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**Pathways Connecting**



**Violence**  
**&**  
**Disability**

**World Conference  
on the  
Prevention of  
Family Violence  
2005**

# What We Know for Sure

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- **Children with disabilities are 3 or 4 times as likely to have experienced violence as children without disabilities.**
  - Sullivan & Knutson (2000) study provides best evidence. Many other studies found similar associations.
  - Often quoted Westat Study not useful for determining relative risk
  - Relationship exists for all categories of maltreatment
  - Some disabilities have higher or lower relative risk for a specific type of maltreatment.

# What We Think We Know

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- **Adults with disabilities are at least 3 or 4 times as likely to have experienced violence as adults without disabilities.**
  - Wilson & Brewer (1992) found that adults with intellectual disabilities were victims of violent crime 4.7 times as often as other adults.
  - Goodman and colleagues (2001) found that 20.3% of women and 7.6% of men with “severe mental illness” had been sexually assaulted within the last year and 57.1% of women and 24.5% of men with “severe mental illness had been sexually assaulted sometime in adulthood

# STRONG RELATIONSHIP

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- About 1/3 of victims of violence have significant disabilities.
- This ASSOCIATION does not tell us the **causal** or **temporal** connection
- This strong relationship requires one or more connecting pathways.
- Understanding this relationship may improve our understanding of family violence in general.

# Defining Family Violence

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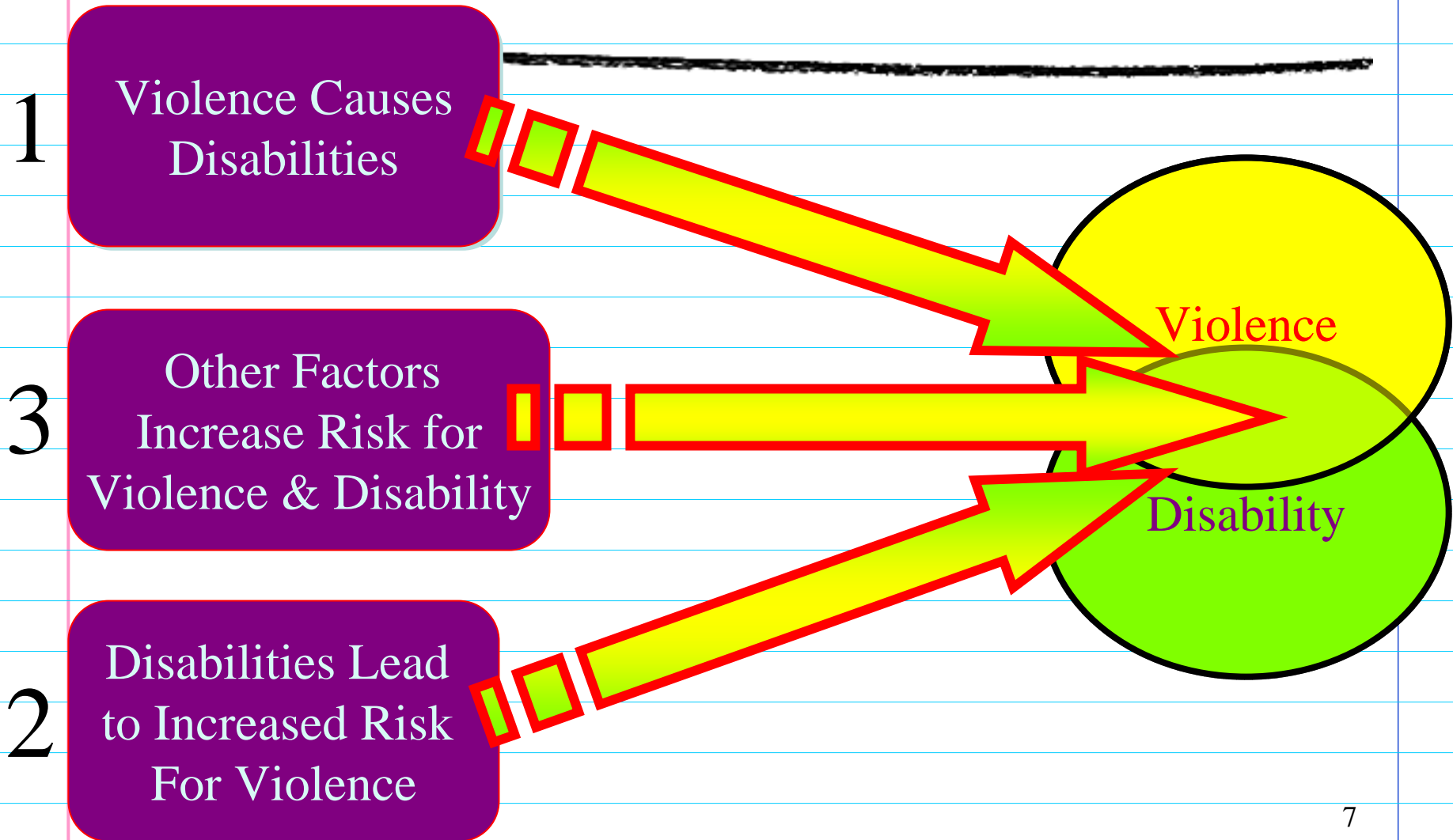
- A major procedural issue is that meaningful definitions of family violence may differ for people with and without disabilities
- The definition of FAMILY may be altered. For example, paid caregivers who may be required for intimate care may be for most intents and purposes family members.
- The definition of VIOLENCE may also be altered, for example, leaving an adult unattended in the bath would not be considered a form of violence for most adults.

# What We We DO NOT Know

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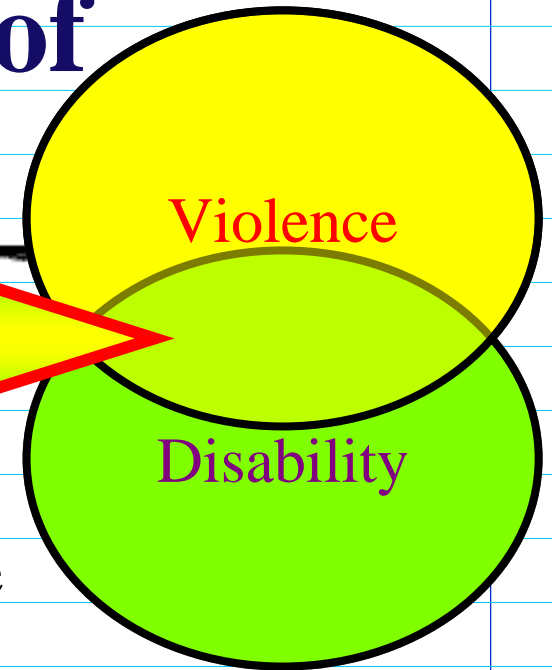
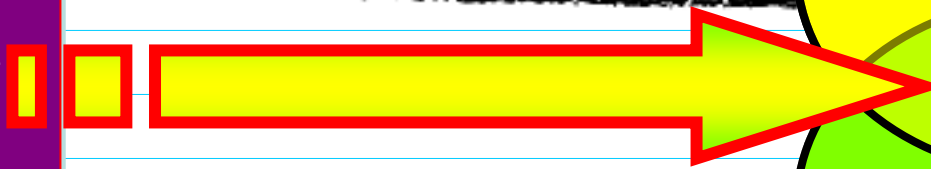
- **WHY is there such a strong Association between violence and disability...**

# Violence & Disability: 3 Connections



# Violence as a Cause of Disability

Violence Causes  
Disabilities



- Certainly, violence causes large numbers of disabilities.
- Currents estimates, however, would only allow violence to be a minor cause of disability.

# Violence to Disability

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- Children with developmental disabilities aged 3 to 10 in Atlanta, only 0.9% of children with developmental disabilities had “child battering” as an etiological factor (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1996).  
*Specifically, child battering was identified as a causal factor in 1.7% of cases of cerebral palsy and 0.6% of cases of mental retardation.*
- May be drastically underestimated.
- May involve a number of direct and indirect mechanisms.
- *For this pathway to explain a significant part of the observed association violence would have to be the cause of 10% or more of all developmental disabilities*

# Violence to Disability

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- Currently, society spends a great deal of money on genetic counseling and a variety of other approaches to reducing disabilities
- Up until this time no one has made serious efforts to reduce disability by reducing injuries resulting violence.

# 1997 Study of 1200 Albertans

- Telephone Sampling study conducted by the Population Research Laboratory
- Respondents were asked if they had been victims of violent crime in the last 10 years,
- If yes they were asked if they had been harmed, if yes they were asked if they sustained long-term or permanent disability.
- 5.2% of men and 6.0% of women had been victims of violence.
- 1.3% of men and 3.1% of women sustained long-term or permanent disabilities.
- This translates to approximately 7,000 people in the Province of Alberta who sustain long term or permanent disabilities through violence each year.
- Because these disabilities are lasting, it may mean as many as 150,000 Albertans with disabilities as a result of

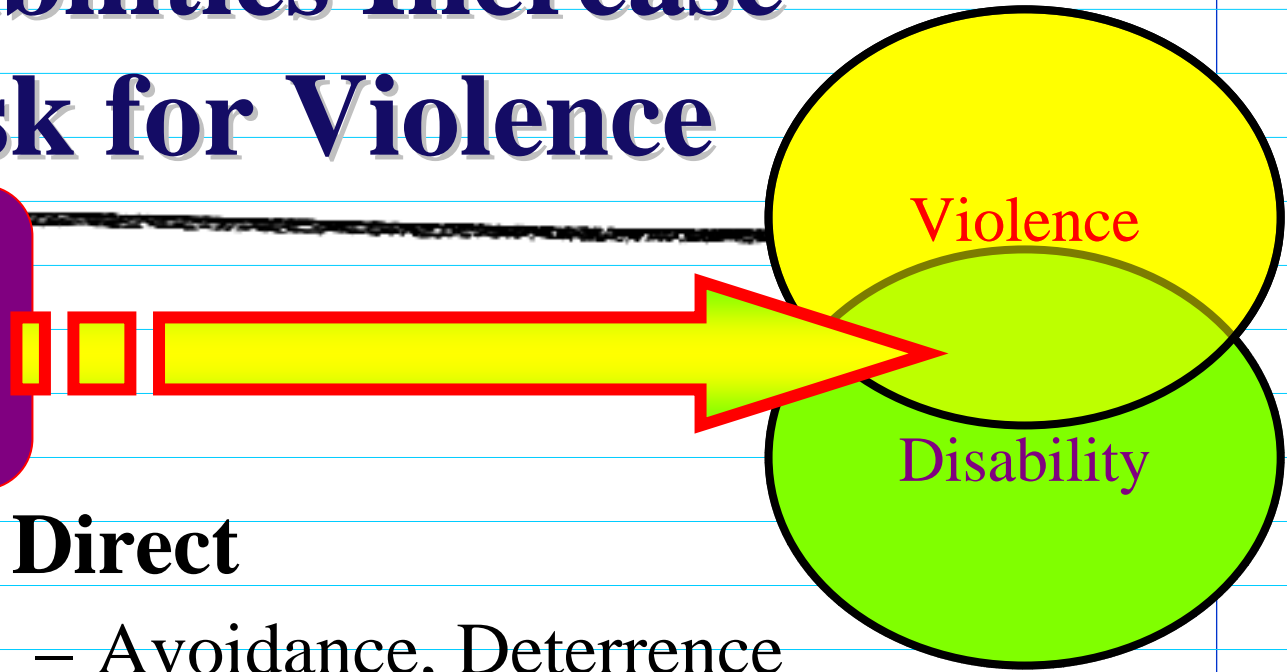
# How Abuse Causes Disabilities

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- Physical Trauma
- Psychogenic- Behavioural
- Neurogenic
  - Child
  - Prenatal?
- Other stress reactions
- Learning effects and distribution shift
- Social construction and screening effects

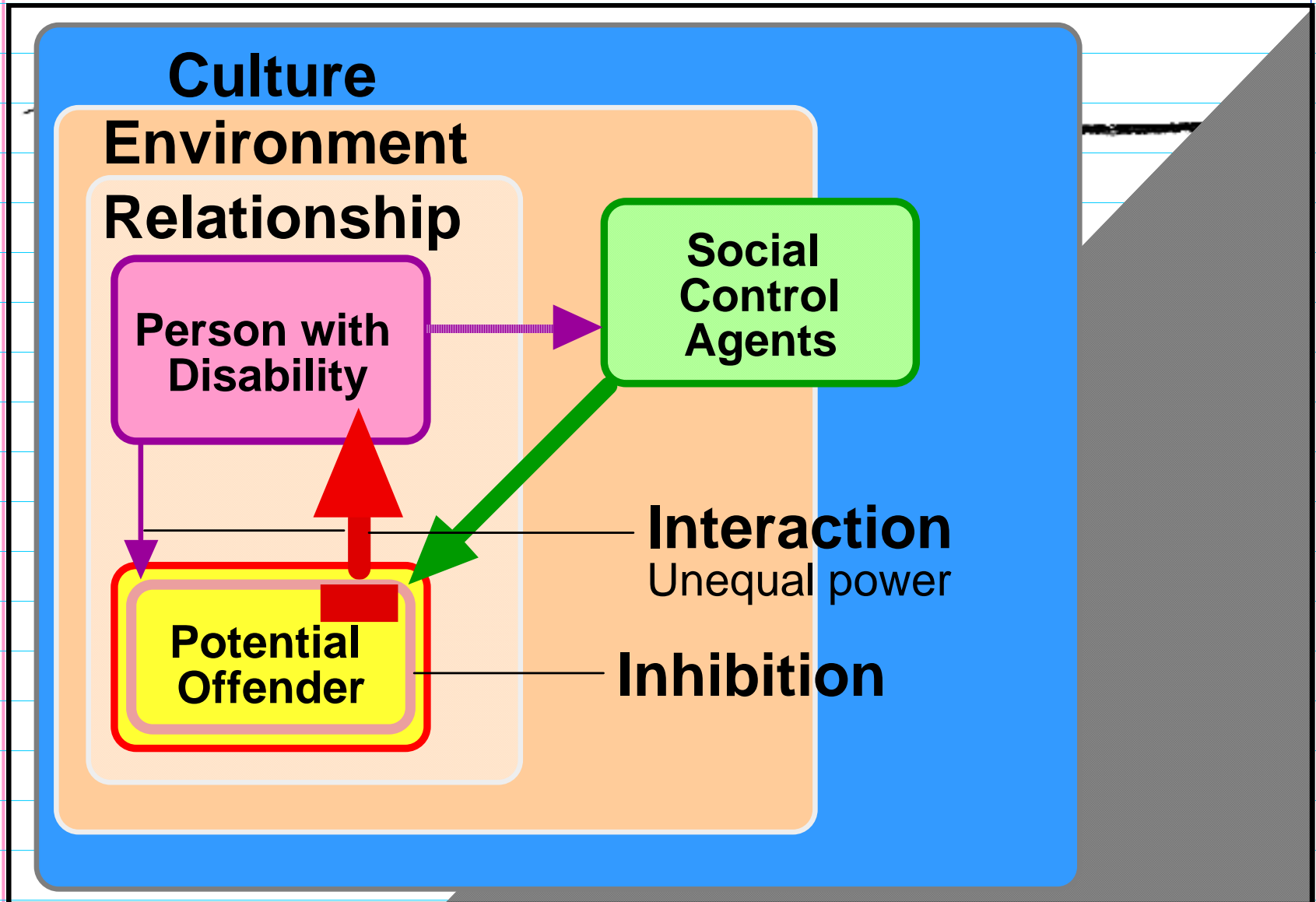
# Disabilities Increase Risk for Violence

Disabilities Lead to Increased Risk For Violence



- **Direct**
  - Avoidance, Deterrence
  - Escape, Defense
- **Indirect**
  - Environmental
  - Social-Psychological

# A MULTIFACTORIAL MODEL



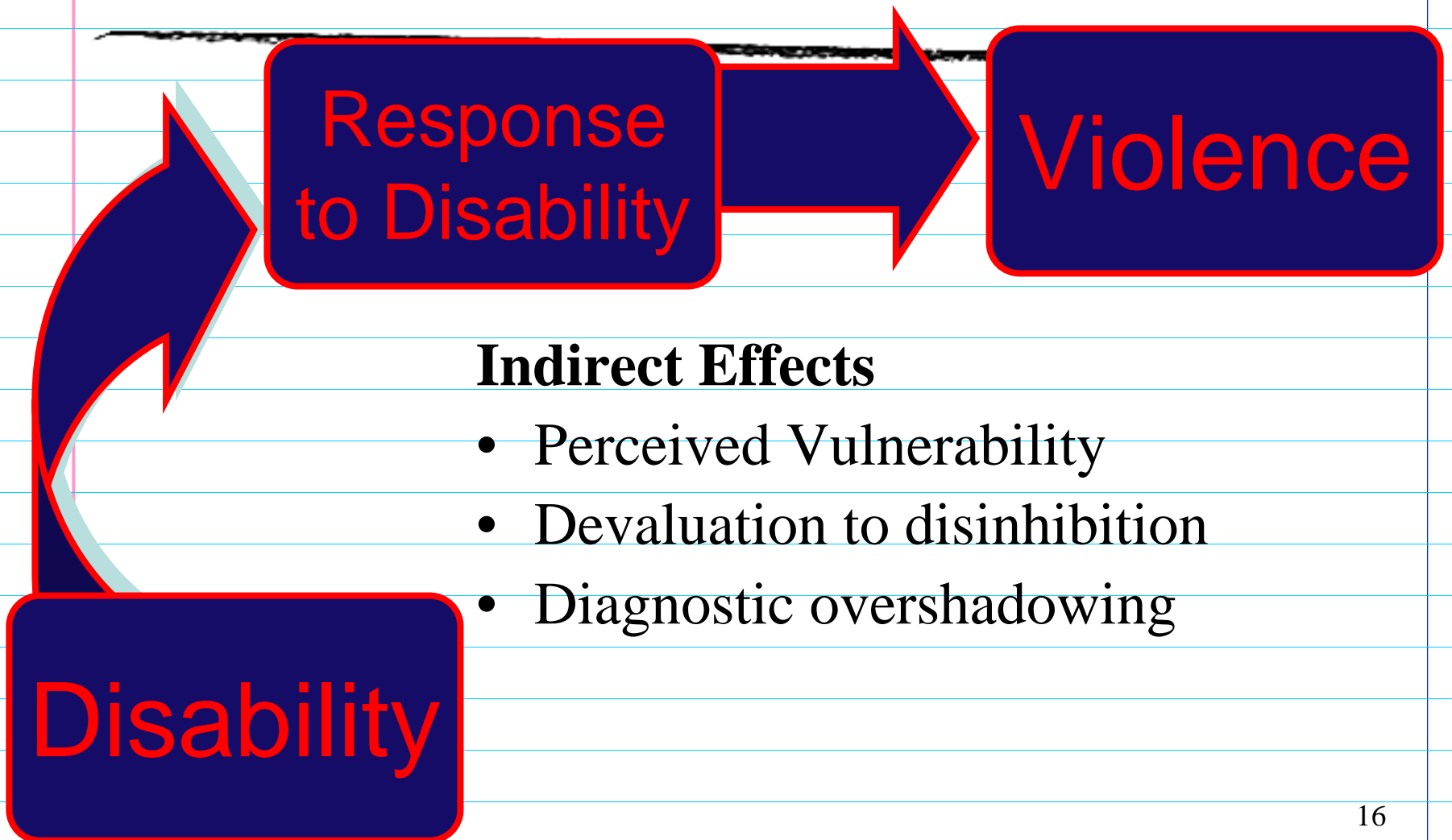
# Disability to Violence

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## Direct Effects

- Impaired ability to communicate with potential offender to leave situation, defend self, to seek assistance
- In ability to regulate social responses to accommodate potential offender
- Direct effects probably less powerful than indirect effects

# Disability to Violence



## Making a Case For Compassion

Lydia Lovric • 06-26-2000 • The  
Toronto Sun

“Robert Latimer is not an evil man. He is a caring father who loved his daughter and decided, after 12 agonizing years, to put an end to his child's suffering.”

“Mercy killing cannot simply be lumped into the same category as murder. After all, something as fundamental as motive should, at the very least, be considered when determining one's sentence.”

## Father allegedly said he would give child to God

Nancy Bartley • Seattle Times  
•Wednesday, March 20, 2002

“Rather than see his disabled 11-year-old daughter become a social outcast, a Seattle man put a gun to her head and pulled the trigger.”

“You don't know what it is like to have a kid who hurts so bad that she begs you to end her life” *William Harold*

“Her sweet little life had spun out of control.” *William Harold*

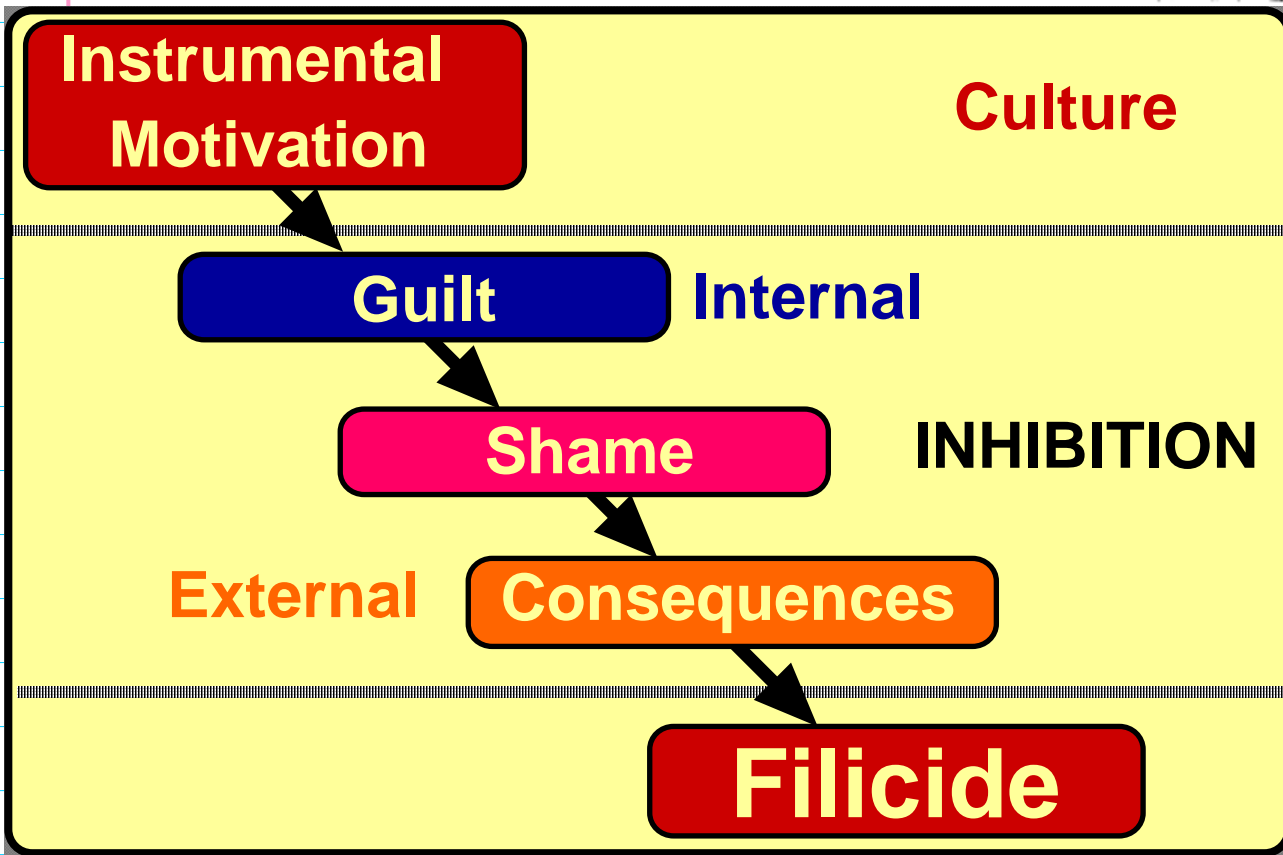
***Socially endorsed attitudes and beliefs play a major role!***

# Mercy Killing

*“Death at the hand of a mercy killer results from the offenders claim/perception of victim suffering and what the offender believes is his or her duty to relieve it. Most often, the real motivation for mercy killing has little to do with the offender’s feelings of compassion and pity for the victim. The sense of power and control the offender derives from killing is usually the real motive. Case Studies show that these offenders frequently commit serial murder.”*

—Douglas, J.E., Burgess, A.W., Burgess, A.G., & Ressler, R.K. (1992). **Crime classification manual: A standard system for investigating and classifying violent crimes.** San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. p. 111.

# Three Components of Inhibition

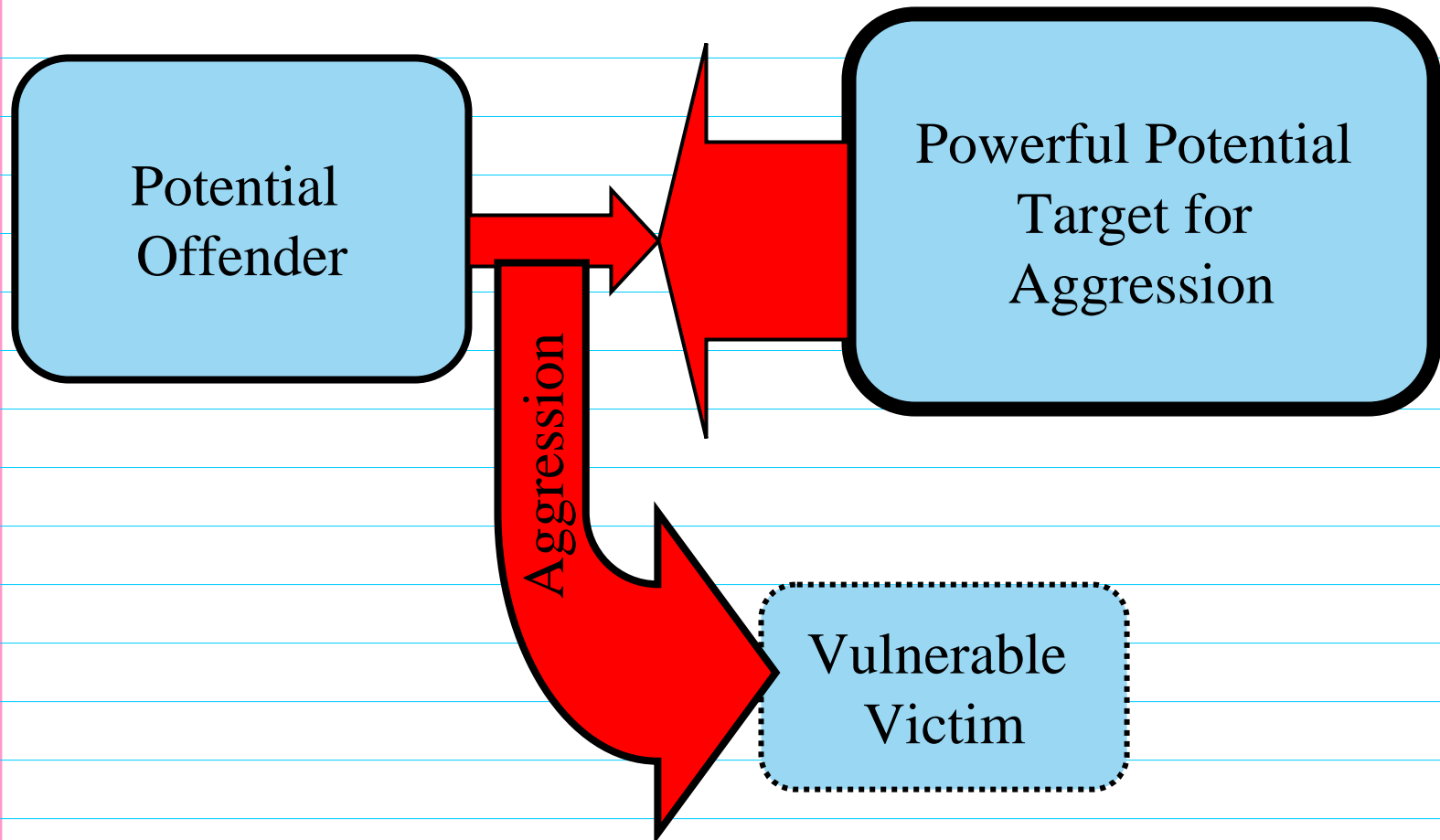


Instrumental motivation is common, but most parents will not overcome inhibition. Disinhibition becomes central issue. Culture may defeat inhibition.

# Displacement

“look what you made me do”

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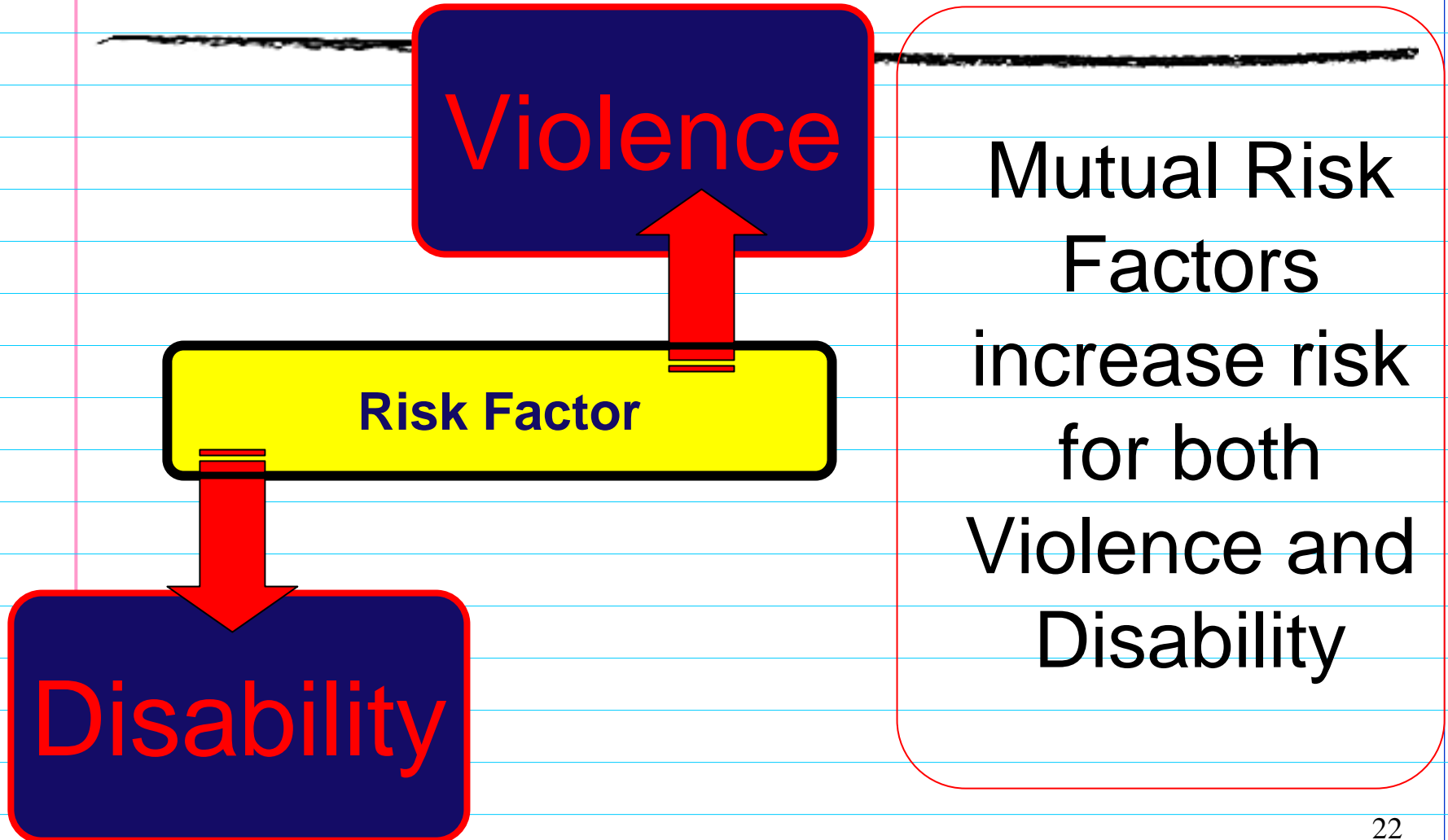
# Other Factors Connect Violence & Disability

Other Factors  
Increase Risk for  
Violence & Disability



- Substance Abuse
- Spousal Abuse
- Socio-economic factors

# Mutual Risk Factors



Mutual Risk Factors increase risk for both Violence and Disability

# Mutual Risk Factors

