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It's not just about changing a law; it's about changing minds

A Minor Field Study on Primary Prevention of

Violence against Women and Girls in a local Argentinian context

Master Thesis in Social Work
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Abstract

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Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a serious human rights issue that demands
urgent action. Current standard practices increasingly focus on primary prevention; that
is, to prevent violence before it occurs. The aim of this study was to enhance the
knowledge on VAWG primary prevention within the social work field in a local
Argentinian context - Lanús Municipality - through the model of prevention theory. It
also sought to explore the understanding of primary prevention and the causes of VAWG.
Following a qualitative research strategy, seven semi-structured interviews were
conducted with professionals engaged within VAWG prevention. The study found that
the content, entry-point and scope of programs vary, although the common thread is the
ambition to address unequal power dynamics and achieve a social change. Most programs
use a selective targeted approach, which is almost exclusively directed toward women,
and focus on empowerment, raising awareness and engaging the community. The
findings also revealed the difficulty in separating preventive and responsive programs
within social work practice. Based on the analysis of these results, it is concluded that the
multiplicity of prevention practices corresponds with the view on VAWG as a
multifaceted issue. Another main conclusion is that social work practices risk reinforcing
inequalities through language use and problematizations made within their programs.

Key Words: Prevention, Preventing Violence Against Women, Primary Prevention,
Gender-Based Violence, Argentina, Lanús

Acknowledgements

During the field work in Argentina, I was talking in Spanish, writing in English and thinking in Swedish. Needless to say, it was not always easy. I would like to express my gratitude toward all the people who offered their support during the process of writing this Master's thesis. Without you, this would never have been possible.

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Abbreviations, figures and maps

Abbreviations

CNM	Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres
	(*'The National Council of Women'*)
CSJN	Corte Suprema de Justicia de la Nación Argentina
	(*'Supreme Court of Argentina'*)
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
DV	Domestic Violence
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
INDEC	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos
	(*'National Statistics and Census Institute'*)
INAM	Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres
	(*'National Institute of Women'*)
NBI	Necesidades Basicas Insatisfechas
	(*'Unsatisfied Basic Needs')*
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
SEM	Social-Ecological Model
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls
WHO	World Health Organization
UN	The United Nations

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Key concepts

Violence against women and girls (VAWG)

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (1993, article 1), defines violence against women as:

> 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.

With the ambition to emphasize that women of all ages can be subject to violence, the term *violence against women and girls* and its abbreviation (VAWG) will be applied in this study. The term gender-based violence (GBV), which is defined as "violence directed against a person on the basis of its gender" (EIGE n.d.), is an umbrella term that includes all types of gender-based violence, including violence against women, girls, men, boys, sexual minorities or those with gender-nonconforming identities. Since VAWG compromises the vast majority of these victims, the terms VAW and GBV are often used interchangeably. Keeping the distinction between these terms in mind, GBV will also be applied in this thesis. Terms such as *Intimate Partner Violence* and *Domestic Violence* will be avoided, as the ambition is to refer to the full range of abuses of women and girls, and not only those taking place in domestic areas or between partners. These terms will only be used when referring to reports and articles in which they appear.

Femicide

The term *femicide* was coined in 1970's by the feminist writer and professor Diana Russell as an alternative to the gender-neutral term 'homicide', with the purpose of visualizing the multiple forms of VAW that in the most extreme form culminates in death (UN 2018). There is still no official and widely agreed-upon definition of the term. However, in this thesis, the term femicide will be used in accordance with Russel's latest definition; "the killing of females by males because they are females" (Russel 2011 n.p.).

Primary prevention

In general terms, *primary prevention* is understood as the ambition to prevent a problem before it occurs. Thus, primary prevention focuses on the underlying causes of an issue, rather than its consequences (Chamberlain 2008).

1. Introduction

It is well known that women worldwide are subjected to multiple forms of discrimination, violence and abuse. A report on world estimates on violence, made by WHO in 2013, reveals that 1 in 3 women have at one or several points in their life experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence. Thus, violence against women and girls (hereinafter VAWG) continues to be a global health problem of epidemic proportions (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2013). Furthermore, as emphasized by Wilson (2014), VAWG occurs everywhere - that is, in both developed and developing countries and regardless of the religion, economy or political ideology.

However, WHO's multi-country report also determines that the prevalence of violence varies among countries. For instance, while the world's high-income regions[1] had an IVP prevalence of 23%, the Latin America and the Caribbean region (hereinafter LAC) had an IVP rate of 29,8%. Based on these figures, the LAC region ranks second in the prevalence of IVP on a global scale (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2015). However, the high levels of violence in the LAC region stand in stark contrast to the last decade's great advances related to gender equality (UN Women 2018). Moreover, scholars and international organizations consider the region one of the leaders in terms of efforts aimed at preventing and ending all forms of VAWG (Chioda 2017; Gherardi 2016)

The LAC region has been described as the most violent region in the world. Accordingly, while the region only accounts for 8% of the world's population, more than 35% of all the homicides in the world occur here (Chioda 2017). The continuing high rates of violence in the region can, according to Mooser and Clark (2001) be traced back to historical factors; that is, both in the colonial era and contemporary history, which in many of these countries have been characterized by civil wars, dictatorships and economic crisis. In addition, just like in most parts of the world, many LA countries still suffer from inequality in terms of income distributions, gender discrimination and inequality related to ethnicity (Pearce 2018).

Meanwhile, in the last decades, the LAC region has been an important region in terms of violence reduction and peace-building. In fact, according to Chioda (2017), the high rates of violence contrast starkly with the region's social progress in recent years, in which many countries have taken considerable steps toward social equity and

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[1] The list of the countries categorized as *high-income countries* is available in Garcia-Moreno et al. (2013).

accomplished substantial poverty reductions. Accordingly, UN Women claims that most of these countries have undergone significant social, economic and environmental changes in the last decade (Essayag 2017). These efforts are also reflected in the countries' work to prevent VAWG. As a matter of fact, Gherardi (2016) argues that the LAC region is "perhaps the one that has advanced the most in creating national regulatory frameworks to address violence against women" (p. 130). Accordingly, since the redemocratization process in the LAC region began, new laws on VAWG have increasingly been institutionalized (Roggeband 2016). Rodríguez and Madera (2018) explain that the region first went through a phase during which laws addressing domestic violence were passed. However, most countries have since then also adopted comprehensible legislation on VAWG with a multidimensional approach.

Still, improvements have not only been made in terms of laws and regulatory frameworks, but also in the area of social awareness of VAWG; that is, of its complexity, scope and the need to act (Gherardi 2016). The most recent and probably most widespread social campaign against VAWG in the region was initiated in Argentina. On June 3, 2015, hundreds of thousands of Argentinians marched the streets of Buenos Aires under the slogan *Ni Una Menos* ('Not One Less'[2]), demanding an end to the growing incidents of VAWG. The protest was triggered by the brutal murder of a 14-year-old girl, which at the time was the latest in a long series of femicides in Argentina. Since that day, the movement has transcended the country's borders and spread across the LAC region. While *Ni Una Menos* was not a solution in itself, it has been claimed that the protest did contribute to the visibility of VAWG in Argentina, and encouraged people, organizations and authorities to participate in efforts to prevent it (Castro 2018; Gherardi 2017).

Argentina has, like many other Latin American countries, experienced periods of dictatorship and political unrest. During the military dictatorship (1976-1983) in Argentina, the population suffered repression, violence, persecutions, torture, disappearances of people and manipulation of information. According to Bacci et al. (2012), more than 30% of these victims were women. Jelin (1990) further explains how many activist women who participated in social movements as a response to the violations of human rights became specific targets of military repression and violence, along with other female activists or suspected activists (Leslie 2001; Wilson 2014). Álvarez (2015) describes how most of the women abducted were, because of their status as women,

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[2] Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Spanish to English in this thesis are the author's own.

subjected to specific forms of violence. Rape and torture, in particular, were common forms of gender-related violence used by the military (Leslie 2001; Wilson 2014). Moreover, Hollander (1996) argues that the military's violence against women during the dictatorship resulted in a legitimation of VAWG in society, causing an increase in violence and rape, especially in domestic areas.

When democracy was reestablished in Argentina in 1986, it did not mean that women's rights were automatically reinstated. In fact, according to Luengo (2018), most of the practices of gender-related violence during the dictatorship were made invisible to research, which means that Argentinian women continued to suffer from inequality, discrimination and violence. Thus, in the post dictatorship period, women's movements, such as The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo[3], joined in the cause of human rights within a democratic state. Since then, a range of women's organizations in Argentina has continued their work to promote gender equality and ensure women's right to a life without violence. It is often argued that the implementation of the country's first law on domestic violence in 1994, the *Protection from Family Violence Law[4]*, was due to these efforts. Furthermore, in 2009, the *Comprehensive Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Elimination of Violence against Women in their Interpersonal Relations[5]* was enacted. This law includes many forms of violence that were not present in the former law and was thus considered an important advance in Argentina (Gherardi 2017).

Today, the debate on VAWG is present in the daily life of the Argentinian people, and an increasing number of both governmental and non-governmental agencies are stepping up to action (Gherardi 2017). Bearing in mind Argentina's rich history of social movements and activism, even before the dictatorship, this is not surprising. However, despite the growing public awareness and advances in the legislative sphere, the consistently high rates of VAWG reflect a critical situation and reveal the persistence of inequality and violations of women's rights. A study made by the National Institute of Statistics and Census[6] (INDEC) (2018) showed that 86,700 cases of VAWG were reported in the country in 2017. The same year, 251 women became victims of femicides (CSJN 2018). Clearly, these figures confirm the need for urgent action in the country.

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[3] *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo* were mothers and grandmothers looking for children who "disappeared" during the Dirty War. The group formed to act against the abuses during the war and became one of the most active and well-known human rights movements in Latin America (Terzian 2017).
[4] *Ley Nacional 24.417.* Protección contra la violencia familias (1994)
[5] *Ley Nacional 26.485.* Protección integral para prevenir, sancionar y erradicar la violencia contra las mujeres en los ámbitos en que desarrollen sus relaciones interpersonales (2009)
[6] *'Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos'*

Accordingly, scholars and international agencies worldwide are demanding greater focus on preventive efforts related to VAWG (Ellsberg et al. 2015; Sarmiento et al. 2015; Storer et al. 2016; WHO 2010). While the actual definition and content of VAWG prevention varies, it is recognized that most efforts take place within the social work field (Ruth et al. 2015). Nevertheless, while earlier social work initiatives against VAWG mainly have focused on developing responsive interventions, such as protection of and support to women who have experienced violence, there is now an increased call for *primary prevention of VAWG* (WHO 2010). The primary prevention approach, in this context, refers to strategies aimed at identifying root causes of VAWG and thus preventing it from occurring in the first place (Storer et al. 2016). Accordingly, the main focus of this research will be primary prevention of VAWG within the social work field.

Having established the general understanding of primary prevention, the complexity of implementing these practices in different contexts must be acknowledged. For instance, the 2030 Agenda, which has a stand-alone goal to end VAWG (SDG 5, target 5.3), is universal and encourages countries worldwide to integrate the SDGs into development strategies and policy-making on a national and local level (UN 2015). Yet, as argued by Sutton (2010), the implementation of the SDGs is a complex process and local and national differences and preconditions must be considered. Thus, prevention strategies cannot simply be transferred from one setting to another but have to be adjusted to the socioeconomic and historical context. Returning to the Argentinian context, it is concluded that it is a country with a long history of conflicts and violence, but also of women's groups and social movements. Evidently, these factors have a great influence on the Argentinian society today. Other factors, such as the history of patriarchal norms and machismo, which can be found in almost all countries in the world (Yagoub 2016), and the country's situation in terms of social and economic equality also have to be taken into account (Kiss et al. 2012). These aspects make the case of Argentina particularly interesting, when considering a country's preconditions to follow international agencies' advice on VAWG prevention.

Yet, contextual differences go beyond the national context. Research shows that the prevalence of violence in the world not only varies among countries, but also within countries and cities (Vilalta, Castillo & Torres 2016). Argentina has a population of approximately 44 million people. Moreover, each of the country's 23 provinces and one autonomous city have their own government, which are autonomous from the federal government. Previous research proposes a substantial difference between the provinces.

Aside from the geographical diversities, socioeconomic conditions vary greatly between the provinces, as well as culture, ethnicities, levels of gender equality and other standard living conditions, such as access to school, work opportunities, health care, electricity and tap water (Gragnolati et al. 2015). Thus, the provincial context must be considered, which in the case of this research is the Province of Buenos Aires.

One-third of the Argentinian population lives in the Buenos Aires Province, which means that the country has one of the most urbanized populations in the LAC region (UNDP 2011). Over the last few years, levels of income disparity in the province have been growing, and the socioeconomic situation has worsened (OECD 2017). Furthermore, the province has the highest figures of reported cases of VAWG in the country. All provinces in Argentina are further subdivided into departments and municipalities. Accordingly, the Buenos Aires Province consists of the city Buenos Aires and 24 adjacent municipalities. Lanús, which is a low-to-middle class municipality belonging to the province, will be the research setting of this thesis. Lanús is located south of the city of Buenos Aires and has a population of almost 460 000 people (INDEC 2018).[7] Thus, this thesis has been narrowed down to a local context and will examine VAWG prevention within the social work field in Lanús Municipality.

1.2 Purpose and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to enhance knowledge about primary prevention of VAWG within the social work field in a local Argentinian context. Within this, it seeks to explore the understanding of the root causes of VAWG, the definition of primary prevention and actual content of prevention practices. To achieve this aim, the thesis will focus on the following research question:

What VAWG primary prevention practices are used within the social work field in Lanús Municipality, and how are these practices influenced by the professionals' definition of primary prevention and understanding of the root causes of VAWG?

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[7] A more detailed presentation of Lanús Municipality is provided in 2.2 *Local context*. A justification for the choice of Lanús as a research setting is available in 4.1.1 *Research setting*.

In order to answer the overall research question, the following sub questions will be addressed. All sub questions refer to definitions, approaches and efforts made within the social work field of Lanús municipality.

1. *Which are the root causes of VAWG?*
2. *How is primary prevention of VAWG understood?*
3. *What do primary prevention practices of VAWG entail?*

1.3 Relevance for social work

This study concerns primary prevention of VAWG within the social work field. Cohen and Chehimi (2010) explain that primary prevention can be employed at various levels of society. When it comes to prevention of VAWG, however, many programs are implemented within the social work field (Lurie & Monahan 2001). This is not surprising, as the social work profession has expressed a strong commitment to prevention work since its very beginning (Ruth et al. 2015).

The topic of VAWG prevention is of great relevance for social work for multiple reasons. Firstly, the strong commitment to human rights and social change are core values within the profession. As clarified in IFSW and IASSW's global definition of social work:

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work (IFSW & IASSW 2014).

This definition demonstrates the emphasis on promotion of universal human rights, as well as the importance of recognizing the essential worth of every individual. Thus, this clearly confirms social work's relevance to this study's topic. VAWG is an obstacle to the achievement of the human rights' objectives of equality and peace, as it violates and revoke women's access to their rights and fundamental freedoms (IFSW 2012).

Secondly, given the high rates of VAWG worldwide and the fact that social workers are found in a range of health, school and human service settings, the likelihood of social workers coming into contact with the issue of VAWG is great (Piedra, Rosa-Martín & Muños-Dominguez 2018). As argued by IFSW (2012), social workers function in the broadest range of professional activities that are critical to the well-being of women and

girls, which further denotes the high relevance of knowledge on VAWG prevention. Lippold, Kainz and Sabatine (2016) argue that, despite of the profession's long-standing commitment to core ambitions of prevention and promotion of health and well-being, increased research on prevention in social work is crucial as it contributes to a deeper understanding of more effective strategies within the field.

Furthermore, a reflection upon social work practices of VAWG prevention in a local Argentinian context is not only relevant to social work in Argentina, but also to social work on an international level. In order to develop and refine social work, professionals worldwide may want to acknowledge other ways of addressing social problems than those currently used within each national context. In other words, by learning about VAWG prevention efforts in Argentina, social workers in other parts of the world can obtain a profounder understanding of prevention, gain other perspectives and make new interpretations of social work.

1.4 Disposition

This thesis will be structured as follows. First, background information on the research country and setting will be provided. The next part includes an overview of previous research on VAWG as well as VAWG prevention. Following this, the methodology of this study will be elaborated, along with a discussion on limitations and ethical considerations. Next, the theoretical framework on prevention theory and concepts will be presented. After this, research findings will be outlined and analyzed, based on the purpose of this thesis, research questions and the theoretical framework. In the final chapter, the conclusions of the research will be drawn. Lastly, the appendices include English and Spanish translations of the *Record of respondents* (see Appendix 1) *Informative sheet about the study* (see Appendix 2-3), *Consent form* (see Appendix 4-5) and the *Interview guide* (see Appendix 6-7).

2. Contextual background

It is usually argued, in particular within qualitative research, that human behavior only can be correctly understood in relation to the context in which they occur. Thus, it is of high importance with context-centered knowledge; that is, to consider the socioeconomic and historical context (Hammersley 2008). Based on this notion, the following chapter includes an overview of the Argentinian context and the selected research setting.

2.1 Country context

Argentina, officially the Argentine Republic, is located in South America and shares land borders with Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia and Chile. It is the next largest country by area in Latin America (CIA 2019). In 2017, the country had a total of 44,271,041 residents, of which about one-third lives in the capital Buenos Aires (Gragnolati et al. 2015). The World Bank (2018) classifies Argentina as a *high-income nation*, nevertheless, urbanized poverty remains high. In fact, in 2018, nearly a third of the country's population was estimated to be living under the poverty line[8] (INDEC 2018).

A hundred years ago, Argentina's income per capita was among the top ten in the world (OECD 2017). However, the country has, since then, been through many economic ups and downs, along with several government shifts and periods of dictatorships. The *Last Military Dictatorship* took place in Argentina between 1976-1983, during which the population suffered multiple forms of repression and violence (Santarcangelo 2017). Finally, in 1983, the military junta collapsed, and democracy has since then persisted in the country. During the redemocratization process, human rights were declared as central to the agenda of the new government. Along with this, a range of social organizations and movements, such as Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo[9], stepped up and participated in the public debate regarding human rights within a democratic state (Bonner 2005).

Consequently, over the past decades, the institutional framework for human rights in Argentina has gradually been strengthened. However, long-standing human rights problems, such as lacking sexual and reproductive rights, ethnic discrimination and

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[8] *National poverty headcount ratio* is the percentage of the population living below the national poverty lines, based on population-weighted subgroup estimates from household surveys (World bank 2018).
[9] *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo* were mothers and grandmothers looking for children who "disappeared" during the Dirty War. The group formed to act against the abuses during the war and became one of the most active and well-known human rights movements in Latin America (Terzian 2017).

restrictions on abortion, still remain in the country. Abortion, in particular, is perhaps one of the most debated issues in the country today (Amnesty International 2018; Human Rights Watch 2018) While abortion is legal in certain cases (e.g. when it is the result of rape or when the pregnancy poses a health risk) women and girls in these situations continue to encounter barriers when requesting legal abortion.

Moreover, one of the most critical human rights problems in Argentina, according to Amnesty International (2018), is the high rates of VAWG. Surprisingly, there were no official statistics on VAWG in the country until 2015. Instead, in 2008, the national NGO *Casa del Encuentro* started counting cases of femicides by reviewing the news published in 120 different newspapers and news agencies. One year later, the association presented their first estimate in the *Observatory of Femicides in Argentina* (Casa del Encuentro 2018). The NGO's annual updates on reported cases of femicides became the frame of reference for all organizations and governmental agencies, even if they practically did not receive State support (Fernández 2012). The lack of official data was one of the points of the complaint from women's organizations for many years, and even more so during the mobilization of *Ni Una Menos* (Penchansky et al. 2017). However, in 2012, the National Institute for Women[10] signed an agreement with the INDEC, with the purpose of generating official statistical information on reported cases of VAWG on a national level. The result is presented in *The Unique Registry for Cases of Violence against Women*[11], which shows that 260 156 cases of VAWG were reported in Argentina between 2013-2017. It must be borne in mind, however, that the study only included *reported* cases. As argued by D'Angel et al. (2015), "far from all cases of VAWG are reported, which indicates that these figures only represent the tip of a huge iceberg" (p. 5).

Another important factor to consider in relation to VAWG in Argentina is the implementation and enforcement of legislation, which continues to be problematic. While the country has a basic institutional structure in terms of human rights, insufficiencies still remain in terms of the interpretation, application and enforcements of laws. For instance, a study made by the Ministry of Defense of Argentina[12] (2014) shows that one-third of the women who have been exposed to violence state that the abuses continued even after making a complaint (MDP 2014). The instability regarding the protection of human rights is claimed to be linked to the fact that plans and policies often are dismissed

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[10] *'Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres'*
[11] *'Registro Único de Casos de Violencia contra las Mujeres (RUCVM)'*
[12] *'Ministerio Público de la Defensa'*

in connection with government changes (Transparency International 2017). Accordingly, opinion polls show that the population's confidence in the police and judiciary is extremely low (Corporación Latinobarómetro 2018). To that end, it is worth noting that several international establishments within the field of human rights have been ratified in Argentina, such as the *Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), and the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women* (Convention of Belém do Pará). The country has also committed to uphold other human rights agreements, such as the *2030 Agenda* where one goal specifically proposes the prevention and elimination of all forms of VAWG (UN 2018, SDG 5, target 5.3).

Furthermore, when presenting the Argentinian context, it is of great importance to consider the socioeconomic aspects. Argentina has traditionally been one of the countries in the LAC region with better social indicators, whereas the socioeconomic situation has gradually deteriorated over the past decades, particularly in terms of poverty (World Bank 2016). While the democratic system perseveres, the country continues to face severe economic crisis. Between 1998 and 2002, Argentina suffered the deepest crisis in its economic history. At the end of the crisis, the Argentinian peso had devaluated, and the GDP had reduced radically (Santarcangelo 2017). The following years, various efforts to reduce poverty and inequality following the crisis were made (Gragnolati et al. 2015). However, as previously mentioned, almost a third of the population was in 2018 still estimated to be living under the national poverty line (INDEC 2018).

2.2 Local context

Lanús is one of the *partidos*[13] ('municipalities') in Gran Buenos Aires[14]. The municipality, which is located south of the city of Buenos Aires, has an area of approximately 50 km2. In 2010, Lanús had a population of almost 460 000 inhabitants, which makes it the second most densely populated municipality in Argentina (INDEC 2010; Municipio de Lanús n.d.).
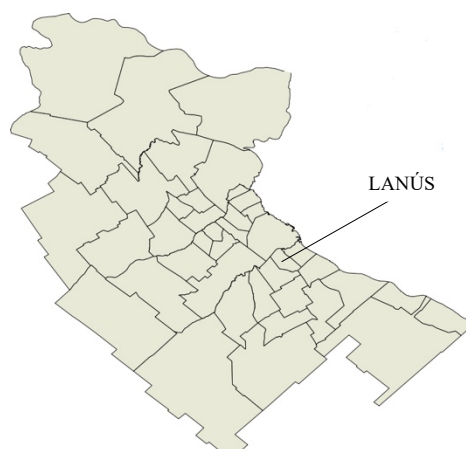
LANÚS

Map 1. Map of el Gran Buenos Aires (Lanús Municipality, n.d.)

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[13] A *partido* ('municipality') is the second-level subdivision in the Buenos Aires Province (INDEC 2015).
[14] Refers to the area compromising the city of Buenos Aires and the adjacent 24 *partidos* (INDEC 2015).

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Lanús was founded in 1944 under the name *4 de Junio*. However, in 1955, the name of the municipality was changed to *Partido de Lanús*. Pereyra and Chianetta (2018) describe how Lanús, at this time, was a prosperous municipality. Though, during the military coup in the 70s and 80s, many fabrics and means of transport in Lanús were shut down, which contributed to increased impoverishment and wage gap in the area, as well as growing rates of unemployment. The municipality's strong link to railway and industrial development is a characteristic that persists today, which is reflected in the 500 large industries in the area, although many of these remain closed (Municipio de Lanús n.d.).

In 2010, INDEC used the index of *Unsatisfied Basic Needs*[15] ('Necesidades Basicas Insatisfechas' or 'NBI') to measure poverty in Argentinian municipalities. While the percentage of NBI among the municipalities in the Province of Buenos Aires ranged between 1,05-19,13%, Lanús Municipality had the relatively low rate of 5%. However, the municipality is divided into six localities: Lanús Oeste; Lanús Este; Remedios de Escalada; Gerli; Valentín Alsina; and Monte Chingolo, and these localities present, in some cases significant, disparities in the living conditions of the population. For instance, the percentage of households with NBI in the town of Monte Chingolo more than triples that of the town of Gerli and Lanús Este (INDEC 2010).

However, Lanús is also characterized by its extensive network of community organizations. There are 41 different *barrios* ('neighborhoods') in the municipality. In each neighborhood, there is an average of 22 organizations; including public institutions, retirement centers, soup kitchens, neighborhood boards, social associations, women's groups and NGO's. As explained by Pereyra and Chianetta (2018), these organizations have emerged in the municipality at different times as a result of the current needs and demands of its population. For example, the majority of soup kitchens appeared during the economic crisis in 2001-2002, as a response to the increase in poverty. Accordingly, in recent years, organizations in Lanús are increasingly focusing on the issue of VAWG. This can be seen through the development of different workshops aimed at assisting women in situations of violence, as well as workshops aimed at spreading knowledge and raising awareness about the issue. However, despite all municipal and national efforts, the average number of complaints regarding VAWG in Lanús exceeds one hundred per month, according to the newspaper Diario Popular (2017).

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[15] The concept of the NBI is based on various indicators, such as the income-related, housing, education and access to potable water (INDEC 2010).

3. Previous Research

With the purpose of providing a more comprehensive picture of the field of interest, the following section provides an overview of previous research. The chapter begins with research on VAWG, based on articles written by Lori Heise; one of the last decades' most well-known VAWG researcher. Thereafter, previous research on primary prevention of VAWG will be presented, based on articles written by various prevention scholars as well as reports published by WHO and UN Women.

The sources that constitute this chapter were collected through various search engines, through the use of different combinations of the following keywords: VAWG; violence; women; GBV; gender-based violence; prevention; primary prevention; Argentina; and their equivalent in Spanish. Special attention was given periodicals within the field, such as *Violence Against Women: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal* and *The Journal of Primary Prevention*. Literature published within the last ten years was sought. Still, certain exceptions had to be made due to the use of primary sources.

3.1 Violence against women and girls

Research on VAWG has expanded greatly over the last decades. An increasing number of scholars and international agencies have been publishing articles and reports with estimates, discussions on the complexity of the violence and reflections upon strategies to reduce and prevent it. However, most research has been dedicated to the extent of VAWG as well as the understanding of causes and factors associated to its existence.

Lori Heise is a British professor in Social Epidemiology with over 25 years of experience within the field of gender equity. Moreover, as a founder of the International Research Network on Violence Against Women and co-investigator on the 6 years project "What Works to Prevent Partner Violence" (2001), Heise is an internationally recognized expert within the VAWG field and has played a crucial role in getting the issue onto to the research agenda. In 1998, Heise published the article *Violence against Women: An Integrated, Ecological Framwork*, in which the social-ecological model (SEM) is applied to VAWG for the very first time. The SEM was originally developed in the 1970's as a framework for better understanding child development (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Since then, the SEM has been applied to a range of social problems, including VAWG. In fact, most of recent research on VAWG is influenced by the SEM (Fulu & Miedema 2015).

Heise (1998) explains that the SEM's starting point is that there is no single explanatory cause for the existence of VAWG. Instead, it is argued that VAWG, as a multidimensional issue, must be understood in relation to the interaction between different factors in an individual's surrounding. Thus, the SEM organizes potential risk factors (factors that can increase violence) and protective factors (factors that can decrease violence) on different levels at which they operate, such as individual, relationship, community or societal levels (see figure 1). The overlapping rings indicate that aspects on one level influence aspects on another; for example, individuals' attitudes are shaped by their cultural and societal surroundings, and at the same time are larger structures and cultures always influenced by attitudes of individuals. The ecological approach, argues Heise, provides us with a better understanding of VAWG (Heise 1998).
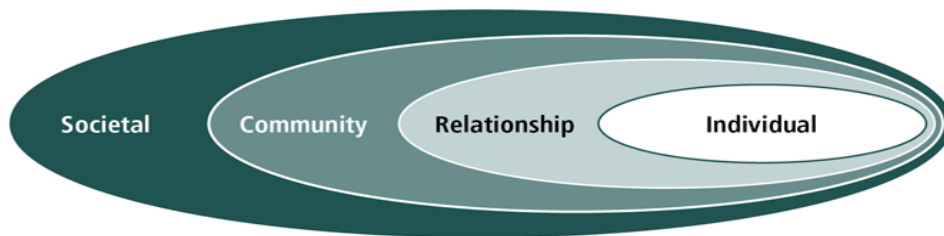
Figure 1. The Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) (Heise 1998)

Many years have passed since the model was developed; nevertheless, it is still considered highly important within VAWG research. However, the model has been complemented on a regular basis with up-to-date evidence on factors associated to VAWG and revised to be relevant for both low- middle- and high-income countries. Along with this, increased focus has been placed on contextual factors on the societal level (Heise 2011).

Accordingly, a profounder approach on contextual factors is employed in the article *Cross-national and multilevel correlates of partner violence: an analysis of data from population-based surveys,* written by Lori Heise and Andreas Kotsadam (2015). Since research reveals an uneven distribution of violence in the world, this study examines how macro-level factors related to gender inequalities correlate with the prevalence of IVP in 44 different countries. The multi-country comparative analysis showed that some macro-level factors (e.g. women's status, gender-related discriminatory norms) are strongly related to a country's prevalence of IVP. Accordingly, it is concluded that the national context and its social norms and hierarchies are highly important to consider when examining VAWG (Heise & Kotsadam 2015). Among international agencies, WHO was one of the first to respond to the earlier lack of basic data and methodical problems within

VAWG research. In fact, the agency published one of the first multi-country studies on VAWG prevalence. This study offers data from a diverse group of countries, aimed at facilitating the development of strategies against VAWG across different contexts (WHO 1999a; 1999b). Since then, the agency has continued to publish reports on both prevalence and prevention (Krug et al. 2002; WHO 2013; 2014).

3.2 Primary prevention of VAWG

Alongside the increased focus on VAWG, there has been a worldwide growth in the quantity of prevention programs, as well as research supporting these strategies. However, when examining previous research on VAWG prevention, a substantial shift of focus can be identified. While the first generation of research mainly focused on responsive measures, the second generation highlights *primary* prevention measures. One of the more comprehensive examples of this is a report made by WHO, where it is concluded that to prevent VAWG once and for all, a greater emphasis must be placed on primary prevention strategies on all levels of society (Butchart et al. 2004).

In the article *Approaching old problems in new ways: community mobilization as a primary prevention strategy to combat violence against women*, prevention carried out by a Uganda-based NGO is lifted by the human rights scholar Lori Muchau (2007). This NGO recognized that to prevent VAWG in the first place, it is necessary to go beyond working with individuals and sporadic awareness-raising activities. With the aim of achieving a sustainable change, a comprehensive community mobilization approach was developed, which included engaging actors at all levels of community: individuals; friends and family; institutions; the media; leaders and government officials. Michau (2007) claims that this multi-level community program has led to decreased levels of social acceptance of VAWG in the area.

While the professionals in the Uganda-based NGO define their approach as primary prevention (Michau 2007), previous research reveals that the actual content of VAWG primary prevention differs. In 2016, Heather Storer et al. (2016) published the article *Primary prevention is? A global perspective on how organizations engaging men in preventing gender-based violence conceptualize and operationalize their work*, which showed that the definition of primary prevention varies greatly among professionals engaged within the field. Thus, this fact confirms the need for further research on the actual understanding and content of primary prevention of VAWG (Storer et al. 2016).

Furthermore, a number of frameworks related to primary prevention have been developed within VAWG research. For example, Cohen and Chehimi (2010) present the model *Spectrum of Prevention*, originally developed in 1983 by Larry Cohen, founder of Prevention Institute. The model draws from an ecological approach, in line with most prevention frameworks, and aims to facilitate the insight into a complex system of multiple, and often intersecting, factors. The tool identities six key entry-points: influencing policy and legislation; challenging organizational practices; fostering coalitions and networks; educating providers; promoting community education; strengthening individual knowledge and skills (Cohen & Chehimi 2010). The model further highlights the importance of acting across different levels of society at the same time. The multi-approach is described as the model's key strength, as the researchers argue that "when used together, each level reinforces the others, leading to greater effectiveness" (p. 17). Accordingly, most VAWG scholars and international agencies to date base their research on multi-level approaches, as it is considered crucial to achieve sustainable prevention (e.g. Hilder & Bettinson 2016; UN Women 2015).

While frameworks, such as the one presented above, can offer guidelines for when and how to intervene against VAWG, it should not be forgotten that they also can be limiting. Silverman (2003) argues that "[*models*] are not a perfect representation of the real world, that is, a real world populated by real people whose behaviors are multi-determined, multi-directed, multi-intentioned, and multi-dependent on changing variables within a temporal context" (p. 33). To that end, it should also be kept in mind that most frameworks have been developed in the Western world and are based on certain preconditions. Thus, caution is advised when transferring them from one context to another. In other words, the importance of considering contextual factors within research is well recognized. However, the role that context plays in the understanding and design of primary prevention of VAWG seems to remain understudied.

It is also important to point out that frameworks are just that – frameworks, and that governments, organizations and institutions in 'the real world' do not necessarily follow these guidelines. This notion underpins the need for research looking into the actual content of primary prevention practices. This fact, along with the scarcity of research on VAWG prevention in local Argentinian contexts, motivates the focus and scope of this study. In order words, the review of previous research reveals a need for a study that investigates both the understanding of primary prevention of VAWG in a local context, as well as its actual content.

4. Methodology and material

This chapter consists of a presentation and problematization of the methodology and material used in this study. Firstly, the choice of research approach and research setting will be introduced, as well as an elaboration on the access to the field. Following this, the research method of qualitative semi-structured interviews will be discussed, along with an elaboration on the respondent sampling methods and instruments used during the data collection. The next section will provide a presentation of complementary sources – that is, reviews of literature and statistics. Then, a section on interpretation and analysis of the collected data is offered. Finally, limitations and ethical considerations will be addressed.

4.1 Research approach

The purpose of this thesis was to examine primary prevention of VAWG within the social work field in Lanús. Within this, it also sought to investigate the understanding of primary prevention and of the root causes of VAWG. To fulfill this purpose and answer the research questions, an overall qualitative research approach has been applied.

A qualitative research approach allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding and account for important contextual details in relation to the problem investigated (Seidman 2006). While VAWG exists in all parts of the world, it is reasonable to argue that it also is context-related. As Bryman (2016) explains, the qualitative approach places emphasis on the different ways of understanding the social world, based on the underlying premise that the social world must be interpreted from the people studied. Accordingly, this approach was considered appropriate for this study as it offered an opportunity to investigate the respondents' own perspectives on primary prevention and grasp a deeper understanding of the context in which it is applied.

The complex and context-specific nature of this study required methods which are effective for grasping profound knowledge. As Kvale and Brinkman (2014) point out: "If you want to know how human beings perceive their world and life, why not talk to them?" (p. 14). Ultimately, this was the main reason behind the choice of using interviews when examining VAWG prevention in Lanús. While material published by governmental and non-governmental agencies can offer information on prevention practices, they do not reveal the professionals' perceptions of the issue, nor the challenges related to it. Thus,

with the purpose of gaining a deeper insight, interviews were conducted with professionals engaged in VAWG prevention in Lanús Municipality.

Thus, a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews constitutes the basis of this research. However, other sources, such as literature and statistics on VAWG and prevention, have also been examined. These data mainly served as background information with the aim of contextualizing the research problem. Yet, they also had the purpose of complementing, validating and confirming data collected from the interviews.

4.1.1 Research setting

Bhattacharya (2008) clarifies that the research setting can be described as the physical, social and cultural context in which the study is being conducted. This study's setting has been on a local level; namely, Lanús Municipality. Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) explain that the choice of a research setting usually is connected to the research problem, and can, for example, be chosen based on the ambition to study a situation that is developing at the time. In the case of this research, Argentina was selected partly due to its high rates of VAWG. While this might be true for many countries, the case of Argentina stands out with the last decades' increasing number of efforts to prevent VAWG, including social campaigns such as *Ni Una Menos*. Moreover, Argentina is particularly interesting due to its strong tradition of women's organizations. It was thus concluded that the country represented an interesting research opportunity.

When Argentina had been selected, the focus was further narrowed down to a local context. Multiple factors lie behind the choice of Lanús. It is, according to Atkinson and Hammersley (2007), advisable to base the choice of a research setting on three factors; (1) its suitability in relation to the research problem, (2) the possibility of carrying out research and, (3) the accessibility to the field. Lanús is a middle-to-low class municipality located south of the city of Buenos Aires. While the municipality has high rates of VAWG, it is also known for its extensive network of community organizations, many of which are engaged within VAWG prevention. Thus, it was early established that this setting was appropriate in relation to the research problem. Furthermore, the possibility of carrying out research and accessibility to the field were arranged through assistance from Lund University's contacts at the National University of Lanús (UNLA).

Dixon (2008) argue that, when presenting a setting-specific research, it is important to provide the readers with background information on the researched context.

Consequently, a brief overview of the socioeconomic and historical context has been included in this thesis. It is sometimes claimed that setting-specific studies are too subjective and irrelevant for other settings (Dixon 2008). However, in the case of this study, the ambition is not to present the results as transferable and relevant to all contexts, but to enhance knowledge on strategies aimed at preventing VAWG in a local context.

4.1.2 Access to the field

The accessibility to the field is perhaps one of the most important factors when conducting a field study abroad. As pointed out by Linstroth (2008), conducting field research requires a lot of preparation before departure, including the development of a well-planned research design. Accordingly, a thesis proposal was developed prior departure and field contacts were established through assistance from the supervisor at Lund University. During the pre-field work phase, main tasks consisted of reviewing literature and statistical data and developing first drafts of the methodical instruments.

The field work was conducted in Lanús Municipality between February 17-April 16, 2019. During the first weeks in the field, emphasis was laid on learning about the Argentinian context in general. Before initiating the data collection, informal meetings were held with social work and gender professors at UNLA. As Creswell and Poth (2017) point out, qualitative field work requires both time and a strong commitment to the research problem. Thus, the ambition was to first familiarize with the context and spend some time in the field. Alongside this process, efforts were made to recruit interview respondents. With assistance from the on-site supervisor, contact was established with different organizations and institutions engaged within VAWG prevention in Lanús.

4.2 Semi-structured interviews

This chapter provides an overview of the main research method for this thesis; that is, semi-structured interviews with professionals from organizations and institutions engaged within VAWG prevention in Lanús. First, sampling methods will be presented and discussed, and thereafter, instrumentation and data collection will be elaborated.

4.2.1 Sampling and recruitment of respondents

This research concerns VAWG in Argentina. However, the purpose of this thesis was not to examine the issue of VAWG in itself, but the *prevention* of it. Accordingly, the target

group was professionals who are engaged within VAWG prevention. Research is often criticized for not talking directly to the people or groups affected by the research problem in question (Bryman 2016). If the purpose of this thesis had been to evaluate the impact of prevention, it would have been more appropriate to approach individuals who participate in such. However, as this study aimed to examine the understanding and content of prevention, an approach focusing on professionals' point of view was chosen.

Upon arrival to Lanús, it became clear that there is a range of different organizations and institutions engaged within VAWG prevention. With the ambition of reflecting this variety, representatives from both governmental and non-governmental agencies were contacted. Consequently, a purposive sampling approach was applied. Purposive sampling is, as Bryman (2016) explains, a non-probability form of sampling, which means that the researcher does not wish to sample respondents on a random basis. Accordingly, in this study, respondents were selected strategically with the purpose of making sure that the sample was relevant in relation to the research aim and, at the same time, reflect the extensive network of organizations and institutions in Lanús.

With assistance from the on-site supervisor, a number of Lanús-based organizations engaged within VAWG prevention were located and provided with an information sheet about the research (see *Appendix 1-2*). The final sample includes representatives from five government agencies, one community organization and one university. The representatives were selected based on their availability, in other words by convenience sampling (Bryman 2016). The names of the respondents[16] have been anonymized, however, all agreed to the publishing of the names of their organizations and institutions.

4.2.2 Instrumentation and data collection

Qualitative interviewing is, as explained by Bryman (2016), less structured than quantitative interviewing. The interview questions in qualitative research tend to be more open-ended, and there is a stronger focus on the respondent's point of view. This also implies that qualitative interviews are more flexible, as the researcher can adjust both the questions, the emphasis and the order of the questions, based on the respondent's answers. However, as Mason (2002) explains, while there are a few characteristics that are typical for qualitative interviews, there is also a variety within this category. They can, for example, be structured, unstructured or semi-structured.

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[16] The term *respondent* will be used when referring to those who participated in interviews.

In this study, the semi-structured format of interviews has been chosen. There were multiple reasons behind this choice. Essentially, by allowing some degree of structure in the interviews, the possibility of comparing the respondents' answers and finding patterns between their statements was considered greater. Thus, the semi-structured format facilitated the thematic analysis[17] which was conducted during the data interpretation process. Another key benefit to the semi-structured format is that the respondents are provided space for their own interpretations and can express themselves on their own terms, since too specific questions are avoided (Bryman 2016). At the same time, the format creates space for the researcher to address the main research questions, while also being able to probe the respondents' answers for clarifications and amplifications. Another argument for using the semi-structured technique is related to the researcher's position as an outsider and the respondents' positions as insiders[18], since open-ended questions give the respondents the possibility of sharing knowledge and experiences that themselves find relevant and important in relation to the topic (Noh 2019).

Following the characteristics of qualitative semi-structured interviews, an interview guide was developed. When creating this guide, the starting point was that all research questions must be covered. Next, it was ensured that the questions were open-ended, not too specific and comprehensible (Bryman 2016). The final interview guide consisted of five main topics: *definitions*; *causes of violence*; *VAWG in Argentina*; *prevention strategies;* and *challenges*, which were followed by open-ended questions associated with each topic. All interviews began with an elaboration on the purpose of the study. Following this, the respondents were informed about the confidentiality, and then asked to read and sign the consent form (see *Appendix 2-5*). After this, introductory questions were asked, before the main topics in the interview guide were addressed. As clarified by Kvale (2007), qualitative semi-structured interviews usually have relatively little pre-planned structure. In the case of this study, the interviews involved a degree of structure, yet, they also allowed room for matters of particular interest to the respondents. Accordingly, follow-up questions were repetitively added by the researcher, as well as probing questions for clarifications. Yet, it was always ensured that all topics in the interview guide were discussed. On several occasions, topics in the interview guide were raised by the respondent on his/her own initiative. Some questions were also asked to check for consistency, which increased the level of validity and reliability.

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[17] See 4.4 *Data interpretation and analysis* for a further elaboration on the thematic analysis.
[18] See 4.5 *Limitations and self-reflexivity* for a further elaboration on the insider-outsider position.

All seven interviews were conducted face-to-face in Lanús, with one (or occasionally two) representative/s from each organization or institution. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, without the need of an interpreter. By conducting the interviews in the respondents' native language, they could feel more comfortable and express their views without the risk of misunderstandings due to language barriers. Moreover, the possibility of capturing the reality of the respondents' views and making interpretations as close to their perspective as possible, was considered greater. However, the interplay of other intercultural factors, such gender, nationality and age, should not be overlooked as it might have influenced the respondents' answers. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The duration of the interviews varied between 60-90 minutes.

4.3 Review of literature and statistics

In-depth literature reading prior to data collection is, according to Bryman (2016), a helpful step in the process of developing a research, as it serves as a 'reservoir of knowledge'. Thus, articles from academic journals as well as reports published by UN agencies and Argentinian government agencies have been reviewed. Initially, the ambition was to get familiar with the Argentinian historical and socioeconomic context, and to get an overview of the country's situation on VAWG. Another reason for examining these sources was to contextualize the research problem and gain an insight into context-specific knowledge and practice. Bryman (2016) argues that the use of literature review as a complementary source of information has many advantages, in particular when the field work is conducted in a context that the researcher is unfamiliar with. In this way, the researcher can both save time and avoid practical complications. Nonetheless, the risks of using secondary data must be acknowledged. Firstly, it requires a time of familiarization, in particular when the quantity of data is large and complex. Secondly, it is important to consider the bias. As Bryman (2016) emphasizes, documents must be examined in relation to the context in which they were produced.

Moreover, statistical data were reviewed. While statistics on VAWG in Argentina were in focus, records presented in multi-country studies have also been studied for comparative purposes. Statistical data on Argentina have exclusively been retrieved from the INDEC, which is the government agency responsible for all official statistical activities carried out in the country. These data provide an overview of the extent of VAWG and of the scope of the issue over time. Though, it must be kept in mind that

statistical data can be misleading (Bryman 2016). Far from all cases of VAWG are reported, which indicates that a substantial amount of cases goes unrecorded. It is therefore reasonable to argue that statistical records do not reflect the reality, i.e. the dark figure. However, since this is a qualitative study, the statistics are considered an indicator, rather than authentic representation (Bryman 2016).

4.4 Data interpretation and analysis

The major part of the review of literature and statistics was made prior to the interviews. However, as all interviews had been conducted, these sources were brought into the analytic process. Still, these sources are not discussed explicitly in the presentation of the findings, as their purpose was to contextualize the interview data, and thus function as a support to interpret the findings in an adequate and context-specific way (Bryman 2016). This approach facilitated the integration of interviews results and literature review in the analysis, which generated a richer and context-specific picture of the research problem.

As Bryman (2016) explains, qualitative methods often generate large amounts of unstructured textual material, which may complicate the analysis process. Accordingly, this study's seven interviews were transcribed word for word in Spanish, which, as anticipated, resulted in a large database of interview transcripts. However, there are strategies that can be applied to overcome such analysis problems. In this case, a thematic analysis based on the overall research question, the sub questions and the theoretical framework was applied. To be more precise, Creswell's (2009) approach to coding and analyzing data was employed. In line with this, the process began with a period of familiarization of the interview transcripts, during which they were read repeatedly, while noting reoccurring or noteworthy topics. Next, the material was coded by color; that is, keywords were added to certain parts or sentences. Since this research has a deductive approach to a chosen theory, the coding was intentionally influenced by terms such as *primary prevention* and *targeted approach*. However, a few unexpected codes were also identified. Thereafter, the codes were brought together into categories. The final main categories clustered around: root causes of VAWG; understanding of VAWG; understanding of primary prevention; content of primary prevention practices. Finally, these data were interpreted and brought into the analysis.

4.5 Limitations and self-reflexivity

The criteria of validity and reliability implies that a single absolute explanation of a social reality is possible. Guba and Lincoln (1994, referred to by Bryman 2016), are critical of this view, as they argue that this method cannot be applied when evaluating qualitative research. Instead, an alternative approach is proposed. The trustworthiness-approach consists of four criteria: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability*.

Credibility is ensured by following principles of 'good practice' and 'respondent validation' (Guba & Lincoln 1994, in Bryman 2016), which in this study was achieved through methodical consideration and analysis of each phase of the research process. The next criterion is *transferability*. The context-specific nature of this research, the purposive sampling and low number of interviews do not allow broad generalization of the results, which means that they are not transferable in the way quantitative findings can be. Still, it can be argued that this research provides 'thick description' (Geertz 1973, in Bryman 2016); that is, a rich description of VAWG prevention in a certain setting, which contributes to the overall discussion on the issue. Next, *dependability* represents the importance of research documentation, which is why all steps of this research process have been documented, and most of them presented in this chapter. Finally, *confirmability* is concerned with whether the researcher's allows personal values influence the research. While Bryman (2016) points out that total objectivity is impossible, efforts were made to carry out this research in an unbiased way; for example, by formulating impartial interview questions and presenting a broad view of previous research.

Furthermore, in international field research, it is crucial to consider the researcher's *positionality*. Positionality is determined by "where one stands in relation to the other" (Noh 2019, p. 330) and focus on 'the researcher-the respondent' relationship. The researcher's positionality can be examined by putting emphasis on *reflexivity* - that is: "the ways in which researchers should reflect upon their own practices" (Mikkelsen 2005, p. 49). Milan (2014) exemplifies this by pointing out the need to reflect upon who is to 'gain' what from the study. For example, interviews take time from the respondents that they could have spent on their work, whereas for the researcher, interviews are part of the everyday work through which valuable data are collected. Another aspect is related to the researcher's background and characteristics - in my case, as a young, white, educated woman from a western high-income country - and how it most likely influences the data collection and interpretation. Besides, the researcher inevitable has preconceived

understandings about the research topic, which most likely have an impact on the analysis of the findings (Noh 2019). Moreover, research conducted in an international setting implies the challenge of positionality between the insider-outsider. Noh (2019) explains that the outsider position generates limitations, for example, in terms of shortage of knowledge about the context-specific issue, which can lead to misinterpretations. Moreover, outsider-led research can result in a reproduction of 'otherness' by non-native researchers. Thus, the reflection upon insider-outsider position includes an understanding of context-specific historical and cultural factors. This is often referred to as *referential reflexivity* and includes the relation to both the respondents and the research environment.

Nevertheless, outsider-led research also poses some advantages. In the case of this study, the outsider-position opened up for the possibility of exploring context-specific practices without presuming their accuracy. Also, the respondents often included detailed descriptions of the country's situation, most likely because they supposed that foreigners have limited context-specific knowledge. Thus, reflexivity of one's positionality as a researcher concerns the need to be observant to biases that may appear during the research process, in particular in terms of power relations, the researcher's position, values and preunderstandings and choices of method (Bryman 2016). In this research, the issue was addressed through constant self-reflection, departing from the view that the professionals are the expert on the subject while I, as a researcher, was new to the research setting.

4.6 Ethical considerations

The social work profession is a vast area of practice and research. Though, one might claim that it usually involves working with people in vulnerable situations. While the focus of this study is not *on* women and girls in a situation of violence, it is unarguable *connected* to them (Shaw & Holland 2014). Most of the respondents in this study had administrative or managerial positions within their institutions and organizations. Nevertheless, careful ethical considerations were made before conducting the interviews.

As Diener and Crandall (1978, referred to by Bryman 2016) clarify, ethical considerations are concerned with whether there is a risk of harm of the participants, a lack of consent or an invasion of privacy. For this reason, the Swedish Research Council (2018) guidelines have been applied: namely; *transparency*, *confidentiality*, *autonomy* and *self-determination*. During the field work, a consent form based on these principles was developed, which all respondents read and sign prior to the interviews. By using a

consent form, the respondents were given an opportunity to be fully informed about the research, the interview and their rights before agreeing to participate (Bryman 2016).

The *transparency* principle stresses the importance of informing the respondents of research's purpose in advance (Swedish Research Council 2002). This was ensured as an information sheet was sent to all respondents in advance. They were also given the opportunity of asking questions prior to the interview, so that they could make an informed decision about whether or not to enroll. Secondly, the *confidentiality* principle denotes that the respondents' personal information must be kept anonymous. Permission to record the interview was therefore asked, and all collected data were treated as confidential material. Thirdly, the *autonomy* principle means informing the respondents of the usage of the data and upholding these promises, which is why the respondents were ascertained that the data exclusively would be used for research purposes. Finally, *self-determination* entails the guarantee of voluntary participation (Swedish Research Council 2002). This criterion was fulfilled when informing the respondents of their right to choose whether or not to participate as well as their right to end the interview at any point.

5. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, a theoretical framework for understanding prevention of VAWG will be presented. To achieve the purpose of this thesis and answer the research questions, *prevention theory* has been chosen as the theoretical model. Prevention theory and its concepts can be applied to a range of different social and health problems in society. In general terms, it seeks to explore the variety in scope and form of prevention measures.

Drawing from a public health approach, different definitions of prevention will be outlined and discussed in this chapter, as well as two different classification systems of prevention. This theory, along with its concepts and classification systems, was considered a useful tool for understanding VAWG prevention, as it provides an opportunity to sort, organize and classify different approaches depending on their scope, target groups, purposes and goals.

5.1 Defining prevention

According to the Encyclopedia of Social Work, the word *prevention* is derived from the Latin word 'praevernire', meaning 'to come before'. It further denoted that the concept indicates that something is effectively done *before* a situation or a condition has evolved (Gulotta & Bloom 2003). Likewise, the public health scholars Chehimi, Cohen and Valdovinos (2011) claim that prevention, in general terms, can be described as taking action in the first place, before a physical, psychical or social problem has developed.

The concept *prevention* has its roots in public health and is therefore often used within the field of disease prevention. However, as Romano (2015) explains, prevention is a crucial part within a many different professions, such as social work, psychology, education, health care and economics. The interdisciplinarity of the prevention area entails one of its most important benefits, as its measures have the possibility of addressing the well-being on both an individual and a societal level. While prevention theory historically have focused on medical issues, more recent research reveals its application to a range of multidimensional social issues, such as gender-based violence (Flood 2019), school violence (Miller 2008) substance abuse (Sales et al. 2018), teen pregnancy (Mueller 2017), and homelessness (Szeintuch 2017).

Yet, the interdisciplinarity of prevention theory also implies a definitional issue (Romano 2015). The definition made by National Research Council and Institute of Medicin (2009) denotes that prevention occurs before a problem is fully visible or developed. Within social work, prevention is defined by Farley, Lorenzo Smith and Boyle (2008) as "the process of action taken so that antisocial behavior or personal, family, or community problems are minimized or do not arise at all" (p. 215). The same authors choose to illustrate prevention with a metaphor, claiming that prevention is the ambition of "keeping the vase intact, rather than trying to repair the broken pieces" (p. 218). However, most agree that there are various levels of prevention. Furthermore, it is often argued that the line between prevention on one side, and treatment or intervention on the other, sometimes can be a bit unclear. Thus, different levels of prevention must be acknowledged to make accurate definitions (e.g. Kirk et al. 2017; Storer et al 2016).

5.2 Classifying prevention

As previously mentioned, the public health approach has its roots in science and medicine, and its terminology and tools are therefore not always a perfect fit for social issues, such as VAWG. However, it should not be forgotten that public health advocates and VAWG prevention advocates are striving towards the same goal: the achievement of social equity and well-being across the whole society. As argued by Chamberlain (2008):

> DV [domestic violence] advocates are dedicated to ending social injustices against women. Public health is committed to reducing health disparities. […] DV *is* a health disparity issue for adult victims and their children. The health disparities and social justice aspects of DV are inextricably interwoven, and this interface provides common ground for public health and DV practitioners to learn from one another and work together (Chamberlain 2008, pp. 1-2).

Thus, following a brief outline of the public health perspective, this chapter consists of an elaboration of two classification systems. The first classification system, referred to as the *levels of prevention*, seeks to categorize a prevention measure as *primary*, *secondary* or *tertiary*. According to this classification system, a measure is categorized based on when it is being implemented in relation to the problem's emergence (Kirk et al. 2017; Woody 2006). The second classification system, referred to as the *targeted population approach*, categorizes a prevention intervention as *universal*, *selective* or *indicated*, based on the population that is being targeted (Woody 2006). These two tools to classify prevention provide a framework for theorizing prevention. Chamberlain (2008) explains that the application of these systems facilitates the examination of the *when*, *what* and *who* of prevention; that is, *when* prevention measures are implemented; *what* aspects of the problem to address; and *who* is the target group.

5.2.1 Levels of Prevention

The first classification system is based on *when* a prevention measure is designed to occur, and includes three levels: *primary, secondary, and tertiary* (Chamberlain 2008). Since this research's main focus concentrates on primary prevention, more emphasis has been laid on the elaboration of this level, compared to the other two.

In the *Encyclopedia of Primary Prevention and Health Promotion*, primary prevention is defined as "actions taken to prevent predictable problems, protect existing states of health and healthy functioning, and promote desired states of functioning within

supportive or benign physical and sociocultural environments" (Gulotta & Bloom 2003, p. 3). In line with this, the concept is commonly understood as the ambition to intervene early and in doing so - prevent the problem before it occurs by removing the cause or preventing the development of factors associated to the issue (Chamberlain 2008). Thus, the concept of primary prevention focuses on the underlying causes of an issue, rather than its consequences (Michau 2007). Primary prevention is usually described as taking action 'upstream', which can be illustrated as follows:

> Some people are fishing on the riverbank. All afternoon they [save] people from drowning by pulling them out of the river, until someone decides to walk upstream to find out what is causing people to be swept away in the river in the first place. Taking action upstream to prevent intimate partner violence and sexual violence involves understanding and intervening against those factors that place people at risk for becoming victims and perpetrators of such violence (Harvey, Garcia-Moreno & Butchart 2007, p. 5).

This quote clearly illustrates primary prevention as the ambition to identify and remove the root causes of a problem. Here, it must be mentioned that the use of an upstream approach does not imply that the significance of downstream interventions that occur 'on the riverbank' should be discounted. Advocates argue that it is not a matter of choice between primary prevention measures and other measures, such as for example those aimed at treatment of victims of violence. On the contrary, both approaches are considered essential to assure the well-being of people worldwide (Storer et al. 2016).

Cohen and Chehimi (2010) explain that the concept of primary prevention initially was developed in the late 1940's by Hugh Leavell and Guerney Clark from Harvard and Columbia University. At this time, the approach was mainly disease-oriented, based on the ambition to prevent a disease to develop in the first place by emphasizing general health promotion. The anti-smoking legislation is, among others, an example of a primary prevention measure that have shown undeniable evidence of effectiveness (Kuiper, Nelson & Schooley 2005). However, the social work profession has since long embraced prevention-focused approaches. In fact, as Ruth et al. (2015) explains, many early social work initiatives were initiated with the goal of *preventing* social problems across the community, for example child and maternal health programs. This implies that primary prevention practices, although not being defined as such, have been employed within the social work field since its very beginning (e.g Jane Addams and the settlement house

movement). Still, these initiatives were not defined as primary prevention until the 1960's, when a report by Lydia Rapoport (1961) initiated an increased interest of primary prevention within social work. Since then, the attentiveness for the relation between social-environmental factors and health issues has spread over society and primary prevention has become a widely discussed topic within governments, social work and other health organizations (Miller et al. 2017).

The other two levels of prevention are called *secondary* and *tertiary* prevention. Based on this classification system, a measure is considered secondary prevention if it is implemented once early indicators of an issue have appeared. Accordingly, the term refers to early detection and immediate responses to a situation *after* it has occurred, with the ambition to respond to those at risk and preventing a situation from progressing (Chamberlain 2008). One example is to screen women for domestic violence in health care settings and refer victims to support services and thus, prevent the development of the situation (Heise 2011). Measures targeting individuals at high risk of perpetration with the aim of reducing the likelihood of their engagement in violence are also included under this level of prevention (Flood 2019). The third level, tertiary prevention, also involves measures that are implemented *after* that a problem has occurred and can, for instance, take the form of programs that seek to mitigate the long-lasting consequences of an act of VAWG and to restore health, wellness or safety of the survivors (Flood 2019). The distinction between secondary and tertiary prevention can sometimes be vague and therefore disputed among scholars. For instance, support efforts for women who are in a situation of violence focus partly on mitigating the consequences and partly on preventing the recurrence of violence. In this way, these measures can be considered a mixture of secondary and tertiary prevention (Kirk et al. 2017).

However, it should be noted that not all prevention scholars support this classification system. In fact, some (e.g. McCave & Rishel 2011; Woody 2006) claim that the term *prevention* only should be used for measures implemented *before* a problem has occurred. Thus, it is argued that the categories *primary*, *secondary*, *tertiary* should be replaced with *prevention*, *treatment*, *rehabilitation*, as the second two are initiated after that the violence has occurred and are focusing on the consequences. Yet, other scholars (e.g. Chamberlain 2008) argue that measures targeting a situation of VAWG that already has occurred also have a prevention-focused approach as they seek to prevent long-term consequences and other issues in the future. However, in this thesis, the classification system based on the terms *primary, secondary* and *tertiary prevention* will be applied.

5.2.2 Targeted Population Approach

The second classification system, usually referred to as the *targeted population approach*, is based on the population that is being affected by the prevention measures, or for whom it is likely to be beneficial. This classification system is divided into three categories of prevention measures: *universal*, *selective* and *indicated* (Chamberlain 2008).

The category *universal* includes measures that have the intention of benefiting everyone, and thus are directed toward a general public or an entire population group (Mizrahi 2008). Large-scale awareness-raising campaigns on VAWG, for example, fall under this category (Sarmiento et al. 2015). *Selective* preventive measures target individuals or groups who are at a higher risk for developing or becoming subject to a particular problem compared to the general population (Jeglic & Calkins 2016). An example on VAWG preventions measures that usually are selective is economic empowerment programs, as they typically focus on populations of lower economic status (Tankard & Lyengar 2018). Selective interventions are sometimes criticized for causing or contributing to stigmatization of the recipients when 'selecting them'. Finally, *indicated* prevention would be employed with individuals or groups with minimal but yet detectable signs of perpetrating or experiencing violence (Miller et al. 2017).

5.2.3 Combining the classification systems

The two classification systems of prevention presented above can be used to describe the same prevention. Chamberlain (2008) claims that: "Universal preventive measures are usually primary prevention strategies; selective prevention measures typically focus on secondary prevention strategies while indicated prevention measures usually involve tertiary prevention strategies directed to high-risk groups" (p. 5). Though, caution is advised when making such broad generalizations. However, the increased demand for primary prevention is partly due to the fact that its measures often targets whole populations and thus can provide universal benefits in a way that selective or indicated targeted programs cannot (Storer et al. 2016). It is therefore reasonable to argue that Chamberlain's (2008) suggestion, at least in some cases, can be accurate. Likewise, scholars argue that secondary and tertiary prevention measures are crucial elements to support victims and prevent recurrence of VAWG. Yet, they mostly do so on an individual scale, whereas primary prevention measures have the possibility of preventing problems on a broader societal level (Cohen & Chehimi 2010).

6. Findings and discussion

This chapter will outline and discuss the findings of this research through the lens of prevention theory. The chapter will first present the respondents' understandings of the causes of VAWG. The next section consists of a discussion on the respondents' views on how perspectives on VAWG and prevention have changed over time, and how it is understood within the social work field in Lanús today. At last, prevention practices of VAWG within the social field in Lanús Municipality will be presented and reflected upon.

The respondents' names have been anonymized. Instead, they will be referred to by an interview number and the type of organization or institution they represent - that is: the Ministry of Social Development (MDS), the National University of Lanús (UNLA)[19], the Directorate of Women, the local Government of Lanús Municipality, the Deliberative Department of Lanús Municipality and the community-based organization *Mariposas de Villa París*[20]. Two of the respondents represent different programs at the MDS. In these cases, the name of the programs will also be included in the reference.

6.1 Causes and triggering factors of VAWG

As previously established, primary prevention is commonly understood as the ambition to prevent a problem before it occurs by removing the root causes or preventing the development of factors associated with it (Chamberlain 2008). In other words, primary prevention work seeks to 'move upstream'; that is, to identify and remove the cause of a problem, rather than exclusively addressing its consequences. This notion leads us to the first sub research question of this research, namely: *Which are the root causes of VAWG?*

According to most VAWG scholars and experts, it is impossible to determine general causes of VAWG (e.g. Heise 2011; Storer 2016). This standpoint was also one of the most prominent to surface in the interviews conducted for this research. The question about root causes generated various thoughts and reflections among the respondents. In line with the social-ecological model, it was acknowledged that violence must be understood in relation to the interaction between a range of different causes and factors. Yet, some factors were described as overarching causes, and others as triggering factors.

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[19] While the respondent currently is employed at UNLA, she also has working experience from various organizations engaged within VAWG prevention. This respondent is therefore not, in this case, representing the university, but offers a broad view of VAWG prevention in Lanús during the last decades.

[20] For further details, see *Appendix 1 Record of Respondents*

Firstly, it can be stated that that there was a general consensus among all respondents that VAWG is rooted in structures of power imbalance between men and women.

> We believe that violence is related to unequal power dimensions. This is the factor that allows these situations of violence against women to exist, right? It is related to the way of thinking about what it means to be male and female (Interview No.4, Local Government, 2019).

It is emphasized, however, that these structures are built upon and constantly strengthened through norms and practices of an unequal and discriminatory nature. The respondents reasoned that these structures are deeply rooted in the people and culture, despite of recent years' increased awareness. Culture, in particular, was a recurring word throughout most interviews, often connected to reflections upon traditional gender roles.

> It is related to the culture. We still have a strong traditional culture in this country, and gender roles are very installed in our culture. These are behaviors learned throughout history, the idea of men's superiority over women, these are the norms that the culture has given to each and every one of us (Interview No.2, MDS: Nosotras en Lucha, 2019).

Several respondents described the culture of machismo and deeply imbedded traditional gender norms and roles as causes of VAWG, since they support and uphold unequal power dimensions in society. It was also stated that the historical view of male dominance and female subservience still is accepted in many Argentinian communities, which, according to the respondents, might be related to the country's history of military violence. Thus, normalization processes of these structures were also highlighted. It was claimed that gender inequalities are part of most Argentinians' daily lives, and that the normalization process of it has a reinforcing function. Thus, in order to prevent VAWG, all respondents stressed the importance of addressing not only structures of power imbalance, but also the normalization process of them. One respondent stated that:

> If we normalize and accept that 'well, we are born into this world to serve, to always obey, and never say no', if we normalize all that, it will never change. So, this is we have to restore, because we have it very internalized (Interview No.2, The MDS: Nosotras en Lucha, 2019).

Several respondents pushed for the need to address the normalization process of inequalities. However, the quote above poses an interesting remark in relation to this

discussion. It is reasonable to assume that the respondent refers to 'women' when she is saying 'we' - for example: "this is what *we* (women) have to restore". Thus, although not explicitly said, this statement gives the impression that women bear the responsibility to stop these normalization processes and transform gender norms, or possibly, that women are the ones who need to change their way of thinking.

Besides the respondents' view on a strong linkage between unequal power dimensions and VAWG, a number of triggering factors were identified. The respondents made clear distinctions between causes and triggering factors and stressed the importance of not confusing them. For example, when asked about causes of VAWG, one respondent began her answer by referring to the culture of violence in general. Nevertheless, while the generalized violence was viewed a contributing factor to VAWG, it was affirmed that it is not a cause of it. The same respondent clarified her answer by saying that:

> So yes, there is a lot of violence in Argentina. But women and girls have to feel insecure all the time, right? In the streets, at work, at the hospital, everywhere. Even in our homes, which is supposed to be a place of love (...) It is not like that for men and boys. So, there must be difference, right? (Interview No.1, The General Directorate of Women, 2019).

Accordingly, in the interviews, various triggering factors that seem to be associated with the prevalence of VAWG were mentioned. To begin with, several respondents pointed out that factors such as financial stress, unemployment, depression or substance use can increase the risk of perpetrating violence or aggravate the severity of it. Still, all respondent concluded that it is crucial to not mistake these factors for causes of violence. As exemplified by one respondent:

> Of course, there are factors that make it worse. Drug use for example. It is very common in this country, unfortunately, but the drug is not violent. The violent behavior has other causes which can be enhanced by the drug (Interview No.3, UNLA, 2019).

While the respondents agreed upon the fact that VAWG is not caused by substance use, it was maintained that the growing substance use in Argentina has contributed to the growing rates of VAWG. Likewise, the majority of the respondents emphasized the impact of socioeconomic factors. While these factors were not considered causes in themselves, all respondents highlighted the importance of not overlooking their relevance

to the issue of VAWG. Firstly, it was argued that the economic aspect is extremely crucial to consider when working with women in situations of violence.

> A woman who lacks work, or who earns little, she needs money from her husband to give her children food. She cannot leave (Interview No.1, The General Directorate of Women, 2019).

This quote illustrates how consideration of socioeconomic aspects is fundamental when working with victims of VAWG; that is, within secondary and tertiary prevention. However, it was also stated that low-income areas in Argentina often are characterized by less awareness on human rights and more social acceptance of violence. In other words, this aspect was not only considered relevant to measures targeting women in situations of violence, but also within primary prevention of VAWG. The respondents also highlighted the aspect of social exclusion as a potential risk factor. Migrating women, for example, who do not speak the language, have more difficulties in terms of gaining access to information about their rights. Thus, socioeconomic aspects, while not being root causes, were underlined as crucial to consider within primary prevention. This notion is supported by research, who suggest that while VAWG cuts across all socioeconomic classes, it can disproportionately burden some groups (e.g. Heise 2011).

Finally, lacking legislation was highlighted as a triggering factor of VAWG. While the respondents considered current laws on VAWG in Argentina rather advanced, it was argued that the problem lies with how they are enforced. At the same time, it was emphasized that the legislation is not a solution in itself, which also implies that the existence of VAWG is not rooted in lacking legislation.

> Having good laws is important, but not enough. The problem goes beyond that. It is integrated in our culture, in the people. So, it's not about changing some laws and then everything will be better, no, it's about changing minds (Interview No.2, The MDS: Nosotras en Lucha, 2019).

In conclusion, the findings reveal the view that there are multiple factors that causes and trigger VAWG. While unequal power structures remain the common thread, it is underlined that these structures are complex, and constantly reproduced through deeply rooted systems of gender norms and roles. This notion confirms the needs for multiple approaches to prevent VAWG. It can be reasoned that if one applies approaches that focus exclusively upon one single cause and disregard other influential factors, the picture of what drives violence (and thus what may work to prevent it) is left incomplete.

6.2 The understanding of VAWG

Turning to the understanding of VAWG, the respondents claimed that the perspective has changed immensely in the last decades. To begin with, it is relevant to mention that all respondents highlighted the decades of efforts made by women before them. As previously described in this thesis, Argentina has a strong tradition of women's groups and social movements and, in line with this, one respondent explained that:

> Today's view on gender-based violence is relatively new in Argentina. I mean, new in terms of the massive debate, that the media and others are talking about this. Of course, there has been many, many people fighting for this for a long time, long before me. But before, it was made very invisible (Interview No.3, UNLA, 2019).

Several respondents explained how the first steps toward the recognition of VAWG as a serious human rights violation were taken a few years after the reestablishment of the democracy. In the transition from dictatorship to democracy, many groups protested against the many acts of state abuse that had been taking place the previous years. These protests led to the growth of human rights politics within the democratic state. In the interviews, it was described how the human rights perspective influenced all levels of society. One of the respondents explained, for example, that when she started studying social work in the university right after the reinstatement of the democracy, they were formed ideologically and academically from the perspective of human rights.

It is further described how the renewed focus on human rights and an increased number of protests against VAWG lead to the implementation of Argentina's first law domestic violence in 1994. However, this law only included violence taking place in domestic areas, and terms such as 'gender-based violence' or 'femicides' were still not acknowledged. Acts of VAWG were instead described in ways that further reproduced traditional gender norms and roles.

> In articles about murders of women, they would have headlines like 'crime of passion', 'murders for love' or 'when she cheated, the jealously took over and he killed her'. These types of comments. Like the man's actions were justified (Interview No.1, The General Directorate of Women, 2019).

The respondents claimed that the language used by the media, in particular, served as a major obstacle to prevent VAWG, as it was directing the attention away from gender

issues and helped to maintain its invisibility. This notion is affirmed by previous research on discourses. As argued by Burrell (2016), terminology and language used by the government and the media in relation to VAWG determine peoples' understanding of it and contribute to the construction of certain representations of the problem. In other words, discourses have a great influence on the maintenance of VAWG. The respondents further explained that this perspective has changed greatly in recent years, especially since the emergence of *Ni Una Menos* in 2015. It is described how the movement led to increased public awareness and a 'discursive change', not only in relation to VAWG but also to other issues concerning women's rights. Thus, alongside the growing awareness, terms and expressions used by government agencies and the media also changed.

> The term femicide, for example, was established as it was recognized that these murders of women had nothing to do with a common homicide, and even less with a 'crime of passion'. It has to do with patriarchal power structures (Interview No.3, UNLA, 2019).

In line with this, most of the respondents who participated in this research, claimed that they today are working from a *gender transformative approach*. This means that they focus explicitly on a critical examination and transformation of gender-related norms, and toward gender equitable attitudes and behaviors (Casey et al. 2018).

Turning to the understanding of VAWG among the institutions and organizations in this research, it can be said that all respondents defined VAWG in accordance with the country's comprehensive legislation on VAWG, which was enacted in 2009 in Argentina. Within this law, VAWG is defined as "any conduct, action or omission, which directly or indirectly, both in public and private spheres, based on an unequal power relationship, affects the woman's life, liberty, dignity, physical integrity, psychological, sexual, economic or patrimonial, as well as her personal security" (Ley Nacional 26.485, article 4). This law, in contrast with the previous one, proposes a comprehensive approach that encompasses the violence that occurs in domestic areas as a reflection of the daily violence that occurs in public spheres, which naturalizes unequal power relations (D'Angel et al. 2015). Several respondents explained that the law often is used within their prevention work, for example in workshops, as it provides a category of analysis of the gender perspective and all different forms of VAWG. Furthermore, it was argued that the law provides them with an opportunity to reflect on other aspects related to VAWG, such as intersectional perspective in terms of ethnicity, identity and sexual orientation.

Accordingly, the analysis of the interview material shows that a gendered discourse is present in the prevention work. Noteworthy, when analyzing the respondents' statements in relation to the understanding of VAWG, is that they mainly refer to acts of violence that are done *to women*, rather than acts of violence that are done *by men*. In other words, the agent of violence – which in most cases is a man – has been removed. As Lamb (1991) describes, the removal of the agent of violence implies a problematization of VAWG where the men are invisible, and where the emphasis is placed on women. This discourse is reflected in the content of prevention practices used in Lanús and will thus be discussed in more detail further below in this thesis.

6.4 The definition of VAWG prevention

The findings show that the respondents' definitions of primary prevention ranged in their clarity. First of all, it should be mentioned that while the respondents were familiar with the terms *primary*, *secondary* or *tertiary* prevention, none of them used them within their work. This is not surprising, however, since these terms derive from a Western public health framework and are not based on official definitions. Instead, the respondents categorized VAWG measures as either *prevención* ('prevention') or *atención* ('attention' or 'service'). When they were asked about where the line is drawn between these two terms, it was claimed that *prevención* takes place *before* an act of violence, and *atención* takes place *after*. Thus, the weight in their definitions lies in the time during which the measure is carried out in relation to the problem's occurrence. Yet, on a few occasions, the respondents also used the term *prevención* when referring to measures aimed at preventing an act of VAWG from reoccurring. For instance, one respondent considered awareness-raising initiatives about the reporting process of VAWG as prevention, since its purpose is to prevent potential femicides or the proceed of the situation. Thus, most programs blended these approaches in organizational-specific ways.

However, when the respondents were asked about their understanding of primary prevention of VAWG, they all defined it as measures that seek to prevent acts of violence in the first place, although the views on the content and scope of primary prevention measures varied greatly. Most respondents shared their perspectives on primary prevention as the ambition to achieve a societal change.

When I think of primary prevention, I think of the state's efforts in relation to women. For example, my cousin lives in Finland and told me that women there have one and a half year of parental leave, and men can also choose. Just as an example […] Prevention, I'm thinking about the rights of people, about a present state that takes care of its people and their rights, to prevent social problems on a broader level (Interview No.2, MDS: Nosotras en Lucha, 2019).

The respondent associates primary prevention with measures taken on a societal level, with a universal targeted approach. This thought coincides with the basic idea of primary prevention, according to which programs target larger parts of the population, rather than on a smaller scale. Another interesting remark in relation to this quote is that even though the respondent was asked about primary prevention *of VAWG*, her answer concerned maternity leave. In fact, it is pointed out that primary prevention of VAWG, according to the respondent, does not necessarily have an explicit focus on violence. Instead, prevention of VAWG is understood as a crucial part of the general fight for women's rights. It is argued that initiatives aimed at improving women's situation in general, indirectly strengthen prevention of VAWG as well. One respondent clarifies that:

Prevention of VAWG does not always have a direct focus on violence, because it is not only related to violence, it is related to women's rights. The same goes for safe and legal abortion, it's also related to women's rights. And equal salaries, and so on. All of this is based on a framework for women's rights, isn't it? (Interview No.2, MDS: Nosotras en Lucha, 2019).

Interestingly, this understanding of primary prevention of VAWG include all measures related to women's rights and the improvement of women's situation in general, whether they focus on economic empowerment of women, safe and legal abortions or women's participation in sports. This leads us to the understanding that VAWG is not an isolated issue. Instead, the eradication of VAWG requires the achievement of gender equality on all levels of society. Accordingly, while most of the institutions and organizations that participated in this study have gender-mainstreaming components within their programs, only a few have an explicit focus on the problem of VAWG.

The findings show that the preventive measures in Lanús vary from large-scale awareness-raising campaigns to small-scale community-based workshops. Notably, none of the respondents mentioned measures focusing on at-risk individuals, although whole communities that were considered to be in a greater vulnerable situation were targeted. The following chapter will outline and analyze the main approaches.

6.5 Prevention practices

As previously established, all respondents claimed that VAWG is rooted in structures of power imbalance between men and women, although it is stressed that these are complex and upheld by deeply embedded systems of gender norms, gender roles and normalization of violence. Thus, in order to prevent VAWG, it was maintained that these structures must be addressed. Yet, focus, entry-point and scope of the programs differed considerably. However, the following main approaches were identified: public awareness and denormalization of violence; empowerment and life skills development; women's group and community programs. Moreover, the respondents argued strongly for the impact of laws on VAWG, as well as the need for multi-level approaches. In the following sections, all these topics will be presented and analyzed.

6.5.1 Public awareness and denormalization of violence

Awareness-raising campaigns are among the most common primary prevention strategies of VAWG. However, the scope of these initiatives varies from large-scale campaigns and school-based programs to smaller workshops on a community level. Some of them target whole populations and others specific groups in particularly vulnerable situations (Hyman et al. 2000). Accordingly, the findings of this research show that there are many Lanús-based initiatives aimed at increasing awareness on VAWG, women's rights and other gender issues, although they take different forms. All respondents argued that increased awareness and knowledge are essential tools within primary prevention, and it is therefore considered a priority within their work.

In Argentina, awareness-raising initiatives and informative campaigns are long-established tools that have dominated the fight for women's rights. As previously clarified, the respondents maintained that the recognition of VAWG is due to the efforts made by decades of women's groups and social movements. For example, it is described how the demands made in the post-dictatorship period led to the creation of the National Council of Women[21] in 1992. This council was responsible for developing programs aimed at promoting gender equality and women empowerment. Soon after its formation, the country's first Directorate of Women opened in the city of Buenos Aires. One of the

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[21] In 2017, the National Institute for Women (INAM) was created, giving continuity to the National Council of Women.

respondents in this study, who at that time was employed at the Directorate of Women, explained how their first program came to be an important milestone in the struggle for the recognition of VAWG as a serious human rights issue.

> A program of visibility was initiated. Along with the opening of women's centers, the topic of violence started to get integrated into the society, into the debate. So, […] the program focused on sensitization, to start installing the topic (Interview No.3, UNLA, 2019).

This program consisted of two axes; the opening of women's centers (i.e. secondary prevention) and sensitization of violence (i.e. primary prevention). Thus, the program is a clear example of a VAWG program with a combination of different levels of prevention. While this program contributed greatly to the visibility of VAWG, the respondent argued that it is unthinkable to talk about these advances without mentioning the important efforts made by women before them.

However, while earlier social movements have been crucial in the fight for women's rights, many other awareness-raising programs have been, and still are being, employed. Most of the organizations and institutions that participated in this study carry out different forms of awareness-raising programs, such as one-time events, community or school-based workshops or tabling at community events. While the content of these programs varies, the main focus is laid on challenging discriminatory gender roles.

At the local government, for example, VAWG prevention partly consists of different workshops for reflection on individual and collective actions, whereas their aim is to visualize situations of asymmetry of power between men and women and deconstruct harmful gender roles. Within the institution, VAWG prevention is defined as "efforts aimed at a sociocultural transformation on both an individual, group and community level" (Interview No.4, Local Government, 2019). Thus, while the underlying purpose of these programs is to prevent VAWG, their explicit focus is put on the achievement of a cultural and social transformation in regard to gender roles and norms. In other words, the programs are directly targeting the factors that are considered root causes of VAWG.

> To prevent violence from occurring in the first place, we have to aim for a cultural and social change of gender. This is why we, in the workshops, focus on the deconstruction of gender stereotypes. We want to increase awareness of the impact of these things. All these gender norms and roles, they create inequalities that allow an environment, which, not always but many times, results in situations of violence (Interview No.4, Local Government, 2019).

The quote above illustrates how the respondent understands the existence of VAWG as the result of discriminatory gender norms and socially constructed gender roles. In line with this, many respondents expressed that awareness raising programs are crucial tools to visualize, identify, reflect and transform the structures that naturalize processes of patriarchal power dimensions. However, as previously described, gender norms and roles of discriminatory nature are deeply enrooted in the Argentinian society, and this fact proposes several challenges for those engage in VAWG prevention. Likewise, the respondents acknowledged that the aim of "achieving a cultural and social change" is a long-term goal. Nevertheless, it is also stressed it is achievable. Several respondents asserted that the last decade's awareness raising activities and movements have led to an integration of the gender perspective, in particular among the younger generation.

> Considering our history, there is a lot to do. I always say that we are all sexist in recovery. But we are beginning to see a change, already. The new generation, for example, they already have the gender perspective incorporated. They come with a philosophy of life, an ideology, where they have the gender perspective installed (Interview No.4, Local Government, 2019)

Most of the awareness-raising activities carried out in Lanús are open to the community, and thus uses a universal targeted approach. However, workshops are also held within educational settings. As argued by many scholars (e.g. Cohen and Chehimi 2011; Heise 2011), children and youths are an important target group for primary prevention. Likewise, at the local government, it is claimed that education institutions are key settings for normative change and social transformation, considering that children and youths spend most of their days there. Accordingly, in the interviews, several respondents argued that educational reforms that strengthen gender equality in the overall educational system should be put in place, and that gender-responsive pedagogy should be integrated into the education process. Most of the school-based workshops serve the same purpose – that is, to encourage children and youths to critical reflection upon gender roles and denormalization of violence. However, the purpose is not only to raise awareness upon discriminatory gender norms, but also to strengthen the skills of the students to create equitable, healthy and respectful relationships and social bonds.

> It is also about giving them an outlet, to give them the opportunity to express their thoughts in a comfortable and safe environment (Interview No.4, Local Government, 2019)

Interestingly, it is argued that focus on positive relationship skills in educational settings is key within VAWG prevention, in particular since these are children's first socialization area. Thus, this approach does not have an explicit focus on VAWG or gender roles, but address protective factors, such as relationship skills and personal development.

In the interviews, it is further shared that workshops either are held with the whole class, with only the girls or only the boys. Nevertheless, workshops are also held with the school staff. It is stressed that educational settings are not isolated from a country's culture and norms, and if these are not addressed properly, schools can contribute to the reinforcement of these discriminatory structures. In line with this, it is reasoned that schools can normalize the culture of violence, for example by using teaching methods that reinforce traditional gender norms. It is therefore considered crucial to target both the students and the staff. All these programs are carried out education institutions upon request from the headmaster, which implies that a selective targeted approach is applied.

Besides these programs, other measures focusing on raising awareness are implemented in nightlife settings for youths. In one program, developed by the local government, staff at nightclubs have received training in key issues related to gender equality. Thus, there is always at least two people trained in the issue of gender-based violence at night, and posters with slogans such as *'No' means 'No'* are put up, along with information on how to get more information or assistance if needed. This program is another example of a mix between preventative and responsive purposes. Other youths in Lanús are approached through the local government's collaborations with sports clubs.

> For example, we currently work with 80 teenager boys from a sports club in Lanús, on the subject 'New Masculinities'. Our mission there is deconstruct the traditional model of masculinity (Interview No.4, Local Government, 2019).

This is one of the few prevention programs that surface during the interviews that target men or boys. This is surprising, as research proposes that increased efforts to involve men and boys in VAWG prevention have been made in recent years (Flood 2019). Moreover, both previous research and the respondents argue that approaches where both men and women are targeted and work together are key in prevention. This gender synchronizing approach relies on the notion that gender norms fundamentally are relational, and that in order to change them, women and men have to work together (Ellsberg 2014). However,

none of the organizations and institutions seemed to apply a specific program where men and women work together, and very few programs target men exclusively.

Despite that the majority of acts of VAWG are perpetrated by men, both in Argentina and worldwide, the findings show that men's engagement in prevention work in Lanús is minimal. This fact poses a need for further analysis. As the chosen theoretical framework of prevention theory is not sufficient to deepen this discussion, a supplementary analytical tool must be applied. Therefore, this aspect will be analyzed through Carol Bacchi's (2016) framework 'What's the problem represented to be?' approach (hereinafter WPR approach). The starting point of the WPR approach is the critical examination of problematizations made within policies. As explained by Bacchi, social policies are understood as measures made to 'fix things', which implies that there are 'problems' that 'need fixing'. Bacchi further claims that these presumed 'problems' are not something that simply exist 'out there' in society. Instead, 'problems' are socially constructed, and thus only exist in the ways in which they are thought about, shaped and defined. In other words, governments and organizations do not only address 'problems'; they take part in giving them meaning. To that end, the WPR approach encourages us to move the focus from the presumed 'problems' to how these 'problems' are shaped – that is; to question the understanding behind problem representations, and the values that shape its policies. This can be done, for example, by examining which aspects that are problematized in policies, and which aspects that are silenced or made invisible (Bacchi 2016).

As earlier established, the respondents in this research define primary prevention of VAWG as efforts made to prevent the violence in the first place, by addressing its root causes. It is further concluded that VAWG is rooted in patriarchal power orders, along with norms related to men's dominance and women's subordination, and the ambition is thus to achieve a social change. Consequently, one might argue that, if the ambition is to stop VAWG by achieving a social change and gender transformation on a societal level (i.e. among both men, women, boys and girls), it is necessary that both genders are engaged in the prevention programs. As Burrel (2016, p. 70) writes: "the gendered social context which underlies men's violence against women […] provides clues as to how this kind of change might be achieved". However, the findings show that prevention practices in Lanús focus almost exclusively on women, whereas men, on the other hand, are made almost completely invisible. Drawing from Bacchi's (2016) WPR approach on problematizations made within policies, this fact implies that women are the ones that 'need fixing'.

As previously clarified, discourses on VAWG have strong implications on the public understanding of the issue (Burrel 2016). In the programs used in Lanús, the problem of VAWG is constructed as a social problem rooted in unequal power dimensions, rather than exertions of power and control by men. One might claim that this is logical, as primary prevention seek to do just that - address root causes, and not specific individuals. Nevertheless, this becomes problematic when efforts to prevent VAWG are limited to work with women, instead of the actual root of the problem. Above all, it diffuses responsibility. The almost exclusive target focus on women gives the impression that the responsibility for preventing VAWG has been lifted from the source of the issue and placed on women. Consequently, departing from Bacchi's (2016) WPR approach, this notion indicates that VAWG is problematized as a 'women's issue' within prevention program in the social work field of Lanús.

6.5.2 Empowerment and life skills development

The concept of empowerment of women has a long history in social work for change. Economic empowerment, in particular, is often described as key to reduce VAWG and achieve gender equality (e.g. Ho & Pavlish 2011; Meija et al. 2014). According to Tankard and Lyengar (2018), economic empowerment can contribute to reduce VAWG within the context of both primary prevention and secondary prevention. Consequently, research suggests that economic empowerment of women has the potential to boost income equality, increase women's independence and improve a woman's situation in the household. Furthermore, reduction in household poverty can decrease financial stress and thus also potential triggers for conflict (Ellsberg 2014; Tankard & Lyengar 2018). It is therefore argued that economic empowerment of women not only leads to reduced levels of VAWG, but also to a social and cultural transformation in terms of gender relations; that is, primary prevention. For example, as argued by Meija et al. (2014), women who earn an income have more possibilities to take action in the household and a greater part in the decision-making. Thus, economic policies can be viewed as primary prevention of VAWG in a future generation. The respondents who participated in this study also lifted economic empowerment of women as an important primary prevention measure of VAWG. In fact, one of the respondents was part of the team at the Ministry of Social Development (MDS) that in 2013 developed a national labor market program on economic empowerment of women; namely, *Ellas Hacen* ('Women who do')

The program Ellas Hacen was a programmatic line of a broader labor market program called *Argentina Trabaja* ('Argentina works'). *Argentina Trabaja* included 100,000 men and women and was carried out by the MDS in 2009, as a response to the high levels of unemployment which followed the deep economic crisis in 2000-2001. A year after the program's initiation, an evaluation showed that 54% of the participants were women, and that the majority of these had not completed formal schooling. There were also a number of illiterate people who never had been to school. The evaluation resulted in the identification of two important data; one, the program had reached the people who really needed it, and two, the profile was much more complex than initially planned. Besides, the respondent from MDS shared that certain situations related to gender issues emerged within the program, along with situations which directly manifested cases of VAWG.

> We had two femicides. Two women who participated in *Argentina Trabaja* were killed. One woman was killed by her partner in the car, in front of her son, when they were on their way to the cooperative. The woman was proposing to separate from her partner due to violence because she now had an income from the program. She had started studying to finish secondary school, and her new friends in the cooperative supported her to make the decision to separate from him. And he killed her (Interview No.5, MDS: Ellas Hacen, 2019).

It has been suggested that economic empowerment of women can generate negative effects on the women's well-being and increase the risk of experiencing violence. According to this theory, women's increased power position, both in the household and on the labor market, can result in men trying to make reinstatement for their decreased authority (Tankard & Lyengar 2018). Within the MDS, this problem was acknowledged and led to intense discussions on how to address the gender question in order to avoid similar situations. Following this, the MDS made the decision to create a new program with the same characteristics, but exclusively for women. Thus, based on the learnings from *Argentina Trabaja*, the program *Ellas Hacen* was carried out in 2013. This was a gender mainstreaming program which included 100,000 women across the country. The targeted group was women who were in a vulnerable situation, such as mothers with three or more children, mothers of children with disabilities or women who were (or had been) experiencing gender-based violence. In other words, a selective targeted approach was applied, focusing on individuals at higher risk than average. The program aimed at the reintegration of women in society, not only in terms of labor, but also educationally and

socially. The women in the program obtained an economic incentive, could associate with other women and complete their primary or secondary education or start new professions. At the same time, they also participated in more integral practical or theoretical training, such as community health, agroecology, popular communication, prevention and treatment of gender violence. All courses were gender mainstreaming.

In 2018, *Ellas Hacen* and other labor market programs were unified under a new program, which do not have an exclusive focus on women or the issue of VAWG. Nonetheless, all respondents agreed that *Ellas Hacen* was a clear example of primary prevention and a crucial program for the general promotion of gender equality. The findings support the view that programs on economic empowerment not only reduce women's dependency on men, but also contributes to social change and poverty reduction, which are essential factors in VAWG prevention. However, several respondents highlighted that, besides the economical aspect, women's empowerment needs to occur in sociocultural dimensions. Likewise, research (e.g. Jewkes 2002) shows that narrow conceptions of empowerment, such as economic, have been criticized for not including culture, social norms and contexts. It is stated that economic empowerment is an important tool for strengthening equal rights, income and opportunities, but it is not enough to defy the gender power imbalance and thus, not enough to prevent VAWG.

Accordingly, several respondents presented primary prevention goals of fostering skills development. The local government, for example, carries out a program focusing on both economic and social empowerment of women, which is partly oriented toward women who are in a situation of socioeconomic vulnerability, such as unemployment, and partly toward women who want to become entrepreneurs. The workshops for this second module focus on skills development and provide the women with tools such as digital marketing and computer programs. One of the purposes is to empower the women with skills they need for working life. However, great emphasis is also put on social empowerment. As pointed out by the respondent:

> It is not only about preparing them for jobs. We want to give them the tools to build self-confidence and autonomy, develop educational skills and at the same time build relationships with other women who are living in the area (Interview No.4, Local Government, 2019).

Group-based training aimed at socially empowering women are commonly applied within the context of VAWG primary prevention. As Ellsberg (2014) explains, these programs

often include educational workshops with indicated or non-indicated community members, where the goals are to encourage to critical reflection on underlying gendered expectations or to support skills development. Thus, VAWG prevention components are often embedded in these workshops, even if not mentioned explicitly. Accordingly, the findings show that the mechanism of social empowerment of women plays an important role within their prevention work. In fact, many programs had an implicit purpose of increasing self-confidence and strengthening the social network.

> When you look from the micro perspective, dependence has to do with something subjective, and not with some concrete thing, such as money. It is true that economic autonomy gives you another freedom to decide, right, but at the same time, there are women with a lot of money who still are being exposed to violence. Violence go beyond that. So, I believe that, to be independent, that is something you are within yourself (Interview No.3, UNLA, 2019).

The majority of institutions and organizations presented in this research carry out different forms of empowerment programs for women, which again implies that a great part of VAWG prevention in Lanús consists of efforts directed toward women. The main focus of these programs is laid on educating and strengthening women and help them to develop skills and social networks of support. Returning to the WPR approach, one fundamental component is the view that policies and programs *are* problematizations - that is; they imply what is held to be problematic (Bacchi 2016). Thus, while the intentions are good, these empowerment strategies reveal an underlying ambition to shape and transform women and their behaviors. Naturally, the purpose of this discussion is not to disregard the need for 'safe spaces' for women or the value of social support, nor the effective outcomes of empowerment of women. Instead, it seeks to highlight the issue that lies in the problematization of VAWG in policies, when these only target women and thus reflect an indirect ambition to 'change women'.

In the context of Argentina, it can be argued that historical factors related to abuse, violence and lack of human rights have generated a need for the creation of women's networks and groups. Due to these factors, along with contemporary structural inequality, different forms of empowerment are considered important strategies within VAWG prevention. It can, for example, be reasoned that these approaches center on equality of opportunity, rather than equality of outcomes (Hearn & McKie 2010). From this aspect, it is reasonable to underpin empowerment for women. However, drawing from the WPR

approach, social policies target 'things that need to be changed' (Bacchi 2016). Thus, by creating prevention programs that almost exclusively apply measures that target women, and in particular, measures that aim to 'change women', it is not only implied that women are held to be problematic, but also that women are denoted the responsibility for preventing VAWG. Paradoxically, this indicates that these programs risk both reflecting and reinforcing inequalities - that is, the issue they aim to eliminate.

6.5.3 Women's groups and community programs

Research proposes (e.g. Ellsberg 2014; Perrin et al. 2019) that community programs aimed at preventing of VAWG often seek to raise awareness. Still, these approaches are multiple and range from selective women's groups to universal public events. Two of the respondents represented different kinds of community programs - namely, the organization *Mariposas* and a community-based project carried out by MDS.

   In the interviews, the common opinion was that community-level approaches have great potential within VAWG prevention. When asking about the outcome of community promotion projects, two key results were highlighted. The first one was related awareness and knowledge. It was stated that the women's groups have led to an increase in the members' awareness of their rights and courage to stand up for them. Moreover, while community approaches, such as women's groups, often consist of a low number of participants, it is argued that the results extend beyond the group. These programs are often strategically implemented in at-risk areas, which implies that the targeted approach commonly is selective or indicated. Nevertheless, the quote below denotes that the content of the program also reaches people outside the initial targeted group.

> Naturally, all this happens on a micro-level. Still, we have seen that the knowledge is spreading. The group members talk to their friends, neighbors, relatives. They teach their kids. And so on (Interview No.2, MDS: Nosotras en Lucha, 2019)

It can thus be argued that these programs have multiplying effects; as the knowledge spreads, it also impacts the social climate in the community and influences relationships within families and between friends. Besides, it is claimed that the small size of these groups can be an advantage. Accordingly, Ogundipe et al. (2018) argue that small group participatory workshops may facilitate the discussion and encourage collective actions

against VAWG. Besides, these characteristics enhance the women's feelings of being seen and listened to. On a similar note, the respondent from *Mariposas* argues:

> Community initiatives are an interesting and important path in the ambition to prevent violence once and for all. Small organizations where people, women, feel referenced, feel like they are part of something, it empowers them. If the organizations are very large, they will feel like a number (Interview No.7, Mariposas, 2019).

Following this line of thought, the findings indicate that the second key result of the community programs is that women have achieved a greater support network. The development of mutual supportive relationships and social bonds, in particular, were defined as crucial mechanisms within VAWG primary prevention. In these programs, both women who are experiencing violence and women who are not, participate. Here, one might argue that the line between prevention on one side and treatment on the other side, becomes vague. It is argued that these are preventive strategies, although it is also stated that they are of great value for survivors of violence. Nevertheless, it is clarified that the primary objective of the groups is to strengthen and empower women in general, which correspond with their view of primary prevention. It can thus be reasoned that primary prevention has the potential of complementing responsive measures. Furthermore, in some of the community programs, VAWG or women's rights are not even mentioned. Instead, the groups meetings focus on a range of different activities.

> They form friendships. We have a group, for example, that organized an outing this weekend, to go out and dance. When they joined the group, they did not have a friend. I remember when they arrived, and where they are now (Interview No.4, Local Government, 2019).

Thus, the respondents claimed that the existence of a women's group in itself, along with the exchange of experiences, the creation of social bonds and the increase in self-esteem, is what constitute the primary prevention approach.

One of the MDS-respondents represents a project that takes place in a neighborhood in the town Monte Chingolo, Lanús. This neighborhood is one of the most densely populated in Lanús where many families are living in poverty and extreme social vulnerability. In 2012, the MSD initiated a community promotion project in the area, which soon revealed that the issue of VAWG significantly crossed many of the women's

lives. Some women were in a situation of domestic violence, while others went through other situations of social vulnerability, such as child abuse and normalization of violence.

> Most women here have been in this situation for many years. For these women [...] it's normal to them, or well, they've been thinking that this it is normal, it's quite striking (Interview No.2, MDS: Nosotras en Lucha, 2019).

While some of the earlier mentioned prevention programs address populations at-risk, either exclusively or as a priority, the prevention context and targeted approach of the project in Monte Chingolo is indicated, since VAWG is considered a common and partly normalized feature in the area. The MDS workers particularly saw the need of establishing a separate safe space for women, with the purpose of empowering them through critical reflection and gain tools to transform the reality surrounding them. Initially, a collaboration was set up with key leaders, influential stakeholders and institutional references with the aim of reflecting upon the issue in this specific context. Following this, women of the community were invited to participate in workshops, during which topics such as gender stereotypes, violence, sexual diversity and sexual and reproductive health, were discussed in relation to the daily life of the participants. At the end of the project, the participants showed a great interest in a continuation of the program and expressed that the workshops had increased their knowledge about their own rights and helped to generate new social bonds with other women in the neighborhood.

> The group functioned as a space for mutual support between women, women who are neighbors, who are friends, who are relatives. Like a network of support, basically (Interview No.2, MDS: Nosotras en Lucha, 2019).

The network of support is a recurring theme in the interviews, and it is argued that social isolation and lack of social support trigger violence. In Monte Chingolo, the program's participants agreed upon the group name *Nosotras en Lucha ('Women in fight'),* incorporated the gender perspective and began to work with a weekly frequency. At this stage, the group's main objective was the internal strengthening of the group and its members, through enhancing of their capacities and autonomy. Accordingly, reflection groups from a gender perspective were held, focusing on topics such as 'women who made history' and 'prevention of violence'. Other activities included cinema-debate, cultural outings as well as writing workshops.

[This neighborhood] is like, how should I say […] We are far from everything. Before, there were many women who did not even know, for example, the train station, who had not been to the capital. They expressed such desire of wanting to see something else, of going to a theater, see the city. So, we did (Interview No.2, MDS: Nosotras en Lucha, 2019).

Further evaluations showed the development of strong social ties among the members and, in particular, the achievement of increased awareness and self-confidence.

Another community organization that participated in this study was *Mariposas de Villa París*, which was created as a branch of the larger organization *Fundación Propuesta*. The respondent from *Mariposas* had participated in *Fundación Propuesta* for many years when she recognized the need for a similar project in her own neighborhood – namely, Villa París. The respondent explains that:

It's an area with much less resources, with people in poverty, in socially vulnerable situations. Women here cannot go to la Fundación and participate in activities. A woman of the Bolivian community with seven kids, for example, does not even consider going, she cannot afford the trip, or leave the kids. That's how Mariposas was born (Interview No.7, Mariposas, 2019).

This quote clearly illustrates that socioeconomic aspects not only are relevant to secondary and tertiary prevention, but also to primary prevention. Many respondents highlighted that low-income areas in Lanús often are characterized by less awareness in terms human rights, and that accessibility to information and programs often are hindered by socioeconomic factors. Previous research (e.g. Michau 2009) denotes that community approaches to prevent VAWG hold many challenges. Likewise, beyond the situation of poverty in Monte Chingolo, the respondent explained that:

So, I started thinking about how to address this issue here, in a neighborhood where not even equity is part of the daily life, where women don't know their rights. With women who have six or seven children, who don't even speak the language, or can write. Also, violence is so naturalized here, it happens all the time, so women think 'what is one more?'. So, with all these challenges, how to start talking about this topic? (Interview No.7, Mariposas, 2019).

Today, *Mariposas de Villa París* is working from a model that do not have an explicit focus on VAWG. Instead, everything that has to do with different situations that affect poor women in the community are addressed and reflected upon. In line with other

respondents' opinions, the respondent from *Mariposas* asserts that the mutual social support is one of the most important elements within their prevention work.

Research proposes (e.g. Michau 2009) that the prevention context of community programs often is indicated, which means that measures are targeting groups or population where signs of the issue already exist. In the case of *Mariposas*, the group was created due to context-specific risk factors, such as poverty and social vulnerability, as well as the already existing occurrence and social acceptance of VAWG. Likewise, the group *Nosotras en Lucha* was formed in Monte Chingolo due to the realization that VAWG crossed many of the women's lives. Thus, both these projects were viewed as primary prevention with an indicated targeted approach, since these specific neighborhoods were 'selected' due the actual prevalence of VAWG. This is an interesting remark, since the general understanding of primary prevention is that it seeks to prevent an issue *before it occurs*. In other words, indicated primary prevention may seem contradictory. According to the respondents, however, efforts that seek to empower women and create social bonds in a community are always primary prevention, as they not only seek to stop existing situation of violence but also to prevent new incidences. In line with an earlier discussion in this thesis, it is also important to mention that the selective targeted approaches can be stigmatizing and harmful for its recipients (Miller et al. 2017). Drawing from Bacchis (2016) WPR approach, one might argue that by 'selecting' certain neighborhoods as target groups within prevention programs, it is implied that these are the ones that are 'held to be problematic' and 'need fixing'.

6.6 The impact of laws and political decisions

According UN Women (2015), one of the foundations for successful prevention is that it is supported through the development of legislation. Accordingly, most respondents viewed laws and political decisions as crucial to VAWG prevention. When asked about the key entry-points in VAWG prevention, one respondent reasoned as follows:

> Firstly, the state. The state has to be in charge, that's fundamental. They have to develop public policies of prevention to combat gender violence. I mean, our law, the comprehensive law, must be real. It has to exist (Interview No.2, MDS: Nosotras en Lucha, 2019).

This statement implies that laws are crucial entry-points but that they also can be useless if not enforced as they should. As explained by Ellsberg (2014), while many countries

have adopted quite advanced legislation on VAWG, the actual application of these is a serious problem since many are not accompanied by budget allocations. Furthermore, in the interviews, it is underlined that primary prevention not should be mistaken for only including efforts aimed at improving laws, since implementation of legislation alone does not improve the situation for women or reduce levels of VAWG. Instead, system-wide changes are necessary to improve the enforcement of laws. As one respondent described:

> In the 90's, the first law on domestic violence came. Then the law on integral protection. But everything was done halfway. I mean, the law came out and it was very good, it is still very good. But it is not applied. For example, the law promoted the opening of a number of places for prevention and for assistance that never really opened (Interview No.3, NGO, 2019).

As previously explained, the provinces of Argentina are governed independently. While they are required to follow the framework of the federal constitution, each province have their own provincial government and laws and are free to define their municipal governments. Thus, the differences between the provinces are great, both in terms of varieties in politics and resources and in the socioeconomic conditions of the population. Likewise, the respondents highlighted the variety among municipalities.

> In this province, there are a few municipalities that are poor, very poor, and others with much more resources. Some areas are densely populated, and others are not. Of course, this affects the policies of each municipality (Interview No.1, The General Directorate of Women, 2019).

One of the interviews for this research was conducted with a councilor from the deliberative department of Lanús Municipality, representing the block *Frente de la Victoria*[22]. In this interview, it was stated that Lanús, from a historical point of view, has been a municipality with great focus on the defense of human rights within the framework of policies. In line with this thought, several respondents describe the municipality as a precursor in many national and provincial policies and laws within this context, such as the enforcement of *The Comprehensible Sexual Education Law*[23] in schools and the opening of women's shelters. However, it was argued that today, there is a lack of political will to continue to strengthen existing laws and policies concerning women's rights in the municipality.

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[22] The *Front for Victory* is a centre-left Peronist electoral alliance (Gobierno de Argentina n.d.)
[23] *Ley Nacional 26.150*. Programa Nacional de Educacion Sexual Integral (2006)

In relation to VAWG prevention, the respondent from the deliberative council shared that they currently are working for the implementation of two important projects. The first one is to integrate women's organizations in Lanús and bring their proposals into the discussion of the council, and the second is the promotion for a specific commission in the council that addresses all matters related to policies toward women - that is, a gender commission. Furthermore, efforts are made to promote that the entire legislative debate is given a gender perspective. Since the block is not a majority, however, neither of these proposals have been approved so far. Furthermore, one of the functions of the deliberative council is to control the executions of the programs, and within that, the economic resources available to the municipality. According to the respondent, less than half of the budget they have available for policies related to VAWG is used. The respondent claimed that this is not because the levels of VAWG in the municipality have decreased, on the contrary, it is stated that statistics imply that the largest percentage of femicides in the Buenos Aires Province is concentrated in the municipalities in the south, including Lanús. It is therefore considered a political decision to not execute these programs.

> We always say that where the money is put, it is where the priorities are put. And apparently, those programs are not priority (Interview No.6, Deliberative Council, 2019).

Several respondents underpin the need to raise political awareness, so that human and economic resources are used to make prevention policies a priority in the municipality. At the same time, efforts in the legislative sphere must be enforced by efforts on different levels. In other words, the findings reveal the demand for multi-level approaches.

6.7 Multi-level approaches

Last but not least, when looking at VAWG prevention, there is one mechanism that perhaps is the one of most importance; namely, multi-level approaches. In the strive for the prevention of VAWG, most scholars argue for the crucial need to adopt a multi-level approach. Within this, argue Gulotta and Bloom (2003), the word 'simultaneously' has to be a key concept, if the measures are to give sustainable results. Thus, one must address various factors on different levels of society simultaneously. Moreover, another core mechanism mentioned by the respondents is long-time commitment. One respondent argues that this standpoint is strengthened by the history.

During the 90's, important efforts were made by feminists. Ten years later, important efforts were made by female politicians. Yet, neither of the groups would have been able to do anything, without the other (Interview No.3, UNLA, 2019).

All respondents stressed that historical struggles laid the groundwork for today's efforts within the political sphere. This denotes the non-existence of an easy one-step solution to the prevention of VAWG. On the contrary, it is considered a long process which requires both time and efforts on multiple levels. This notion is also an argument for using both short- and long-term measures. For example, both findings and previous research denote that economic empowerment is an effective prevention strategy, yet, it is concluded that it alone will not solve the issue of VAWG. Instead, this strategy should be used as one component within prevention and carried out in combination with other more long-term approaches. An interesting comment on this is offered by Tankard and Lyenger (2018): "Economic policies may offer interim, shorter-run benefits while waiting for longer-term changes in social norms. If deeply rooted social norms […] require extended time to change, it may offer value to complement efforts toward cultural change with efforts addressing other factors" (p. 3369). Thus, short-term approaches should not substitute for sensitization, but can be complementary to it. In line with this thought, the respondents acknowledged that programs aimed at a gender transformation and social change require time and, in the meantime, other aspects must be addressed. It is further maintained that approaches on different levels influence each other, and thus must support each other.

We need to focus on awareness-raising at all levels of society. But, more importantly, there has to be consensus in this question between both governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations (Interview No.1, The General Directorate of Women, 2019).

Here, the respondent highlights the importance of consensus between government agencies and NGO's. This view corresponds with the SEM, as it affirms that prevention measures tend to give better result when they are integrated in a wider holistic approach, rather than in isolation (Heise 2011). Other respondents stressed that measures on national, provincial and municipal level are useless if the problem is not recognized among the people. Thus, it is underlined that that awareness-raising approaches must be supported by legislation, and vice versa. Thus, all respondents underpinned multi-level approaches; that is, to simultaneously focus on raising awareness, empowerment, community mobilization and the enforcement of legislation.

7. Conclusion

The overall purpose of this thesis was to enhance knowledge about primary prevention of VAWG within the social work field in a local Argentinian context; namely, Lanús Municipality. The study also sought to explore the understanding of the causes of VAWG, as well as the definition of primary prevention. In order to achieve this purpose, the following research question was put forward in the beginning of the thesis:

What VAWG primary prevention practices are used within the social work field in Lanús Municipality, and how are these practices influenced by the professionals' definition of primary prevention and understanding of the root causes of VAWG?

To answer this question, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals engaged within the field of VAWG prevention in Lanús and then analyzed through the theoretical model of prevention theory. The final sample consisted of representatives from two national government agencies, three local government agencies, one community organization and one university. Furthermore, to contextualize the issue and complement this data, literature and statistics were reviewed. In this chapter, a summary of the analysis of the main findings is provided.

To begin with, the present findings confirm that the definition of primary prevention is not fixed. While the respondents stated that primary prevention takes place *before* the violence occurs, some measures aimed at preventing acts of violence from recurring were also defined as such. This notion indicates a difficulty in drawing a clear line between preventive and responsive measures within social work practice. In fact, most programs presented by the respondents blend preventive and response approaches in organizational-specific ways. In other words, it is concluded that that there are grey areas between prevention and response measures. While this, at first glance, can seem problematic, the analysis of the findings indicate that this could be an advantage, rather than a disadvantage. The multi-pronged approach allows professionals to work with both those who are experiencing violence and those who are not. For example, primary prevention targeting whole communities inevitably reaches those who already are experiencing violence, which enhances early intervention. Accordingly, by sending a society-wide message declaring that gender-based violence is unacceptable and encouraging to a shift in attitudes that tolerate VAWG, there is a potential of preventing

violence in a future generation, but also of preventing the recurrence of already existing situations of VAWG. Thus, through the analysis of the respondents' statements, it can be concluded that primary prevention aims to stop situations of VAWG before they occur, but also to complement response measures. In closing, it would appear that primary prevention has two potential outcomes – the achievement of a social change and gender transformation, and the prevention of recurring situations of VAWG – and perhaps, an integration of these two goals would be ideal.

Departing from prevention theory, a crucial part of understanding a social problem, and a precursor of stopping it from happening in the first place, is to understand its causes. Thus, identifying underlying causes of VAWG is central for its prevention. The findings of this study reveal that professionals engaged within VAWG prevention in Lanús Municipality consider the existence of VAWG to be rooted in the social context of inequalities and in particular, structures of power imbalance between men and women. It was further argued that these structures are built upon, and constantly reinforced by, a complex interplay of many factors, such as gender inequality and systems of gender norms and roles. Triggering factors were also identified, such as poverty, naturalization of violence, poor rule of law, lack of awareness and socioeconomic inequalities. Thus, while structures of unequal power dimensions remain the common thread, it is maintained that these structures are complex, operate in multiple ways and are constantly reinforced by other factors. Thus, the conclusion that can be drawn from this is that professionals engaged within VAWG prevention in Lanús consider VAWG a multifaceted issue and disregard the existence of a single explanatory cause of the problem.

The overall aim of primary prevention of VAWG, according to the professionals who participated in this study, is to transform the social environment so that new acts of violence become less frequent and ultimately no longer occur. Yet, having established the understanding of primary prevention, the view on VAWG and the factors associated to its existence, the findings show that prevention strategies within the social work field in Lanús consist of a great variety in focus, entry-points and scope. A first distinction is that some programs concentrate directly on triggering factors in at-risk areas, and others have a broader and societal approach aimed toward a social change. At last, three main approaches were identified: public awareness and denormalization of violence; empowerment and life skills development; and women's groups and community programs. Despite the multiplicity of approaches, it can be said that most programs focus on raising awareness and deconstruction of harmful norms through the use of gender

mainstreaming workshops in educational or community settings. The creation of women's networks, in particular, is argued to be a crucial strategy, as it is maintained that these generate multiple positive outcomes; it raises awareness about gender issues, strengthens women's self-confidence and contributes to the creation of mutual support in the community. Accordingly, it was found that some of the programs in this category do not have an explicit focus on VAWG. To that end, it can be concluded that approaches within VAWG prevention do not have to have a direct focus on violence or gender issues. They can instead center on other factors which indirectly strengthens prevention, such the formation of social bonds or healthy relationships, among others.

Other significant conclusions drawn in this thesis are related to the problematization of VAWG within prevention programs. It is found that VAWG is understood as a social problem which only can be stopped through social change and gender transformation on a societal level. It is reasonable to assume that this only is possible if both men and women are engaged. Nevertheless, most approaches used within the social work field in Lanús focus nearly exclusively on women, whereas men are made almost completely invisible in both discourses and practices. Using Bacchi's (2016) WPR approach, this notion leads us to two significant findings. First; if social policies, as Bacci (2016) argues, aim to 'fix things' that are 'problematic', the women-centered approach used in Lanús indicates that women are the ones that 'need fixing'. Second; it indicates that the responsibility for preventing VAWG has been lifted from the source of the problem and then been placed on women. Returning to a quote included earlier in this thesis, one respondent said that:

> [...] It [gender norms] is integrated in our culture, in the people. So, it's not about changing some laws and then everything will be better, no, it's about changing minds (Interview No.2, The MDS: Nosotras en Lucha, 2019).

As this quote illustrates, there is an ambition to achieve a social transformation – that is; to change minds. It is further stated that these norms are integrated in the culture and the people. Considering this preunderstanding and goal, one might question the almost exclusive focus on women in their prevention programs. This poses an interesting question; is the ambition to change everyone's minds, or only the women's?

These two findings (i.e. women as 'the problem' and women as 'bearer of the responsibility to prevent VAWG') indicate that VAWG is problematized as a 'women's issue' in the programs. Based on this, a significant paradoxical issue can be identified:

VAWG prevention approaches used within the social work field risk reinforcing inequalities – that is, the structures they initially are trying to eliminate. Importantly, this analysis leads us to one of the main conclusions of this study; the essential need to critically examine the understanding, construction and representation of problems made within prevention programs in the social work field. It also poses an interesting contribution to the discussion on power dimensions within social work in general, and in particular, the potential risk of reinforcing structures of inequality and discrimination. It can, for example, be argued that men's power within patriarchal structures has been replaced by professionals within the social work field, who through programs make problematizations that can be harmful for its recipients.

However, the discussion upon power dimensions within social work should not be limited to practices, as they also exist within the terminology and language used. For instance, as earlier reviewed, by talking about 'violence done *to women'* instead of 'violence done *by men'*, a problematization of VAWG as a 'women's issue' is constructed. In other words, the terminology, language and practices used within social work are normative as they both shape, and are shaped by, certain assumptions and values. As expressed by Burrel (2016): "day-to-day, taken-for-granted discursive practices do not just reflect inequalities, but help to produce and reinforce them" (p. 73). While a deeper discussion on this topic goes outside the scope of this thesis, this conclusion underpins the crucial need for critical thinking in relation to power dimensions within social work, as well as its risks to reinforce inequalities through language and problematizations made with programs.

Moving on, the findings suggest that some prevention approaches were considered particularly important. However, it was maintained that each of them must be complemented by others. In other words, a multi-level approach within VAWG prevention was underpinned. It was also acknowledged that a social and gender transformation requires long-term commitment, and that, in the meantime, more short-term factors must be addressed. Economic empowerment, for example, was considered important since it contributes to both the strengthening of equal rights, income and opportunities and to the strive for a gender transformation. The findings also indicate that the professionals are critical toward the view of VAWG prevention as the mere implementation of laws. It is pointed out that laws are pointless if they are not, on one hand, enforced as they should and on the other, supported by approaches on other levels of society. In other words, it can be concluded that professionals engaged within VAWG

prevention maintained that no isolated approach will prevent VAWG once and for all. Instead, the issue must be addressed through multi-level approaches.

While the prevention programs presented in this study had different target groups, it can be said that most used a selective approach. However, the findings indicate that the line between different targeted approaches can be a bit vague. The program *Ellas Hacen*, for example, could easily be mistaken for having a universal approach, since it was implemented on a national level and included 100.000 people. Nevertheless, the program's target group was individuals at risk - that is, women in particular vulnerable situations. Likewise, school-based programs were implemented where the need was considered greater. Thus, in these cases, a selective targeted approach was used. Some programs, such as the women's groups *Mariposas* and *Nosotras en Lucha*, were initiated in certain areas precisely because of the high prevalence and social acceptance of VAWG. Thus, indicated targeted approaches were applied. However, the findings show that the participants in these programs commonly share their newfound knowledge and experiences with people in their surroundings. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that selective and indicated targeted approaches might extend beyond the initial target group and generate a change on a broader level. Nevertheless, it is also found that selective and indicated targeted approaches, for example those applied in low-income areas, can be stigmatizing and harmful for its recipients. Through the analysis based on Bacchi's (2016) WPR approach, it can be concluded that the selection of target groups within prevention programs may reflect a view of these as particularly 'problematic' in relation to the issue and that these groups are the ones who 'need fixing'.

In closing, this study can conclude that primary prevention is understood as measures taken to stop VAWG before it occurs, although its content, entry-point and scope varies greatly. The common thread, however, is the ambition to address unequal power dimensions and achieve a social change and gender transformation. Furthermore, the findings show the difficulty in drawing a clear line between preventive and responsive measures within social work practices, and that most VAWG programs in fact consist of multi-pronged approaches. This approach, however, corresponds with the professionals' view of VAWG as a multifaceted issue. In other words, it can be concluded that the non-existence of a single cause that accounts for the presence of VAWG also implies the non-existence of a single solution to prevent it. It was also found that most programs focus almost exclusively on women, which gives the impression that women bear the responsibility for preventing VAWG, and that VAWG is problematized as a 'women's

issue'. The main conclusion drawn from this is that practices and language used within the social work field risk both reflecting and reinforcing inequalities.

The context-specific nature of this research does not allow a broad generalization of the results. However, when examining understandings among professionals engaged within VAWG prevention in Lanús, the ambition was not to generate results that can be transferred to other places, but to enhance and fill the gap of research on similar subjects in local contexts. While many frameworks of prevention have been developed in recent years, the complexity of transferring these to a local context should not be overlooked. Thus, this study provides an insight into VAWG prevention in a local context, which may contribute to the overall discussion on the issue. Still, there are matters that this study could not investigate. While there is some evidence that shows promising effects of primary prevention of VAWG, more research is required to reach an in-depth understanding of its effectiveness. One interesting approach could be to examine the understandings and experiences among individuals who participate in prevention programs, as it would provide an opportunity to investigate the actual impact of the programs. Thus, continued research onto both the content and outcome of primary prevention of VAWG is needed as it may contribute to the development of more successful and sustainable strategies to eradicate VAWG once and for all. Another significant conclusion of this study is that social work practices risk both reflecting and reinforcing inequalities, which denotes the crucial need for critical reflection in social work. Future research should therefore consider potential risks related to power dimensions within the social work field, in particular in terms of language use and problematizations of VAWG, as these have a great impact on the public understanding of the issue and may contribute to the strengthening of inequalities, rather than to the elimination of them.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: RECORD OF RESPONDENTS

Interview	Job title	Project/Program/Organisation/Institution	Type of organisation/institution
NR.1	Social Worker	General Directorate of Women, National Ministry of Social Development and Habitat (*La Dirección General de la Mujer, Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Hábitat de la Nación*)	Local Government agency
NR.2	Social worker	Nosotras en Lucha, National Ministry of Social Development (*Nosotras en Lucha, Ministerio de Desarollo Social de la Nación*)	National Government agency
NR.3	Docent in Social Work	National University of Lanús - UNLA (*Universidad Nacional de Lanús - UNLA*)	University
NR.4	Social worker	Subsecretary of Gender, Integration and Childhood, Executive Department of Lanús Municipality Government (*Subsecretaría de Género, Integración y Niñez, Departamento Ejecutivo del Gobiero Municipal de Lanús*)	Local Government agency
NR.5	Social Worker	Ellas Hacen, National Ministry of Social Development (*Ellas Hacen, Ministerio de Desarollo Social de la Nación*)	National Government agency
NR.6	Councilor	Deliberative Department of Lanús Municipality Government (*Departamento deliberativo del Gobierno Municipal de Lanús*)	Local Government agency
NR.7	Social Worker	Mariposas de Villa París	Community Organization

APPENDIX 2: INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher: Sara Borrás
Master thesis, 30hp, Master of Social Work Program,
School of Social Work, Lund University, Sweden

About the researcher
My name is Sara Borrás and I am a master student at the School of Social Work at Lund's University in Sweden. In addition to the Social Work Degree, I have also studied courses in Project Management, Social Sciences and Spanish, with the professional objective of working with international social work in Latin America. Previous work experience in Latin America has been gained through internships in Nicaragua and Cuba within projects focusing on human- and sexual rights. Currently, I am based in Buenos Aires with the purpose of conducting field work for my Master's Thesis.

The aim of the study
The aim of this study is to examine VAWG prevention within the social work field of Lanús Municipality. More specifically, the research will focus primary prevention practices; that is, practices that seek to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. The ambition is to collect information and knowledge about strategies, challenges and recommendations that can contribute to the development of successful prevention practices of VAWG.

Research design
The research will undertake a qualitative approach and include interviews with different professionals working within the field of VAWG prevention in Lanús Municipality. The data collected during the field work will be analyzed through theories of prevention.

Why have I been asked to participate?
You have been asked to participate in this study because I believe that you, with your expertise and background, can contribute to the understanding of VAWG and the work to develop successful prevention programs.

If you choose to participate in this study
Your name and identity will not be used or reveled to anyone. With your approval, the interview will be recorded. You can withdraw your participation at any time, and you will not need to explain the reasons for withdrawing. All data, including the interview recording, will be strictly treated like confidential materials and therefore stored in a secure place.

Publication of the thesis
The data collected during this fieldwork will only be used in this study, However, if possible, it will be published in an academic or for other research purposes. The study will be available to access online on Lund University LUP Student Papers in the end of 2019.

Contact details:
------------@gmail.com, +46 ---- -- --

APPENDIX 3: HOJA INFORMATIVA

Investigadora: Sara Borrás
Tesis de Maestría, 30hp, Maestría de Trabajo Social
Escuela de trabajo social, Universidad de Lund, Suecia

Sobre la investigadora
Mi nombre es Sara Borrás y soy estudiante de Maestría de Trabajo Social en la Universidad de Lund en Suecia. Además de la licenciatura en trabajo social, he estudiado cursos en Gestión de Proyectos, Ciencias Sociales y Español, con el objetivo profesional de trabajar en el área de los derechos humanos en América Latina. La experiencia laboral previa en América Latina se ha obtenido a través de prácticas en Nicaragua y Cuba dentro de proyectos que se centraba en los derechos humanos y derechos sexuales. Ahora estoy en Buenos Aires para realizar el campo de trabajo para la tesis de Maestría.

El propósito del estudio
El objetivo de esta tesis es examinar la prevención de la violencia de género dentro del campo de trabajo social del Partido de Lanús. Más concretamente, se centrará en estrategias de prevención primaria, es decir, estrategias que buscan prevenir la violencia antes de que ocurra. La ambición es recopilar información y conocimientos sobre estrategias, desafíos y recomendaciones que puedan contribuir al desarrollo de programas de prevención exitosos de la violencia de género.

Diseño del estudio
El estudio se basará en un enfoque metodológico cualitativo y incluirá revisión bibliográfica y entrevistas con diferentes trabajadoras sociales comprometidos en el área de prevención de la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas en Lanús. Los datos recopilados durante el trabajo de campo se analizarán según las teorías de prevención.

¿Por qué me ha pedido participar?
Se le he pedido que participe en este estudio porque creo que Usted, con su conocimiento, experiencia y experticia, puede contribuir tanto a la comprensión de la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas, como al trabajo para desarrollar programas de prevención exitosos.

Si eliges participar en este estudio
Su nombre e identidad no serán utilizados o relevados a nadie. Con su aprobación, la entrevista será grabada. Puede retirar su participación en cualquier momento y no tendrá que explicar las razones para retirarse. Todos los datos, incluida la grabación de la entrevista, se tratarán estrictamente como materiales confidenciales y se almacenarán en un lugar seguro.

Publicación de la tesis
Los datos recopilados durante este trabajo de campo se utilizarán principalmente en este estudio. Sin embargo, si es posible, puede publicarse con fines académicos o de investigación. El estudio estará disponible para acceder en línea en LUP Student Papers a finales de 2019.

Detalles de contacto:
------------@gmail.com, +46 ---- -- --

APPENDIX 4: CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Sara Borrás
Master thesis, 30hp, Master of Social Work Program
School of Social Work, Lund University, Sweden

RESPONDENT

- I have read the information sheet of this research

- The purpose of this study has been described to me

- I understand that my participation is completely voluntary

- I understand that I can withdraw my participation in this study at any time, and that I will not be asked to explain my reasons for withdrawing

- I agree to have my interview audio recorded

- I understand that all information will be treated in strict confidence and only accessible by the researcher

- I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in this thesis and related publication that comes out of this research

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

RESEARCHER

I have thoroughly explained to the participant the content of the information sheet. I have asked if the participant has any question and answered this question to the best of my ability.

_____   _____

Researcher's signature   Date

APPENDIX 5: HOJA DE CONSENTIMIENTO

Investigadora: Sara Borrás
Tesis de Maestría, 30hp, Maestría de Trabajo Social
Escuela de trabajo social, Universidad de Lund, Suecia

ENCUESTADO/A

- He leído la hoja informativa de esta investigación

- El propósito de este estudio me ha sido descrito

- Entiendo que mi participación es completamente voluntaria

- Entiendo que puedo retirar mi participación en este estudio en cualquier momento y que no se me pedirá que explique mis razones para retirarme

- Acepto que mi entrevista sea grabada en audio

- Entiendo que toda la información se tratará con estricta confidencialidad y solo será accesible para la investigadora

- Estoy de acuerdo con el uso de citas anónimas en esta tesis y publicaciones relacionadas que surjan de esta investigación

_____   _____

Firma del/la encuestado/a   Fecha

INVESTIGADORA

He explicado detalladamente al/a la encuestado/a el contenido de la hoja de información. He preguntado si el/la encuestado/a tiene alguna pregunta y respondí esta pregunta lo mejor que pude.

_____   _____

Firma de la investigadora   Fecha

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview guide

Introduction: The researcher explains the purpose of the thesis, how the collected data will be used and who will have access to it. The respondent is informed of the confidentiality and how it will be protected. The researcher describes the outline of the interview and clarifies that the respondent always has the option of not answering a question, etc. The researcher goes through the consent form with the respondent and asks for approval to record the interview.

The organization/institution

- Please describe your role as (position) at (organization).
- Briefly describe the goal of (organization), and how you work toward this goal.

Definitions

- How would you define the following terms? In what way are they defined, understood and conceptualized in your organization/institution?
    - o Violence against women and girls
    - o Prevention of violence against women and girls
    - o Primary prevention

Causes of violence

According to your knowledge and experience in Argentina:

- What do you believe causes /increases the risk for/ violence against women and girls?
- What do you believe can reduce the risk for violence against women and girls?

Violence against women and girls in Lanús

According to your knowledge and experience:

- Who are most likely to experience violence?
- How is violence against women and girls understood in Lanús?

Prevention strategies

- Can you explain in which ways (organization/institution) works to prevent violence against women and girls?
- Can you outline your prevention strategy? Which are your key focus areas?
- Do you collaborate with other organizations that have similar goals, in particular related to your work for the prevention of violence against women and girls?
- Do you address gender norms in the prevention programs of violence against women and girls within your organization/institution? If so, in which way?
- In what ways have your efforts succeeded, so far?
- What measures do you think would be most effective in preventing violence against women and girls Lanús?

Challenges

According to your knowledge and experience:

- What are the barriers for preventing violence against women and girls in Lanús?
- What are the challenges for preventing violence against women and girls Lanús?
- What measures would you believe to be most effective for preventing violence against women and girls Lanús?

Do you have any questions or comments, or is there something that you would like to add?

THANK THE RESPONDENT FOR TAKING THE TIME

APPENDIX 7: GUÍA DE ENTREVISTA

Guía de entrevista

Introducción: La investigadora explica el propósito de la tesis, cómo se utilizarán los datos recopilados y quién tendrá acceso a ellos. Se informa al/a la participante de la confidencialidad y cómo se protegerá. La investigadora describe el esquema de la entrevista y aclara que el/la participante siempre tiene la opción de no responder una pregunta, etc. La investigadora revisa el formulario de consentimiento con el/la participante y pide la aprobación para grabar la entrevista.

La organización/institución

- Por favor, describa su rol como (posición) en (organización/institución).
- Por favor, describa brevemente el objetivo de (la organización/institución) y cómo trabaja para alcanzar este objetivo.

Definiciones

- ¿Cómo definirías los siguientes términos? ¿De qué manera se definen, comprenden y conceptualizan en su organización/institución?
    o Violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas
    o Prevención de la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas
    o Prevención primaria

Causas de la violencia

Según tus conocimientos y experiencia en Argentina:
- ¿Qué cree que causa /aumenta el riesgo de/ violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas?
- ¿Qué cree que puede reducir el riesgo de violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas?

Violencia contra las mujeres y las chicas en Lanús

Según tus conocimientos y experiencia:
- ¿Quiénes son más propensos a experimentar violencia?
- ¿Cómo se entiende la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas en Lanús?

Programas de prevención

-   ¿Puede, por favor, explicar de qué manera (organización/institución) trabaja para prevenir la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas?

-   ¿Puedes delinear tu estrategia de prevención? ¿Cuáles son sus áreas de enfoque clave?

-   ¿Colabora con otras organizaciones que tienen objetivos similares, en particular relacionados con su trabajo para la prevención de la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas?

-   ¿Se ocupa de las normas de género en los programas de prevención de violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas dentro de su organización/institución? Si es así, ¿de qué manera?

-   ¿De qué manera han tenido éxito sus esfuerzos, hasta ahora?

-   ¿Qué medidas consideraría más efectivas para prevenir la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas en Lanús?

Obstáculos

Según tus conocimientos y experiencia:

-   ¿Cuáles son las barreras para prevenir la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas en Lanús?

-   ¿Cuáles son los retos para prevenir la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas en Lanús?

¿Tiene alguna pregunta o comentario, o hay algo que le gustaría agregar?

AGRADECE AL PARTICIPANTE POR TOMARSE EL TIEMPO