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The global politics of the age–gender divide in violence against women and children

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ABSTRACT

Decades of collective and cumulative work by practitioners, activists and researchers have made violence prevention an important part of international development agendas. However, violence prevention and response work addressing women and children has historically been siloed. Those working at the intersection of violence against women (VaW) and violence against children (VaC) have wrestled with the age–gender divide. Addressing the historical and political influences that underpin this divide will likely enhance progress towards more integrated strategies. This paper examines the origins and development of this polarisation and potential strategies for a more coordinated and collaborative agenda. This paper draws on the insights gained from eleven (11) semi-structured interviews conducted with key violence prevention actors in VaW and VaC from across the globe, alongside relevant published literature. Informants were purposively sampled on the basis of their expertise in the field. Findings reveal key differences and tensions between the two fields, including in collection and use of research and evidence, core conceptual frameworks, and the development, funding and implementation of policy and practice. Potential opportunities for future synergies between the two fields are highlighted, particularly through a focus on the adolescent girl.

Background

Decades of collective work by practitioners, activists and researchers have rendered violence prevention an important part of international development agendas. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for 2030 reflects these advances with four SDG Targets (5.2, 5.3, 16.1 and 16.2) addressing Violence against Women (VaW) and Violence against Children (VaC) directly (Garcia-Moreno & Amin, 2016; Bontha & Kusuma, 2017). As a field, violence prevention and intervention has made significant strides, building a stronger evidence base and exposing otherwise hidden forms of violence. Violence is now widely recognised in numerous global conventions as a threat to human health and well-being, especially for women and children. Accordingly, global discourse is increasingly calling for greater convergence of VaW and VaC prevention to craft effective strategies for collaboration (Guedes et al., 2016; Fry & Elliott, 2017).

The co-occurrence of VaW and VaC, and the effects of intergenerational violence, are well documented (Renner & Slack, 2006; Herrenkohl et al., 2008; Thornberry et al., 2009). Recent global research reveals underlying social norms and risk factors that are common to both types of violence

(Namy et al., 2017; Kenny et al., 2019; Carlson et al., 2020). These commonalities include: social norms that condone violence, high levels of gender inequality, marital conflict, alcohol or drug abuse, economic stress, lack of responsive institutions, and weak legal sanctions. VaW and VaC also have similar and compounding negative health and social impacts (Guedes et al., 2016; Fulu et al., 2017). Although they share these commonalities, the fields of VaW and VaC have not evolved in unison, and researchers, donors and practitioners working for women and children have historically operated in siloes, and at times, even at cross-purposes (Jensen, 2010; Hanson & Patel, 2014; O'Leary et al., 2018). Those working at the intersection of VaW and VaC have wrestled with this divide, with increasing recognition of the need for strategic integration of programming and services while highlighting challenges and tensions in doing so (e.g. Beeman et al., 1999; Guedes & Mikton, 2013; Guedes et al., 2016; Kenny et al., 2019).

While both fields would agree that violence is generally linked to a series of inequalities that pit the vulnerable against the powerful, and that the violation of children's rights is ultimately linked to the status of women (UNICEF, 2008; Jensen, 2010), positions remain entrenched. Scholars have argued that the field of VaC has evolved without a thorough analysis of gender inequalities and power relationships (Horton, 2014; Houston, 2015). The focus on protection (as opposed to empowerment) tends to shift the lens towards interpersonal relationships within the family and community, rather than the larger macrostructures that might be influencing those relationships at the structural and institutional levels (see Kitzinger, 1990). However, more recent scholarship, led by partnerships of activists and researchers, is starting to explore VaC from a feminist perspective (Namy et al., 2017). This paper traces the origins and sources of this polarisation, especially in transnational spaces such as the United Nations, international development organisations and the humanitarian sector. Our research asks: how are the overarching objectives, systems and approaches of both fields similar or different? Can tensions be resolved for greater integration, and if so, how?

Methods

In order to understand the perceptions of violence prevention actors on the intersections of VaW and VaC, eleven (11) detailed semi-structured interviews were conducted with globally recognised long-standing experts with experience in the fields of VaW and VaC. These expert key informants ranged from high-level policy makers to activist practitioners. Participants were chosen purposively on the basis of a well-recognised substantial history as a researcher, policy maker and/or practitioner in the field of VaW and/or VaC. Irrespective of their principal field of expertise, key informants were selected for their capacity to talk about historical and practical developments across both the fields of VaW and VaC.

The interview focused on understanding participants' professional background and experience; historical perspectives on the rights movements (women's and/or children's) which have informed their professional focus on violence; understandings of key milestones that marked change or stagnation in the progression of the fields; understandings of the intersections of VaW or VaC in the context of participants' particular professional roles; and recommendations for future work in integrating the two fields. Individual interviews were conducted between November 2015 and March 2016 in person or via Skype, in India, Italy, Tanzania, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the United States. Interviews were independently coded and analysed thematically. All personal identifiers were removed to preserve interviewee anonymity in accordance with the study's ethics approval and participants' consent. Interviews were thematically coded and validated by at least two researchers independently of each other.

Results

The results focus on the challenges and tensions in development of the fields of VaW and VaC, explored through in-depth interviews with 11 key informants with long-standing experience of

both fields. We found that the emerging tensions coalesce around five key areas: research and evidence, conceptual frameworks, global funding and politics, practice and rights on the ground, and adolescence. Together, these provide an overview of some of the challenges and possible directions for future cooperation and integration.

Research and evidence

The VaW and VaC movements have followed different pathways towards recognition, yet informants agreed that strong research and data have catapulted both movements into the policy arena. Participants discussed several factors which facilitated the global VaW research agenda, underpinned by the World Health Organization Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women (Garcia Moreno et al., 2005), to coalesce into effective action, including its multi-disciplinary paradigm, the strong collaboration between researchers and on-the-ground activists, and, ultimately, what was described as the 'ethics of ownership'. Researchers and activists in the early days of VaW evidence collection, framed violence as a public health and women's health issue. The interdisciplinary collaboration between statisticians, physicians, social epidemiologists and activists was critical to shifting the political lever to sustain change. As one informant explained: 'Creating ownership from the beginning is so important. That is why our work was taking hold'.

Informants described the WHO study focusing on intimate partner violence as an international landmark for violence research, which effectively advanced the VaW agenda. As one informant noted, that study 'helped Tanzania recognise the impact of VaW in the nation'. Early epidemiological and action-oriented VaW research was an effective means to garner public and political support in actioning urgent law and policy reforms. As a result of these surveys, new interventions have been developed and evidence continues to mount on what works. Advances in the prevention of violence against women and girls owe thanks, in large part, to support by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls programme, investing an unprecedented £25 million over six years from 2013 to 2019 (Fulu 2014). Yet unanswered questions around scale, replicability and uptake, notably within governments, impedes progress (see Kerr-Wilson et al., 2020).

Key informants in this study indicated that empirical research on VaC, notably the *Violence against Children Surveys*, completed by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in collaboration with national governmental stakeholders worldwide, has also played a critical role in advancing public awareness and policy in the field of child maltreatment, although this effort is more recent than research on VaW. Informants acknowledged that the surveys' reception, due in part to the global public-private partnership 'Together for Girls', has been positive and that uptake of the research has been generally strong in 24 countries, enhancing awareness about the magnitude, nature and consequences of the problem, thus establishing strong foundations for VaC advocacy and country-specific National Action Plans. For example, one respondent reported that the survey has had important country-wide policy and programming results.

Many of the informants believed the success of the VaW surveys provided critical groundwork for what has since become a similar, although comparatively newer, field of science on VaC. Borrowing from VaW, the idea of inclusivity and a multi-sectoral reach was key to the establishment of the CDC surveys:

> Part of the reason for having a cross-sectoral government group was so that learning about protection and violence would be active … 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 Government involved.

Compared to early research on VaW, however, participants reflected that some countries have very slow uptake of the CDC's study depending on the survey results, the extent of consultation

and the multiple stakeholders' commitments. Numerous corrective measures have been taken over the years and the survey is now being adapted for the humanitarian setting. VaC actors acknowledged that the standardisation of research methods has been less straightforward than with VaW surveys, with complex ethical issues arising (Rumble et al., 2017). Further, one informant remarked, 'It would be fair to conclude that the VaC survey has evolved over the past 9–10 years, but slowly, with tense consultation and virtually none of this [consultation] with children'. For both areas of interest, there are many other important tools and models that collect violence-related variables (e.g. Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), the UN Multi-country study in Asia and the Pacific (UNMCS), the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), the International Violence Against Women Survey, the Demographic Health Surveys, and plenty of qualitative and theoretical studies, etc.). Overall, these have been relatively untapped for their analytical relevance to the intersections of VaW and VaC.

Conceptual frameworks

Informants remarked on the lack of a shared conceptual framework for understanding commonalities between the two fields: namely, what drives violence, and how to prevent and respond to it. An experienced frontline worker in the field of VaW shared her candid 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 navel-gazing about gender without deconstructing it for people and putting it in plain English.

Potential areas for conceptual integration were raised. One VaC practitioner confirmed that subscribing to the ecological framework permits natural linkages to be made between VaW and VaC:

> If we didn't see those connections, in some ways we would be completely blind in terms of our interventions. … 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.

The funding and politics 'from above'

Several informants commented that much joint VaC and VaW work goes uncontested at the field level. This level of cooperation was particularly notable among those with humanitarian experience, where emergency situations allow little time for political division. The real challenges, frontline workers independently and (strikingly) unanimously 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. Our counterparts [in the field] are good, but the directives they get from management are not as supportive. 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 – … I actually see most of the confusion at the level of the [United Nations].

Mandates 'from above' are often tied to funding, which is inevitably reliant on government priorities from the global north. According to one participant, 'The development community is often its own worst enemy, and the donors too'.

While it was recognised that funding has generally increased as violence achieves greater attention in public policy dialogue, informants across both fields discussed the dire need for additional support and more rigorous work on violence prevention. One informant, for example, remarked on the low proportion of funds allocated within the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for child protection and even less for its mandate on violence, compared to other, 'easier to resolve' children's issues.

The issue of funding was described by several informants as a 'tension' contributing to the age–gender divide. One VaW informant lamented over how 'easy' it is 'to rally people emotionally around the issue of VaC in a way that is much more difficult to rally around VaW'. This also related more broadly to concerns that women's issues would be subsumed by the focus on violence against

children, including blaming women victims of violence for failure to protect their children. Additional tensions were expressed by respondents around donors' emerging interests on violence prevention focused on men and boys as creating yet another division.

Practice – and rights – on the ground

Divergent perspectives were revealed in the practical approaches of VaW and VaC practitioners. Participants described how VaW advocates have worked to keep their rights agenda, public health, and empowerment approaches at the forefront of applied practice while also strengthening the responsiveness of relevant medical and justice agencies to provide services to survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. By contrast, VaC prevention largely falls under the banner of child protection driven by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. While VaC advocates for a multi-sectoral approach, the field has a strong tendency to focus on social welfare and protection, favouring a case-management or 'systems' approach to assisting individuals and families.

The logic and impetus for these different approaches were frequently expressed as a genuine concern that, in the face of integration, children's rights and interests might be lost to women's rights or vice versa. As one child right's advocate voiced:

> 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.

For VaW practitioners, there is the fear that the integration of services might further implicate women – as delinquent mothers or simply less worthy of assistance than their children. Despite tensions, a VaC practitioner hailing from years of feminist grassroots work, acknowledged the role of VaW in shaping current VaC policy and practice:

> The VaW space and attention actually enabled the VaC era to come into play … . 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 (Gender-Based Violence). … we'd still be too busy 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.

Perspectives varied depending on history, training and experience. Historically, in the U.S.A., the relationship between domestic violence service programs and the child welfare system was described as 'difficult, at best', with mistrust and noncooperation common. These same issues permeate international work on violence prevention, with the very real concerns that family preservation policies encourage women to stay with their abusers, or that women may be re-victimised through the removal of their children or being held accountable for failing to protect them.

Yet, as a U.S.-trained social worker now working in international GBV recalled from her early days of practice in the U.S.A., a combined response to VaC and VaW is possible:

> I had a job that was specifically looking at family violence. It was looking at spousal abuse as well as child abuse. [Although] there were separate interventions and activities underway … these two were interlinked, because where there is one, there is usually the other.

However, in her work internationally, she has seen more of a separation between VaW and VaC. Limited resources can create siloing, as this social worker noted, adding further tension where 'the child protection actors don't have the GBV experience and the GBV actors don't have expertise working with children.' But these deficiencies, she indicated, may reflect a general lack of investment in violence prevention and training for women or children:

> If you want 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 find you thousands in almost every country. But if you want to find a community worker … who could go to talk to a community about violence against women and children … [They're] not even learning about it in schools of social work.

Practical solutions towards more effective interventions must be found, participants shared, including strengthening workplace and relational competencies for VaW and VaC workers:

> Being competent is dealing with people. I don't think we should say I am a specialist up to 18 and then [an] 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.

Exploring opportunities for joint programming corroborate this position, Bacchus et al. (2017) review a small number of programmes (only six studies met the criteria) that largely focused on the home and parenting interventions. Similarly to informants' comments, the study concludes that improved 'coherence' between interpersonal violence and child maltreatment requires equal attention to the needs of women and children.

Opportunities for collaboration: The girl in the middle

Work with adolescent girls was identified as both an area of concern and a potential site for intersection in practical approaches between VaW and VaC. Participants highlighted that for many girls, the onset of puberty marks a time of heightened vulnerability – for leaving school, child marriage, early pregnancy, HIV, sexual exploitation, coercion and violence. However, some reflected that this too is a highly contested space:

> If you are 13 and pregnant, there are issues about a child's development, not just a reproductive body. There is a lot of subsuming of children's needs under women's issues. … subsuming . … is not going to work.

One child protection advocate took a more conciliatory position:

> I think it leads to the rather lazy assumptions that we are variously making - that [VaW] assumption 'if you help women, you help children; and [the VaC] assumption, "If you interrupt violence against children, you are interrupting violence against women".' But both of these are untested assumptions. And … wasted opportunities, because we must be missing opportunity for synergy, if nothing else.

Discussion

Informants' perspectives on shared (and divergent) experiences and approaches to VaW and VaC reflect both historical and existing tensions between the two fields. Informants suggested tensions at the practice level between VaW and VaC often come from upper levels of government, organisations and donors, and are ultimately rooted in divergent rights agendas and ideologies. For the field of VaW, gender and violence are understood to be rooted in hegemonic structures and the unequal power distribution between men and women, as reflected in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The response to recognising these inequities is fundamentally and simultaneously transforming social norms and power relations at both an individual/family and societal level. By comparison, VaC, informed by the field of child protection, aims to strengthen the social welfare system and its related services. Working with professionals across government and non-government, the practice tends to be assessment-based with reflection and collaborative solution building within client families and among a community-based referral system. VAC practice continues to draw largely on models from psychology and social work developed in the global north so tends to focus on individual characteristics and interpersonal relations, with less attention to how these are shaped by structural and contextual factors (Boyden & de Berry, 2004, p. xiii–xiv). There are some strong research and policy agendas addressing VAC but these are often removed from actual practice in the field and resolutely anchored in the now near universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC states that children should be protected through an entire range of rights: civil, political, economic-social-cultural and humanitarian. At its core is an explicit gender-neutral ethos, where girls and boys are treated equally (Cohen, 1997).

While scholars have recognised the 'absence of an explicit dialogue between children's rights and feminism' (Raitt, 2005, p. 11), feminist methods and ideals arguably underlie a large portion of children's rights discourse. Raitt (2005, p. 11) argues that:

> [M]any 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. … Two prominent examples of such strategies, informed by 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.

Differences aside, scientific evidence from both VaW and VaC have helped prioritise violence on national and international policy agendas, but in very different ways. Early research on VaW engaged both the women's movement and the scientific public health community, twinning advocacy with evidence (e.g. Zimmerman, 1995; Njovana & Watts, 1996; Ellsberg et al., 1999; Olsson et al., 2000). By contrast, VaC research – particularly the landmark CDC surveys – tends to be more agency- and researcher-led. In-country practices often include cross-ministerial and multi-sectoral bodies, and an effort for similar collaboration on the ground. Calls for children's voices to be heard through their greater participation in research on VaC also reflect a difference found in our data between the VaW and VaC research (Callaghan & Alexander, 2015). These different approaches reveal points of division: the former is anchored locally, with national researchers and activists using evidence to drive political change, while the latter is considerably more global agency-driven, with the CDC, UNICEF and more recently the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) harnessing the power of governments' highest level stakeholders and international non-government organisations.

Influencing research as well as practice, study participants emphasised the major divergence of conceptual frameworks and ideologies between the fields of VaW and VaC. At the intersection of these approaches to violence are gender and power. Gender (and, ultimately, its social expression in terms of power) becomes, as we argue below, the defining and yet dividing principle in the way that VaW and VaC are interpreted conceptually, politically and practically.

The now dominant paradigm that informs both fields of violence prevention, for women and for children, is the socio-ecological model. The model was first advanced by a child psychologist to describe the overlapping impact that different settings and sources of socialisation – home, family, work, school, community – had on child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This framework is context dependent, allows for complexity and can account for multiple interacting variables moving in multiple directions.

For VaW, the model is informed by a complex array of interconnected factors across the individual, inter-relationship, community, and macro-social levels (Heise 2011; Heise & Kotsadam, 2015). Reinterpreting Bronfenbrenner, Heise (1998) used the model to explain the etiology of violence against women revealing that the biological, social, cultural and economic factors and norms at each layer that may increase men's risk of perpetrating violence and a woman's risk of experiencing it. Reflecting the dominant discourse in the field of VAW where gender inequality is a structural determinant of violence, Fulu and Meidema (2015) later added to the model to demonstrate the power of globalisation and its effect on women's lived experiences of IPV.

The VaC field also refers to the socio-ecological model but mainly to address risk and protective factors for violence (World Health Organization, 2002). Internationally, the work of violence, abuse and neglect is nested, as noted, within the child protection system – the laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors to address VAC. While larger societal forces are recognised as contributing to violence, solutions focus on the family and in the community where risk factors are identified and subsequently addressed through prevention or support services. Often the expectation is that, in order to protect children, policy-makers will develop interventions at each layer (Hart, 2008). But, paying attention to single layers, as distinct arenas, means that in

many cases, the interconnections, interdependencies and bi directionality between layers are over-looked (Maternowska & Fry, 2018).

Addressing these very interconnections and interdependencies may be the most effective solution forward. Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991) positions age and gender, among other dimensions of difference, as existing within a mutually constitutive system of disadvantage. 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 (Etherington & Baker, 2018). 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; Jung et al., 2019). Indeed, some forms of VaW are age-specific; for example, female infanticide, child marriage, female genital mutilation, child prostitution and pornography (UNICEF, 2000).

In recent years, the adolescent girl has become a domain of concern as well as debate (Ellsberg et al., 2017) and was a recurring theme raised by informants as a strong site of intersection between VaW and VaC (Fulu et al., 2017). Bhutta and Zlotkin (2014) make a compelling argument on numbers alone: there are almost 1.2 billion adolescents in the world, and almost 90% live in low- and middle-income countries. Fulu et al. (2017) also point to evidence indicating that the perpetration of non-partner sexual violence usually begins in adolescence, and that adolescent marriage and child-bearing are risk factors for both intimate partner violence and child maltreatment. Most studies agree that it is during adolescence that the consolidation of gender norms occurs, making this an opportune time for interventions. Indeed, much of what is needed to address the issues of violence in the lives of adolescents – 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.

Guedes et al. (2016) identify six overarching areas that make the intersection of VaW and VaC programming 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 (see also Fulu et al., 2017, pp. 1–2). Both fields of practice now have established frameworks for action. For VAC the *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies to End Violence Against Children* technical package has gained considerable momentum worldwide, with its seven evidence-based strategies alongside guidance on implementation and indicators. From the VAW sector, the recently produced *RESPECT women: preventing violence against women*, a framework aimed primarily at policy-makers sets out to do the same with a set of, and in many cases similar, action-oriented steps that enables policy-makers and health implementers to design, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate interventions and programmes.

Aligned, the action frameworks could offer joint solutions. Notably the RESPECT framework could bring a much needed gendered perspective to INSPIRE, while also acknowledging, as Guedes notes, that 'there may be valid reasons to work independently in some circumstances' (2016, p. 10). Further, better alignment of the frameworks would tackle, more efficiently, persistent challenges of adaptation and scale-up.

A 2015 report on the connection between VaC and VaW recommended programs and policies which address 'violence against women and violence against children holistically and in a complimentary way' (UNICEF & UNFPA, 2015, p. 22). Within the last decade there has been encouraging recognition of the intersection between age and gender in violence response and prevention with VaC actors calling for the incorporation of a gender lens (UNICEF, 2014) and VaW actors calling for a life cycle approach (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). However, challenges are likely to remain, with perceptions and practice anchored around differing definitions of gender (and power) and dearth of evidence on age–gender intersectionality. To boot, a stubbornly consistent problem is that VaW and VaC programming receives significantly less funding than programs addressing other issues facing women and children (Garcia-Moreno & Watts, 2011; Equality Institute, 2019). Drawing connections

between these two fields should in no way underemphasise, especially for funders and policy makers, the individual importance and distinct needs of women and children separately.

Like all research, this study has limitations that may have affected the findings. Despite attempts to gain a purposive sample of informants from multiple regions, the sample size is relatively small and selective. As a small qualitative study, the goal of the research is not to be representative of all actors working in the fields of VaW and VaC but to gain a deeper perspective from a selective informed group of individuals. Although the same themes were explored across all the interviews, the use of multiple interviewers, themselves working in these fields, may have resulted in some inconsistencies or bias. However, despite these limitations, the subject of the inquiry is nevertheless an important step towards continuing discourse, suggesting further exploration, and, importantly, more pragmatic and less divisive solutions towards addressing violence.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the historical, political, conceptual and ideological disconnects between the fields of VaW and VaC. Increasingly, researchers and practitioners recognise that context matters, acknowledging that people's lives are affected by local and global factors. The inability to reconcile differences – in theory or practice – is largely rooted in the rights agendas for both women and children (Langenderfer-Magruder et al., 2019).

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 & Patel, 2014, p. 4; citing Magen et al., 2000). Without a more collective or integrated approach, the two fields are likely to remain anchored in divisive rhetorical positions around rights: the protection of the child in the context of their developing capacities and relationships, *versus* the rights of women, writ large, accompanied by significant structural change.

VaW and VaC do not exist in wholly independent spheres. Forging connections between women's and children's rights would benefit both movements, potentially by focusing on power dynamics as a commonality – that is, acknowledging that where there is violence, there are power hierarchies and imbalances. Ultimately, eliminating violence against women and children is about recognising their value. 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, and have rights that remain unfulfilled in many parts of the world. While change will be slow, promising practices can overcome these historical and political positions.

Recommendations

To overcome the global politics of the age–gender divide, build a coalesced agenda to fortify action and magnify the outcomes for all victims and survivors of violence, we suggest further analysis and action as important and immediate both in policy and practice:

1. **Development of more synergistic conceptual model(s)**: Violence always takes place in the context of gender/age and intergenerational relationships structured by power. Building a conceptual framework for VaC that builds on the structural inequalities that give rise to violence would create, at the very least, a common policy and practice platform to ensure that gender inequality is addressed. In this way, the important links between women's gendered identities (as mothers and spouses) and violence in the family could be understood in relation to children's exposure and experience of violence in the same setting.
2. **Application of the life cycle**: We must pay attention to a complex range of behaviours, normative models of social relations and intersecting inequalities that affect humans from birth through to the end stages of life attending to the use and effect of violence.

3. **Aligning the INSPIRE and RESPECT frameworks for action**: Where alignment makes sense, evidence-based strategies from one framework should inform the other to address multiple risk factors, recognising that multicomponent interventions or synchronised strategies are more likely to reduce violence.
4. **Continued and joint rigorous research**: The field of violence prevention and response would benefit from testing new models of delivery that might respond to the different and overlapping needs of women and children. Real-time results could immediately feed into better programming. When joint research endeavours are not possible or desirable, evaluation or intervention studies focused on either VaW or VaC could include measures to determine the indirect impact on children/women from the same family, household, or community.
5. **Cross-cutting professional training**: Given the typically separate training and professional development of VaC and VaW field workers, more opportunities are needed for VaC actors to gain competencies in VaW gender inequality and for VaW actors to gain competencies in VaC and child development. Interventions addressing the intersections would afford that opportunity.
6. **Improved donor advocacy for increased joint (and overall) financing**: Joint funding mechanisms might yield more innovation and results to stimulate pathways towards greater convergence in the fields of VaW and VaC. However, joint funding initiatives should be carefully considered so as to not detract from areas of separate and different need.

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