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The help and services for the perpetrators in Finland

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The national and personal context

- The personal history of working with Intimate Partner Violence is as long as the professional path as a psychologist
- All this time it has been evident that both the services organized to help and the orientation to work with violence are very varied



The national and personal context

- An important part of this variation is that actually the only public service directly connected to violence in Finland is the work of police, and its task is focused solely on control
- As it comes to helping services it is obvious that those are organized (too much) as temporary projects, and governmental decisions to organize those are missing (with the exception of The Federation of Mother and child homes and Shelters, and regional coordination persons)



The national and personal context

- Organizing the helping services as temporary projects does not mean that there would not exist good practices – on the contrary – but it means that implementation of the project outcomes, and of the fruitful innovations to public services has been, and still is more or less difficult



The national and personal context

- My own first serious effort to understand what are the pre-conditions of violence in families, how to understand those situations, and what are the consequences as well as means of providing help to those families was doing my psychology master thesis about the child psychiatric disorder named encopresis which according to our results seemed to be connected around family secrets and domestic violence



The national and personal context

- After that first effort there was a long break before I found myself providing a group intervention for perpetrators with my colleague Juha Holma – that effort proved to be the beginning of the treatment and research program – and Juha Holma has managed to keep it alive, at least until now
- This group intervention was provided in collaboration with the national project Mobile, and especially its local crisis center of Jyväskylä



The national and personal context

- The next step was to organize some bigger seminars for professionals about that topic
- The first seminar brought in Jyväskylä Per Isdal from Oslo, Norway, and it was the first step to long lasting collaboration with his host organization Alternativ til Vold, ATV – we even named our own program with the direct translation to ”Vaihtoehto väkivallalle”
 - Per’s contribution for me personally was to highlight the multiplicity of perspectives in work – it is not just about emotions and meanings, but it is also about behavior and actions in a very significant manner



The national and personal context

- Nationally the Jyväskylä program started to create contacts, but not all were fascinated to the pro-feminist idea of taking a stance towards IPV, or violence against women
- The other point of interest in that stage was the theoretical perspective towards violence



The role of legislation

- Since domestic violence mostly took place in private space, at home, in bedroom et c. it was seen as a private matter
- In 90's this situation changed and in Finnish legislation violence at homes was taken to public prosecution – and this began clearly and directly emphasise the crime dimension of violence taking place at homes – and nationally this can be regarded as the single most important change – at least until now



The ways to organize services for IPV

- Paradox of IPV while deciding the treatment mode
- Each intervention mode or therapeutic orientation (individual, couple, group) has its pros and cons in relation to the treatment of violence, and violent behavior – and still the professionals have to make choices in order to help their clients - and all these three basic modes are in use in Finland



The ways to organize services for IPV

- E.g. in group context the participants model each other ways to take responsibility of one's own behavior – and simultaneously it is very tempting to socialize oneself with jokes justifying violent behavior and acts, attitudes of racism and misogyny
- Individual interventions provide a safe relationship to deal with one's own vulnerability and feelings of helplessness – and simultaneously it provides a possibility to give as one-sided picture of personal life as needed in order to be able to stay in balance without real self-disclosure or psychological work with the feelings of guilt



The ways to organize services for IPV

- Couple interventions bring the unit in which violence takes place to treatment and that calls for special attention to the issues of safety, both in therapy, and especially between treatment sessions – this became also a part of our work
- Those are only few examples of these, and still all of those also include the risk of victim blaming



The ways to organize services for IPV

- Sandra Stith and her group in US have developed the work with couples and groups of couples, and Arlene Vetere and Jan Cooper developed also couple therapeutic approach for this bringing forth the idea of the stable third – that meaning (most often) the role of the referring agency or professional
 - Both groups also provide a list of possible contraindications for couple therapeutic treatment



The ways to organize services for IPV

- Both the ideas of Stith and Vetere have been applied in Finland – Arlene Vetere was the main trainer in a training program – and Sandra Stith’s model has been applied in Kuopio by the local organization of the national association of mental health, MIELI ry



The ways to organize services for IPV

- There is apparent need for the parliament to take a clear governmental stance in order to develop legislation – and thus the public services – as well as coordinating collaboration with private sector and several project organizations



Thank you!