts to address the above questions, and dispel some myths around girls and young women's use of violence using the information, which was presented by the experts who were involved in the Forum on June 5th, 1999, in Winnipeg. It also includes the next steps – some programming, funding and partnership ideas.

As well there is an examination of the information collected in the evaluation process, which gives a picture of what the many regions represented at the Forum have to say about their community's needs and desires in addressing this complex issue. The group who attended the Forum was overwhelmingly in favour of taking action against the violence that young women and girls in Canada are experiencing in their lives.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank the following persons who assisted in the development of this project: the members of the Core Advisory Committee - Helen Saravanamuttoo, Chair, Joyce Ireland, Ruth Brown, Dorothy Hodgson and Annette Werk, and also all the members from across the nation who participated on the Advisory Committee.

The Forum would not have been a success without the wisdom of the Winnipeg Council Members, in particular, thanks to Mary Scott and Beryl Eyford. Thanks to Hannah Service, Executive Director of the National Office for her endless hours of commitment to the future of women in Canada. To the Honourable Minister Hedy Fry, a thank you for her impassioned words and commitment to ending violence against women in Canada.

And most importantly I would like to thank all the youth delegates who came and openly shared their stories with us. I hope we do you justice and find a way to diminish the violence in our homes, schools and on our streets so your future is brighter and safer.

Thank you to Status of Women Canada for the financial support for this project.

I. INTRODUCTION

A national forum – Understanding the Connections: Girls as Victims and Perpetrators of Violence, the first step of a national initiative sponsored by Status of Women Canada, occurred on June 5th, 1999, in Winnipeg. The intention of the forum was to gather together National Council of Women members, youth representatives from across Canada and informed professionals for a one-day national event to educate members of the Council and to make further plans to investigate and understand this complex issue.

The impetus behind the project, as described by the Chair of the Advisory Committee, Helen Saravanamuttoo, was the culmination of many years experience of members of the Ottawa- Carlton Local Council of Women (LCW) working in the field of child welfare and how they had observed violence blighting the lives of youths, and they realized, through these observations, that there was a link between victims and perpetrators.

Approximately 160 people attended the one-day national event. There were 95 Council members, 20 guest youth delegates from Councils across the country, 15 youth delegates from the Winnipeg area and 30 public attendees. As well, there were a number of presenters, volunteers and workers to help pull the day together.

Also in attendance was Barbara Riley, project officer from Status of Women, and the Honourable Hedy Fry, who delivered an impassioned speech at the luncheon and met with the youth delegates and members of the media.

A. Background

There has been a recent spate of media coverage concerned with girls or young women who have engaged in acts of violence, and Statistics Canada recently reported that violent crime by young females is growing. It is important for the future of such young women that this phenomenon be acknowledged and investigated within an equality-seeking framework, so that treatment principles can be built on effective violence prevention measures instead of on punitive ones. It is even more important to understand the connection between being the victim and the perpetrator of violence, in order to ensure social justice for these young women.

Since most research has been done on boys and since programs are largely developed from research, there is some question as to whether existing programs are appropriate for girls. It is important that such gender

differences be acknowledged, so that girls and young women, either victims or perpetrators of violence, be given effective help.

The statistics regarding girls and young women and violence are staggering. The chance that a young woman or girl will be a victim of some form of violence before she reaches 16 is 50%. Furthermore, girls from marginalized groups tend to experience violence at heightened levels; these are girls and young women of the First Nations, refugees and immigrants, lesbians, bisexual and trans-gendered youth ().

The chance that young women or girls will perpetrate violence is statistically low in a gender comparison to young males; however, in recent years young female involvement in violent crime has been statistically growing and it has changed its face (Stermac, 1998, p.18). Whereas young female offenders were once principally involved in crimes of property, they have become increasingly involved in crimes against persons. Professor Lana Stermac theorizes, as do others, that this increased involvement in violent crimes may be a response to feelings of low self-esteem. She writes, "A girls' self-reports reveal that physical aggression may increase feelings of empowerment, dominance and self-importance." (Stermac, 1998, p.19)

A recent discussion paper released by Health Canada's Interim National Expert Advisory Committee for the Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being states, Children who witness their mother being abused by their father or another male partner display increased rates of withdrawal, low self-esteem, depression and emotional problems (Peggy Edwards, Health Canada and the Fostering Knowledge of Children in Canada, 2-23-99, p. 18).

Sibylle Artz, in her study of violent school girls, concludes that two of the central patterns emerging which prepare them for involvement in violence are their extensive personal experience with emotional, physical and sexual abuse... and internalized notions of being female that assign low general worth to women (Artz, 1998, p. 195-96).

This supports the research coming from the , a tri-province initiative which has just completed a study to be used as development material for a national action plan on the prevention of violence and the girl child. Their findings are compiled in a paper entitled Violence Prevention and the Girl Child, February 1999.

They observe that responses to violence manifest themselves in many forms, and we can not use a narrow definition; rather the definition must encompass all of its manifested forms such as eating disorders, sexual exploitation, self-harm, depression, suicide and delinquency. Findings in the AFRCV report suggest that there is a direct connection between these behaviours and the experience of violence.

B. Intervention and Research

There are interventions available to youth; however, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of existing programs as the many evaluations of particular approaches do not deal with gender issues and frequently the evaluated programs do not even serve girls (Artz, 1998, p. 191). Artz explains that many programs which focus on delinquency were originally designed for males and for the most part do not address the needs of young females (Artz, 1998, p. 196).

Also with regard to intervention, youth need to be made aware of the continuum of violence, which encompasses many of their lives, and to know that violence is not normal. It must be made clear that girl children have the right to live in a non-violent society (AFRCV, 1999, p.2). This is a challenging task and one that is perhaps guided best by the young people who are living or have lived through violence and are willing to share their sensitive observations.

To develop appropriate and significant intervention it is important to understand and address all the factors that put children at risk of violence. The following is a combined list of risk factors from the AFRCV and Investing in Children: A National Research Conference, 1998: 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 (AFRCV, 1999, p. 2, and Investing in Children: Workshop Paper 6, 1998, p.8).

One might surmise that as girls are at the greatest risk for violence, there should be priority given to gender-specific research and development of effective intervention programs; however, this is not the case, and

in fact, gender-specific inquiry is scarce. Kelly Gorkoff, in a Review of Child Abuse Affects, Interventions, Prevention and Legal Issues: A Focus on Canadian, Female and Aboriginal Literature concludes that a review of the literature on child abuse has revealed that although girls are most at risk of all forms of abuse, they are not prominent in research, theory or law.

C. Next Steps

Understanding the connection between girls as victims and perpetrators of violence requires a thorough examination of the gaps that exist in research and intervention for both victims and perpetrators. This examination must be guided by an overall gender sensitivity that does not presently exist. Put succinctly by the AFRCV:

“...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. Safe gender-specific spaces, programs and services for girls are necessary and more effective in the long term.” (AFRCV, 1999, p. 16)

II. THE FORUM – PROGRAM OF EVENTS

The Forum began with a sharing circle. During this ceremony, the group of 160 was reminded that violence is not an individual issue but truly an issue that pervades our society. This set the tone for the day by encouraging all present to examine the painful reality of violence involving young women and girls and using their experience and strength to explore possible solutions.

Presenters at the Forum included Dr. Sybille Artz from the University of Victoria, and from the University of Manitoba, Kelly Gorkoff, MA, from Resolve, one of the Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence (AFRCV).

They addressed the audience with an informed presentation on the complex issue of girls and young women as victims and perpetrators of violence. This was followed by concurrent workshops: Model for Intervention; Prevention and Early Detection; Conflict Resolution; and Self Defense which all explored the nature of violence in society and offered new alternatives for intervention based on holistic, self-esteem building, community development methods.

A youth panel after lunch with the Hon. Minister Hedy Fry gave all who attended a first-hand look at the violence that young women and girls face with little or no resources. The day ended with small group work, which allowed the regions to focus in on the needs of their communities.

III. THE FORUM – CONTENT ANALYSIS

A. Gender-Based Research: Acknowledging Women's Value

The importance of gender-based research and programming emerged as a central theme of the Forum. All of the presenters highlighted it as a significant area in need of development, which will help in understanding the true experience of violence. They all posit that the experience of violence, be it as a victim or perpetrator, is based in gender, and that gender and how one is socialized in that gender affects how one experiences or uses violence.

The panelists revealed this as a basic premise from which to assess the issue of violence among and against young women and girls. The experiences of women and how women live their lives differently from men must be recognized to further the understanding of how violence affects society. Artz explained that gender-based research must be a starting point rather than an afterthought.

Both Gorkoff and Artz advocated further research in the field, which would be gender-specific; in other words, we must begin to clearly examine female experience, in general, from a gendered perspective. As Reitsma-Street, PhD., from the University of Toronto explains, the experience of women is not adequately examined in social science research: The pattern of seeing females as similar to, equal to, different from, less than, better than the standard of male behaviours, thoughts and theories is pervasive in all of our sciences, in all of our laws and in all of our practices (Reitsma-Street, 1996, p. 252).

This gender bias manifests itself in the lives of young women and girls. It is seen most clearly in how girls and young women define equality as sameness rather than an acknowledgment and a respect for difference, explains Artz. Women will not be autonomous until they recognize their own identity. Sibylle Artz, PhD:

This became real to me when I started spending a lot of time interviewing girls from elementary school to senior high and especially when I did my ethnographic study. Their definition of equality had turned into sameness- they had no idea that equality meant that one had the ability to define one's own terms- that one wasn't truly autonomous until one understood that one could create the world in a way that fit with one's values and one's creed. Therefore their sense of equality was really still that of an oppressed group (Appendix - Opening Panel, 6-5-99).

Here Artz quotes Paulo Ferreira, One of the basic elements of the relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed is prescription. Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed into one that conforms to the prescriber's consciousness. Therefore, as long as we see ourselves as attempting to attain the standards and qualities of life that someone else has, we are not yet taking control of defining the quality of life that we see is the quality of life that is in the best interest of all.

Gorkoff asked the participants to be mindful of their own experiences as women and how truly different women are and how this is not reflected nor respected in much of the research done which examines the lives of girls and young women. The research that has been done to date on violence has used a very narrow definition of violence; focused mainly on the mainstream; has not distinguished between boys and girls; has examined violence as an individual problem; and has not included the manifestations of abuse, such as eating disorders, self-harm, prostitution, depression and suicide. What has been revealed is that girls tend to experience abuse at the hands of family and friends and that boys tend to experience abuse at the hands of strangers.

Family violence, the sexual objectification and abuse of female bodies, dominance of one gender over another and the stereotypical characterization of males and females are pervasive and lie at the root of violent action. As a result of this reality, young women and girls from across Canada have a similar experience. Often they accept the assumption that they are stupid and the inferior sex. They are often the brunt of sexist jokes and this sexism defines how they must behave in their families and at their schools. They are commercialized and convinced by a market-driven culture that they are nothing unless they are skinny. These are all examples offered in the research presented by Gorkoff and Artz.

Artz's research indicates that young women and girls who have identified themselves as being involved in violent acts, had been abused physically and sexually more than all other people who participated in our study - and that they are in constant fear of being abused and that they are in competition for male attention. In order to be noticed and valued by males they feel compelled to utilize tactics often associated with males, such as violence. In fact, male desire is so important that young women and girls may even fight to excite them, as was described by Sibylle Artz in the story of Molly, one of the young girls that participated in her study and is documented in her book *Sex, Power and the Violent School Girl*.

Their experiences are compounded by the sense young women and girls have, that they are constantly watched and assessed according to what activities they do and the behaviour they display. Mary Pipher, PhD, author of *Reviving Ophelia* calls this imaginary audience syndrome; it is attached to their mental developmental phase, which, at adolescence, is steeped in concrete thought. Therefore, they see things in black and white; for example, young women might believe that if they take the initiative sexually that they are sluts and deserve abuse. This is linked again to the need for self-identification and a need for the freedom to define one's own person- physically, mentally, emotionally and sexually. Girls, generally, rely on prescriptions that society gives them. In this regard they are continually oppressed and pressured into well- defined sexist roles. This leads to the development of surface or manifest behaviours, which can be linked directly to depletion of self as a result of the experiences with violence.

B. Dispelling the Myths

The opening panelists presented five myths that surround girl violence. Much of the research regarding the myths comes from a study by the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies in Calgary. Myths are emerging because of media distortion and our distorted understandings of why girls use violence. So I want to present these myths to you as a way to open a dialogue as to why girls use violence from a gendered

perspective, Gorkoff explained.

Myth #1 Violence committed by young girls is skyrocketing

As mentioned in the background information, statistically girl violence is increasing and both Gorkoff and Artz explain that this is erroneous and has to do with how statistics are compiled. It was clarified that although the rate of violence among young women and girls has increased, it is neither statistically significant nor is it more so than the overall rate of violence in Canada.

Myth #2 Violence by girls is becoming more violent

In 1965 women were responsible for 2% of all homicides, where as in 1995 that dropped to 1%. For sexual assault we see the same drop from 2 to 1%. Robbery seems to be increasing and this includes robberies with weapons. Female involvement in assault has actually dropped.

Myth #3 - It is not appropriate for girls to use violence because it is a male aggression characteristic

Research would indicate that this is judging by a male standard and that there is a big gender difference between the way women use violence and the way men use violence even physiologically. This argument is supported with social and physiological data as it relates to female use of violence. Gorkoff explained that violence is socially acceptable for boys and not for girls. In the AFRCV focus group study the girls said, "My brother can fight and get into trouble and he is a big man." If I do it I'm a terrible girl, a terrible person. But it is socially acceptable for my brother.

Physiologically, Artz said there is new data emerging that would indicate that females experience the use of violence differently in their bodies than males. Ann Cameron, a Canadian researcher, is looking at the physiological underpinnings of what happens in anger and the differences between males and females. When at-risk females reach a certain level of stress that is brought on by anxiety they disassociate from their bodies. They are slipping out of consciousness, which is typical for abuse survivors, again reaffirming the need to move outside the notion of measuring everything according to a set standard.

Myth #4 Poor parenting: working mothers and liberal parenting styles have caused violence to increase

Suggestions that single-parent families, working moms, or income levels have a causal relationship in the development of at-risk children was firmly refuted in Artz's study of 1500 British Columbia students. Furthermore, this myth blames women and does not implicate men. Men are also parents and play a role in how parenting should be structured.

Myth #5 - There is a gang problem with young women

This is an under-researched media-hyped issue, Gorkoff explained. In a current AFRCV study they found that although girls affiliated with gangs are considered members of the gangs, their membership is that of a worker, usually as a prostitute, who makes money for the gang; they do not actually have the same kind of involvement or status as male gang members.

C. Panel Recommendations

The Alliance of Five Research Councils (AFRCV), investigating family violence and violence against women across Canada, undertook background research on the development of a national action plan on the girl child. The goal of the research was to begin to understand the range and types of violence experienced by girls, as well as to understand what Canadians are doing to prevent and stop violence. They did an extensive search of the current literature in Canada and the United States. These are the recommendations that came from the national study from the AFRCV and that Gorkoff and Artz presented at the Forum:

1. There is a need to conceptualize violence on two interconnected levels: at the individual level and at the societal level. The individual level is within the family context- within personal experience. The contribution of the larger societal forces must be understood in relation to issues such as racism and poverty, unemployment, lack of support for parents (for example, the lack of a national day care program) and how these intersect with the patriarchal beliefs, which are widely held about women and men.
2. There must be a clear coordinated government mandate on violence prevention and this mandate should embrace a gender-specific as well as a culturally sensitive perspective.

3. Services need to be co-coordinated and service providers have to be given the forum and the resources to be able to communicate with one another.

4. There is a clear need for a community development approach. In the survey conducted by the AFRCV, the more successful existing programs had a strong community base. Artz's data supports this. In the Suck School District, just outside of Victoria, B.C., Artz has been working since 1994 on a community-based violence prevention program. It is a grassroots-driven program. In each of the participating schools there is a team of parents, teachers, administrators, youths (even at the elementary school level) and agency workers, and the result thus far has been a 40-50% drop in incident rate in violence in the schools and an overall 50% self-reported drop in violence among young girls and a 22% drop in violence among boys.

5. There has to be a holistic approach. In some way there must be a connection made between mind, body, spirit and action. Our complex human relations must be reflected in law, policy and program development.

D. Prevention and Early Detection

The workshop on Prevention and Early Detection of Violence presented by Nanci Burns, MSW, of Ottawa, focused on the need for educators to recognize the impact of sexism on the development of girls and young women. Burns offered an array of program ideas. One in particular engaged the youth to carry out research and depict the results of their research in a video.

Burns recommended that students, educators and parents should be educated on the full range of violence—to learn that violence can be subtle, verbal, even silent, and that any form of discrimination hurts and is unacceptable. Furthermore, the school curriculum must be bias-free.

E. New Models for Intervention

Following the recommendation from the AFRCV, the workshop entitled New Models for Intervention featured three innovative, holistic, community-based approaches to assist communities and individuals to negotiate with and reintroduce perpetrators into a less violent culture.

The Winnipeg School District Number One and the Community Education Development Association (CEDA) have partnered in the Youth Opportunity Program. This innovative youth-driven program encourages young people to take responsibility for their own actions and identify what they would like to see happen for themselves and their community. Meeting certain expectations in order to be involved in this innovative school program, they develop leadership skills and formulate plans to access resources in order to address their identified issues and projects. Blair Robillard of CEDA presented this program.

Cathy Denby from the First Nations Centre at the University of Northern British Columbia described a program for young women and girls who have experienced violence, which emphasized the need to consider the whole person, and used the aboriginal medicine wheel as a focal point for healing.

The Leave Out Violence Program (LOVE) provided a visual outlet of photography for young women and girls whose lives have been affected by violence. Participants in the program talked about the healing effect of this model.

All of these programs are steeped in the community. Their success is directly linked to the whole of the community being involved and also that the youth have a voice within the process of healing.

F. Conflict Resolution

The third workshop How to Use Conflict Resolution described how to dissipate the escalation to violence and to promote the art of truly learning to understand different points of view. Mediation specialist Susan Gibson led participants through learning scenarios, which were designed to broaden their understanding of conflict. The major focus was the acknowledgment that conflict does occur but it need not end in violence; in human relations there are always non-violent choices.

G. Self Defense

Gary Black and Mira Sahay explored with their participants the power of the human body. Women are often socialized to negate the true strength that they have and once in touch with this they can utilize it not only

in defense but also in their self-esteem building. This was a powerful and loud workshop, which included women from a number of generations.

H. Conclusions

The most common element that came out of the information presented was the lack of true equality girls and young women experience, and inside this the diminished respect for self and one's own identity. The young women who were present talked at length about their desire to stop violence. Many of them are working as social advocates already and are seeking resources to augment their endeavors. A number of them spoke about a need for respect and space that is safe and girl-run, from which it can be concluded that they do not feel safe in the communities in which they live, work and learn.

This assumption is supported with evidence from many of the presenters, for example, in this quote from Nanci Burns' presentation on prevention: Girls avoid certain hallways, classrooms, courses and even school, to free themselves from sexual harassment. Their life experience is being hampered by the actions of others, mostly males in their schools. They are not free to choose. Larkin and Staton's studies of 500 girls in Ontario schools indicated that sexual harassment was virtually an everyday reality.

The opening Panel examined the main theme of girls and young women as victims and perpetrators of violence. Sibylle Artz, PhD, Director of the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria, and Kelly Gorkoff, MA, research associate at the University of Manitoba with (one of the Alliance of Five Research Centres investigating family violence and violence against women in Canada) laid out the challenges for the day. They offered a clear picture of what it is to be a girl in Canadian society, how young women are affected by violence and what the outcome is of their experiences with violence.

They both expressed the need for a concerted political will to act; that is, a co-coordinated approach in service provision at all levels- community-based and holistic in nature. Their most important point was that the voices of girls and young women must be heard. It is their stories that will lead to understanding the tangle of violence that engulfs many of their lives and it is through this information that solutions will be found. As one participant said, "We are not the future, we are the now."

IV. EVALUATION

A. Goals of the Forum

The following are the goals set out by the NCWC Advisory Committee, which guided Phase One-, the National Forum on Girls and Young Women as Victims and Perpetrators of Violence.

1. To give participants (members, youth delegates and general public) a knowledge base about the connections of girls/young women as victims and perpetrators of violence from the following perspectives:
 - i. Research
 - ii. Effective programs
 - iii. What youth think is important
 1. This was accomplished at the Forum through:
 - a. Panel discussions, workshops and small group work
 - b. The resource material presented
 2. To listen to and record regional concerns of council members from across the country:
 - i. This objective was the key to the small group work that occurred in the afternoon and the survey/questionnaire which asked the participants what resources they need in their communities to become a part of a national education campaign regarding girls and young women as victims and perpetrators of violence.
 3. To raise energy levels, awareness and commitment among participants on issues related to girls and young women and violence,
 4. The small group work allowed the regions to focus on their community needs. It is hoped that the presence of the youth delegates acted to invigorate the Council members and their commitment to the youth in their communities.
 5. To develop material on which the first stage of a public education campaign will be based:
 - a. Using all the information collected from the Forum, the Advisory Committee will be able to develop effective and relevant information, which will assist in determining the focus and direction of the public education campaign.

To evaluate these goals, four tools were used. Three surveys were completed; one to the youth delegates prior to the Forum, a general attendance survey which was administered during the afternoon small group work, and one to all the Local and Provincial Councils prior to the Forum.

All of the out-of-town Youth Delegate surveys were completed and returned prior to the Forum, and 115 general surveys were completed and returned the day of the Forum. All Councils responded to the information requests prior to the Forum.

The small group work, the fourth tool, was designed to assist the NCWC in the evaluation of this phase of the project and as a base of information for the future, as each of the regions was asked to focus in on their community and identify areas of concern regarding the issue. The information collected here gives a picture of some of the interest areas of the regional councils, and this information will be useful in evaluating the next steps. It will be used as a basis of comparison to see whether or not the regions acted on this issue in the area that they identified at the Forum.

These four evaluative tools have provided a picture on where the group at large is sitting with the issue.

B. Local and Provincial Council Update

This brief questionnaire asked each Local and Provincial Council to provide information on activities that they had initiated regarding the Common Program Speak Out for Children, which was the catalyst for this current project. All the Councils responded and thirteen indicated that they had completed some programming concerning this. There was a broad range of issues indicated, from parenting to gambling. The list of activities was included in the program, which was distributed the day of the Forum. This information about the Councils will act as a baseline of comparison for the follow-up evaluation.

C. General Survey

Here is a summary of analyzed data collected from the general survey.

For Question 1: Did you increase your understanding of the issue?

§ 50% responded that their understanding was substantially increased and 49% responded that their knowledge was increased.

§ Eighty percent of the group rated the quality of the information as very good or excellent and 99% evaluated the program of events as clear and easy to follow.

§ As far as rating the overall day, there is a 100% response that it was a rewarding experience.

The response to Question 6, which dealt with the willingness of the participants to pursue this issue in their home communities, is encouraging with 90% of the group saying yes they are interested in further action. This is made even more significant when compared to the information revealed in Question 7, which indicates that 50% of the participants are not currently involved in the issue of girls and young women and violence. Examples of the support needed to assist in the public education campaign were: information; make strategy information readily available; provide money for programming; and choose it as the Common Program for National.

Question 8 asked participants to identify the three most significant things that came out of the Forum. The responses have been organized in similar groups to give a picture of where the larger group was focusing.

D. Youth Delegate Survey

Thirty-five young women under the age of 25 attended the National Forum. Twenty of the delegates were selected from Councils across the country. Fifteen delegates attended from the Winnipeg area. All were asked to respond to a pre-Forum survey, which allowed for the assessment of background knowledge and their involvement in their home community on this issue. It will also provide a baseline of information for comparison for follow-up in the months to come.

Ninety-nine per cent of the respondents said that they were somewhat aware or well aware of the issues of girls as victims and perpetrators of violence. When asked to define the source of their awareness, many (75%) cited American television as their major source. Seventy-seven per cent indicated that they were not aware of any initiatives in their communities that deal directly with girls or young women as perpetrators

of violence.

Those that responded positively to this question indicated that their awareness was limited to punitive initiatives. Regarding victims, 44% said they were aware of community programs, and all of these were crisis-based programs.

One-third of the youth delegates are involved in initiatives which work to reduce violence in their communities; women's centers, girl guides and teen support groups were some examples cited.

Twenty-two per cent indicated that they were somewhat aware of the National Council of Women of Canada and 78% indicated that they were completely unaware. None had ever attended a Council event of any kind.

E. Small Group Work

The challenge here was to find a way for everyone to participate. The Forum participants were a diverse group coming not only from the varied regions of Canada, but also from different generations, and political and social backgrounds. A process called the nominal group process was used as a facilitation tool during this two-hour workshop.

Dr. Sid Frankel of the University of Manitoba, as an efficient way to generate ideas, a democratic process controlling status and communication differences, describes the nominal group process. It is useful in situations, which are broadly defined and lack certainty. The goal was to provide a process whereby the regional councils and youth delegates could comment and collect information for planning and programming and begin a community development process.

Forum delegates were asked to break into groups by region - 12 groups of 12. A facilitator and a recorder were present with each group to guide them through the process and collect information. The following question was asked: A What do you think your local or provincial council can do to help decrease violence in your community?

The twenty-four items listed below represent the top two selections from each of the twelve groups. They focus predominantly on public education and Local Council internal or partnership initiatives, such as educating group members)

Top Two Selections from each Group

1. Provincial council to provide a forum for young women to speak out about experiences and concerns. ASK THEM WHAT THEY WANT- makes it solution-based.
2. Identify at-risk children and provide early intervention
3. Provide a haven for young girls in your own neighbourhood
4. Develop youth councils in high schools that mirror the model of Council and act in partnership with the local council
5. Facilitate workshops with young women in partnership with YW CA+20 in partnerships with other community groups, i.e. School boards to 3, RAFT (youth drop-ins)
6. Link girls and young women with mentors
7. Advocate for programs in schools to facilitate children in revealing abusive situations
8. Have speakers at council meetings to help us to know how to recognize symptoms of abuse
9. Provide opportunities for youth. Establish programs run by youth
10. Encourage the educational system to provide resources and time- to include in its curriculum age and developmentally appropriate life skills (listening and communication skills toward peer supporters) - including healthy sex education and abuse awareness.
11. There is a need for appropriate preventative programs dealing with anger, self-esteem, self-worth, the justice system and everyday living- for youth and by youth.
12. Support children's programs through media and schools to value qualities attributed to women in girls and boys (i.e. trusting intuition, compassion and love, community service, respect).
13. Conduct local sessions/meetings every 2 months.
14. Consult and listen with young people about what they would do in a violent situation and offer choices.
15. Listening and mentoring.
16. Council to include young women in activities discussions and decision-making (personal invitations to young women).

17. To inform young women of services/help available in Montreal in both languages (collect and publish).
18. Implement a viable policy against harassment in the schools.
19. An integrated program in the schools- starting at an early age- to promote gender equality and respect.
20. Council to support Head Start programs- for children at risk, with parental involvement.
21. Formal and informal celebrations and instruction and mentorship programs for girls moving into adolescence
22. Build high self-esteem among young women
23. Develop theatre program written and performed by students for the community
24. School program as part of curriculum that involves youth working with youth including all children addressing violence, anger management, drugs and alcohol, empowerment of youth.
 - a. Final vote - small group process

Each participant chose two priorities from a list of 24 generated from the larger group.

First Choice:

Encouraging the educational system to provide resources and time- to include in its curriculum age and developmentally-appropriate life skills (listening and communication skills toward peer supporters) including healthy sex education and abuse awareness.

Second Choice:

An integrated program in the schools- starting at an early age- to promote gender equality and respect.

Third Choice:

Build high self-esteem among young women.

F. Evaluation Conclusions and Recommendations

Information gathered from all four-evaluation tools indicate a high interest in education and advocacy work. From the general survey one can surmise that there is a desire to take this issue back to their communities and do some kind of work. There is certainly a range of activities indicated- from inviting speakers to Council meetings to lobbying school board for curriculum development. In general, there is a strong indication that each of the regions have grasped the need for work to be done in the area of girls and young women and violence. The Advisory Committee can be certain that the topic is of interest to Council members.

The Forum and the information presented were well received, and the major goals of the Forum were accomplished.

From the wide range of topics suggested in both the small group work and from the area of significant impact indicated in the general survey, it would be advisable to allow the local councils to direct their own action at this point. It would be wise to direct the information disseminated, however, and heed the words of the experts who presented, especially regarding the myths.

It is very important, as the presenters indicated, to examine this issue in an equality framework- to acknowledge that more often than not young women who use violence are acting out their own struggle with living in a society that does not value them. Their behaviours are manifestations of the violence they have experienced and females in Canada are responsible for less than 2% of all violent crime.

V. NEXT STEPS

A. Phase Two Project Description

The National Council of Women of Canada is a well-established organization with a credible and admirable lineage of public service. To use the momentum of this organization to address the issue of girls and young women and violence on a local, provincial and national level would be an effective and efficient use of the organization's reputation and expertise.

The second phase of this project will:

1. Include LCW, PCW and youth in the development and implementation of local and regional public education and advocacy initiatives regarding the issue of girls and violence. Each PCW and LCW will select a project representative to act as a liaison between their council colleagues and the Co-coordinator and Core Advisory Committee.
2. Project Representatives will receive this report. They will also receive a pamphlet, which will echo the information presented by the experts who participated in the Forum and the extensive survey of programs that was completed by the Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence early in 1999. The Project Representative will consult with their Council colleagues and decide on an activity. They will report back to the Co-coordinator through a prepared form. These initiatives may take the form of lobbying school boards for zero tolerance, hosting a workshop on alternative models of prevention (such as the programs presented at the Forum- Leave Out Violence, and the Youth Opportunities Project) or organizing a mini film festival to screen films such as the NFB's Taking Charge, part of the Teens Against Violence Collection. It is intended to suit each council's need.
3. Resources will be made available from the remaining budget.
4. The program's effectiveness will be evaluated by measuring the rate of involvement.

B. Time Line

The following is a suggested time line and activity description for the completion of this project.

August- September 1999

Information collected at the Forum will be used to create a framework and to give direction regarding interest areas of the PCW and LCW. This information will be presented in the form of a pamphlet and accompany a brief needs assessment which will be used as a guide for community involvement.

September 1999

A project rep from each of the LCW and PCW will be identified. They will receive the report, which includes the major areas of interest identified at the Forum and suggestions on the way we might initiate a local or regional activity.

September 1999

Preparation of funding applications

October 1999

Funding Applications made to Status of Women and the Millennium Fund for second stage funding

November 1999

Feedback from the local Reps to the Co-coordinator regarding the initiative to be undertaken by the LCW or PCW

April 2000

LCW and PCW will have completed their local project and report back to the National Office

April 2000

Final report to Status of Women Canada

Project continuation is contingent on future funding.

C. Future Considerations

A future stage may include the development and distribution of a national education tool that will assist the general public in understanding the issue. This tool will follow the research of the AFRCV, which focuses on

the six behaviours identified as manifestations, which result from the experience of violence.

The NCWC could create information packages on each of these issues (delinquency, depression, suicide, prostitution, self-harm and eating disorders) linking them to the experience of violence. These info packs will include a framework for understanding the issue, for example, how each of these manifest behaviours is connected to violence; resources available across the country; activity suggestions (i.e. which organizations are doing work in the area and might make good partners for initiatives); and examples of exceptional models of intervention and prevention that already exist and might be implemented in their communities or be given the backing of the NCWC if they already exist.

A publication that is clearly making the link between violence and the lives of young women does not yet exist. The companion piece to this education tool would be film vignettes. These vignettes would be produced on the same themes as the educational tool. Partnering with a broadcaster and the AFRCV would allow for wide public distribution and a chance to reach youth through a medium they understand. And would it not be great for one moment between the barrage of sexist, violent images on TV to see a self-esteem building piece that might educate youth on their self-worth and human potential?

D. Funding and Partnerships

Status of Women would be the ideal funding partner for the educational tool.

1. Initiate a partnership with the Alliance of Five Research Centres and a broadcaster for application to the Millennium fund for the vignettes.
2. Other funding possibilities are the Canadian Women's Foundation and United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women.

Further develop relationships with collaborators such as the Alliance of Five Research Councils, the Elizabeth Fry Society, the Canadian Psychological Association, etc. These partnerships are part of the original Status of Women proposal.

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Questions? Please email:

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