THE POLITICS OF THE AGE-GENDER DIVIDE IN RESPONDING TO SEXUAL, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE

Catherine Maternowska
UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Italy
Suggested Citation:

BACKGROUND PAPER

THE POLITICS OF THE AGE- GENDER DIVIDE IN RESPONDING TO SEXUAL, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE

Catherine Maternowska
UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Italy
Introduction

Empirical evidence has conclusively established that physical, sexual and emotional violence affecting women and children is prevalent in all societies, often at alarming rates, and transcends any particular social, cultural and economic context. Violence against women and children occurs in private and public spaces – in families, schools, care and justice systems, workplaces, neighbourhoods and communities. Violence affecting adults and children has short-term and longer-lasting consequences for individuals, families and for society. An increasingly robust research base and rich data has significantly advanced and shifted the policy discourse away from “Violence does not happen here,” to “What is driving this violence” and “How can we address it?”

But the evidence base to answer policy makers’ questions still has gaps and is largely drawn from high-income countries, with particular social structures and capacities. Since acts of violence against women and children are often hidden and shrouded in secrecy, data collection is a challenge. Only recently has there been significant progress in many low and middle-income countries on this front, but data in many places still remain of poor quality, or non-existent. Progress has undoubtedly been made in gaining a better understanding of violence against women, and there is much to learn from it in relation to children (and vice versa); however, millions of women and children continue to be exposed to violence and remain at risk.

Although addressing violence is challenging, recent evidence shows that preventing violence is possible. In some cases, macro-level reforms in policing and economic development have been linked to violence reduction (Finkelhor and Jones, 2006). In other cases, evidence of reduced interpersonal violence has been linked to community-level interventions focused on health, economic support and power inequity (Kim et al., 2007; Michau, 2013). Moreover, interventions targeting individuals and families in the areas of education, awareness raising and behavioural change have, in some cases, also shown reductions in violent crime, intimate partner violence and negative parenting practices (Allen, 2011; Knerr, Gardner, and Cluver, 2007).

As a result of increased policy traction, numerous global initiatives, each with its own focus, are working collectively on prevention and responses to violence against women (VAW) and children (VAC).¹

¹ Including: ‘Together for Girls’, a global public private partnership focused on sexual violence affecting children (www.togetherforgirls.org); ‘KNOW Violence in Childhood’ a global learning initiative, harnessing learning and action across boundaries, stimulating global advocacy and encouraging greater investment in prevention (www.knowviolenceinchildhood.org); ‘What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls?’ sponsored by the British government and funding innovative approaches to violence prevention (http://www.svri.org/WhatWorks.htm); ‘Global Partnership to End Violence’, a very new global initiative supporting the efforts of ‘pathfinders’–countries (and their governments particularly) that wish to be at the
The combined work of practitioners, activists, and researchers has been potent, effectively moving violence squarely onto the development agenda with targets now clearly defined as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Under this, governments will make a commitment to ensure that all people live in peaceful, just and inclusive societies, setting ambitious targets to be delivered by 2030 in order to deliver the vision of a world where every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. Four SDG targets concern violence prevention directly: Targets 5.2 and 5.3 focus on ending violence against women and girls; Target 16.1 calls for significant reductions in all forms of violence everywhere; and Target 16.2 calls for ending all forms of violence against children. Several other SDG targets focus on important underlying causes that cut across all forms of interpersonal violence, including targets for poverty reduction, increased social protection, reduced access to alcohol and drugs, enhanced early childhood development, improved urban planning, and strengthened rule of law and justice systems.

Although there is much to celebrate, the field of violence prevention and intervention has increasingly become polarised in debate, practice and funding priorities (Hanson and Patel, 2014; Jensen, 2010). Those working at the intersection of VAW and VAC have wrestled with this divide, and some have proposed a need for strategic integration of programming and services (Beeman, Hagemeister, and Edleson, 1999; Eckenrode et al., 2000; Sousa et al., 2011; Guedes and Mikton, 2013; Guedes et al., forthcoming). In order to better understand opportunities for collaboration and pathways towards a joint agenda of action, it is necessary to understand existing tensions. This requires an analysis of history, power and inequalities that, although important to shaping both fields of VAW and VAC, may differ in key respects.

The aim of this paper is to map and analyse the historical and political evolution of the field of violence prevention and intervention, in order to understand what tensions exist in the field, and determine if, and how, strategies for a more coordinated, collaborative and integrated agenda for action against violence can be pursued jointly across the different sectors and groups of stakeholders working in the field. Specifically, this paper seeks to answer the following key questions: What are the tensions between the fields of VAW and VAC, and what are the sources of these tensions? How are the overarching aims, systems and approaches of both fields similar or different? If and how can these be resolved for greater integration in work and action?

In addressing these questions, we first provide an overview of the nature and extent of violence against women and children in order to contextualise our discussion. We then review the literature on the development of the fields of VAW and VAC, highlighting the rich histories of advocacy and the subsequent demands for rights. The two movements, as our discussion reveals, have developed forefront of designing and implementing new approaches to preventing and responding to violence against children (http://www.end-violence.org/).
along somewhat parallel paths; understanding how these histories have influenced perceptions and practice on the ground is important in identifying key sites of convergence which can ground future joint work. Next, by drawing on insights from key stakeholders that we interviewed – including researchers, practitioners and activists (roles which frequently overlap) – we identify and map out the divergence in concepts and practice across several domains in the two fields, focussing specifically on: (i) understanding and interpretation of why and how violence occurs; (ii) policy and programming priorities, including technical approaches in the field; and (iii) key issues of contention that require resolution if greater integration of efforts in responding to VAW and VAC are to succeed, such as addressing issues across the age-gender continuum and funding challenges. Finally, we conclude, arguing that given the intersections between age and gender and the power structures embedded in VAC and VAW, making connections between the two fields can further help combat violence and strengthen outcomes for survivors and victims.

The Nature and Extent of Violence Against Women and Children

VAW and VAC have both existed throughout history, across cultures, ethnicities, and socio-economic settings. Here, we briefly review the nature and extent of VAW and VAC, to highlight both the progress made in both fields, and the potential for learning across them.

Violence Against Women

Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines “violence against women” to mean “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (United Nations General Assembly, 1993). Article 2 expands on this definition through three major non-exhaustive categories of such violence – in the family, in the community, and violence perpetrated and condoned by the State. Although definitions may vary, VAW extends from sexual violence (including rape, forced prostitution and human trafficking in the sex industry), to physical violence (such as domestic and intimate partner violence), and to emotional, economic and political violence (Htun and Weldon, 2012; United Nations Secretary-General, 2006; United Nations Children’s Fund, 2000). VAW extends along women’s life continuum, including from pre-birth, through, for example, sex-selective abortions (UNICEF, 2000).

2 For the purposes of this paper, psychological violence is referred to as emotional violence.
VAW is pervasive worldwide. A review of data from over 80 different countries found that 35 percent of women globally have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) or non-partner sexual violence; that 30 percent of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner; and that globally, up to 38 percent of all murders of women are committed by intimate partners (WHO, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the South African Medical Research Council, 2013). In addition, up to 7 percent of women have been sexually assaulted by a non-partner (ibid). Estimates from the global North suggest that as many as 45 percent of European women have been subject to physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetimes, while Canadian estimates indicate a similar figure of about 50 percent (Htun and Weldon, 2012, citing Elman, 2007; Johnson and Sacco, 1995).

VAW has a wide range of consequences. Its impact on women’s health is well documented, ranging from mental health sequelae such as PTSD, self-harm, suicide attempts and depression, to physical and reproductive health consequences including injuries, STIs, gynaecological complications, unwanted pregnancies, and even death (UNSG, 2006). VAW also has profound social and intergenerational impacts by, for example, potentially limiting survivors’ participation in the wider community or contributing to cycles of abuse (ibid). Further, VAW has economic costs, often impoverishing women and their families, as well as having knock-on effects for the wider economy in terms of lost productivity and other costs of services (Morrison and Ortiz, 2004; Ribero and Sanchez, 2005; Agüero, 2013).

Various predictors of VAW have been identified. These include low education, poverty, child maltreatment or exposure to domestic violence, harmful use of alcohol, and attitudes accepting of violence (WHO, 2016). Importantly, VAW cannot be analysed in a VACuum; it is rooted in hegemonic gender structures and the unequal power distribution between men and women (UNSG, 2006; Wall, 2014). Thus, it is persuasively argued that VAW is a means of maintaining the marginalisation of women (UNSG, 2006).

**Violence Against Children**

VAC includes “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse” perpetrated against a “human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” This definition of violence, as expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, covers a broad spectrum of abuse; that said, different definitions of child abuse exist in different cultures (WHO, 2002), and abuse statistics vary across countries. Moreover, there can be difficulties in collecting data; for example, official statistics may understate the number of victims

---

3 Violence against children can be defined by joint reference to Articles 1 (on the definition of “child”) and 19 (on the definition of “violence”) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Pinheiro 2006, 4).
or injuries, since evidence suggests a large number of child maltreatment cases are not disclosed or reported to authorities, even in countries with mandatory reporting (WHO, 2002).

WHO (2006, cited in Pinheiro, 2006) estimated that 150 million girls and 73 million boys aged under 18 had experienced sexual violence in their lives. Sexual violence against children has dire personal and public health consequences, such as exposure to sexually transmitted infections such as HIV (UNICEF, 2015). For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, not only do women make up 60 percent of HIV victims, girls under 18 are 2 to 4.5 times more likely than boys to be infected with HIV (UNAIDS, 2009).

More recently, the largest-ever compilation of data on violence against children, the UNICEF report *Hidden in Plain Sight* (2014a), showed the staggering extent of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. The report reveals the impact of attitudes that perpetuate and justify violence, keeping it “hidden in plain sight” in every country and community in the world (UNICEF, 2014a), and bringing social norms into play as a key new dimension.

Major findings of the report include that around 120 million girls under the age of 20 worldwide (about 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts, and one in three ever-married adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 (84 million) have been victims of emotional, physical or sexual violence committed by their husbands or partners. Boys are also not immune: in Switzerland, a 2009 national survey of girls and boys aged 15 to 17 found that 22 percent and 8 percent respectively had experienced at least one incident of sexual violence involving physical contact (the most common form of sexual violence for both sexes was cyber-victimisation). Homicide is the leading cause of death among males between 10 and 19 years old in Panama, Venezuela, El Salvador, Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil, Guatemala and Colombia. Nigeria has the highest number of child homicides, at 13,000 in 2012 alone (UNICEF, 2014a). Among countries in Western Europe and North America, the United States had the highest homicide rate in 2012, with a rate of 4 victims for every 100,000 children and adolescents aged 0-19 (ibid).

In schools, bullying and playground violence are common (although the former is most often verbal, it can also take physical forms) (Pinheiro, 2006). Violence in such contexts can be connected to discrimination against marginalised groups, such as the bullying of LGBT children (2006). More than 1 in 3 students between the ages of 13 and 15 worldwide are regularly bullied in

---

4 The report draws on data from 190 countries, documenting violence in places where children should be safe: their communities, schools and homes. It details the lasting, often inter-generational effects of violence, finding that exposed children are more likely to become unemployed, live in poverty and be violent towards others.
school, making children’s learning environments caustic for both boys and girls. In schools and in homes, physical violence is also problematic, with 17 percent of children in 58 countries subject to severe forms of physical punishment (such as hitting on the head, ears or face, or hitting hard and repeatedly). Over 40 percent – close to half of all children under 14 year olds – experience severe physical punishment in Chad (41 percent), Egypt (42 percent) and Yemen (44 percent) (UNICEF, 2014a). Globally, 3 in 10 adults believe physical punishment is needed to raise children well (2014a).

Attitudes that support these behaviours are rampant and make clear how gender socialisation contributes to the acceptance of violence early in life. UNICEF estimated that 44 percent of all adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 (around 126 million) believe a husband is justified in hitting his wife under certain circumstances; this proportion rises to 80 percent or more in Afghanistan, Guinea, Jordan, Mali and Timor-Leste (2014). In 28 of 60 countries with data on both sexes, a larger proportion of girls than boys believe that wife-beating is sometimes justified (UNICEF, 2014a). In Cambodia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Rwanda and Senegal, girls are around twice as likely as boys to think a husband is sometimes justified in hitting his wife. Data from 30 countries suggests that for girls aged 15 to 19 who had been victims of physical and/or sexual abuse, 7 in 10 had never sought help; many said they did not think it was abuse, or did not see it as problematic.

Social Movements Addressing Violence: Raising The Rights Agenda

Violence against women, like violence against children . . . is not an original event with a defined point of emergence, but rather is part of the mainstream of human history (personal communication, Bruce Grant 2016).

A review of how the social movements of women and children evolved sheds light on how divisions between the movements have developed and manifested.

The Development of Women’s Rights and Violence Against Women Movements

Scholars have demonstrated that VAW was (and often still is) raised as a priority because of pressure from women’s advocacy groups (Htun and Weldon, 2012; Weldon and Htun, 2013). In the US, for example, Tjaden (2005) traces the current field of VAW’s first emergence to the women’s movement. In the West, the early years of second wave feminism focused on funding for childcare, gender discrimination in employment, abortion rights, and the equal rights agenda (Pleck, 1987). However, the anti-rape and domestic violence movements of the 1970s, both of which were grounded in second-wave feminist thinking, became the groundwork of the “personal is political” mantra, where battering could be defined as not just a private marital problem, but rather as the result of hegemonic gender structures (Bush, 1992). In the UK, following the first widely
publicised centre for battered women in 1971, the “battered women’s movement” propelled the issue into a newsworthy one by the late 1970s and 80s (Bush, 1992).

The Latin American women's movement has also been recognised internationally for its advances in combating VAW. Latin America was the first region in the world where all countries ratified the CEDAW, and the first to formulate a legal instrument explicitly designed to eradicate gender violence – the Inter-American Convention for the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (1994). Until the 1990s, most countries in the region lacked any domestic violence legislation; by the end of the decade, organised women's lobbying had yielded new laws in nearly every country. However, the regional movement has encountered various obstacles; neoliberal policies concurrently undercut governments' capacities to meet their legal obligations under the new laws, while gender violence continues to be trivialised as a civil, rather than criminal, offense. Discrimination against women also continued in such practices as exonerating rapists who offered to marry their victims, and denying redress to non-wage earning women by recognising "injury" only when victims were rendered unfit for paid employment. Furthermore, the defeat and cooptation of liberation struggles in the 1990s undermined progressive politics. The role of the Catholic Church and its practices of encouraging reconciliation in cases of domestic violence, and of denying reproductive rights has been longstanding and was particularly throughout Latin America (Ruether, 2006).

The impact of the women’s rights and VAW movements was also felt in Asia. In India, autonomous women’s organisations were formed in response to a National Commission on the Status of Women report, published in 1974 (Bush, 1992). In South Korea, Jung (2014) notes that, prior to the Korean women’s movement, there was no terminology with which to refer to sexual violence, nor any legal options to address it. Prior to 1994, sexual violence was dealt with under the Criminal Act as a crime against chastity; however, in 1991, women’s rights organisations pointed out the limitations of this categorisation and lobbied for legal reform which saw the passage of the Special Act on Sexual Violence in 1994 (Lee, 2013). While women have made huge advances in Asia, the work to realise women’s right to freedom from violence remains; for example, domestic violence is still seen as a private matter in many countries (Amirthalingam, 2005). In Malaysia and Singapore, grassroots campaigns by women activists against domestic violence began in the 1980s, slightly later than in the United States (ibid); however, despite years of advocacy, marital rape has still not been added to the criminal codes of either Singapore or Malaysia.

Internationally, it was the momentum of the development of human rights instruments in the latter half of the 20th century that provided a potential framework in which to address gender inequality, including VAW (Bunch, 1990). It was within this framework that the landmark 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was enacted; however, it was not until several years later (1989) that General Recommendation No. 12 was made, specifically addressing VAW (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2013). Since then, efforts have been made by the UN to mainstream gender in its human rights work (see, e.g., Goonesekere and de
Silve-de Alwis, 2005 The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, for example, saw government commitments made to the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into policies and programmes, and notably emphasised that for a “full realisation of human rights for all,” gender discrimination needed to be tackled (Goonesekere and De Silve-de Alwis, 2005); by 2000, 118 countries had developed national action plans to implement their commitments to the Platform for Action. Furthermore, the Vienna Conference in 1993 saw the first official recognition that VAW “was incompatible with human dignity, and represented a violation of human rights” (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2013). In addition to General Recommendation No. 12, The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was adopted by the General Assembly in 1994, and a Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women was appointed in the same year. Several relevant UNSC resolutions have also been passed, including Security Council Resolution 1920, adopted in 2008, which saw the Security Council address conflict-related sexual violence as part of international peace and security (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2013).6

A marked increase in activity devoted to research has also helped raise awareness by pushing forward evidence-informed advocacy. 7 Women’s movements have also been critical to developments; Weldon and Htun show that, indeed, the differing strengths of feminist movements amongst countries may affect what policies exist on VAW, with countries with strong feminist movements being more likely to have comprehensive policies (2013). One veteran researcher of women’s reproductive health, gender and violence interviewed in our research shares her experience:

The work on women came from grassroots organizing. Twenty years ago we saw we needed epidemiological research. We’ve got this huge body of history and data. . . In twenty years we have

---

5 In 1997, ECOSOC published its Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming, setting out a strategy for it (UNICEF and UNFPA 2013, 62). The 21st century has seen continued developments, such as the Millennium Development Goals.

6 Other include the appointment of the the first Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women in 1994 and UNIFEM launching of regional campaigns in 1998 draw attention globally to the issue of violence against women. That same year the Statute of the International Criminal Court codified rape and other sexual violence as war crimes (in armed conflict of international or non-international character), and those crimes committed on a systematic or widespread basis as crimes against humanity, including genocide. In 1999, the United Nations Population Fund declared violence against women ‘a public health priority’ and the Optional Protocol to CEDAW was signed, allowing the Committee to address petitions from groups or individuals on alleged violations of the convention. In 2000, the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Security and Peace provided a framework for addressing women’s needs and rights to protection during conflict, and acknowledged their role in peacekeeping. The UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime in 2000 also included a protocol to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons, especially in women and children.

7 http://www.undocs.org/A/61/122/Add.1
data in over 80 countries. All the laws that have been passed are largely due to that organizing. Now we have a SDG indicator. The women’ movement has been hugely strategic.8

The Development of Children’s Rights and Violence Against Children’s Movements

Preventing violence is a core activity that we should be doing if we are interested in promoting children’s rights. Because violence is simply a way of diminishing peoples’ options and life trajectories and that it makes them smaller people, which has consequences in every sector that you can care to imagine (Anonymous interview, March 2016).

One of the earliest recognitions of children’s rights with regards to violence – expressed as “severity” – was the Massachusetts Body of Liberties of 1641, the first legal code established by European colonists in New England. The code told parents not to choose their children’s friends and nor use unnatural severity against their children. Children, furthermore, were given “free liberty to complain to the Authorities for redress”.9 Two centuries prior, in 1421, the Florentine Silk Guild opened the Ospedale Degli Innocenti, the world’s first home for foundlings. In contrast to orphans, whose parents are known, foundlings were the abandoned infants of (usually) unwed mothers (UNICEF, 2016). London did not open its first foundling home until 1739; New York, not until 1869. Foundling Hospital in London established a children’s home for the “education and maintenance of exposed and deserted young children” (Brownlow, 1847). However, the majority of issues around children and violence in the last 150 years have stemmed from protection issues; in the Industrial Revolution, this was particularly related to child labour (including bondage and slavery), child abuse, exploitation and cruel and inhumane treatment in the workplace.

By the beginning of the 20th century, child protection legislation was developing in the medical, social and judicial fields. Early developments, such as Key’s call for the “century of the child”, the development of the Save the Children Fund, and the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1924, laid the groundwork for the direction of subsequent policy and programming. The emphasis was on the fulfilment of children’s basic needs, in order to allow for their development into functional, valuable members of society (Thomas, 2011).

The Charter, while simple, included protection from multiple types of violence without explicitly highlighting them as physical, emotional or sexual in nature:

8 Anonymous interview, November 2016.
9 But, this was also the law that prescribed the death penalty for children over 16 who disobeyed parents.
1. The child must be given the requisite means for its normal development, both materially and spiritually;
2. The child that is hungry must be fed, the child that is sick must be nursed, the child that is backward must be helped, the delinquent child must be reclaimed, and the orphan and the waif must be sheltered and succored;
3. The child must be the first to receive relief in times of distress;
4. The child must be put in a position to earn a livelihood, and must be protected against every form of exploitation;
5. The child must be brought up in the consciousness that its talents must be devoted to the service of its fellow men.

Since the enactment of the first human rights treaties, concerns for the protection of children from violence also formed part of the international debate. From the 1960s onwards, more attention was paid to the child’s right to self-determination, with the attendant privileges of, and rights to, what adults have; however, these arguments have not been widely accepted, and indeed are opposed and criticised (Thomas, 2011). A middle way approach has emerged, suggesting that rights should reflect children’s developing competence, offering them protection as long as they need it, combined with empowerment as soon as they are ready for it, with restrictions on their freedom and autonomy only where these can be justified in terms of maximising their future choices (Thomas, 2011).

Not until the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted in 1989, and put in force in 1990, did an international instrument came into existence to protect children from violence, by parents and caretakers, as well as from sexual exploitation and trafficking. The CRC declared that children not only have needs that must be respected, but are autonomous rights-bearers who should have a voice appropriate to their level of maturity, in decisions that influence their development. Scholars of children’s rights and violence have phrased this more explicitly:

Children’s dependence on adults makes them more vulnerable to violence. Unquestioned authoritarianism in the relations between adults and children makes violence against children a permanent threat (Pinheiro and Daher, 2008).

The CRC spells out the basic human rights of children worldwide: the right to survive; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful practices, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. Also addressed are such traditionally harmful practices as child labour, commercial sexual exploitation, and corporate punishment. Such statements, according to Pinheiro and Daher (2008), constitute a modern day call to action:

Hannah Arendt once said that if the workers were emancipated in the 19th century and the women achieved liberation in the 20th century, children were still waiting for their emancipation. The
Convention should represent this turning point in the recognition of children’s full citizenship. Properly protecting children from violence must include fully hearing children and respecting their rights as full citizens and not as beloved proprieties of parents, schools or institutions.

By February 2010, 193 out of 195 states had become party to the CRC – the most for any human rights treaty. Such unanimity reflects the recognition of the universal requirement for all children, as a particularly vulnerable class of individuals, to be accorded basic human dignity and the opportunity for harmonious development.

**Study Methods**

In addition to a literature-based mapping of the development of the fields of VAW and VAC, this study also sought to understand the perceptions of leading violence prevention actors on the intersections of these two fields. During a 2015 meeting of the KNOW Violence Initiative in London, preliminary and salient issues on the topic were developed by small working groups with leading experts from around the globe. Based on this material, the authors subsequently developed and agreed upon key research questions. Data was collected through semi-structured, open-ended interviews to elucidate – from a political, historical and current-day lens – how the two fields of VAW and VAC have diverged on somewhat separate trajectories. Interviews included questions on participants’ professional background in VAW or VAC; understandings of the intersectionality of VAW or VAC in the context of participants’ particular professional role; historical perspectives on the rights movements (women’s or children’s) which have informed study participants’ professional focus on violence; milestones that marked change or stagnation in the progression of the field/s; and general recommendations for future work in integrating the two fields.

Ethics approval for this study was obtained from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in October 2015. The purposive sample was drawn from a list of approximately 20 key informants across the globe, ranging from high-level policy makers to activist practitioners recognised for their expertise in the field. Eleven individuals were interviewed, either in person or via Skype, in Italy, Tanzania, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and the United States. All interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed in order to facilitate analysis. We applied thematic content analysis to the data collected, adapted from Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) “grounded theory” approach to analyse the form and substance of the narrative. Underlying – and often overt – meanings and ideas were revealed through analysing patterns in elements of the text, such as words or phrases (Yang, 2008). The interviews were empirically coded

---

10 Project No.: 2015/794 (Approval Date: 12 October 2015).
based on a coding system developed by the first author (Babbie, 1999). Research team members reviewed the interviews and then collectively identified and agreed upon key thematic categories. Content analysis provides a way to understand valuable historical/cultural insights over time through analysis of narrative; it is unobtrusive and provides insight into complex models of human thought and language use (Colorado State University, n.d.). Limitations of our methodology include the risk that, devoid of theoretical base, the use of this method can encourage an overly liberal attempt to draw meaningful inferences about the relationships and impacts implied in the narrative; it is inherently reductive, particularly when dealing with complex texts (Colorado State University, n.d.).

**Understanding Why: Divergent Rights Agendas**

The history of the women’s and children’s rights movements, and the successes they have generated, suggests that activists’ roles in both movements have been pivotal to pushing public concerns about violence onto overarching human rights agendas.

Curiously, while both movements evolved concurrently with the widening of children’s programmes to focus not only on survival but also on development (see, e.g., the intersectionality theory of feminism in Crenshaw, 1994), these movements have not necessarily evolved in unison for nearly three decades (Jensen, 2010). Raitt (2005) highlights the “absence of an explicit dialogue between children’s rights and feminism,” despite the obvious mutual ground between the two movements. With experience as both a social worker in the United States, and later in gender-based violence (GBV) humanitarian issues in Asia, Africa, the Balkans, and elsewhere, a seasoned women’s rights practitioner interviewed for this project agrees:

There is a perception in the GBV community that the child protection actors don’t know enough about GBV to deal with survivors and there is a perception in the child protection community that the GBV people don’t understand enough about children. But, pretty universally people understand that they need each other. They don’t know how to work together, but they know that they should.  

Raitt suggests that, despite the “curious lack of debate” within the children’s rights movement about its mutual interests with feminism, feminist methods and ideals underlie a large portion of children’s rights discourse (2005). Indeed, she argues that many of the policy achievements of the children’s rights movement owe their success directly to the adoption of theoretical frameworks and practical strategies that were originally cultivated within the feminist movement and honed to perfection during the twentieth century. Two prominent examples of such strategies, informed by

---

11 Anonymous interview November 2015.
feminist critique, are the use of a language of rights for children, and the demand for children’s visible participation in much of the decision-making linked to civic and family life.

Hailing from years of feminist grassroots work in the United States, and later, the foreign service, a practitioner working on violence affecting children acknowledges the enormous role of VAW in shaping the current VAC policy and practice platform:

The VAW space and attention has actually enabled the VAC era to come into play. And so I don’t think the children people ever acknowledge that. I don’t think we would be talking about VAC the way we are today if it hadn’t been for all the work on GBV. Because we’d still be too busy VAC vaccinating kids and getting them birth certificates and things like that which all need to happen, of course. But because the GBV people put that issue on the table, it gave everybody the opportunity to figure out what’s going on, and that’s how you end up back there with those kids.\textsuperscript{12}

However, understandings of VAC have taken considerable time to evolve:

back in the day then, there was very little acknowledgement then that children were on the streets to escape family conflict, and really the issue of violence, and street children, and conflict…it was not even part of public discourse to say that they even intersected. The discourse was very much that these children were either fleeing poverty, or were in some way socially abhorrent, and it was only, really in about...the mid-2000 that the work that I’m doing with street children began to be framed by others as a child protection intervention. And, in the context of Tanzania, child protection was…and I think still is, for a long time conflated with the response to most vulnerable children, and it’s only been recently, in the last 2 or 3 years, that the issue of violence has been put out on the table for everyone to scrutinise.\textsuperscript{13}

Violence today is widely recognised in numerous global conventions as a threat to human well-being, especially for the most vulnerable – women and children. Both the women’s movement and the children’s movement have contributed to this progress in significant ways. Without doubt, these movements share commonalities, among them an essential concern with power – the women’s movement focussing on the power of men over women, and the children’s movement on the power of adults over children. This history informs different approaches to research and practice, and the evolution of professional perspectives and capacities required for effectively preventing violence. These, in turn, are made politically complex by unclear agency mandates, donor pressures and ultimately policy that lacks coherence. While some progress has been made, the fields of violence prevention for women and children remain divided, often existing in parallel and with competing

\textsuperscript{12} Anonymous interview, January 2016.
\textsuperscript{13} Anonymous interview, November 2015.
agendas. With this historical backdrop, we now analyse why this lack of unity in VAW and VAC has emerged.

Here, we begin with reviewing how the fields of violence against women and children have their roots in two “divergent rights agendas”: feminism/women’s rights and children’s rights. We then discuss how these two fields validated their concerns, moving rhetoric about rights into hard empirical data. We trace the more recent history of evidence-based knowledge generation and the “science of violence” to show how these fields have evolved into established areas of study – namely, public health – but not without their independent and collective struggles. The “conceptual frameworks” generated from this work provide insights into how and why the approach to violence prevention and response, including differing perspectives on required professional “competencies”, is at odds. The analysis then moves from knowledge to practice; here, the stark divisions between the “political” and the “technical” mandates around prevention and response become clear. In the process, we explore the blurry lines between “laws and policies” that act to contradict, rather than connect, the two fields. Finally, we explore the unlikely subject of focus – “the (adolescent) girl in the middle” and the ramifications of a development and “lifecycle approach” – as well as the sought-after “donor funds” that might give her the rights that both movements have long fought for.

The Science of Violence: Ownership and Process

Interviewees agree that a key turning point in greater public and policy awareness on violence against both women and children has come through the findings of empirical research – hard data that show prevalence rates and demonstrate statistically significant associations between violence and a wide array of adverse outcomes. Both VAW and VAC have pushed their messages forward using research, but have done so using different approaches that have sometimes been at odds with one another. To illustrate the role of science in advocacy, we present two case studies, one in each field: the WHO multi-country study on women’s health and domestic violence against women (first published in 2005), and the CDC’s Violence against children survey (first published in 2007); the latter was first conducted in Swaziland, with subsequent countries engaging in similar processes. Despite the momentum generated from these two surveys, representatives from both fields agree there is still a lacuna in research on “best practices” or evaluation data.

“Movements” Making Science: Measuring Violence Against Women

The WHO multi-country study was an international landmark study documenting VAW by their intimate partners. This report presented initial results based on evidence collected from over 24,000 women in 10 countries, and suggested 15 recommendations to strengthen national commitment and action on VAW; these included promoting primary prevention, harnessing education systems, strengthening the health sector’s response, supporting women living with violence, sensitising criminal justice systems, undertaking research, and enhancing collaboration. VAW research predating the WHO survey helped shape how the women’s movement and the scientific public
health agenda worked together. Some early research on women and domestic violence was a strategic move: research activists needed hard data to move women’s independent national struggles into the heart of policy and practice. There were several factors that helped the VAW research agenda coalesce into action; one of these was the multi-disciplinary paradigm, and ultimately the “ethics of ownership”.

While research on violence against women was underway in the United States, it was not until the mid-1990s that violence was even considered a relevant variable for women or their children in other parts of the world. An activist researcher working in Latin America, recalls, at the commencement of the VAW surveys:

We were in Leon, Nicaragua and studying maternal mortality. I asked at the meeting [of physicians and research scientists] – “but what about violence”? They didn’t really know how to respond. They sort of looked at me and thought, “We have never looked at that”. There was no literature at the time.14

This inquiry was an example of how the VAW movement turned activism into science. In the years that ensued, a Nicaraguan team added a simple question – “Was there violence at home?” – followed by a prevalence study. The results reinforced these concerns, with 50 percent of all women interviewed suffering from sexual violence, making it a major risk factor for child mortality. Patterns emerged and connections were made. Before long, violence questions were embedded in other studies, to measure the interactions between violence and health outcomes. In a hospital-based study of pregnant women in Nicaragua, findings showed that women were six to seven times more likely to have a child die before the age of five if exposed to violence. Throughout this process, researchers and activists also started collating these pieces of information, highlighting how all these issues were connected; after poverty, violence and pregnancy were the greatest risks for women. These studies reaffirmed US data.

The interdisciplinary approach to the VAW survey in Nicaragua (involving work between statisticians, physicians, social epidemiologists), informed by a women’s movement, was a potent combination in collecting data and mobilising action based on findings. The combination of science backed by an active “movement” was critical to moving the political lever.

Also key to the success of the early VAW surveys was the joint partnership of researchers and activists. This approach set a precedent for the WHO VAW surveys that followed:

14 Anonymous interview November 2015.
Creating ownership from the beginning is so important. That is why our work was taking hold. It was the ethics of ownership.\textsuperscript{15}

This model of activism and science has been a cornerstone of VAW work. Learning from the global South informed work in the global North, with practitioners creating a network to discuss different methodological issues that would further the “science of violence” agenda; their efforts at an early stage focused, firstly, on standardising methods from the start; secondly, on developing agreed-upon ethical guidelines, and thirdly, on working with other experienced researchers, including DHS, to build on existing understandings of survey methodologies used globally.

Collaboration was key. Experienced colleagues recommended comparative data as essential to building the case. The work “came out of a collective place”.\textsuperscript{16} What resulted was the landmark WHO multi-country study, now underway in its 14\textsuperscript{th} country. This collaboration at the global level was mirrored at the national level, where surveys were always paired with activist/practitioners to ground the study process – and eventually, the findings as products – in reality.

\textit{The New Looking Glass of Science: Measuring Violence Against Children}

Empirical research on VAC has also played a critical role in advancing public awareness and policy, although this body of science is more recent than in the VAW field; as one astute observer remarked, “I don’t think there is as much of a child activist movement – children’s welfare has come from State actors and it’s been generally weak.”\textsuperscript{17} Many interviewees in the current study argued that the success of the VAW surveys provided critical groundwork for what has since become a similar, although comparatively newer, field of science. While surveys such as the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse’s (ISPCAN) Child Abuse Screening Tools (referred to as ICAST) and the Adverse Childhood Experiences Surveys (ACE) have been collecting and reporting on violence data (Finkelhor, 1994; Pereda, Guilera, Forns, and Gómez-Benito, 2009), the majority of these surveys have been completed in middle and higher income countries. The ACE surveys, for example, began in 1995 in San Diego, California, and have provided a wealth of information on outcomes for an impressive 17,000 participants. International interest in replicating the ACE study has been growing, with efforts to replicate the study or use its questionnaire in Canada, China, Jordan, Norway, the Philippines and the United Kingdom. In Puerto Rico, the link between women’s cardiovascular health risks and ACEs has been examined (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). One VAC interviewee suggested that ICAST

\textsuperscript{15} Anonymous interview November 2015.
\textsuperscript{16} Anonymous interview November 2015.
\textsuperscript{17} Anonymous interview November 2015.
and ACE have informed the field but have never really taken off internationally partly because of they were backed by private interests, rather than the US Government.”

The most recent and significant body of survey data, especially from lower- and middle-income country settings, has been the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) violence against children surveys, completed in collaboration with UNICEF and participating country offices. The first of the VAC surveys, implemented in 2007 in Swaziland, looked at violence against girls alone; since then, the surveys have rapidly been reproduced within East and Southern Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, and include data on boys as well as girls. Surveys have been completed in at least 11 countries; their outcomes, thanks largely to the Together for Girls network, have generally been positive, with uptake particularly strong in certain countries. Data from these surveys have assisted progress in awareness raising and advocacy on VAC; as one activist noted, “the household study that UNICEF did – was hugely significant in providing evidence about the extent of the problem”. These studies, in large part, were based upon the success of the WHO VAW study.

This history of shared (or unshared) experiences is important in explaining existing tensions between the two fields. Those interviewed indicated that the approach of this survey was different, and views around this approach began to delineate and differentiate the two fields of VAW and VAC.

According to a former UN worker, the experience in Tanzania was exemplary:

What the CDC surveys were trying to do was strategic – even the Directors of Ministries would talk about individual cases of violence. We knew the survey would do more to help children stand up and start being counted. [So we could] stop whining about Child Protection having no data but to get the numbers and getting millions of children who are being violated in countries around the world.

Borrowing from VAW, the idea of inclusivity and a multi-sectoral reach was key to the success of the survey (at least in Tanzania).

We were very, very involved with the way the study was done. We worked hard with the Government from the beginning. Part of the reason for having a cross-sectoral government group

---

19 For example, the survey conducted in Tanzania has had important policy and programming results but, on the other end of the spectrum, other countries have had little or no uptake, this being dependent on the survey results and the multiple stakeholders commitments.
was so that learning about protection and violence would be active. They had sessions with each Ministry, asking what will each Ministry do in response in this situation? It wasn’t so much a study as it was a tool for engagement in child protection – to focus money on child protection and to get the broader Gov’t involved. 21

As VAC surveys have been carried out, the success of engaging governments has been variable; although there was considerable success in some African countries, sustaining this commitment has proved challenging. Some would argue that the survey approach requires adaptation for the Asian setting (Rumble et al., forthcoming). One interviewee suggested that while research is always a learning process, the VAC surveys had “little interest in building on best practices.”22

While consultations started out well, calling on VAW expertise and history, the meetings and alliances quickly broke down over misunderstandings on basic constructs surrounding gender, power and local input. According to several interviewees, the CDC had several technical meetings to discuss ethical and technical issues, and tensions were evident. From the VAW perspective, questions were raised around the utility of asking 13 year olds about their experiences with violence, both for ethical and technical reasons, which led to truncated data. The ethics around collecting confidential and sensitive information from minors remains problematic;23 as one VAC proponent remarked,

It would be fair to conclude that the VAC survey has evolved over the past 9-10 eras but slowly, with tense consultation and virtually none of this with children.24

The point here is not so much to pit VAW and VAC surveys (or their implementers) against one another, but to understand points of division. The divergent approaches to surveys is highlighted; one engaged with activists and local researchers, using evidence to drive political change, while the other considerably more agency-driven, with the CDC and UNICEF directly harnessing the power of the Government.

During an interview, a proponent of the VAC surveys paused and agreed:

I think one of the questions that does confound us [VAC] a little is where is the role of civil society and the feminist movement? Especially coming out of the 1970s feminist health care movement which defined activism and then moved right into the HIV activist movement.25

---

21 Anonymous interview March 2015
22 Anonymous interview November 2015.
23 UNICEF does not have an ethics review board, which makes country offices dependent on local review.
24 Anonymous interview, November 2015.
The science of violence is complicated, and approaches need to vary depending on the context, the survey respondents and overall objectives. An essential aspect of implementing survey research is learning from what has been done. Even VAC supporters claim that the terrain is tricky; from the perspective of inside the UN one informant is brutally honest:

In Cambodia we had research on our side. We had the P4P [UN] study, we had the VACS [CDC] study, and at the same time the VAW [WHO] study was being planned: so much research in such a little country, and yet, very little coordination. We all knew it was happening and we were unable to take a breath and say: “there has to be a way we can put some of this stuff together”. It’s a case of where proponents might say, “It’s good, it builds capacity, we have a lot of data now.” And yet my philosophy is that for every dollar you are spending on documenting the magnitude of the problem there should be twice as much on the response . . . and I don’t think that is happening in Cambodia.

The lesson, perhaps, is in the dialogue; from the start, there is a need to engage academics and government as well as the constituencies being surveyed, and, to the extent that it is possible, ensure consultation with the on-the-ground front line providers who will in the end carry both the history of what works (and what doesn’t), and the onus of prevention and response delivery.

**Continued Challenges**

While data has driven change in many countries, challenges remain. Funding has always been scarce for both fields; in fact, for the first five years of the WHO VAW study, most of the collaborators were not paid. This lack of funding for continued research remains. A significant challenge now is that the discourse is catching up – there is recognition of a violence problem, but not enough investment. The action plans developed based on the findings are not being effectively funded.

Collectively, both from the perspective of VAW and VAC, more research on evaluation of what “works” is desperately needed. Those from both VAW and VAC describe the need for such research:

I think we all need more robust evaluations of the work that we do. Every project should include a strong, external evaluation component. And, I think that we need for more research and that it

---

should be embedded in the programming that we are doing. Because we still don’t know what works and what doesn’t work.26

While the field has increased understanding of domestic violence, there are lacunae on women and children with disabilities, very little on indigenous women and children, migrants, and too little on trafficking. We do not have nearly enough in the area of interventions – in scaling them up and evaluating them. According to one participant, “We have only started this work.”27

**Conceptual Frameworks**

They don’t share a conceptual framework – this is absolutely critical.28

By the mid-1990s, when data from the global studies on VAW first started rolling in, social epidemiologists could finally begin to map the way violence manifested in women’s (and, in part, children’s) lives. Patterns were emerging; violence, especially interpersonal, was common for women globally; male intimate partners (as opposed to strangers) were often the perpetrators; levels of violence varied widely depending on the setting and context; and women who experienced violence were likely to experience a host of other negative health outcomes, which can persist for a very long time (Heise, 2012). It is noteworthy that these findings are remarkably similar to cumulated findings from the last ten years on VAC research.

Nearly 40 years ago, Urie Bronfenbrenner, a Russian-born American developmental psychologist who is best known for his ecological systems theory of child development, referred to the field of violence against children as “the science of strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time” (1979). His framework embraced an ecology of human development that involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 21)

For years, Heise (2012) has also argued that the field of violence was “developing towards an integrative, meta-theoretical mode of violence that considers multiple variables operating at different times in a probabilistic fashion.” This ecological model, now the standard violence

26 Anonymous interview November 2015.
27 Anonymous interview November 2015.
28 Anonymous interview November 2015.
prevention framework, was originally applied to the field of domestic violence in 1984 (Carlson), and made widespread by the work of Heise in the late 90s (e.g. Heise, 1998). Ironically, the application of the ecological model to VAW was informed by the field of children’s developmental psychology, and first applied to child abuse and neglect in 1980 (Belsky).

Heise, applying this framework to VAW, similarly posited that there is no single factor that “causes” partner violence; rather, the likelihood that a specific man will become abusive, or that one community will have a higher rate of violence than another, is a function of many interacting factors at different levels of social ecology.

In fact, exploring and documenting the pathways through which factors act and interact, at different levels of the ecological model, has consumed the field of VAW. The framework works because it allows for complexity, is context dependent, and can account for multiple interacting variables by moving in many directions, from the individual to larger structural levels of society (and back). The most recently revised model has been strengthened by up-to-date evidence on the risk and protective factors related to intimate partner violence (IPV), and the inclusion of empirical evidence from low- and middle-income countries (Heise, 2011). Fulu and Meidema (2015) build on Heise’s work even further, adding a global level to the existing ecological model framework to explore the relationships between global processes and experiences of VAW.

Drawing on a cross-country analysis of Cambodia and the Maldives, Fulu and Meidema (2015) illustrate how two dominant global ideologies – women’s rights and democracy – and the processes that accompany them, interact with social-level factors of the ecological model. The authors argue that globalisation is multi-dimensional and multi-directional as well as highly gendered, yielding “contradictory work on sexed, raced, and labouring bodies; gendered family relations; and masculinized and feminized institutions, ideologies and identities” (Fulu and Meidema, 2015, citing Ferguson, Merry, and Mironesco, 2008). Heise and Kotsadam (2015) push further, with a recent analysis that builds on and extends the fairly undeveloped scientific literature about macro-level predictors of population prevalence of VAW. The authors use multilevel modeling to suggest that macro-level processes affect women’s individual risk of violence. They argue that greater emphasis must be placed on shifting normative expectations around the acceptability of wife beating, and the perceived right of men to control female behaviour. Similarly, practitioners and researchers should explore removing barriers to women’s access to land and property as a potential strategy for reducing IPV levels, thus bringing the structural centre back to violence against women.

The conceptual framework for VAC borrows from several disciplines that guide its work in a decidedly different manner. Protecting children from violence is central to the traditional framework for VAC; the use of the word “protection” conveys the right of children to live in a safe and protective environment. These rights stem from the principle of “evolving capacities”, which first emerged in international law through the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC allows for the recognition that children in different environments and cultures, faced with
diverse life experiences, will acquire competencies at different ages (Lansdown, 2005). Evolving capacities recognise that, as children acquire enhanced competencies, there is less need for protection and a greater capacity to take responsibility for decisions affecting their lives.

There is a sense among some in the field of VAC that the focus on “protection” is changing, with a shift towards understanding children as whole human beings with the capacity and right to have a say in decisions that affect their lives:

So in the early days while people were still drunk with the idea that we had to give out protection, that meant that we had to do things for children . . . So we had a lot of interventions that were designed with children as the beneficiaries or recipients rather than as actors.²⁹

While VAC also relies on (or certainly refers to) the socio-ecological model to address findings on VAC, it is promoted with the expectation that policy-makers will intervene and develop interventions at each layer, in order to protect children. Paying attention to single layers means that the interconnections, interdependencies and the bi-directionality between the layers are overlooked. More often, research on violence affecting children – and the practical interventions used to address violence – have borrowed from the fields of social work and psychology; these often focus on individual characteristics and interpersonal relations, with less consideration on how these are shaped by structural and contextual factors (Boyden and de Berry, 2004). Some of the more progressive work in the field of VAC, based largely in the global North, seeks to understand how aggressive interactional styles emerge, and what we can do to prevent them or intervene to curtail them, whether they arise within the peer group or within the family context. The premise is often that children develop social-emotional skills and relationship capacities through their interactions with others, and that parents (the “other” focus of VAC interventions) often fail to help children grow and develop the capacities and attitudes that enable them to succeed at school, at work, and in life-long relationships (personal communication, D. Peplar). While there is recognition that, throughout their development, children and adolescents need warm, sensitive, and reinforcing families and schools, and communities that minimise punishment, conflict, and coercion, the focus is typically on the relationship, not the larger macrostructures that might be influencing that relationship.

One VAC practitioner interviewed suggested that subscribing to the ecological framework allows for natural conceptual linkages to be made between VAW and VAC:

²⁹ Anonymous interview March 2016.
So, in some ways if we didn’t see those connections, in some ways we would be completely blind in terms of our interventions. So I think that if you work to the ecological framework, and if you move in concentric circles around an individual in terms of what influences them, we might find that those concentric circles have quite a few intersections for women and children. So naturally, and at a conceptual level, there is a connection in the work we do in violence against women and children.30

Conceptual frameworks are inherently complex; how they are determined is informed by a system of concepts, assumptions, beliefs and expectations. At the intersection of these approaches is gender and power, neither of which, we argue, can or should be separated from the other. Gender – and, ultimately, its social expression in terms of differences and power – becomes, as we will demonstrate, a defining and yet dividing principle in the way that VAW and VAC are interpreted.

**Gender, Power and The Rhetoric of Rights**

“We have a conceptual, ideological and political problem”.31

In discussing their resistance to the VAW conceptual frameworks, child protection interviewees sometimes referred to the question of “what about boys” – they saw their view on children as being inclusive, as this practitioner described, “...we wanted an understanding of why this needs to be a gendered approach. My approach has been we work for all children. I am a feminist! But I have always felt it serves no one to exclude men and boys…”32 VAW advocates, on the other hand, argue that this view ignores the gendered experiences of both boys and girls: “VAC is treated like boys and girls have the same needs, problems, and rights.”33

Historically, gender and power have been central to VAW but more peripheral for VAC; understanding why it might contribute to a more effective way forward. The VAW conceptual framework remains embedded in gender, acknowledging that gender inequality stems from historical power imbalances between men and women (Wall, 2014). These inequalities were the common and resounding voice in both the feminist movement and subsequent early practices in violence prevention and response:

The field… for a very long time was really filled with activists . . . a lot of it was very much, “This has to stop!” “You’ve got to help this woman today!” There was a lot of – not necessarily literally

30 Anonymous interview March 2016.
31 Anonymous interview November 2016.
32 Anonymous interview November 2015.
33 Anonymous interview November 2015.
screaming – but the approach was . . . not necessarily a best approach for advocacy. It was crowded with feminists. Not all of whom had the requisite knowledge, skills, and expertise to identify a problem and design interventions to then go and work with communities to further refine them and start to influence change.  

This same front line worker in the field of VAW shared additional insights:

I think that is our fault to some degree because we have picked up this term gender and then we – the royal we – activists and feminists have spent all this time naval gazing about gender without deconstructing it for people and making it in plain English. 

This was also echoed by another observer: “Their analysis is that everything has to do with gender rather than everything has to do with being a child.”

Perhaps most symptomatic of this divide is the familiar post of “gender focal point” in the Ministries of Social Welfare, or a “child protection focal point” in Ministries of Gender, who often fail to fulfill their duties for either lack of a clear mandate or lack of understanding of how the two fields might practice together. Defined by history, practice and even general perception, the two fields remain polarised around issues of gender. While both would likely agree that virtually all forms of violence are linked to entrenched gender roles and inequities, and that the violation of the rights of children is closely linked to the status of women (UNICEF, 2008; Jensen, 2010), positions remain entrenched.

These tensions were voiced by practitioners we interviewed from both sides:

Their only agenda is a feminist agenda (VAC). 

They say gender is not relevant (VAW). 

Stated more explicitly, gender remains rooted in hegemonic structures and the unequal power distribution between men and women, issues central to the CEDAW (UNSG, 2006; Wall, 2014). As one VAW advocate noted:

---

34 Anonymous interview November 2015.  
35 Anonymous interview November 2015.  
37 Anonymous interview March 2016.  
38 Anonymous interview November 2015.
[Those working on VAC] are not getting the memo from the MDGs Beijing. The UN as a whole have agreed on VAWG and there is a small group of researchers and Child Protection people who will not accept it – they don’t refer to it and they don’t see it. That is a huge problem. They try to take ideology out of this – refusing to see gender as an ideological position. VAC people are not allowed to talk about gender.\(^\text{39}\)

The VAC construct, by comparison, is lodged at the levels where human, not structural, relationships are paramount. For VAC, the focus moves inward to community notions about children’s status within the family and the relationships of care. While gender is not entirely absent, if it is discussed it remains in the realm of family or school – the two environments where children do or do not thrive – which, it seems, is designed to preserve children’s agency.

My worry is that to make everything about gender, that’s why I’m resistant to making everything about school related gender based violence, is that in some ways it dehumanises children. It takes away the agency of being a child. We have to recognise that childhood, regardless of whether you are a boy or a girl is a particular experience. Now a girl child has a diversified experience from that of a boy child and we should not overlook that, but being a child is also a particular experience.\(^\text{40}\)

This is reinforced through its rights framework, notably Article 19 of the CRC:

The State should take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has the care of the child.

The challenges remain to join conceptual frameworks that might unite instead of divide. It has been suggested that “women’s advocates approach their practice from a feminist framework and child welfare workers approach their practice from a child-centred approach” (Hanson and Patel, 2014, citing Magen et al., 2000), contributing to a potential erasure of the links between the two forms of abuse. Without a more collective approach, the fields of violence prevention and response are likely to remain anchored in divisive rhetorical positions around rights: the protection of the child in the context of their capacities and relationships, \textit{versus} the rights of women, writ large, accompanied by significant structural change.

The common dialogue sits somewhere at the “intersection” of VAW and VAC, as it is expressed on-the-ground – where violence is an everyday event for women and children worldwide.

\(^{39}\) Anonymous interview November 2015.

\(^{40}\) Anonymous interview March 2016.
Identifying intersections and overlaps between VAW and VAC may be a way forward in reconciling tensions between the fields.

**Approaches: Practice Made Political**

**The Politics**

Given the respective rights and conceptual frameworks that guide VAW and VAC, it is not surprising that practice and approaches in the field vary. There are numerous factors at play, from the political to the practical. Increasingly, with improved data, various overlaps and correlations between VAW and VAC have been identified. An increasing preponderance of evidence, from multiple countries, exists on the connection between VAW and VAC (Bourassa, 2007; UNICEF, 2015; Chan, 2011; Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner and Ormrod, 2010). For example, studies confirm that there exists a category of children who “witness” or are exposed to domestic violence, which is increasingly recognised as a form of child abuse in and of itself (Richards, 2011). It is increasingly well-known that children who are raised in violent households are susceptible to behavioural and emotional disturbances, and are more likely to perpetrate or experience violence later in adult life. Links have also been made between IPV and increased rates of infant and child mortality and morbidity, including diarrhoeal disease and malnutrition (WHO, 2016). UNICEF (2015) also confirmed the co-occurrence of violence against women and children; in a study of women in the south Pacific, women who experienced IPV were more likely to report child abuse, compared to women who were not IPV victims. In Kiribati, 33 percent of women who experienced IPV reported abuse of their child, compared to 7 percent for non-victims of IPV; in the Solomon Islands, it was 36 percent of IPV sufferers to 11 percent of non-victims (p. 10).

These intersections, for those on the front line of service provision, are obvious. A research-practitioner puts it simply:

You can’t ever be around women without children. If you are with women, they are usually holding a baby half the day. I think the orientation . . . comes from an underlying root cause about patriarchy and inequality between men and women. Most expressions of violence come from that – so you work on their behalf.

In practice when working with groups like Save the Children, International Rescue Committee, the International Red Cross, Médecins sans Frontières – we can pretty much create or reinforce referral systems and make them work.41

---

41 Anonymous interview, December 2015.
In fact, in numerous interviews, informants commented that getting work done at the field level often, but not always, goes uncontested. This level of cooperation was particularly notable among those with humanitarian experience, where emergency situations – wars and conflict, or natural disasters – leave less time for politically divisive conversations about the treatment of women and children as separate (theoretically driven) issues. The real challenges, frontline workers independently agreed, are “from above”:

There is a willingness at the technical level to engage. But when it gets to the higher levels it tends to shut down. Counterparts are good but the directives they get from management are not as supportive. footref{42}

On the ground level it is not as hard, it is when you go further away and have to decide what Ministry – health, social welfare, gender or which agency UNFPA, UNCHR, UNICEF – I actually see most of the confusion at the level of the UN. footref{43}

The mandates, of course, are political, being tied to governments and often funding, which is inevitably reliant on global northern government priorities:

The development community is often its own worst enemy, and the donors too. So Canada likes funding kids stuff, DFID likes funding women’s stuff, USAID has this incredible set of work on gender, but the OVC and the children’s strategy is completely separate and has its own chapter on violence, so a lot of it is just the way the development community is structured. It might get worse before it gets better. footref{44}

Furthermore, the issue of funding itself was described as contentious and a key source of tension between the two fields: “The tension is absolutely grounded in resources.” footref{45} While there was recognition that funding had increased somewhat over time, respondents in each field discussed the dire need for additional support for work on violence prevention and response within their own field, and the lack of prioritisation of this work. One respondent, for example, lamented the low proportion of funds allocated within UNICEF for child protection, compared to other, “easier to resolve” issues. Multiple respondents, however, acknowledged that it was more difficult to raise funds for VAW than VAC, which was seen as more politicised and linked to a feminist agenda:

footref{42} Anonymous interview November 2015.
footref{43} Anonymous interview December 2015.
footref{44} Anonymous interview November 2015.
footref{45} Anonymous interview November 2015.
It’s so easy to rally people emotionally around the issue of VAC in a way that is much more difficult to rally around VAW.\textsuperscript{46}

Women are quite rightly suspicious of being marginalised yet again in a global development agenda.\textsuperscript{47}

Funding tensions were also raised by a few respondents in the context of funding for work with men and boys on violence prevention, seen to be in competition with funding for work with women or for response services.

Analysing further beyond the development community, one of our interviewees, a scholar with over 40 years of experience working on child rights, brings it back to the original rights agendas and remarks on how topics “like violence prevention” are extremely difficult to fund; not only do they often lack demonstrable outcomes, but effective responses require getting to the real causes of violence, which can be highly contentious. Children’s rights are considered highly political; focussing on the family is not. For women, the recognition that rights are political is the entire point – and focussing on changing the structures that prohibit equality is essential. For example, linking gender norms and gender discrimination in access to land and property (see Heise and Kotsadam, 2015) is considered politically accurate and embraced.

Nested between the political and the practice is the legal system. Here, too, definitions and differentiation divide the fields of VAW and VAC. Typically, service provision and the laws that advocate for VAW or VAC are tangled; in many countries, children’s issues are addressed in the constitution through issues of VAW. Often, because mothers are seen as responsible for the health of their children, they are reluctant to report violence for fear of losing their right to parent. Good laws and policies might exist, but these are rarely translated into good practice and accountability. Sometimes, laws and policies contradict each other, often because the State is incapable of responding. Rules and regulations for both women and children are typically drafted by lawyers, and the primary mandated response often involves authorities who are frequently incapable of providing services, either for lack of training or resources. Worldwide, the onus of responsibility is on the victims to seek out their own justice, often under difficult circumstances. In fact, as one practitioner from an NGO in Tanzania commented, there is little reason to report, especially with no entitlement “to do with health or therapeutic care or transcending violence in a way that is healthy. And, I don’t see anything, about engaging with abusers in either [the VAW or VAC] sector”.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{46} Anonymous interview November 2015.
\textsuperscript{47} Anonymous interview March 2016.
\textsuperscript{48} Anonymous interview November 2015.
Beyond the political is the practical – ensuring that, somehow, prevention and response services to address violence are provided some degree of care. But here, too, the approaches of VAW and VAC often diverge. Despite its enormous public health impact, the recognition of VAW as a public health policy issue is a relatively recent development. Until the early 1980s, concerns about VAW rested almost exclusively within the purview of criminology, sociology or psychology. Violence emerged as a major public health concern for the first time in the United States in 1980, when the US Surgeon General’s report *Healthy People 2000* identified the control of stress and violent behaviour as one of 15 priority areas (USDHS, 1980). This landmark document was followed by other reports, workshops, and conferences that addressed violence as a public health issue. Then-Surgeon General C. Everett Koop urged the public health community to “respond constructively to the ugly facts of interpersonal violence” (USDHS, 1986). The study of violence from a public health perspective was institutionalised in the US in 1991, with the creation of the Division of Violence Prevention within the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the CDC.

A public health approach to interpersonal violence, including VAW, examines violence as a problem that can be studied, understood, and prevented – not as an inevitable phenomenon. Proponents of this perspective point to public health successes in controlling infectious diseases, such as smallpox and polio, which were once considered unavoidable. Advocates will argue that the advantages of a public health approach to violence includes its emphasis on prevention; its interdisciplinary nature; the analytical tools, such as epidemiological methods and surveillance techniques, that public health can contribute; and a focus on policy as an intervention strategy (Mercy and O’Carroll, 1988; Rosenberg and Fenley, 1991). Finally, a public health approach considers the differences in the causes of perpetration between IPV and sexual violence outside of intimate relationships (Wall, 2014).

Until now, the field of VAW based most of its work in the health sector, providing emergency care and treatment to survivors of sexual and physical violence. Early on, these services were hospital-based, and later developed into the establishment of one-stop centres in communities, providing social, medical and police services in one place to victims of sexual, emotional and physical abuse (Keesbury et al., 2012). VAW’s use of established “systems”, including the health care system and the legal system, has ensured a relatively effective combined approach of prevention. As a field, VAW advocates have worked to keep their rights agenda intact, while also strengthening the responsiveness of the medico-legal system (medical, police, justice systems) to hold accountable perpetrators and provide services to survivors. But challenges remain with the model, and many of these pit the adult (woman) against the child:

In the public health model, when you put the two together – women and children -- the women are the ones who drop out of the picture. For example, we had Maternal and Child Health, and we had
to fight to put the “M” back in; then we had PMPCT–why is only the woman responsible for transmitting this virus? And then Zika. (personal communication, Garcia Moreno)

By comparison, the public health approach in the field of VAC has advanced only recently. Leading this has been the CDC, contributing to the way that evidence on violence is collected and understood – as a population-based phenomenon – but not necessarily the way the problem is addressed. For the most part, VAC falls under the larger field of child protection, which is mostly aligned with the social welfare sector. Child protection systems have unique structures, functions, and capacities, and are typically assembled in relation to a set of child protection goals. A systems approach should address child protection more holistically, bringing greater focus on prevention and strengthening the critical roles and assets of the key actors responsible for child protection. Such key actors include government, civil society, parents, caregivers, families and other community structures; together, these actors provide formal and informal child protection mechanisms and services. The diversity of actors alone makes this system’s work challenging. Unlike the established health and legal systems used by VAW to address violence, in child protection,

[these systems have traditionally neither been the particular focus of child protection discourse nor that of child protection “practise” or action. Historically, analysis and programming in child protection have focused on issues. Among those that quickly come to mind are violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect, alternative care, justice for children, trafficking, child labour, and child separation (Wulczyn et al., 2010, Preface).

Increasingly, international organisations such as UNICEF, Save the Children, and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are turning to what is referred to as a “systems approach”, in order to establish and otherwise strengthen comprehensive child protection efforts. While there have been some successes in creating multi-sectoral systems, including addressing violence in the home, school, community, justice and health care sectors, this diffused approach often results in a fragmented child protection response, marked by numerous inefficiencies and pockets of unmet need (UNICEF, 2010).

Even so, VAC providers are adamant that “violence for children is not a health issue, it is a social welfare issue”. But social welfare systems with few resources and even less political clout may be a tenuous solution. This, combined with resistance to the integration of services – certainly at the management levels within agencies – can be strong. As one child right’s advocate voiced:

49 Anonymous interview November 2015.
Until VAC has an equivalent knowledge base, status and recognition then subsuming it under women is not going to work. If we continue to subsume the VAC work under women we will lose the importance of treating a child as a child and all the implicit protection that comes with that. We can acknowledge what women do to keep kids safe and stable, but the women’s movement needs to acknowledge that some women are not good caregivers.50

Perspectives can vary depending on history, training and experience.51 Interestingly, two of the most vocal respondents during our interviews were trained as social workers – one moved into international GBV humanitarian work (VAW), and the other into international child protection work (VAC). With combined hindsight, they agreed that in their respective countries (USA and the UK), social workers took on specialised roles, with separate interventions and activities underway. As the US social worker recalled from her days of social work practice:

It was looking at spousal abuse as well as child abuse. There were separate interventions and activities underway. So, these two were interlinked, because where there is one, there is usually the other.52

Typically in the field, certainly internationally, resources are scant and capacities to address complex issues of violence in the home or community are scarce. These lean conditions can create siloing, adding further tension where – as one veteran in the field noted – “the child protection actors don’t have the GBV experience and the GBV actors don’t have expertise working with children”.53 But these deficiencies may be more complicated symptoms of violence prevention writ large – and its inability, so far, to become a significant development issue:

If you want to have a community healthcare worker almost anywhere on the planet who could go and talk to women about family planning, honestly give me 15 minutes and I could probably find you thousands in almost every country, but if you want to find a community health care worker, or even a community legal aid person, or any sector, social work, who could go to talk to a

50 Anonymous interview November 2015.
51 Historically, in the US, the relationship between domestic violence service programmes and the child welfare system has been described as “difficult, at best”, with mistrust and noncooperation quite common (Findlater and Kelly 1999, 167). It is suggested that many child welfare workers believe that advocates for battered women are “exclusively woman-focused,” prioritising the welfare of battered mothers over their children, and that domestic violence programmes have not always adequately dealt with child maltreatment perpetrated by women (1999, 167). Advocates for battered women, on the other hand, are concerned that family preservation encourages women to stay with their abusers. Moreover, there is the concern over charges of failure to protect, whereby removing their children, or charging mothers with failing to protect their children from abuse, child protection services may revictimise battered women (Findlater and Kelly, 1999, 167; Magen, 1994, 127).
52 Anonymous interview November 2015.
53 Anonymous interview November 2015.
community about violence against women and children. . . People are not even learning about it in social work schools.54

While divisions remain, practical solutions need to be found. On the subject of a skilled workforce, Nigel Cantwell, who helped draft the Convention on the Rights of Children, sums it up in a pragmatic and positive manner:

Being competent is dealing with people. I don’t think we should say I am a specialist up to 18 and then adult specialist takes over at 19 – that will get us nowhere. Sure if you have a 2 year old then you need a specialist but over-specializing will not solve the issue. Learning to be competent will. Competency is actually at a human relations level.55

**When Practice is Political**

Globally, more recognition is now being given to the intersection between age and gender in violence response and prevention, with VAC actors calling for the incorporation of a gender lens (UNICEF, 2014b) and VAW actors calling for a life cycle approach (What works to Prevent VAW). A recent report on the connection between VAC and VAW recommended programmes and policies which address “violence against women and violence against children holistically and in a complimentary way” (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2015). However, a lack of research exists on the challenges which may arise from integrated efforts at a programmatic, advocacy, or policy level. Guedes and Mikton (2013) argue for an integrated framework addressing child maltreatment and interpersonal violence, citing the growing evidence that suggests that violence between women and children often occurs within the same household, and that exposure to violence as a child has been linked to experiencing or perpetrating violence later in life (Abramsky et al., 2011).

Some of the more recent forward thinking on how and why – in very practical terms – the fields of VAW and VAC can intersect are forwarded by Guedes et al. (forthcoming), who argue that there are six overarching areas that make the intersection feasible; these include shared risk factors, social norms that condone violence and support gender inequity, co-occurrence, intergenerational effects, common consequences, and a common interest in adolescents. These authors argue and acknowledge

Possible risks of collaboration associated with potential harm and competing interests, recognizing that there may be times and circumstances when there are valid reasons to address these forms of violence separately (p. 18).

54 Anonymous interview November 2015.
55 Nigel Cantwell, child rights consultant, interviewed March 17, 2016.
Intersectionality theory (see Crenshaw, 1994) positions age and gender as existing within a mutually constitutive system of disadvantage. VAW manifests in different forms throughout the lives of women; thus, girls, who sit at the juncture of youth and gender, may find that their experiences of gender violence are shaped by their youth, and vice-versa (Taefi, 2009). Indeed, some forms of VAW are age-specific; for example, girls in their infancy may be subject to female infanticide as well as abuse. During childhood, violence can include child marriage, female genital mutilation, child prostitution and pornography, as well as abuse (UNICEF, 2000). Other forms of violence may be influenced by age, such as dating and courtship violence and human trafficking; VAC may also overlap with VAW. Moreover, attitudes of paternalism and sexism may act to amplify and reinforce one another (Taefi, 2009).

Theoretically and practically, then, the adolescent child seems, as Guedes et al. (forthcoming) suggest, a viable point of intersection. Most proponents of VAC tend to agree:

Particularly in the developing world, adolescent girls are often the most marginalised and invisible segments of the population. Furthermore, adolescent girls are often invisible not only within societies and communities but also within development programs. Well-intentioned but poorly designed youth programs that do not specifically target disadvantaged adolescent girls can perpetuate unequal access to critical services and opportunities for improved health, education, and economic outcomes (Sewall-Menon et al., 2012).

Another VAC advocate argues similarly:

[Whether you are talking about women or whether you are talking about children, you are still not talking about the 10-14 year olds. . . if you want to prevent and respond to VAW, these are the interventions we need to invest in, and this is where we need to be building capacity, and if you want to prevent and respond to VAC it should be here.]

In an article entitled, Why Adolescent Health and Why Now?, Bhutta and Zlotkin (2014) make a compelling argument on numbers alone: there are almost 1.2 billion adolescents in the world, and almost 90 percent live in low- and middle-income countries. In addition to the sexual and reproductive health issues that girls face, including early marriages and subsequent or related early pregnancies, they note that the issues are not restricted to girls exclusively. Adolescent boys are

---

56 Feminist researchers have come to understand that the individual’s social location as reflected in intersecting identities must be at the forefront in any investigation of gender. In particular, gender must be understood in the context of power relations embedded in social identities.

57 Anonymous interview November 2015.
also greatly neglected in terms of their health – especially mental health – and are disproportionately forced into child labour. The risks of drug use and violence are also considerably higher among boys, and young people account for almost 40 percent of all new HIV infections. Most importantly, while studies may be few on the challenges adolescents face, most would agree that it is during adolescence that the consolidation of gender norms occurs, making this an opportune time for interventions that might prevent any future violence.

**The Girl in The Middle**

Not surprisingly, however, the adolescent girl in particular has become a domain of concern as well as contestation; as one interviewee stated, “The global fight is around the bodies of adolescent girls. This to me is astounding, and further justifies the most aggressive collaborations between CP and VAW, gender, all of us.” For many girls, the onset of puberty marks a time of heightened vulnerability – leaving school, child marriage, early pregnancy, HIV, sexual exploitation, coercion and violence. This nexus of transitions from girlhood to womanhood seems like an obvious intersection for programming, but this too is a highly contested space for VAW and VAC:

If you are 13 and pregnant, there are issues about a child’s development and not just a reproductive body. There is a lot of subsuming of children’s needs under women’s issues. Until VAC has an equivalent knowledge base, status and recognition then subsuming it under women is not going to work.

One advocate of child protection we interviewed took a more conciliatory position:

I think it leads to the rather lazy assumptions that we are variously making. It’s that “if you help women, you help children”–is their assumption [VAW]; and our sort of assumption is “if you interrupt violence against children, you are interrupting violence against women.” But both of these are untested assumptions. And in many ways they are wasted opportunities, because we must be missing opportunity for synergy, if nothing else.

Indeed, much of what is needed to address the issues of violence in the lives of adolescent girls – multi-sectoral coordination and support, services tailored to the developmental stage and specific circumstances of the girl, adequate funding, and a perspective rooted in gender equality and full rights – could lead to greater intersections and collaborations between the fields of VAW and VAC more broadly.

---

58 Anonymous interview November 2015.
60 Anonymous interview November 2015.
Conclusions

This paper has highlighted that there is a conceptual and historical disconnect between the fields of VAW and VAC. Though today, there is, within each field, a more contextual approach to programming, recognising that people’s lives are affected by local and global variables – including culture, climate, economic development and governance. However, this expanded conceptualisation has not changed basic policy or programming approaches for either children or women (Jensen, 2010).

Moreover, the perspective of some activists is still that to treat “women and children” together may “relegate women to the role of caretaker of the children and homemaker,” or that children should be placed at the forefront so that their entitlement to rights is recognised (Trodres, 2004), which may contribute to a belief by some that women’s rights and children’s rights should be addressed separately.

While historically VAC and VAW have developed along somewhat different rights perspectives, VAC and VAW do not exist in wholly independent spheres. There are very real links between the two, for example, women’s rights directly benefit girls, and the fact remains that in most countries, women tend to hold child-rearing responsibilities and as such, the subordination or promotion of women’s rights has the potential to indirectly affect their children (Trodres, 2004). Family violence is another example of the strong links that can exist between VAC and VAW (Naker, 2002).

It is not a reach to suggest, therefore, that forging connections between women’s rights and children’s rights thus can be beneficial for both movements (Trodres, 2004). A number of UN reports have similarly emphasised the importance of bridging the divide (see e.g. Jensen, 2010; Goonesekere and De Silva-de Alwis, 2005; UNICEF, 2015).

Perhaps an entry point for intersections is focussing on power dynamics as a commonality, rather than gender specifically – a recognition that where there is violence, there exist power hierarchies. In the end, violence against women and children is about their value, and the social structures that determine this. Both women’s and children’s fields grapple with issues of dependency and marginalisation—the effects, almost always, of power differentials. Moreover, as on VAC advocate reminds us, power reflects directly onto age and gender, which do not exist independently of each other, but can work in tandem:

At the most powerful end of the hierarchy are adult males who are socialised to assert their superiority as heads of families. Inevitably, this is often confused with infallibility and a lack of need for accountability.

This is not to ignore the differences between the two fields: children need to be protected, but have rights that go largely unrecognised, while women need agency, not necessarily protection, as well
as their rights which remain unfulfilled in many parts of the world. Understanding, too that power operates differently within the spheres of adults versus children is critical. For these reasons, considerably more joint conceptual work between the VAW and VA/C could potentially pave the way towards better understandings of how power operationalises in women’s and children’s lives.

As research, policy and practice move forward there remain many possibilities for bridging this divide. Naker (2002) lends insight into potential steps forwards for both women and children (italics added):

a) Challenging the unjust power distribution within the family (and society), a shared antecedent of a myriad of human rights abuses
b) Promoting equity in family (and work) relationships
c) Reconceptualising the adult-child and gender based power dynamics
d) Inspiring the communal will and practical mechanisms that support and sustain this new vision (p. 2).

Some of our interviewees also indicated ways in which the traditional bifurcation could be or has been overcome, providing possibilities for the future:

I think that there are a couple of organisations who do get it. They don’t necessarily even use the terms gender. They do look at how their services, interventions, programs, whatever they are doing are affecting women, men, boys, and girls, and they break it down in those ways and then consider how those different groups are being affected by what’s happening to them, in my case, displacement and trauma. And then build programs that are aimed at those individual needs. People can kind of jump on board when you talk about understanding beneficiary needs and when you talk about designing programs that address gaps and inefficiencies in meeting those needs.

TFG hosted this meeting in Swaziland, 180 people from 20 countries, and the number one recommendation, or at least in the top 3 or 4 from all country level ministry folks and civil society was that they hated the bifurcation, they found it challenging and really didn’t like it.

---

61 Women’s groups have often cautioned against the terminology of ‘women’s protection’, arguing that it promotes a view of women as vulnerable or inferior (UNICEF and UNFPA n.d.).


63 Anonymous interview November 2015.
You are less divided if you say we get everybody to agree this is a life-cycle issue, we all need more money, it’s not an either/or, we’re in it together and then when you start to think about where the priorities, where are the gap, then you start to parse things out a bit more.\textsuperscript{64}

We suggest that such a coalesced agenda can fortify action and magnify the outcomes achieved for all victims and survivors of violence – women, children, families and whole communities. Whilst there is global conceptualisation of where the line is drawn between children and adults, in practice, drawing a clear line between responding to VAW and VAC is potentially problematic. Though the two forms of violence are not identical in their causes and effects, this does not mean that the fields of VAW and VAC are wholly irreconcilable. Rather, the potential exists for the two fields to come together in combating violence. Importantly solving the problem of violence requires an enabling environment at every level of society for both adults and children.

A multi-dimensional approach can operate within each level of the model – e.g. at the macro level, including poverty reduction, health and social welfare, inclusive education systems, and laws and policies on violence) and between levels – in direct interventions with young people, alongside working with institutions and national level systems (Parkes, 2015).

\textsuperscript{64} Anonymous interview November 2015.
References


Brownlow, J. 1847. Memoranda; or, chronicles of the Foundling Hospital. London, UK: Sampson Low.


Know Violence in Childhood


Bureau of Statistics website:


_______, 2008. From invisible to indivisible: Promoting and protecting the right of the girl child to be free from violence. Retrieved from


_______, 2015. Harmful connections: Examining the relationship between violence against women and violence against children in the South Pacific. Retrieved from
http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Harmful_Connections(1).pdf


