

## About Language and Violence

“The problem of violence is inextricably linked to the problem of representation.”



An example of improved accuracy and evidence

THE FACT  
PATTERN

First Edition

## What has informed this resource?

This resource is an excerpt from the work of Dr Linda Coates and Dr Allan Wade from the Masterclass on Language and Violence hosted in the **Language Lab** on [www.insightexchange.net](http://www.insightexchange.net)

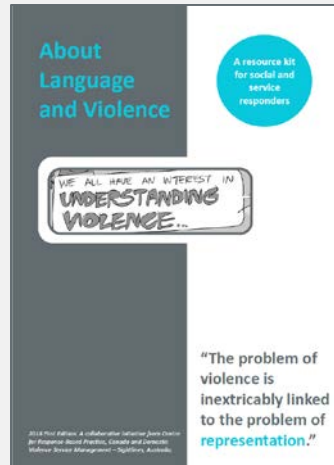
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## What are some of the other resources in the Language Lab?

### Dr Linda Coates - Video 'Language and Violence Masterclass'



### Resource Kit



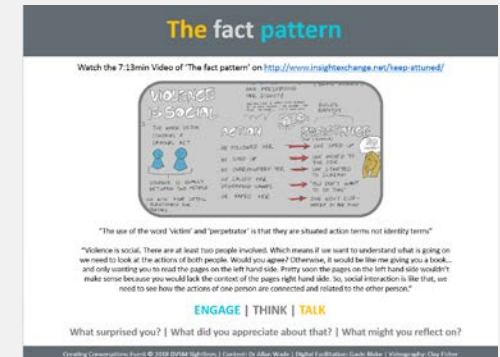
### Tool for Social Responders



### Tool for people with lived experience of DFV



### Dr Allan Wade - Video 'The Fact Pattern'

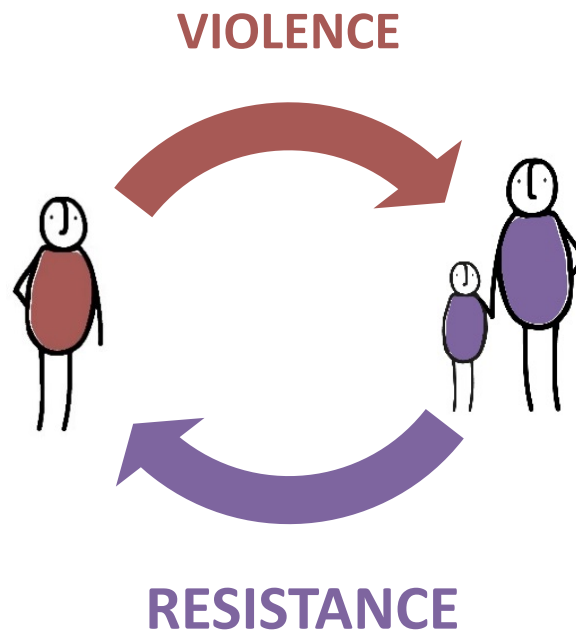


Keep attuned for a PDF copy of this resource, the resources it links out to and other related resources via: [www.insightexchange.net](http://www.insightexchange.net)

## Use of language in this Resource: **Perpetrator** | **Victim**

We use the terms victim and perpetrator to refer to individuals' actions in specific interactions, not as identity terms or as totalising descriptions. That is, the extent to which an individual can be described as a victim or perpetrator depends entirely on the nature of their conduct in specific instances. An individual who is a victim of violence in one instance can be a perpetrator of violence in another. While we reject the use of the terms victim and perpetrator as totalising identity terms, we believe it is imperative to maintain this distinction.

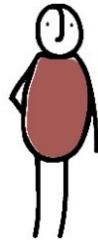
Perpetrators often try to conceal or avoid responsibility for their actions by obscuring the distinction between victim and perpetrator, for instance, by portraying their unilateral, violent actions as mutual.



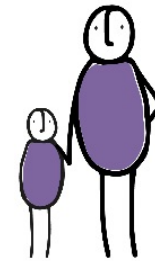
The word victim refers to a person who has been wrongly harmed.

The perpetrator's history is a history of violence.

## VIOLENCE



**Violence does not take place in a vacuum.  
It is not individual or psychological.  
Violence occurs socially and interactionally.**



## RESISTANCE

The victim's history is a history of responses and resistance.

Victims resist and respond to violence.

**There is social context.  
Social context matters.**

The perpetrator's history is a  
history of violence.

**VIOLENCE**



**Violence does not take place in a vacuum.  
It is not individual or psychological.  
Violence occurs socially and interactionally.**

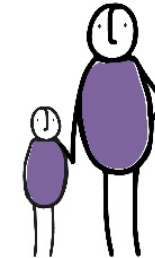
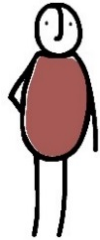


**RESISTANCE**

The victim's history is a history of  
responses and resistance.  
Victims resist and respond to violence.

**There are social responses.**

There are social  
responses to the  
perpetrator.



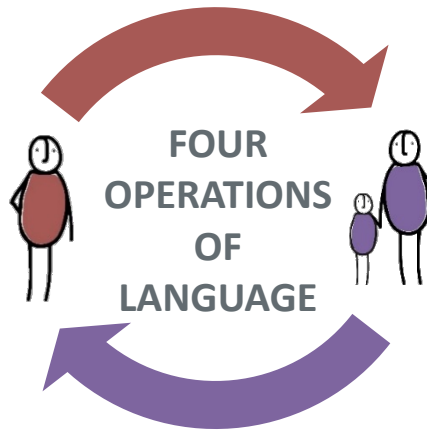
There are social  
responses to the  
victim.

**Contest the blaming and pathologising of victims**  
by obtaining accounts of victims' prudent, determined, and creative resistance. While language is a tool of domination, it is no less a tool of resistance.

**Blame and Pathologise**  
**Clarify Responsibilities**

**Elucidate and honour victims' responses and resistance**  
by enquiring about victims' responses to specific acts of violence and oppression, and elucidating the situational logic by which some responses become intelligible as forms of resistance.

**Conceal Violence**  
**Reveal Violence**



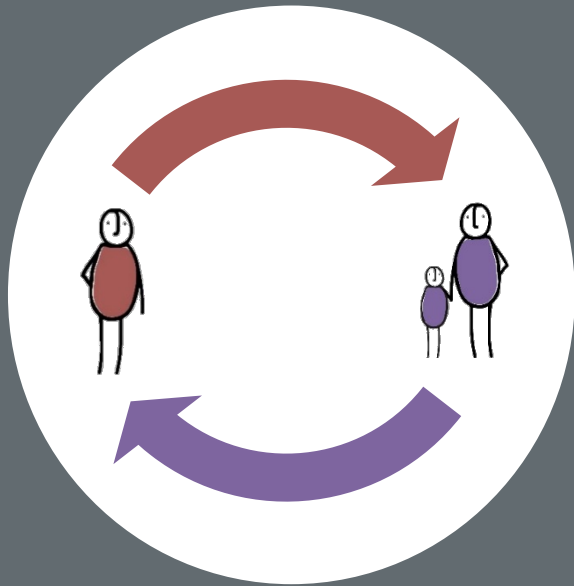
**Conceal Responses and Resistance**  
**Reveal Responses and Resistance**

**Expose violence**  
by using language that conveys its unilateral nature and, wherever possible, by including accounts of victims' responses.

**Obscure Responsibilities**  
**Reveal Personal-Situational Logic**

**Clarify offenders' responsibility**  
by avoiding language that portrays offenders as out-of-control and by highlighting the deliberate nature of violent acts, particularly offenders' strategic efforts to suppress victims' resistance.

## A COMMON ACCOUNT



### ACCOUNT 01

They were arguing.

Something was said and Mr. Smith lost control.

He grabbed her and they struggled.

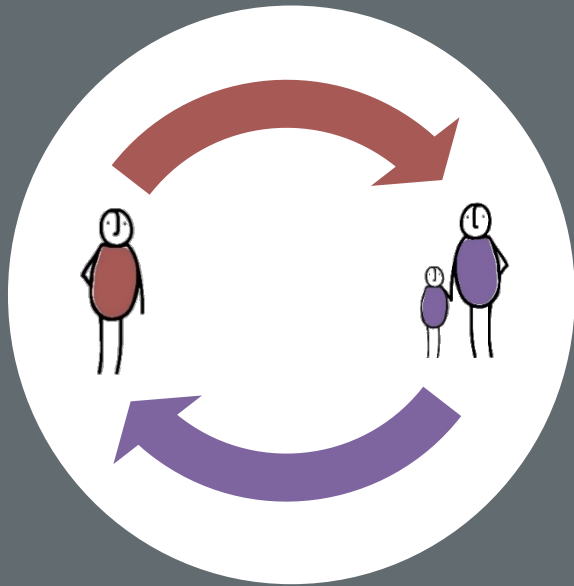
The struggle got into the bedroom.

He swooped her up and put her on the bed.

He french kissed her.

They had sex.

## A COMMON ACCOUNT



## QUESTIONS & ANALYSIS

What was done?

Who did it?

Who was it done to?

Who is responsible?

## ACCOUNT 01

**They** were **arguing**.

**Something was said** and Mr. Smith **lost control**.

He **grabbed** her and **they struggled**.

The **struggle** got into the bedroom.

He **swooped** her up and put her on the bed.

He **french kissed** her.

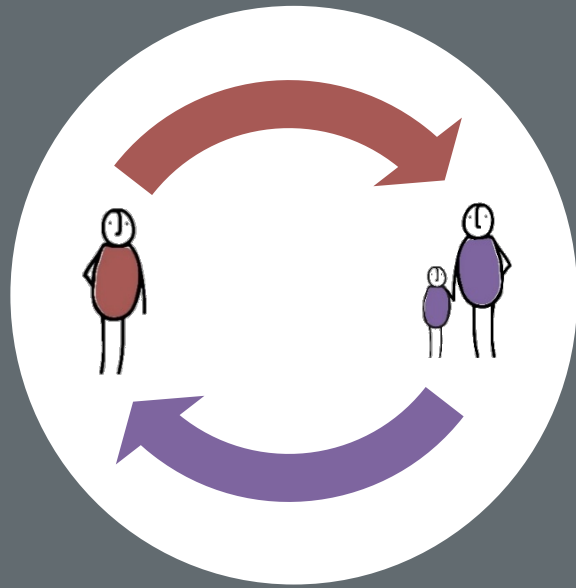
**They** had **sex**.

## ANALYSIS OF ACCOUNT 01

- **Conceals the violence and/or obscures the responsibility**
- **Mutualising language**
- **Resistance to violence is missing in the account**



## A MORE DETAILED ACCOUNT



This account is beginning to clarify:  
Who Did What To Whom

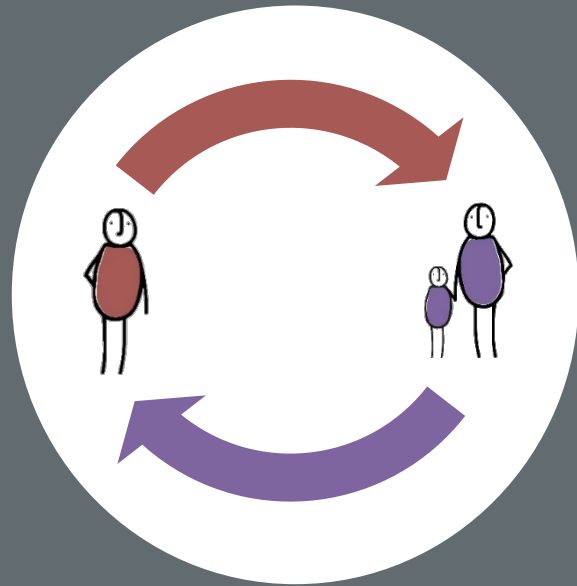
## ACCOUNT 02

Mrs. Smith reminded him to take out the garbage. **He** began **yelling** at her. **He called** her denigrating names. **Mr. Smith** lost control. **He grabbed** her. **He tightened** his grip and **yanked** her toward him. **He grabbed** her around the waste and **forced** her off the ground. **He dragged** her into the bedroom and **threw** her onto the bed. **He grabbed** her by the hair and arm and **wrenched** her over. **He jerked** her down the bed toward him. **He pinned** her on the bed with the weight of his body. **He grabbed** her face. **He forced** his tongue into her mouth. **He yanked** her skirt up. **He raped** her.

## ANALYSIS OF ACCOUNT 02

- **His unilateral-violent actions are recorded**
- **Resistance to violence is missing in the account**

## A MORE DETAILED ACCOUNT



Perpetrators anticipate, suppress and overpower resistance.

Whenever people are subjected to violence, they resist.

Resistance is:

- Any action (mental, emotional, spiritual, physical) that opposes the violence, attempts to limit its affects, attempts to maximise safety
- Rarely successful in stopping perpetrator violence
- Usually covert and prudent

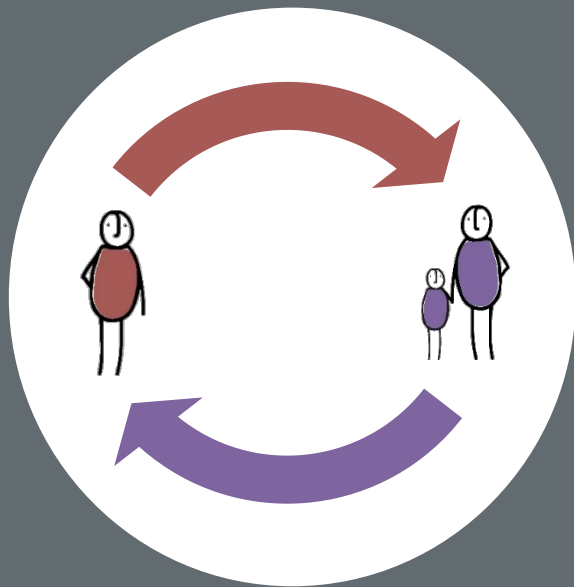
## ACCOUNT 03

Mrs. Smith reminded him to take out the garbage. He **began yelling at her**. She went quiet and started to walk out of the room. He called her **denigrating names**. She told him not to talk to her that way. Mr. Smith lost control. He **grabbed her**. She pulled back. He **tightened his grip and yanked her toward him**. She twisted to try to get away. He **grabbed her around the waist and forced her off the ground**. She kicked her legs and threw her weight backwards. He **dragged her into the bedroom and threw her onto the bed**. As soon as she landed, she rolled over and moved to the head of the bed to try to get off the bed. He **grabbed her by the hair and arm and wrenched her over**. She grabbed the edge of the bed. He **jerked her down the bed toward him**. He **pinned her on the bed with the weight of his body**. She tried to breath. He **grabbed her face**. She tried to turn away. He **forced his tongue into her mouth**. She concentrated on not gagging because she knew he would hurt her worse. He **yanked her skirt up**. She went quiet. He **raped her**. She went elsewhere in her mind.

## ANALYSIS OF ACCOUNT 03

- His deliberateness is evident in how he overpowers her resistance
- Resistance to violence is present in the account

## QUESTIONS TO ASK:



Which account gives you a better sense of the magnitude and severity of the assaults?

What do you know about Mrs. Smith?

What is your sense of Mrs. Smith?

### ACCOUNT 01

They were arguing.

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### ACCOUNT 02

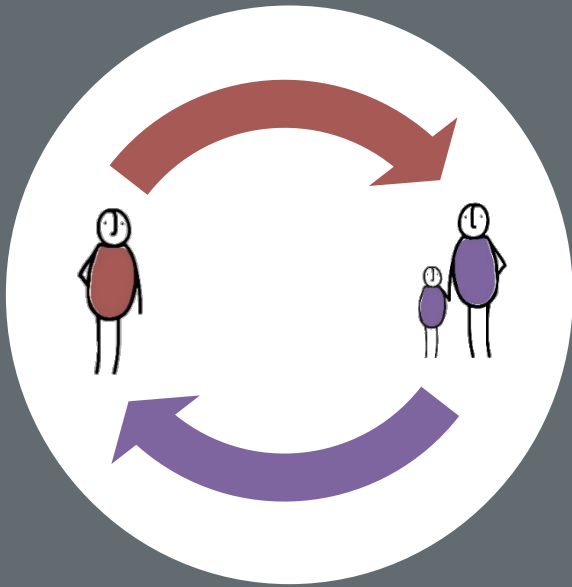
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### ACCOUNT 03

Mrs. Smith reminded him to take out the garbage. He began yelling at her. **She went quiet and started to walk out of the room. He called her denigrating names. She told him not to talk to her that way.** Mr. Smith lost control. **He grabbed her. She pulled back. He tightened his grip and yanked her toward him. She twisted to try to get away. He grabbed her around the waste and forced her off the ground. She kicked her legs and threw her weight backwards. He dragged her into the bedroom and threw her onto the bed. As soon as she landed, she rolled over and moved to the head of the bed to try to get off the bed. He grabbed her by the hair and arm and wrenched her over. She grabbed the edge of the bed. He jerked her down the bed toward him. He pinned her on the bed with the weight of his body. She tried to breath. He grabbed her face. She tried to turn away. He forced his tongue into her mouth. She concentrated on not gagging because she knew he would hurt her worse. He yanked her skirt up. She went quiet. He raped her. She went elsewhere in her mind.**

## VIOLENCE IS DELIBERATE



Intent: examine behaviour and make inference backwards

Note the false representations of Mr. Smith's violence ...

- “Lost control” → as if no intent
- “Hoped the sex” → as if the intent was to have sex
- “sex” → rape misrepresented as non-violent and mutual

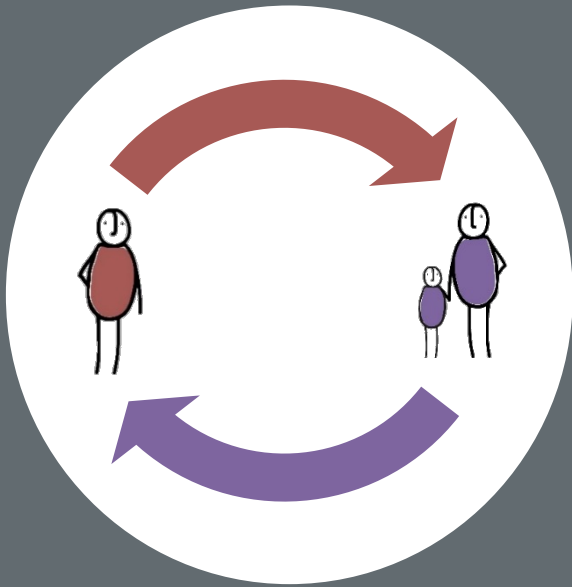
## ACCOUNT 04

Mrs. Smith reminded him to take out the garbage. He began yelling at her. She went quiet and started to walk out of the room. He called her denigrating names. She told him not to talk to her that way. Mr. Smith **lost control**. He grabbed her. She pulled back. He tightened his grip and yanked her toward him. She twisted to try to get away. He grabbed her around the waist and forced her off the ground. She kicked her legs and threw her weight backwards. He dragged her into the bedroom and threw her onto the bed. As soon as she landed, she rolled over and moved to the head of the bed to try to get off the bed. He grabbed her by the hair and arm and wrenched her over. She grabbed the edge of the bed. He jerked her down the bed toward him. He pinned her on the bed with the weight of his body. She tried to breath. He grabbed her face. She tried to turn away. He forced his tongue into her mouth. She concentrated on not gagging because she knew he would hurt her worse. He yanked her skirt up. She went quiet. He raped her. She went elsewhere in her mind. He said **he hoped the sex** would “jump start” their marriage.

### ANALYSIS OF ACCOUNT 04

- **Conceals the violence and/or obscures the responsibility through false representations of intention.**

## A MORE ACCURATE ACCOUNT



With full account of the social interaction, we are in a better position to judge intent.

## ACCOUNT 05

Mrs. Smith reminded him to take out the garbage. He began yelling at her. She went quiet and started to walk out of the room. He called her denigrating names. She told him not to talk to her that way. Mr. Smith **chose to assault Mrs. Smith.** He grabbed her. She pulled back. He tightened his grip and yanked her toward him. She twisted to try to get away. He grabbed her around the waist and forced her off the ground. She kicked her legs and threw her weight backwards. He dragged her into the bedroom and threw her onto the bed. As soon as she landed, she rolled over and moved to the head of the bed to try to get off the bed. He grabbed her by the hair and arm and wrenched her over. She grabbed the edge of the bed. He jerked her down the bed toward him. He pinned her on the bed with the weight of his body. She tried to breath. He grabbed her face. She tried to turn away. He forced his tongue into her mouth. She concentrated on not gagging because she knew he would hurt her worse. He yanked her skirt up. She went quiet. He raped her. She went elsewhere in her mind. He **hoped the rape would hurt her badly.**

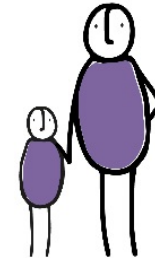
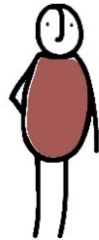
## ANALYSIS OF ACCOUNT 05

- **Reveals violence and responsibility**

**VIOLENCE**



**We have to look  
closely to grasp the  
situational logic for  
both victim and  
offender**

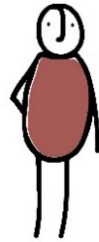


**RESISTANCE**

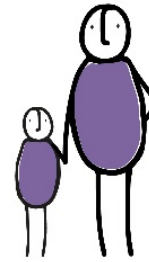
As social responders, if we rely on **too broad social abstractions\***, then we can enable inaccuracies of violence.

**For example: We excuse his behaviours as a product of culture.**

**For example:**  
We don't get closer to context meaning.  
We prescribe theories and make assumptions about her decisions, action and inaction – concluding it is illogical, inadequate or causal.



**We have to look closely to grasp the situational logic for both victim and offender**



**VIOLENCE**



**RESISTANCE**

As social responders, if we rely on **individual and psychological abstractions\***, then we can enable inaccuracies of violence.

**For example:**  
We make her responsible for stopping his violence and he is excused.

**For example:**  
We blame her through mutualising language.  
“She was the gateway for his abuse”  
“They have a symbiotic relationship”  
“They are co-dependant”  
“She has poor boundaries”

...and in doing so we diminish her agency, capabilities, deliberateness and strategies...

*\*Abstraction: The quality of dealing with ideas rather than events. (OED)*



### **Acknowledgement and Thanks:**

Domestic Violence Service Management - Sightlines Professional Services would like to thank Dr Linda Coates and Dr Allan Wade and their colleagues at the Centre for Response-Based Practice, Canada for their visionary and pioneering work on social responses, resistance, language, and the upholding of dignity. DVSM Sightlines would also like to acknowledge the generosity of Gavin Blake (Digital Facilitation) & Clay Fisher (Videography) as supporters of Insight Exchange.

Most significantly, our thanks goes to all people with lived experience of Domestic and Family Violence who have courageously shared their insights for the benefit of others.

**Keep attuned for a PDF copy of this resource, the resources it links out to and other related resources via:**

**[www.insightexchange.net](http://www.insightexchange.net)**