
FINAL DISCUSSION



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*** The multidimensionality of the problem of violence against children and adolescents**

The different perspectives agree in characterizing the situations of violence and aggressiveness as a multicausal problem, and thus there were recommendations suggested that attempted to seek multidisciplinary, comprehensive solutions. However, attention was called to the need to make specific recommendations based on the experience and the scientific progress that has been achieved, responding to the expert's responsibility to propose targeted approaches that may be evaluated and incorporated by political negotiators.

The INAME is evaluated as having a "brave and responsible political attitude," for having convened this Consultation Group, because it expresses the challenge of integrating theory into practice and listening to different viewpoints on rethinking action.

There was agreement in the distinction made at the meeting between aggressiveness as a natural, positive pulsion, and the different forms of violence as the expression of a situation of conflict or disorder. We again stated the value of the idea that originally motivated the INAME to convene this Consultation Group in the understanding that children and adolescents are victims of violence who often – as a consequence – become aggressors or violent individuals. Therefore, the object of analysis was the violence committed against children and adolescents, and their reactions, instead of the idea of "violent adolescents."

The bio-psycho-social multidimensionality of violence expropriates from absolute knowledge to each discipline and obliges multidisciplinary as well as multiple comprehensive strategies for intervention and prevention. This intellectual attitude was shared by the political experts and negotiators, and from this emerged criteria from each discipline, all of which intersect with the others.

Some of the mentioned general criteria are:

The establishment of multidisciplinary groups for the generation of information, the formulation of actions and policies, and the evaluation of processes and results.

The importance of prevention as a central political principle in all fields before the emergence of a violence problem: the family unit, the education system, the community, the peer group, and the institution itself.

The generation of information, research and studies that contribute to clarifying the specificity of violence against and by children and adolescents, in order to modify social constructions that are not founded on real data.

The generation of information that allows for the specification of structural and cultural characteristics that make up the foundation of the conditions of violence suffered by children and adolescents.

The promotion of strategies that "give children and young people the floor" as a way to politically translate a right and mandate of the Convention.

The pedagogy of "incomplete organization." The suggestion was made with reference to the fact that the INAME should integrate other organizations and institutions, since it alone will never be sufficient in all of the areas of action.

However, this criterion may also be applied to the incorporation of the “social responsibility” that must be added to political-institutional responsibility with reference to the issue of violence. In other words, the solution cannot, and must not, be expected to come from the institution alone, nor from the state alone, because the criterion is to promote initiatives for the incorporation of society as a whole into the search for solutions.

The linkage between theory and practice as a way to overcome the concept of “usury”: This will mean to overcome the practice of urging direct action, which often impedes thought. Therefore, it is healthy to create spaces for reflection away from pressure.

We insist on not forgetting about everything that has been done and the experience that has been accumulated, which is a temptation into which we often fall when these situations arise. The current transformation of the INAME has been, and continues to be, possible based on its history and record.

*** The media in the information age and the construction of social images**

From the communications perspective, Luciano Alvarez begins by addressing the assumption that audiovisual media have a definite influence on their audience; he makes reference to studies that, for many decades now, have been attempting unsuccessfully to confirm this influence. He states that research has shown that the media are less powerful than interpersonal influence, and that mass communications do not reach isolated individuals, but rather individuals who belong to groups and whose action is done through a chain of habits, traditions, interests and interpersonal relationships. In his hypothesis, audiences develop techniques of resistance to exposure; further, it has not been proven that the most violent or aggressive societies are those that consume more violent film and television.

Besides proposing that “in postmodern times, little can be done to intervene in the work of the logothete system of narrative,” he maintains that institutional control over media

consumption is impracticable, because of the variety and availability of media that directly reach the spectator.

However, he also states that it is legitimate not to be resigned to interaction between social actors with institutional justification and propose actions that are oriented toward obtaining the greatest possible quality, quantity and variety of knowledge about the issues that have been outlined here, and operate on the basis of promoting positive actions through information, stimulus policies, awards, etc.

Cecilia Zaffaroni shares the idea that it is not correct or viable to resort to censorship mechanisms as in the past, or to expectations of control over the media in the information age, because it would be ineffective, “but we cannot merely trust the laws of the market, hoping that those who do not want a product will not consume it,” because, as was mentioned, the “exit it not possible in this case.” She also sets out the dilemma of how to respect the autonomy and liberty of the “logothetes” while respecting the rights of minors who are not yet prepared to consume products that require greater maturity and discernment, or how to respect the rights of these children's parents, who wish to prepare them to handle the bombardment of images and representations that reach them through the media, as they become more capable of doing so.

In sum, the proposals are oriented more toward positive incentives than mechanisms of control, or the resignation of the political responsibility of guiding the generation and consumption of information resources.

The following would be possible actions for the INAME in terms of the production of logothetes and the consumption of products:

To promote fields of negotiation and linkage between the sectors involved, facilitating their expression of interests and expectations.

To seek the greatest quality, quantity and variety of knowledge on these issues.

To stimulate the generation of products that show the social sensitivity of the “logothetes”

through information, stimulus, awards and other mechanisms.

To promote the social responsibility of the consumer of these types of products.

To educate for consumerism, guiding "how to see" instead of "not seeing."

To create educational campaigns that help parents guide consumption, making use of the educational potential of the media.

In his presentation, Rafael Bayce shows the imbalance between the factual data on the marginality, offenses, and deprivation of children and adolescents, and the socially constructed ideas about them. This issue, as well as the data that emerge from the analysis of Public Opinion completed by Agustín Canzani, demonstrate the difference between the real conditions expressed by the diverse data, and the dominant social beliefs about and images of children, adolescents and youth in our country.

This challenge involves actions that use the media as an instrument for training, sensitization and generation of social images, as well as the object of specific actions such as:

The construction and promotion of a "positive," real image of adolescents in the country, which would revert the socially constructed negative images.

The explicit proposal of a policy for building a "positive" image of the INAME, which is also stigmatized.

The generation and dissemination of information that demonstrates the fallacies surrounding the situations of stigmatization of the adolescent population.

The creation of an institutional mechanism with the participation of civil society organizations that perform duties of monitoring and control of the information disseminated by the media: spaces, times, contents, etc.

The specialization and training of communicators on the issue of children and adolescents.

*** The child-adolescent/family/school/ community links**

The various professional areas have emphasized the importance of children's and adolescents' ties to the fundamental support for their social integration: their adult references or family, their peers, the community, and the education system. In some cases, the strategy was to contrast adult society and young society (such was the strategy of Rafael Bayce's presentation). In other cases, there was an attempt to identify, within adult society, conditions of exclusion/marginalization/deprivation whose victims are families; these families, in turn, operate as environments that cannot hold their children and adolescents. From mental health professionals to legal experts, there was agreement on the consideration of the family unit and healthy ties with adult references as the principal agents in this stage of life.

However, there emerged new emphases within these considerations, such as:

The narratives and the mechanisms of constructing these narratives (by children and youth, and by adult society) as central factors in the explanation and reproduction of behaviors, and also of situations of violence.

Peers as central players in prevention and rehabilitation policies. Thus it is proposed that peer groups, meetings and assemblies be promoted as privileged spaces for reflection on problems, the search for alternatives, and self-help.

Words as therapy to be incorporated into policies, based on work currently being done by the INAME.

Resilience as a new category to incorporate into prevention and intervention, banking on the generation of information on the subject, as well as on the formulation of political strategies that keep this factor as an aspect to be considered.

In mental health, it is considered that the narratives that children and adolescents construct about their own lives, their peer groups, and the context of socialization all contribute to operating as a factor for the modification of foreseeable tendencies and trajectories. In this field, there is an area of intersection between medicine, psychiatry,

psychology, and sociology applied to the process of development and social integration of children and adolescents, that is worth exploring with more depth.

The family unit appears in the diverse propositions of the consultants as the center of the strategies to be developed. It is interesting to note that, in the final discussion, the risk of “sacralize the family” was mentioned, because it is also a complex realm of conflicts. Perhaps there are many imprecise expectations in this field, as well as the greatest frustrations with respect to both prevention and rehabilitation policies. It seems necessary to remember that, in many ways, the family unit is in crisis, because it is the depository for the duties of socialization in a context of a crisis of other integration sub-systems: the world of work, the education system, the conditions of daily life (community), etc.

There emerges the recommendation of specializing personnel to address the subject of the family, expanding on past experience and seeking to converge in it, in the most comprehensive way possible. The way in which the family is linked to the Judiciary, to law professionals, to health personnel, and to social workers.

Violence is a family that is not in a position to efficiently fulfill its duties of social reproduction; it is both victim and “victimizer” in the social imaginary. The non-institutionalization policies proposed by the INAME, as well as de-institutionalization, require the central factor of strengthening their links with families and rethinking strategies for strengthening these units.

The community can contribute as a network of solidarity, as a reference space that is complementary to the family, and above all, responsible for its children and adolescents. We saw evidence of the differences that the “scale” of the community generates as a factor facilitating a process of revalorization of this dimension. In the Interior in particular, references were made to the case of San José, and emphasis was placed on successful

experiences of work with young people in the family and in the community. Policies co-managed by NGOs and Civil Organizations are a form of lobby or a support network. But various positions suggest assessing this sphere as a “good” space for encounters, strengthening, playing a central role, socialization, etc. through co-managed community strategies at different levels.

*** The forms of violence against/committed by children and adolescents**

Rafael Bayce asks why minors, adolescents and young people are stigmatized, stereotyped, and the victims of prejudice, and situates the question on the level of symbolic power that is incarnated in the intergenerational struggle, which has always existed but which has certain characteristics in the contemporary era. On the level of status, he understands that it is a struggle that is resolved in function of the young person's “value”; on the economic and political level, adults have the floor. But he points out that the major field in dispute is that of moral ethics. And it is in this field that we must formulate actions to define positive confrontation for those who do not have the power of representation, for children and young people.

Thus, Agustín Canzani calls out attention to the need to give specificity to children and give accord the issue a “political” character. He notes the risks of structuralist readings (that cannot exclude or pardon action on the conjuncture and processes) or culturalist readings that tend to emphasize the forms of organization of action. He defines two scenarios of violence that require different strategies. The first: minors as victims of domestic violence. Here, the propositions range from seeking social sensitization in order to conceptualize the issue and thus improve the conditions of being responsibly taken up by the social ensemble, to diverse proposals that give incentive to reporting offenses. The second: minors as aggressors or violent individuals. Here, the ethical-moral struggle consists in not stigmatizing, de-stigmatizing, and effectively

providing an alternative that does not victimize the victim again.

The lack of consistency between the legal theory within the reach of institutions, and actual daily practice, was mentioned by Dr. Parga, Dr. Elena Sarli and Sergio Migliorata. However, the challenge is how to act in this framework and how to stimulate or encourage the modification of the legal frameworks and the practices of professionals in the field. There was a review of the current experiences of INTERJ on the subject of offenders, probation policies, and the need to open the institution in this field as well. This was perhaps one of the areas in which the gap between theory and practice was most revealed, because the general principles or criteria announced and shared still require an effort of targeting in order to be effectively translated into practical initiatives.

*** State policies for children and adolescents**

From various disciplines emerged the concern about formulating state policies on children and adolescents that are able to transcend the time periods, rhythms and interests of their governments. Questions were asked with different characteristics and emphases. In the final discussion, with respect to the reform of the institution itself, the possibility was suggested to specialize certain staff to implement the reform, in an attempt to avoid falling victim to changes in government, so as to be able to incorporate the transformative sense of state policies.

It was suggested that the INAME develop an adult education policy (although it seems a contradiction in terms) in order to recover its educating role instead of its role of overseeing society with respect to child affairs. In other cases, there were suggestions of mechanisms for institutional linkages for the formulation and supervision of a national plan for children, made up of national, international and non-governmental organizations that would undertake the continued task of monitoring, evaluation, formulation of initiatives, contact

with children and adolescents to inquire about their expectations, etc.

In sum, with respect to the state policy as an objective of stability, political continuity and commitment to children, the recommendations agree on two general attitudes: the freedom to rethink the institution itself, and the quest for the revalorization of the child and adolescent on the national stage: the collective imaginary, daily practices, regulatory frameworks, institutional practices, and political will. And fundamentally, from various presentations has emerged the search for the adolescent as a central player participant with rights, who must be listened to by the adult world in order to establish a real tie. An attitude where children, adolescents and young people effectively have the floor.