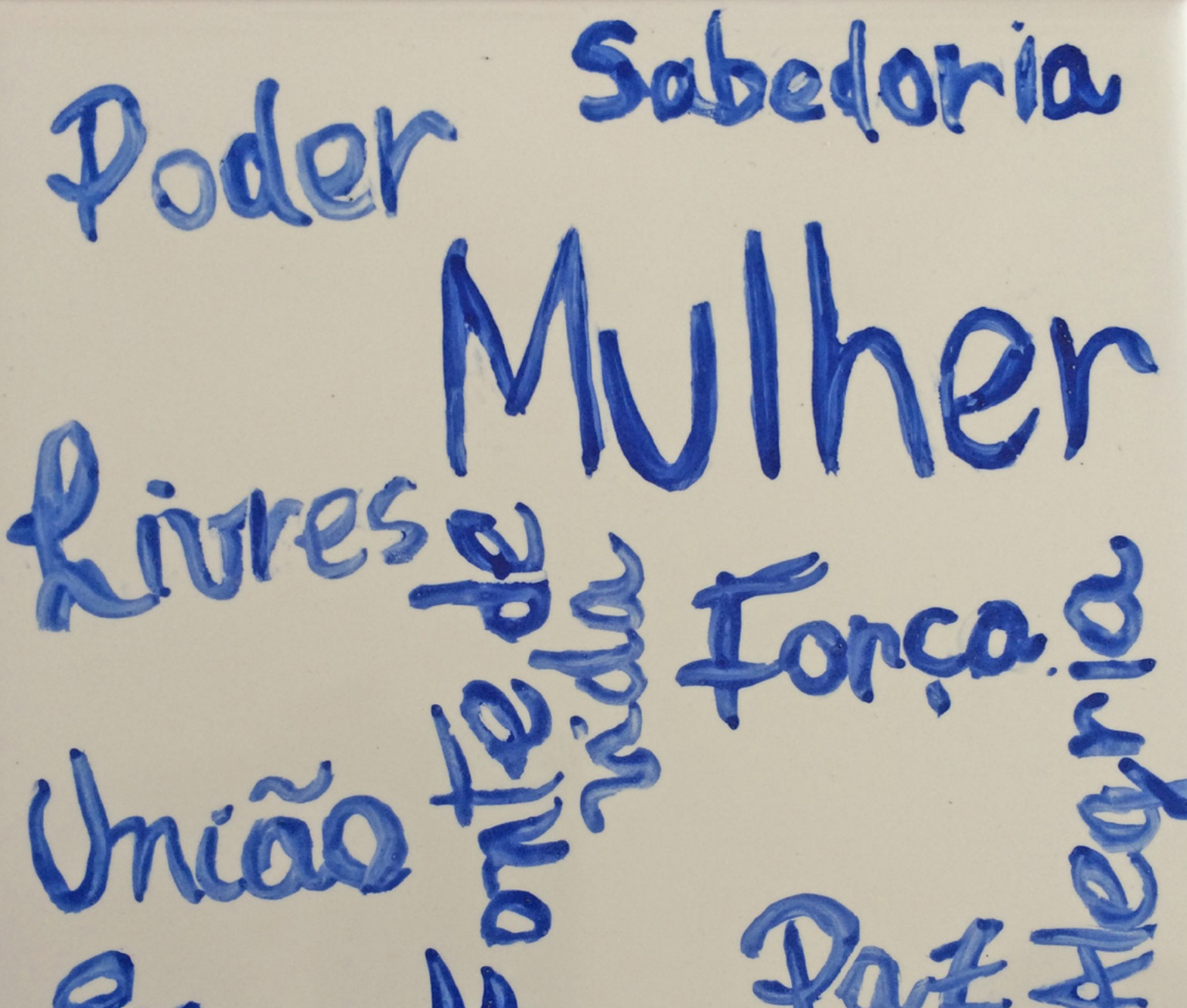


Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG): a spectrum approach

Yara Evans and Cathy McIlwaine July 2016

School of Geography, Queen Mary University of London



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Working Paper 1 Healthy, Secure and Gender Just Cities: Transnational Perspectives on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Rio de Janeiro and London

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG): a spectrum approach¹

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Introduction

This paper briefly reviews the meanings and modes of violence against women and girls (VAWG) with a view to deriving a conceptual definition that will orient the research work for the project *Transnational Perspectives on VAWG in Rio de Janeiro and London*. A related aim is to identify the variety of forms of VAWG that may more directly capture the experiences of women in Rio de Janeiro and of Brazilian women in London. The paper begins by outlining the wider concept of gender-based violence (GBV) and then moves on to focus on VAWG, introducing key meanings and forms as well as groups of women at greatest risk that are relevant to the context of Brazilian women in London. The paper concludes by proposing that the various modes and forms of VAW identified be seen as constituents of a broad spectrum that will allow for capturing more effectively the nuances and specificities of violence experienced by women in different contexts and locations.

Gender-based Violence (GBV)

While definitions of violence are themselves heavily contested, they usually refer to the imposition of force and/or power that causes hurt to others. The primary motivating reason behind perpetration, either conscious or unconscious, is the gain and maintenance of political, economic or social power (Moser and McIlwaine 2006). All violence is gendered although GBV is distinguished where the gender of the victim of violence is directly related to the motive for the violence. Although GBV is often used interchangeably with VAWG to highlight the fact that most violence is inflicted by men on women and girls, the use of GBV places the phenomenon of violence in the wider canvas of power relations. GBV thus expresses power inequalities between women and men and refers both to violence against women and violence against men (EIGE 2016). A more specific definition that focuses on violence against women is, for instance, gender-based violence against women, which refers to ‘violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately’ (CEC 2011:3). It should also be pointed out that some argue that using the term GBV rather than VAW de-politicises it and diverts attention from the reality that women and girls suffer disproportionately from violence at the hands of men (McIlwaine 2014).

Violence Against Women (VAW) [and Girls (VAWG)]

The benchmark definition of VAW and, thus, most widely used in research and policy is that found in Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women (UN 1993), which refers to ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is

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likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life'. Article 2 continues that it may occur in the 'family, community, perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs' and may refer to assault, sexual abuse, rape, female genital mutilation and other 'traditional' practices, as well as sexual harassment, trafficking in women, and forced prostitution' (UN 1993)ⁱ Central to these definitions is that VAW occurs not only in the private sphere thus challenging its invisibility and its associated impunity.

VAWG is now said to constitute a global pandemic, a human rights violation, a major public health risk as well as an insidious form of gender discrimination (UNFPA 2013). As noted above, it occurs across the public and private spheres, and although specific forms are most prevalent (i.e. IPV and NPSA; see Table 1), they affect women of all social strata around the world (UN 2013; UN WOMEN 2014; UN WOMEN 2015c). The endemic nature of VAWG is reflected in the fact that 35% of women globally having experienced either physical or sexual intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence. A high proportion of this violence is fatal with 38% of all murders of women committed by intimate partners (WHO, 2013: 2). Despite such prevalence, it is also acknowledged that VAWG is under-reported, with Palermo *et al* (2014) stating that only 7% of women worldwide report to a formal source such as the police and/or some other judicial entity (McIlwaine, 2016 for discussion).

The growth and evolution of research on VAWG over the last two decades has entailed the recognition of a variety of forms and configurations of violence. Hence, according to Garcia-Moreno *et al* (2005: 13), one of the key challenges for researchers is that of developing 'clear operational definitions of different types of violence and tools for measuring violence that permit meaningful comparisons among diverse settings'. Table 1 exemplifies the great variety of extant definitions of forms of violence directed at women and girls.

Table 1 - Definitions of Forms of Violence Directed at Women and Girls

<i>term</i>	<i>source</i>	<i>definition</i>
Domestic Violence	Garcia-Moreno et al (2005) UN (2013:10)	Not a precise term and could include child abuse, IPV and abuse of the elderly; IPV more often used Any behaviour by a man or a woman, or a boy or a girl, within an intimate relationship, that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to the other person in the relationship; the most common form of VAW (WHO and LSHTM, 2010); sometimes referred to as 'domestic violence' or 'family violence', which also encompass violence by and against other family members
Intimate Partner	Heise and Garcia-Moreno (2002); UN	Behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, by former and

Violence (IPV)	(2010); WHO/PAHO (2012)	<p>current spouse/partner(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ acts of physical aggression (slapping, hitting, kicking, beating) ➤ sexual violence (forced sexual intercourse and other sexual coercion) ➤ emotional/psychological abuse (insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation, threats of harm, threats to take children away) ➤ controlling behaviours (isolating a person from family and friends; monitoring their movements; restricting access to financial resources, employment, education or medical care)
Physical Violence	Hindi, Kishor and Ansara (2008)	Pushing, shaking, slapping, throwing things at person, arm twisting, punching with the fist or something else that can hurt, kicking, dragging, strangling, burning and threatening and/ or attacking with a knife, gun or other type of weapon
Sexual Violence (SV)	Hindi, Kishor and Ansara (2008) Jewkes, Sen and Garcia-Moreno (2002); WHO (2010); UN WOMEN (2015c)	<p>Physically forcing a person to have sexual intercourse or perform other sexual acts</p> <p>Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or other directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting including but not limited to home and work; includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ rape (within marriage and relationships, by strangers, and during armed conflicts) ➤ unwanted sexual advances/sexual harassment (including demanding sex in return for favours) ➤ sexual abuse of children ➤ forced marriage or cohabitation (Including child marriage)
Human Trafficking	UN (2000)	Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation
Trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation	Watts and Zimmerman (2002); Niemi (2016), after UN (2000)	<p>Aims at the exploitation of persons in prostitution, forced labour and the removal and trade of organs, entailing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ use or threat of force, other coercion, or abduction ➤ use of fraud or deception ➤ abuse of power of the victim's vulnerable position

-
- giving or receiving payments from a person who has control over the victim
-

In addition to these types of violence, VAW has also been characterised according to both type of violence and the context of its occurrence, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 - VAWG: types and contexts

1. Physical, Sexual, Psychological Violence

<i>in the family</i>	<i>In the wider community</i>	<i>by the state</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • battering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rape 	perpetrated and condoned by the state wherever it occurs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual abuse of female children in the household 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual abuse 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dowry-related violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual harassment, stalking, intimidation, exploitation • at work • in educational institutions • elsewhere 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • marital rape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trafficking in women 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • female genital mutilation: procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forced prostitution 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • other traditional practices harmful to women 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-spousal violence 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • violence related to exploitation 		

2. Other acts of violence

- violation of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict, in particular
 - murder
 - systematic rape
 - sexual slavery
 - forced pregnancy
- forced pregnancy, forced sterilization and forced abortion
- coercive/ forced use of contraceptives
- prenatal sex selection
- sorcery/witchcraft-related violence
- gender-related killings/femicide/feminicide; female infanticide; ‘honour crimes’

Source: UN WOMEN (2015a; 2015b, 2015c).

A further characterisation of VAW according to type is that provided by the EU Council, which identifies violence as direct and indirect, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 - Direct and Indirect VAW

<i>Direct</i>	Includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence <i>Psychological violence</i> includes threats, humiliation, mocking and controlling behaviours <i>Economic violence</i> involves denying access of the victim to financial resources, property, healthcare, education or the labour market, and denying them participation in economic decision-making
Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ violence in close relationships ➤ sexual violence (including rape, sexual assault and harassment in all public and private spheres of life) ➤ trafficking in human beings, slavery, and sexual exploitation ➤ harmful practices such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child and forced marriages • female genital mutilation • crimes committed in the name of so-called ‘honour’ ➤ emerging forms of violations, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online harassment • various forms of sexual abuse instigated or facilitated through use of ICT • stalking • bullying
<i>Indirect</i>	Structural violence characterised by norms, attitudes and stereotypes around gender in general and against women in particular
Forms	Any form of structural inequality or institutional discrimination that maintains a woman in a subordinate position, whether physical or ideological, to other people within her family, household and community

Source: EIGE (2016; based on UN 2011).

In addition to these various forms of VAW, specific groups of women have been identified as being particularly at risk of experiencing violence, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – Groups of Women Particularly Vulnerable to or Disproportionately Affected by VAW

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • displaced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elderly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • female children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from indigenous communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from minority ethnic communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in communities where there have been rapid changes in women’s status and power (e.g. women’s participation in paid work has increased as a consequence of changing economic arrangements or a result of migration)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • irregular migrant workers/domestic workers

- lesbian, bisexual or transgender or intersex women

- living in institutions or in detention

- living in poverty; destitute

- living in rural and remote communities

- living with HIV

- migrants

- refugees or asylum-seekers

- repatriated

- prostitutes/ sex workers

- with disabilities

- women in situations of armed conflict, foreign occupation, wars of aggression, civil wars, terrorism (including hostage-taking)

Source: Watts and Zimmerman (2002); UN WOMEN (2015a, b).

Of the groups of women that are generally seen to be most at risk of VAWG, as shown in Table 4, a number of groups may be particularly relevant in the context of Brazilian women in London, as evidence from research on Latin American women in London (McIlwaine 2010; McIlwaine and Carlisle 2011) and elsewhere suggests (Perilla 2009; Menjívar and Salcido, 2002; Raj and Silverman 2002; Erez, Adelman, and Gregory 2009; O’Neal and Beckman, 2016). These groups are, namely, migrants, irregular migrant workers, and sex workers and in each case a range of factors condition their susceptibility to violence, including, for instance, limited or no knowledge of the English language, limited or no knowledge of local laws, limited or no access to support services, and irregular immigration status (Salcido and Adelman 2004; Hazen and Soriano 2007; Mai 2009; Vidales 2010; Reina, Lohman and Maldonado 2014; Pitts 2014).

The case of sex workers may also merit closer attention, in light of the debate about violence in the context of sex work, which relates to the distinction between forced and voluntary prostitution that followed from UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (UN 1993). The distinction is said to have ‘deeply divided feminists’ (Nieme 2016) and the debated has raged on about the extent to which engaging in sex commerce, on-street or off-street, whether freely or under coercion, places women at greater risk of violent victimisation and whether criminalisation of the activity can help prevent or reduce such risk (Musheno and Seeley 1987; Pateman 1988; Lucas 1995; Doezema 1998; O’Neil 2003; Monto 2004; Weitzer 2007; Sullivan, Schroeder, Dudley, and Dixon 2010; Matthews 2015; Nieme 2016).

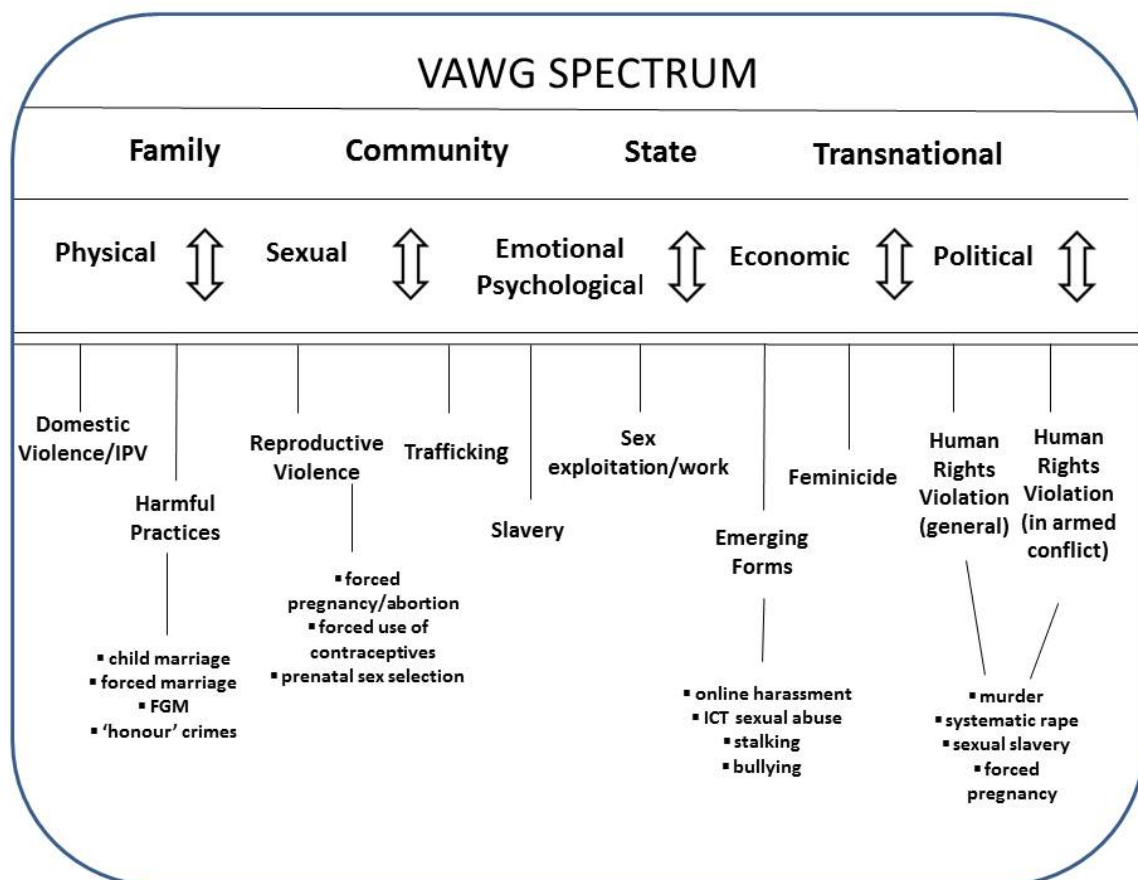
As Thaller and Cimino (2016) have recently noted, IPV and sex work have been generally treated as mutually exclusive phenomena, although they highlight research that has eschewed such artificial divides (e.g. Dunlap *et al* 2002; Benoit *et al* 2013; Jiwatram-Negron & El-Bassel, 2015). However, they argue that IPV and sex work should be treated as GBV,

and advocate ‘a more systemic approach...that aligns with the UN’s mandate to eliminate all forms of violence against women and acknowledges that this violence is often used to exploit women’s physical, emotional and sexual labor’ (Thaller and Cimino 2016:2). In addition, the cross-border movement of Brazilian women into the UK/London raises further issues about the transposition and/or adaptation of cultural practices that play a role on VAW on a transnational context (McIlwaine 2010; McIlwaine and Carlisle 2011), along with the role of the state in addressing and regulating VAW at the supra-national and transnational contexts which, as Abraham and Tastsoglou (2016) argue, can be both as an agent of justice, and as an instrument of oppression.

VAWG: a spectrum

As the previous sections have shown, there is considerable overlap between definitions, types and forms of VAW, as well as complementarities. The concept of VAW by the UN is widely used, but VAWG may be more usefully understood as comprising a spectrum of modes of violence that helps capture the subtleties and nuances of the violence experienced by women and girls in different contexts and locations. Figure 1 illustrates the spectrum.

Figure 1



As Figure 1 shows, the VAW spectrum comprises a number of layers that may interrelate in multiple directions. The first layer refers to the context of VAW involving both scale and

perpetrators (family, community, state, and transnational). The second layer refers to the main types of violence (physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, economic, and political). The third and final layer contains various forms of violence (some with specific examples), which may relate to more than one type of violence in the previous layer. In addition, each form of violence may overlap or complement other forms. The spectrum may thus be used to help examine specific cases of VAW in specific locations, such as, for instance, the case of Brazilian migrant women in London, as well as the case of resident women in the *Complexo da Maré* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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