



VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND POLYCENTRICITY: Interactional configurations, regimes of meaning, and professional intervention under uncertainty

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ABSTRACT

In this theoretical study, we examine violence as an emergent outcome of interactional configurations formed through interdependent dimensions: agents and patients, desires and decisions, power asymmetry, normative regulation, and potential for harm. These dimensions combine under given conditions, generating patterned interactions that unfold across contexts and registers. We address a significant limitation in current approaches, which often struggle to capture how violence emerges in environments characterized by ambiguity, indirect communication, and partially articulated dynamics, particularly in domains such as consent. Because these processes frequently remain implicit or context-dependent, we do not rely on explicit disclosure as a primary source of information. Instead, we adopt a relational and interpretative approach grounded in contextual inference. By connecting configurations of interaction to regimes of meaning and interaction, we explain how patterns stabilize and persist over time, shifting the analytical focus from isolated events to recurrent dynamics. This contribution supports a transition from reactive institutional responses toward anticipatory and coordinated forms of action. In institutional terms, this transition depends on strengthening capacities for sensing, interpretation, and coordination. Community-based systems illustrate how locally embedded actors can detect early signals of relational risk, while institutional arrangements contribute by structuring informational processes, aligning resources, and stabilizing interpretative frameworks. Together, these elements enable early recognition, coordinated response, and more effective engagement with complex forms of violence.

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Keywords: Emergent Violence; Interactional Configurations; Interactional Registers; Regimes Of Interaction; Legislative Architecture For Violence Prevention.

PREVENÇÃO DA VIOLÊNCIA E POLICENTRISMO: Configurações interacionais, regimes de significado e intervenção profissional sob incerteza

RESUMO

Neste estudo teórico, examinamos a violência como um resultado de configurações interacionais formadas por dimensões interdependentes: agentes e pacientes, desejos e decisões, assimetria de poder, regulação normativa e potencial de dano. Explicamos como essas dimensões se combinam, sob determinadas condições, para gerar padrões de interação que se desenvolvem em diferentes contextos e registros. Levantamos uma limitação significativa das abordagens atuais, que

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frequentemente enfrentam dificuldades para compreender como a violência emerge em ambientes caracterizados por ambiguidade, comunicação indireta e dinâmicas parcialmente articuladas, especialmente em domínios como o consentimento. Como esses processos frequentemente permanecem implícitos ou dependentes do contexto, não adotamos o auto-relato como fonte primária de informação. Em vez disso, adotamos uma abordagem relacional e interpretativa, orientada por inferência contextual. Ao conectar configurações de interação a regimes de significado e interação, explicamos como padrões se estabilizam e persistem ao longo do tempo, deslocando o foco analítico de eventos isolados para dinâmicas recorrentes. Essa contribuição sustenta a transição de respostas institucionais reativas para formas de ação antecipatórias e coordenadas. Em termos institucionais, essa transição depende do fortalecimento da capacidade de identificação de sinais, interpretação e coordenação. Sistemas de base comunitária ilustram como atores territorialmente inseridos podem identificar sinais precoces de risco relacional, enquanto arranjos institucionais contribuem ao estruturar processos informacionais, alinhar recursos e estabilizar referenciais interpretativos. Em conjunto, esses elementos permitem o reconhecimento precoce, a ação coordenada e respostas mais eficazes a formas complexas de violência.

Palavras-chave: Violência Emergente; Configurações Interacionais; Registros Interacionais; Regimes De Interação; Arquitetura Legislativa Para Prevenção Da Violência.

PREVENCIÓN DE LA VIOLENCIA Y POLICENTRISMO: Configuraciones interaccionales, regímenes de significado e intervención profesional bajo incertidumbre

RESUMEN

En este estudio teórico, examinamos la violencia como un resultado de configuraciones interaccionales formadas por dimensiones interdependientes: agentes y pacientes, deseos y decisiones, asimetría de poder, regulación normativa y potencial de daño. Explicamos cómo estas dimensiones se combinan, bajo determinadas condiciones, para generar patrones de interacción que se desarrollan en distintos contextos y registros. Señalamos una limitación significativa de los enfoques actuales, que con frecuencia enfrentan dificultades para comprender cómo la violencia emerge en entornos caracterizados por ambigüedad, comunicación indirecta y dinámicas parcialmente articuladas, especialmente en dominios como el consentimiento. Dado que estos procesos suelen permanecer implícitos o depender del contexto, no adoptamos el autorreporte como fuente primaria de información. En su lugar, adoptamos un enfoque relacional e interpretativo, orientado por inferencia contextual. Al conectar configuraciones de interacción con regímenes de significado e interacción, explicamos cómo los patrones se estabilizan y persisten a lo largo del tiempo, desplazando el foco analítico de eventos aislados hacia dinámicas recurrentes. Esta contribución sustenta la transición de respuestas institucionales reactivas hacia formas de acción anticipatorias y coordinadas. En términos institucionales, esta transición depende del fortalecimiento de la capacidad de identificación de señales, interpretación y coordinación. Los sistemas de base comunitaria ilustran cómo actores territorialmente insertos pueden identificar señales tempranas de riesgo relacional, mientras que los arreglos institucionales contribuyen al estructurar procesos informacionales, alinear recursos y estabilizar marcos interpretativos. En conjunto, estos elementos permiten el reconocimiento temprano, la acción coordinada y respuestas más eficaces frente a formas complejas de violencia.

Palabras clave: Violencia Emergente; Configuraciones Interaccionales; Registros Interaccionales; Regímenes De Interacción; Arquitectura Legislativa Para La Prevención De La Violencia.



1 THE PERSISTENCE OF INTERACTIONAL VIOLENCE

Violence remains a persistent feature of human social organization, coexisting with practices of care, regulation, and cooperation across historical and cultural contexts. Despite increasingly complex legal frameworks and institutional arrangements, societies have not succeeded in eliminating it. Instead, it adapts, redistributes, and reemerges across domains, revealing systemic persistence rather than an episodic occurrence. In a global context where renewed geopolitical tensions and escalating armament prevail, the challenge of understanding and addressing this phenomenon becomes increasingly urgent for prevention and systemic polycentricity in tackling any kind of violence.

In this context, we adopt a complexity informed perspective, recognizing violence not only as a persistent social phenomenon but as a set of conditions that directly affect societal development. From this standpoint, we understand violence as a multidimensional and relational phenomenon unfolding across registers, linking micro interactional processes to macro interactional institutional and cultural structures. These dynamics structure patterns of vulnerability, exposure to risk, and access to protection within community settings. Drawing on insights from Complexity Theory (Morin, 2022), Complex Adaptive Systems (Holland, 2014; Carmichael & Hadžikadić, 2019), and Cultural Psychology (Valsiner, 2020, 2021), we interpret violence as emerging through recursive and nonlinear processes involving interaction, interpretation, and feedback. Within this perspective, violence does not appear as an isolated act but as an emergent pattern formed through the interaction of relational positions, motivational dynamics, power asymmetries, normative conditions, and potential outcomes.

To study this, we pursue three interconnected objectives. First, we organize key analytical elements into a relational and multidimensional framework for examining violence and risk environments, supporting probabilistic and context-sensitive approaches to interpretation and action. Second, we examine how patterns of violence stabilize over time through recurrent dynamics, introducing regimes of meaning and interaction as an analytical standpoint for understanding persistence in complex adaptive systems. Third, we connect relational interpretation to conditions of coordinated response, examining how institutional arrangements, professional practice, and informational processes interact to enable or constrain action in community health contexts.

Our approach follows a deductive, integrative, and theory-building logic characteristic of theoretical studies. We begin with a general conceptual discussion of violence grounded in Complexity Theory, Cultural Psychology, and systems perspectives, and progressively move toward the construction of an analytical framework. Rather than relying on empirical data collection, the analysis operates through conceptual integration, relational modeling, and analytical refinement. We use consent as an analytically dense domain to explore how interactional configurations become observable under conditions of ambiguity, enabling the articulation of theoretical constructs with

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concrete interactional processes. This progression enables the movement from conceptual formulation to structured interpretation and to the examination of institutional and practical implications.

Finally, we situate this discussion within a broader shift from event based interpretations toward relational configurations and systemic dynamics. This shift enables more coherent and context sensitive approaches to tackle violence as a complex phenomenon with direct relevance to public policies.

2 VIOLENCE AS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL AND INTERACTIONAL PROCESS

Violence does not represent an anomaly within social systems. It persists as a historically embedded phenomenon that coexists with practices of care, regulation, and social organization. Across cultures, historical periods, and geographic contexts, violence emerges as a recurring feature of human social life rather than as an exceptional deviation (Pires, 2023a, 2025a, 2025b). This continuity indicates that violence cannot be reduced to episodic failures or isolated breakdowns, but reflects deeper relational and structural dynamics that evolve over time.

Historical and archaeological evidence further reinforces both this persistence and its coexistence with care. Findings from Shanidar Cave, in present day Iraq, indicate that interpersonal violence predates Homo sapiens, while evidence of long term care for injured individuals points to the presence of empathy and solidarity (Hunt, 2023; García-Basanta & Romagnoli, 2023). Additional records, including prehistoric rock paintings, also show that violence and care have coexisted throughout human history (Paiva et al., 2022). Consequently, this duality does not represent contradiction but a constitutive feature of human social organization.

This constitutive duality directs our focus toward the implications for institutional analysis. The persistence of violence despite increasingly complex social systems indicates that responses based solely on regulation or control remain insufficient and inefficient. Instead of treating violence as an external disruption, we examine how it emerges, adapts, and redistributes within the same structures that sustain cooperation.

The study of violence requires a transdisciplinary approach that avoids ontological reductionism by observing phenomena across interconnected scopes of interaction. Rather than referring to fixed levels of reality, we introduce the concept of registers as a methodological distinction that organizes observation without segmenting the phenomenon into discrete layers. This perspective draws on significant theoretical precedents that utilize layered analytical approaches to capture human complexity, such as the semiotic levels of experience in Cultural Psychology (e.g., Valsiner, 2014), the recursive links between parts and wholes in Complexity Theory (e.g., Morin,

2022), and the nested spheres of influence in Ecological Systems Theory (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1981). By building upon these foundations, registers function as interdependent analytical perspectives that allow the examination of how interactions unfold, combine, and stabilize under different conditions.

Thus, registers serve as analytical approaches to identify how specific configurations emerge and how regimes of meaning become sustained over time. Across all registers, interaction remains the primary unit of analysis, meaning the scope of observation changes rather than the nature of the phenomenon itself. We consider three interdependent forms:

1. Micro-interactional register: focuses on situated interactions, including perception, interpretation, emotional activation, and decision making within immediate relational contexts as well as interpersonal settings.
2. Meso-interactional register: captures patterned interactions within institutional, organizational, or networked settings, where roles, norms, and coordination structures canalize behavior.
3. Macro-interactional register: addresses broader configurations in which legal frameworks, cultural meanings, and systemic constraints influence and are reproduced through interaction.

Across all registers, interaction remains one important unit of analysis, meaning the scope of observation changes rather than the nature of the phenomenon. This distinction avoids locating violence within a specific register, instead framing it as an emergence from interconnected processes that require a multi-register and regime-based analysis. This perspective provides the analytical basis for examining how configurations of interaction emerge and eventually stabilize into enduring regimes of meaning and interaction.

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2.1 Violence across registers and recursive dynamics

Violence unfolds across registers, linking micro-interactional processes to broader institutional and cultural dynamics. At the micro-interactional register, it emerges through perception, emotion, decision making, and communication, while at the macro-interactional register it is expressed through norms, institutional arrangements, inequalities, and cultural meanings. These registers are analytically distinguishable but dynamically intertwined, as interactions and structures continuously influence and reorganize one another.

The term *registers* is inherently polysemic and has been employed across different theoretical traditions to designate distinct but related analytical concerns. In linguistic anthropology, it refers to socially organized patterns of meaning and language use embedded in interaction (Silverstein, 2003). In Cultural Psychology, the term appears in multiple senses, including as differentiated language repertoires within scientific discourse, as modes of cognition within cognitive polyphasia,

and as domains of experiential and practical organization that support learning and skill stabilization (Valsiner, 2007, 2014; Rojas, 2015). Within the Vygotskian tradition, the notion of “registration” is mobilized critically to distinguish passive recording of facts from active conceptual construction in scientific analysis (Vygotsky, 1982). These varied uses illustrate that the term does not refer to a single unified concept, but to a set of methodological distinctions concerned with how processes become organized, expressed, and interpreted under specific conditions. At the same time, in its more common usage, *register* often denotes stylistic variation in language or distinct domains of activity, which may suggest discrete or bounded categories.

In this work, the term is used in a more specific and restricted sense. Registers refer to analytically distinguishable modes through which interactional processes become observable and interpretable across different forms of expression. They do not denote discrete levels or separate domains of reality, but relationally interconnected aspects of ongoing interactional dynamics. The distinction between registers is therefore methodological rather than ontological, allowing the analysis to differentiate patterns of perception, action, and organization without assuming that these operate in isolation.

In this sense, registers do not segment reality but structure observation under conditions of complexity. Micro-interactional processes contribute to the continuity and transformation of macro-interactional structures through repetition and institutionalization, while macro-interactional conditions orient action by defining expectations and constraints. Between these, the meso-interactional register captures patterned interactions within institutional, organizational, or networked settings, where roles, norms, and coordination structures canalize behavior. From a Cultural Psychology perspective, this process involves the ongoing negotiation of meaning through internalization and externalization (Valsiner, 2007, 2014). Consequently, violence does not reside within a specific register but emerges from the interplay between structured environments and active processes of meaning making.

These dynamics unfold through recursive causality, as actions influence norms, norms orient behavior, and institutional responses redefine the conditions under which new forms of violence may emerge. Such feedback processes resist linear explanation and complicate intervention, since interactions in complex systems occur under conditions in which causal relations are difficult to trace and the boundaries between intention, interpretation, and outcome remain uncertain (Cilliers, 1998). Under these conditions, individuals rely on partial information and contextual cues to interpret interactions, and misalignment between intention and perception may generate harmful outcomes without clear causal pathways, a condition particularly visible in contexts such as consent negotiation. Violence thus develops through interconnected processes structured by relational, normative, and interpretative dynamics rather than isolated causes, often involving multiple registers simultaneously within the same interactional episode.

Within this perspective, the distinction between registers gains analytical relevance when connected to configurations of interaction and regimes of meaning and interaction. Configurations describe how interactions are organized in specific situations and frequently combine elements from different registers, as a single interactional episode may integrate micro-interactional interpretations, meso-interactional institutional and interpersonal constraints, and macro-interactional normative references. Over time, recurrent configurations may stabilize into regimes of meaning and interaction, as patterns of interpretation, expectation, and coordination align and persist across contexts. Registers therefore function as interdependent analytical perspectives that enable the identification of how configurations emerge and how regimes become sustained.

2.2 Violence as an emergent outcome of interactional configurations

Violence emerges as the asymmetric imposition of desires or decisions that disregard normative expectations and generate potential harm (Pires, 2023b). This phenomenon unfolds through interaction rather than isolated acts, requiring identifiable relational positions, the exercise of influence, and consequences that extend to psychological, symbolic, and communicative domains. Consequently, we conceptualize violence not as a discrete event or static category, but as an emergent property of complex systems that requires robust conceptualization for effective intervention (Hamby, 2017).

Early formulations emphasize power relations and social structures (Galtung, 1969), while Cultural Psychology highlights how meaning, affect, and interpretation canalize these dynamics in context (Valsiner, 2014). From this perspective, configurations of interaction do not constitute violence itself; instead, they organize the conditions under which violent outcomes become more or less likely.

To support this relational analysis, we examine five interdependent dimensions: (1) agents and patients, defining the shifting relational positions; (2) desires and decisions, capturing the motivational and often non-semiotic drivers of action; (3) power asymmetry, which channels the interactional flow; (4) normative regulation, representing the interpretative and social constraints; and (5) potential for harm, as the ultimate systemic outcome. These dimensions, as formulated by Pires (2023b, 2025b), do not operate in isolation; instead, they combine under specific conditions to form configurations of interaction. It is through the stabilization of these configurations into regimes of meaning and interaction that violence persists and redistributes across social registers, requiring an analytical shift from reactive measures toward an anticipatory institutional design.

Configurations of interaction provide the analytical basis for examining how violence develops. This approach shifts analysis from discrete events to patterned interactions unfolding across contexts and registers. Under certain conditions, these configurations give rise to violent outcomes and allow for more structured interpretation of interactional dynamics.

3 CONSENT AS AN ANALYTICAL DOMAIN FOR UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE

In primary care and community health settings, professionals frequently encounter situations where relational dynamics canalize health outcomes through subtle and difficult to interpret forms. Ambiguity in communication, asymmetries in decision making, and constraints on autonomy appear during consultations and household visits. These challenges indicate underlying configurations that increase vulnerability and risk, requiring a method that embraces uncertainty as a constitutive element of both the analysis and the visibility of violence.

Consent provides an analytically productive interactional domain for examining these situations. By concentrating emotional intensity, cultural expectations, and power asymmetries, it makes interactional dynamics involving multiple actors more visible across domains of practice. In this context, consent functions as a dense analytical domain in which relational and configurational dynamics become observable under conditions of interpretative uncertainty.

Under these conditions, consent operates as a negotiated process mediated by emotional, cultural, and interpretative dynamics. Because individuals rarely rely on explicit verbal expressions, professionals must interpret interactional signals amidst constant uncertainty and without clear indicators of agreement. Individuals interpret combinations of verbal and nonverbal signals, contextual cues, and socially structured expectations, which introduces inherent variability into the interaction (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013).

From a Cultural Psychology perspective, semiotic processes embedded in sociocultural contexts construct meaning (Valsiner, 2007), requiring professionals to interpret how agents negotiate meaning within specific relational conditions. Consent operates within relational fields structured by shared meanings and affective dynamics (Innis, 2016). Furthermore, affective, embodied, and situational processes often structure interaction without becoming fully articulated (Barrett & Westlin, 2021), which adds layers of non-semiotic uncertainty to professional interpretation.

This complexity makes consent a revealing domain for examining how configurations of violence emerge. Because it involves multiple layers of subjectivity, consent allows the observation of interactional processes that remain less visible elsewhere. Breakdowns in consent arise from misalignment across relational dimensions, including desires, interpretation, power asymmetry, and normative regulation. In such cases, interaction shifts toward imposition as ambiguity, pressure, or selective perception alter how agents process signals.

Empirical research reinforces the role of uncertainty. Magnusson and Stevanovic (2023) show that sexual consent emerges through sequences of joint decision making where ambiguity functions as a structured interactional resource. This ambiguity allows alignment to remain implicit,



complicating intervention and requiring an analytical framework that treats uncertainty not as an error, but as a fundamental feature of the phenomenon.

While consent provides a specific analytical domain, these underlying dynamics extend across social life. For community health professionals, these dynamics appear as constrained decision making and limited autonomy in everyday care. Therefore, the analytical relevance of consent lies in its capacity to make these dynamics observable, establishing a bridge between concrete interaction and the structured, uncertainty aware analysis developed in the following section.

4 A RELATIONAL-DIMENSIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR DIAGNOSING VIOLENCE AND RISK ENVIRONMENTS

This relational architecture translates complexity into structured analysis while preserving the dynamic and interactional nature of violence. Rather than attempting to eliminate analytical reduction, this approach orients it to maintain the interdependence between relational, motivational, normative, and systemic processes. Within this perspective, violence is not approached as an isolated event but as an emergent configuration of interaction where these dimensions interweave and canalize the relational flow under specific conditions.

Existing approaches have advanced the recognition of multilevel influences on violence, particularly through ecological and structural models (Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). However, these approaches often rely on relatively stable categorizations that do not fully capture the fluid, recursive, and context dependent nature of interaction. In contrast, this framework focuses on configurations of interaction as the primary unit of analysis, allowing the examination of how relational positions, asymmetries, motivations, norms, and potential outcomes dynamically combine and evolve.

To operationalize this perspective, our framework is organized as a non linear analytical structure based on multiple entry points. Rather than prescribing a fixed sequence, it allows the researcher or professional to initiate the analysis from the dimension that presents the most accessible or reliable information in a given situation. This decision depends on the conditions of observation, the available indicators, and the interpretative demands of the context.

In practice, some situations provide clearer access to relational positions, while others are more readily approached through visible asymmetries, affective dynamics, normative tensions, or emerging indicators of harm. This architecture enables a fluid movement across dimensions as the interactional configuration becomes more visible. Such flexibility is fundamental in contexts such as primary care and community health where information is often partial, indirect, and mediated by uncertainty.



Within this structure, relational positions including agents, patients, and contributors frequently provide an initial analytical anchor. These positions allow the identification of who acts, who is affected, and who sustains or modulates the interactional field, offering a concrete starting point for subsequent analysis. However, this starting point is not prescriptive. The analytical process remains open, iterative, and responsive to how configurations unfold across contexts.

By organizing the analysis around configurations of interaction and multiple entry points, the framework supports a shift from static classification toward dynamic interpretation. This approach enables professionals to engage with complex and ambiguous situations while maintaining analytical clarity, creating the conditions for more coherent interpretation and progressively coordinated response.

4.1 Core dimensions of interaction

The framework operates through five interdependent dimensions derived from the conceptual definition of violence proposed by Pires (2025b), in which violence is understood as an emergent outcome of interactional configurations rather than an isolated act. These dimensions translate the theoretical definition into analytical components that allow the structured examination of how violence and risk develop under specific conditions. They do not function as isolated variables, but as relational components whose meaning and effects depend on how they interact in context.

Existing approaches often rely on fragmented institutional perspectives or event based classifications that fail to capture the relational and interpretative dynamics through which violence emerges in practice (Peters, 2015; Pires, 2025c). While these models provide important insights, they remain limited in their ability to sustain structured interpretation under conditions of ambiguity. This limitation becomes particularly evident in domains such as consent, where interactional dynamics unfold through indirect signals, asymmetries, and shifting interpretations.

Agents, patients, and contributors define the relational structure through which interaction unfolds. Rather than fixed roles, these positions are dynamic and context dependent. Agents refer to those who exert influence within the interaction, patients to those who are affected, and contributors to actors who sustain, reinforce, or potentially interrupt the interactional flow. The inclusion of contributors allows the analysis to account for the broader relational field in which configurations are stabilized. This perspective encompasses observers, institutional actors, and third parties whose actions or omissions modulate outcomes and sustain the interactional regime over time. By identifying these distributed roles, the practitioner moves beyond the dyad to understand how the surrounding environment canalizes the interaction toward either protection or harm.

Power asymmetry refers to the unequal distribution of resources and capacities that canalize interaction. These asymmetries may derive from physical, economic, institutional, social, or symbolic sources, and often operate without explicit articulation. Rather than determining behavior in a linear



manner, they structure the range of possible actions and influence how individuals interpret and respond within a given configuration. In many cases, asymmetries become particularly relevant when they restrict the capacity for negotiation, resistance, or reinterpretation.

Desires and decisions capture the motivational and affective dynamics that orient action. Emotional states, impulses, expectations, and cognitive interpretations influence how individuals respond within interactions, often under conditions that are not fully transparent. These processes may include both semiotic and non-semiotic elements, ranging from articulated intentions to embodied and affective responses. Their relevance lies in how they interact with relational and contextual conditions, canalizing the direction and intensity of the interactional flow.

Normative regulation concerns the interpretative frameworks that orient what is perceived as acceptable, tolerable, or subject to intervention. Norms operate through both formal institutional structures and informal cultural expectations, and their influence depends on how they are interpreted and enacted in practice. In contexts marked by ambiguity, such as those involving consent, the absence of shared or stable normative references increases uncertainty and may contribute to the persistence of harmful configurations.

Potential for harm connects the analytical process to outcomes, focusing on the likelihood and severity of negative consequences. Harm may take physical, psychological, symbolic, or structural forms, and does not always appear immediately visible. This dimension allows the identification of early indicators of risk based on misalignments across relational dimensions, supporting anticipatory analysis rather than reactive classification.

Taken together, these dimensions provide a structured yet flexible basis for the interpretation of interactional dynamics. Their analytical value lies not in isolated assessment, but in examining how they combine to form configurations that increase or reduce the probability of harm. This integrated perspective allows professionals to move from observable interactional cues toward a more comprehensive understanding of relational dynamics, even under conditions of uncertainty.

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4.2 Applying the framework in practice

To illustrate the analytical application of the framework, we consider a primary care situation in which a woman's health related decisions appear systematically constrained within a domestic relationship. During consultations, she hesitates to speak in the presence of her partner, alters her responses when he intervenes, and delays treatment despite evident need. Similar interactional patterns have been documented in primary care settings, including altered communication and postponed care in contexts of relational constraint (Feder et al., 2011).

From a relational perspective, the analysis begins by identifying agents, patients, and contributors. This entry point is selected because relational positions are directly observable in the interaction and provide an initial anchor for reducing ambiguity under conditions of partial



information. The woman occupies a patient position in relation to her own health decisions, while the partner acts as an agent of interference. At the same time, professionals present in the interaction may function as contributors, either reinforcing the existing configuration through inaction or creating conditions for its disruption.

The analysis then considers power asymmetry, which becomes visible through recurrent interruption, control over communication, and indirect constraints on access to care. This dimension is examined at this stage because asymmetries are empirically traceable through observable interactional patterns, allowing the analysis to move from relational identification toward structural constraints on action. These elements suggest a configuration in which the woman's capacity to negotiate or act autonomously is limited, even in the absence of explicit coercion. Such dynamics align with findings that emphasize control and regulation of behavior as central features of constrained autonomy in intimate relationships (Stark, 2023).

Motivational dynamics are examined through the interplay of desires and decisions, acknowledging that a partner's actions may reflect expectations of control or entitlement, while the woman's responses are often modulated by fear, anticipation of consequences, or emotional dependency. This dimension is introduced after relational and structural elements because motivational processes are less directly observable and require inferential interpretation grounded in the configuration already identified. These interpretations are treated as probabilistic rather than definitive, recognizing the limits of direct access to internal processes.

Normative regulation is assessed by examining how the interaction is interpreted within its context. This dimension is considered at this stage because normative expectations organize how both actors and observers interpret the interaction, influencing whether it is recognized as problematic or remains normalized. In this case, the normalization of interference in health decisions suggests a weak or unstable normative environment, contributing to the persistence of the configuration by reducing the likelihood of intervention.

Finally, the analysis considers the potential for harm. This dimension is addressed after the examination of relational, structural, motivational, and normative elements because it synthesizes how these dimensions combine under specific conditions. Delayed care, emotional distress, and constrained decision making indicate an elevated level of risk, even in the absence of immediately visible injury. This dimension allows the identification of priority concerns and supports early engagement before harm becomes fully manifest.

This application demonstrates how the framework supports a structured yet flexible diagnostic process. While multiple entry points are possible, the sequence adopted here reflects the availability and reliability of observable indicators in this specific context, moving from more directly accessible elements toward those requiring greater interpretative inference. Rather than relying on explicit disclosure, the framework enables the interpretation of indirect indicators and relational dynamics that often precede formal recognition of violence. In practice, such signals are frequently



perceived but remain difficult to translate into action due to the absence of shared interpretative frameworks and coordinated responses, a limitation consistently observed in clinical and primary care contexts (World Health Organization, 2013).

The analytical outcome of this process can inform the planning of subsequent encounters by guiding attention toward the specific configuration identified. Rather than prescribing fixed interventions, the framework supports the deliberate calibration of professional conduct in light of relational dynamics, asymmetries, and potential risks. In the situation described, this may involve creating conditions that reduce the partner's influence during the interaction, such as ensuring moments of private communication, adjusting the timing or structure of consultations, or strengthening rapport to facilitate more autonomous expression. It may also guide the professional to monitor subtle changes in communication patterns, decision making, and affective responses across encounters, treating these as indicators of shifts in the configuration. At the same time, the identification of normative ambiguity and potential harm may orient the professional toward mobilizing additional support, including referral pathways or coordination with other services, when appropriate. In this sense, the framework does not produce a single course of action, but supports context-sensitive decision making, allowing the professional to navigate uncertainty while progressively aligning observation, interpretation, and intervention over time.

4.3 From configurations to regimes of meaning and interaction

The five dimensions outlined above operate as an integrated analytical structure whose relevance lies in how they combine under given conditions, allowing the identification of interactional patterns that may increase or decrease the likelihood of harmful outcomes. These configurations describe how relational dynamics are organized in specific situations and provide the basis for structured analysis. However, identifying configurations alone is not sufficient to explain persistence. While configurations clarify how interactions unfold, they do not fully account for why certain patterns recur over time.

From a diagnostic perspective, assessing the potential for harm involves evaluating the vulnerability of those affected, the severity of possible outcomes, and the capacity of the system to interrupt or mitigate harmful dynamics. Its practical value lies in supporting early recognition of risk configurations before harm becomes fully visible, attributable, or institutionally formalized. In many cases, relevant signals emerge through indirect indicators such as relational asymmetries, constraints on decision making, or shifts in interactional patterns. These signals often precede explicit recognition of risk, yet they remain difficult to translate into action in the absence of structured interpretative frameworks and coordinated institutional responses.

To address these limitations, the analysis extends to regimes of meaning and interaction. Regimes refer to relatively stable patterns of interpretation, expectation, and coordination that orient



how configurations emerge, are maintained, and reappear across contexts. Emerging through recursive processes, regimes tend to sustain and reconfigure configurations across situations, integrating relational positions, power asymmetries, emotional dynamics, normative expectations, institutional conditions, and culturally embedded patterns of meaning into coherent and enduring patterns.

Empirical research on memory and emotion helps clarify this process. Emotional states influence how interactions are interpreted and later reconstructed, contributing to the stabilization of particular meanings over time (Davis et al., 2023). In contexts marked by ambiguity, this dynamic reinforces the persistence of specific interpretative patterns even when the original interaction remains uncertain or contested.

A key implication concerns the limits of relying on explicit declarations as primary sources of information. In complex interactional contexts, relevant dynamics are often only partially articulated due to ambiguity, strategic concealment, or limits of self awareness. What remains unspoken is not incidental but constitutive of the interactional field. For this reason, analysis must rely on structured observation, relational inference, and contextual interpretation to access elements that are not directly expressed.

This perspective has direct implications for analysis and intervention. Outcomes that appear as failures of intervention may reflect the consistency of an underlying regime. When interventions do not alter the conditions that sustain these patterns, systems tend to absorb or reinterpret them, preserving dominant dynamics. At the same time, regimes help explain how violence coexists with practices of care, as different patterns may prevail under different conditions within the same environment. The same individual may alternate between inflicting harm and providing care, depending on the configuration in which interaction unfolds.

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Understanding violence therefore requires examining not only configurations of interaction but also the regimes of meaning and interaction in which they are embedded. By distinguishing between situational dynamics and the patterns that sustain them over time, it becomes possible to move beyond reactive responses and engage with the conditions that reproduce or transform these interactional processes.

At the same time, it is methodologically important not to rely on explicit disclosure as a primary source of information. Individuals rarely articulate resistance, strategic obstruction, or attempts to undermine initiatives, and subjective dimensions such as emotions are not always accessible through direct expression. These processes often remain implicit, partially formed, or context-dependent, making them difficult to capture through declarative accounts alone. For this reason, the responsibility for accessing these dimensions lies with the researcher, who must actively vary analytical strategies and instruments in order to engage with layers of interaction that remain invisible, unarticulated, or strategically concealed.

5 FROM DIAGNOSIS TO COORDINATED CARE

The relational-dimensional framework enables the identification of configurations of interaction associated with violence and risk. However, recognizing such configurations does not ensure intervention. In practice, professionals frequently perceive signals of relational risk but lack the conditions required to translate these observations into coordinated action.

This limitation reflects a broader pattern of fragmentation across institutional responses. Despite the recognition of violence as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, different sectors continue to operate through distinct mandates and interpretative frameworks, often without effective coordination or integration. Legal systems focus on adjudicating violations after they occur, health systems address physical and psychological consequences, educational initiatives promote awareness, and social services provide support. While each contributes to the broader response, these approaches remain bounded by sectoral logics that fail to capture the relational and configurational nature of violence.

As a result, relevant interactional dynamics are frequently isolated rather than integrated. Institutions organize around specialized functions, while violence emerges from interactions that cut across these boundaries. This disconnection limits the capacity to link micro-interactional processes with broader institutional and cultural structures, reinforcing persistent challenges of coordination and integration across domains (Peters, 2015).

This fragmentation also affects professional practice. Evidence shows that when healthcare providers fail to recognize the relational dynamics underlying violent interactions, their responses may result in inaction, misinterpretation, or even the inadvertent reproduction of asymmetries present in the original interaction (Keeling & Fisher, 2015). Under these conditions, signals of risk may be perceived but not translated into effective response, particularly when they depend on indirect or context-dependent indicators. From a non-naïve perspective, this limitation is not solely a matter of individual recognition or competence. Professionals often operate under conditions in which acting upon perceived risk may exceed the boundaries of their formally defined roles, generating uncertainty regarding responsibilities, potential consequences, and legal exposure. In the absence of clear parameters and institutional support, this situation may lead to hesitation or restraint, even when the configuration suggests the need for early intervention.

The transition from diagnosis to care therefore depends on structuring conditions that allow professional impressions to be interpreted, recorded, and circulated across services. At the same time, diagnosis alone is insufficient under conditions of complexity, as the mere identification of risk does not ensure that relevant information is translated into coordinated action. Rather than remaining localized, these observations must become part of shared informational processes capable of supporting collective response. This requires strengthening capacities for sensing, interpretation,



and coordination, enabling different points of intervention to operate with aligned reference frameworks.

To support this transition, three interdependent processes must be considered: coordination, information, and normative alignment. Taken together, these processes constitute the minimal conditions for a distributed form of governance capable of operating across sectors and levels of interaction. Rather than relying on centralized control, they enable multiple points of decision to act upon shared interpretative frameworks and circulating information, allowing responses to emerge in a coordinated manner across contexts. In this sense, they function as the operational basis for a polycentric approach to violence, in which different actors contribute to detection, interpretation, and intervention within a common relational field.

Coordination processes organize interaction between services and define pathways for response. Without shared criteria and role clarity, professionals may recognize risk but remain uncertain about how to proceed.

Informational and sensing processes enable the detection and circulation of relevant signals. Many dynamics associated with violence emerge through indirect indicators rather than explicit disclosure, including hesitation, behavioral shifts, and relational asymmetries. Their effectiveness depends on the ability to translate localized perception into shared informational processes that support coordinated action.

In this context, community-based actors play a central role. In the Brazilian case, community health agents and endemic disease control agents operate as locally embedded observers capable of identifying early signs of vulnerability (Vieira-Meyer et al., 2021). Their sustained presence in households allows them to detect subtle changes in interactional dynamics that often precede explicit manifestations of harm. However, when these observations are not integrated into broader systems, they remain fragmented and underutilized.

Normative alignment processes orient interpretation and action under conditions of ambiguity. In domains such as consent, where meaning is negotiated and often implicit, the absence of shared interpretative frameworks increases uncertainty and variability in professional response (Valsiner, 1998, 2014; Magnusson & Stevanovic, 2023). Normative alignment does not imply rigid standardization but the stabilization of reference points that allow professionals to act with clarity while remaining sensitive to context.

From a Cultural Psychology perspective, norms are actively constructed and reinterpreted within interaction (Valsiner, 2007, 2014). Institutional arrangements contribute to this process by signaling which forms of interaction are recognized as problematic and which responses are supported. In this sense, institutional design not only regulates conduct but participates in the stabilization of meanings that orient behavior over time.

Finally, the capacity to act depends on the degree of clarity regarding professional roles, responsibilities, and limits of intervention. When such parameters are absent, professionals may



hesitate or refrain from acting despite perceiving risk. Providing clear conditions for action reduces this uncertainty and supports consistent and accountable responses, while preserving sensitivity to contextual variation.

Taken together, these elements not only support but can actively drive a shift from fragmented responses toward coordinated and anticipatory care. Violence, understood as an emergent outcome of interactional configurations, requires conditions that allow early signals to be perceived, interpreted, and acted upon across contexts. This shift does not eliminate uncertainty but structures how it is handled within professional practice, reducing the gap between perceived risk and institutional response.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, we started from the premise that linear or sectoral approaches are insufficient to understand or address violence. Rather than treating the phenomenon as a discrete event, we conceptualize violence as an emergent outcome of configurations of interaction that unfold through relational, motivational, normative, and institutional dimensions. The persistence of violence reflects the stabilization of patterns that require new analytical frameworks capable of identifying the conditions under which such outcomes become more likely.

The relational dimensional framework we developed offers a structured approach for identifying configurations associated with risk. By anchoring our analysis in observable relational positions and progressively incorporating dimensions such as power asymmetry, motivational dynamics, and normative regulation, we examine how interactions evolve under given conditions. Our central contribution lies in connecting configurational analysis to regimes of meaning and interaction. While configurations support situational analysis, regimes explain how patterns stabilize and persist over time, shifting the analytical focus from isolated events to recurrent dynamics.

These contributions have direct implications for institutional design. Addressing violence as a persistent and adaptive phenomenon requires coordinated arrangements that act upon the conditions sustaining harmful dynamics. In this context, legislative architecture provides the foundation for aligning diagnostic insight with collective action by structuring legal norms, funding arrangements, informational processes, and coordination across domains.

We do not treat uncertainty as a limitation to be eliminated, but as a constitutive condition of analysis. Social interactions unfold under conditions in which intentions, interpretations, and outcomes do not fully align, limiting causal traceability and requiring reliance on partial and context dependent information. Within this framework, uncertainty is not an obstacle but an integral element of the method, guiding how observation, interpretation, and inference are organized. Central dimensions, such as motivations and interpretative processes, do not allow for direct measurement



and frequently require indirect inference. Furthermore, misleading action introduces additional complexity, as strategic concealment and ambiguity constrain the visibility of underlying dynamics and complicate the interpretation of available data.

These limitations reflect a broader methodological challenge. Approaches capable of systematically accessing subjective dynamics and non-articulated processes remain underrepresented for institutional application. Although interpretative traditions offer important insights, we must advance the connection between subjective processes and structured diagnostic frameworks without reducing their complexity. This challenge becomes even more pronounced in analytical arrangements that combine human judgment with artificial intelligence based systems, which expand processing capacity but do not resolve the fundamental problem of interpreting ambiguity.

Future work should therefore focus on developing integrative approaches that combine sensitivity to meaning, contextual interpretation, and structured analysis. We must prioritize the design of new technical instruments capable of penetrating the surface of misleading actions and capturing the affective and embodied processes that define interactional flow. Strengthening these capacities is essential for supporting more coherent and coordinated responses, particularly in domains such as community health, where early recognition and aligned action through polycentric systems remain critical.

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