

# VICTIM, PERPETRATOR, OR WHAT ELSE?

# SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Series Editor: David A. Kinney (from 1999)

Series Editors: David A. Kinney and  
Katherine Brown Rosier (2004–2010)

Series Editors: David A. Kinney and  
Loretta E. Bass (from 2011)

Series Editor: Loretta E. Bass (from 2012)

## Previous Volumes:

Volume 14: 2011 David A. Kinney & Loretta E. Bass, Series Editor; Loretta E. Bass & David A. Kinney, Guest Editors

Volume 15: 2012 Loretta E. Bass, Series Editor; Susan Danby & Maryanne Theobald, Guest Editors

Volume 16: 2013 Loretta E. Bass, Series Editor; Sandi Kawecka Nenga & Jessica K. Taft, Guest Editors

Volume 17: 2014 Loretta E. Bass, Series Editor; Paul Close, Guest Editor

Volume 18: 2014 Loretta E. Bass, Series Editor; M. Nicole Warehime, Guest Editor

Volume 19: 2015 Loretta E. Bass, Series Editor; Sampson Lee Blair, Patricia Neff Claster and Samuel M. Claster, Guest Editors

Volume 20: 2016 Loretta E. Bass, Series Editor; Yasemin Besen-Cassino, Guest Editor

Volume 21: 2016 Loretta E. Bass, Series Editor; Maryanne Theobald, Guest Editor

Volume 22: 2016 Loretta E. Bass, Series Editor; Ingrid E. Castro, Melissa Swauger & Brent Harger, Guest Editors

Volume 23: 2017 Loretta E. Bass, Series Editor; Patricia Neff Claster & Sampson Lee Blair, Guest Editors

Volume 24: 2019 Loretta E. Bass, Series Editor; Magali Reis & Marcelo Isidório, Guest editors

SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
VOLUME 25

**VICTIM, PERPETRATOR,  
OR WHAT ELSE?  
GENERATIONAL AND  
GENDER PERSPECTIVES ON  
CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND  
VIOLENCE**

EDITED BY

**DORIS BÜHLER-NIEDERBERGER**

*University of Wuppertal, Germany*

**LARS ALBERTH**

*Leibniz University Hannover, Germany*

SERIES EDITOR

**LORETTA E. BASS**

*The University of Oklahoma, USA*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan  
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2020

Copyright © 2020 Emerald Publishing Limited

**Reprints and permissions service**

Contact: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78973-336-5 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-78973-335-8 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-78973-337-2 (EPub)

ISSN: 1537-4661 (Series)



ISOQAR certified  
Management System,  
awarded to Emerald  
for adherence to  
Environmental  
standard  
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985  
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

# CONTENTS

*About the Contributors*

vii

## **Introduction: Children and Violence – A Blind Spot of Sociology**

*Doris Bühler-Niederberger and Lars Alberth*

1

### **PART I PERCEPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS**

#### **The Rhetorical Idiom of Unreason: On Labelling in Child Protection**

*Lars Alberth*

17

#### **The Perpetration of Fatal Child Maltreatment: It's the Men Who Are Bad, Right?**

*Emily M. Douglas and Kerry A. Lee*

33

#### **The Definitions Are Legion: Academic Views and Practice Perspectives on Violence Against Children**

*Andreas Jud and Peter Voll*

47

#### **Putting Definitions to Work: Reflections from the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations**

*Jordan Fairbairn, Danielle Sutton, Myrna Dawson and Peter Jaffe*

67

### **PART II INSTITUTIONAL REACTIONS**

#### **Naughty or Bad: Children and Crime**

*Robert van Krieken*

85

#### **Perceptions of Violence within Child Protection Systems in Russia: Views of Children, Parents, and Social Workers**

*Veronika Odinokova, Maia Rusakova and Vladlena Avdeeva*

107

**PART III**  
**CONDITIONS OF CHANGE – GLOBAL, NATIONAL,**  
**AND LOCAL**

<b>Exploring the Role of Evolving Gender Norms in Shaping Adolescents' Experiences of Violence in Pastoralist Afar, Ethiopia</b>	
<i>Nicola Jones, Yitagesu Gebeyehu and Joan Hamory-Hicks</i>	125
<b>Governing Childhood in India: the Up-hill Battle to Abolish Child Marriage</b>	
<i>Elvira Graner</i>	149
<b>Child Marriage in Kyrgyzstan: Exploring Institutional Ambivalences in Constructing the "Victim"</b>	
<i>Elena Kim</i>	171
<b>Child Marriage and Sexual Violence in the United States</b>	
<i>Jamie O'Quinn</i>	191
<i>Index</i>	207

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Lars Alberth** is Professor of Theories and Methods of Childhood Studies at Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany. He is a Postdoc in the Sociology Department at Leibniz University Hannover, Germany. His research interests comprise professional responses to child maltreatment, the fabrication of culture, and interactionist theories of work and organization.

**Vladlena Avdeeva** is Junior Research Fellow at the Sociological Institute, Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation. Research interests: institutional care for children, child protection systems.

**Doris Bühler-Niederberger** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Wuppertal, Germany. In her research she focuses on institutions and professions dealing with childhood and on age as a dimension of social structure and social order in different societies.

**Myrna Dawson** is Professor in Public Policy in Criminal Justice, and Director of the Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence, University of Guelph, Director of the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, and Co-Director of the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations.

**Emily M. Douglas** is Professor and Department Head of Social Science and Policy Studies at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts, USA.

**Jordan Fairbairn** is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Criminology at King's University College at Western University in London, Ontario. Jordan is a co-investigator with the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations and an expert panel member of the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability.

**Yitagesu Gebeyehu** specialises in Gender based violence and has served as a Lecturer and Research Team Leader in CTE, Aysaita since 2012. He is affiliating GAGE as a qualitative researcher since 2018. He is co-author of 'Exploring the Role of Gendered Social Norms in Shaping Adolescents' Experience in Afar'.

**Elvira Graner** is habilitated (*Privatdozentin*) at the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University. Assignments in South Asia include heading the Heidelberg Centre South Asia in New Delhi, a one-year consultancy at UNFPA (New Delhi) and being the Deputy Director of the International Centre of Advanced Studies: Metamorphoses of the Political (ICAS:MP).

**Joan Hamory-Hicks** is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the University of Oklahoma. Her research primarily focuses on transitions to adulthood among youth in low income countries, and has been published in outlets such as *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* and *The European Journal of Political Economy*.

**Peter Jaffe** is a Psychologist and Professor in the Faculty of Education at Western University and the Academic Director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women & Children. He is the Co-Director of the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations.

**Nicola Jones** is a Principal Research Fellow at the Overseas Development Institute in London and the Director of the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) longitudinal research programme. Her research focuses on the intersection of gender, childhood and adolescence, social inclusion and social policy in the Global South.

**Andreas Jud** has a Chair on Child Maltreatment Epidemiology and Trends at University of Ulm, Germany, and is staff at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences, School of Social Work, Lucerne, Switzerland. His research interests encompass the empirical knowledge base on agency response to child maltreatment and decision-making in child protection.

**Elena Kim** is an Associate Professor of Social Sciences at the American University of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan. Her research and areas of expertise include gender, gender violence, and institutional ethnography.

**Robert van Krieken** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Sydney, Adjunct Professor at the University of Tasmania, and Visiting Professor at University College Dublin. His research interests include criminology, childhood, and processes of civilization and decivilization.

**Kerry A. Lee** is a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, in the School of Social Work. Kerry's research interest focuses on violence and social determinants of health, child maltreatment prevention, gender related issues, child and adolescent mental health services, and race and ethnic minority in child welfare.

**Jamie O'Quinn** is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin. Her work investigates gender, race, and youth sexualities.

**Veronika Odinkova** is a Senior Research Fellow at the Sociological Institute, Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation. Research interests: violence prevention, sexual exploitation, research with children.

**Maia Rusakova** is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Sociology, Saint Petersburg State University, Saint Petersburg, Russia. Research interests: prevention of sexual exploitation and human trafficking.



**Danielle Sutton** is a PhD Candidate in Sociology at the University of Guelph. She serves as a Senior Research Assistant at the Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence and her research focuses primarily on homicide, policing, and media constructions of violence.

**Peter Voll** is Professor and Head of the Research Institute at the School of Social Work HES-SO Valais-Wallis. He headed the first nation-wide research project on child protection structures and processes in Switzerland. His current research projects focus on organisational structure and professional action in child and adult protection.

This page intentionally left blank

# INTRODUCTION: CHILDREN AND VIOLENCE – A BLIND SPOT OF SOCIOLOGY

Doris Bühler-Niederberger and Lars Alberth

## THE GENERATIONAL AND GENDER BIAS IN APPROACHING VIOLENCE

For all its claims and endeavours to tackle power and domination, sociology failed to grasp the full extent of violence in contemporary societies. This is due to a remarkable generational and gender bias in approaching incidents of violence. Children, while being the most victimized group in society (Finkelhor, 2008), rarely become a topic of sociological research, neither as victims nor as perpetrators. The violence against them was never conducive to any sociological theory building. The sociological discussion on power and violence happens beyond generation (i.e., the socially defined age) as an important dimension of social structure, and in many respects also beyond gender aspects that are inseparably linked to generational violence. This is a severe omission when the extent of violence in a society needs to be understood, as well as the structures and processes perpetuating violence or opposing its abolition. Likewise, it is a serious obstacle when attempting to understand the position of children in societies vis-à-vis other age groups and the social meaning of childhood.

Sociology's generational and gender bias, while having developed theories on violence, is based on common and everyday conceptions of social problems. This volume is an attempt to step back from such presets and to make a contribution to what has been a blind spot. It does so by mapping the ways that children and young people are considered victims or perpetrators by their societies and consequently the ways that their societies react. The chapters analyze a variety of phenomena in different countries. All of these phenomena may be considered to include acts of violence towards children and adolescents, or those

---

Victim, Perpetrator, or What Else? Generational and Gender Perspectives on Children, Youth, and Violence

Sociological Studies of Children and Youth, Volume 25, 1–13

Copyright © 2020 by Emerald Publishing Limited

All rights of reproduction in any form reserved

ISSN: 1537-4661/doi:10.1108/S1537-466120190000025001

committed by them, and acknowledged as such in various degrees and ways. This highlights violence as one of the major building blocks of the scope and qualities of constraints on children's agency, limiting the social recognition of their rights as members of their respective societies. Furthermore, insight into the intersection of the generational and gender aspects of violence shows the violent content of the private space in particular and the hesitant and often futile interventions of public authorities.

This introduction will start with a brief review of the sociology of violence, considering three strands: (1) the idea of a peaceful modernity; (2) violence research instigated specifically by perspectives on women and intersectionality; and (3) victimology of children. As we will show, all three approaches fall short of taking into account violence against children as an omnipresent feature of society. The introduction will then proceed to expose the specific approach of this volume, give a short preview on the chapters, and outline the most important conclusions that the studies gathered here allow.

## **SOCIOLOGY OF VIOLENCE – PEACEFUL MODERNITY?**

Violence became an issue for sociologists with two important sources: Norbert Elias (2000) and his concept of the civilizing process, and Michel Foucault's work on modes of government (1978). Both inputs had a clear focus on public life, i.e., on the development of modern societies going along with new, more efficient, and more productive modes of government. For Elias, the monopolizing of power, growing social intertwining, and less violent techniques of discipline created new constraints regarding self-restraint and meticulous self-control, effectively reducing the violence in everyday life. On the other hand, Foucault's analysis replaced the public spectacles of violence and a punitive economy of pain with the parceling of bodies via disciplinary technologies, making individuals the site of a productive re-organization instead of subjecting them to a central authority's violence. Both authors argue based on historical material and both state modern societies transitioned to a form of domination that renounces the direct and physical exercising of violence and subjects the violence of individuals to control.

From that point on, sociology tackled the central thesis of a decline in violence in the course of societies' development. They analyzed statistical developments and generated additional hypotheses regarding the causes of a reduction of violence (Eisner, 2003; Hadas, 2017). Other authors contested the thesis of a reduction of violence and a civilizing process to be an ethnocentric assumption that disqualified historical and different societies (Duerr, 1994). However, the discussion mainly focused on public life, while the private remained faded out as a backstage. Sociology thematizes the private only with regard to public concerns. Accordingly, the rates of marriage, divorce, reproduction, and education are the core topics of family sociology (Becker, 1981); with regard to children, the private is considered only as a space of socialization, preparing them for future participation in public life (Durkheim, 1994; Parsons & Bales, 1955).

In these debates on a more peaceful modernity, violence in the private space and, above all, adult violence against children, were completely ignored. In the US, violence against children came into the public focus via the publications of pediatricians and psychologists in the 1960s and 1970s (Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegemueller, & Silver, 1962). The experts that were involved in this debate perceived child abuse as social deviance and characterized it as the psychological pathology of the adult perpetrators. This was undoubtedly insufficient and a critical discussion of this “discovery” of child abuse can be found in Gelles (1975), Pfohl (1977), and Conrad & Schneider (1980). Such sociological critique was based on constructivist assumptions, but ultimately fell short of recognizing the full extent and severity of the phenomenon.

Violence against children is by no means a random or rare phenomenon, and as such cannot be explained by individual parental pathology nor downplayed as a mere moral enterprise. For a long time, it had been a mode of generational domination, and as such not only a private ruling of adults over children, but also a strategy to integrate developing individuals into social expectations of order, and it still is. This is what a brief look into the history of childhood shows: with the reformation and the beginning of modernity, the education of children became the theme of moralists, men of the church and the state, and later experts. Until the middle of the twentieth century, authoritarian and violent forms of education were predominantly advocated. Parents were strongly encouraged to use them and rebuked if they didn’t (Bühler-Niederberger, 2005; DeMause, 1974; Hardyment, 2007; Julia, 1998; Schumann, 2010; Strauss, 1978). And while from the nineteenth century onwards, the use of the rod may have become less frequent, this can simply be seen as a strategy to increase the domination of the child through a subtle mixture of corporal punishment and the raising of feelings of guilt. This applied not only to Europe, but also the US, where even after the Second World War there was the criticism of “momism”, an allegedly too-soft upbringing that especially emasculated men and made them incapable of meeting social demands (Plant, 2012). Hardship and violence in education was justified and even demanded in order to subject children to the will of adults early in their development. Subjection to adult commandments meant more than just obeying the parents; it meant training children for probation in society and making them respect public authority. Therefore, the domination between the age groups was by no means created according to purely individual wishes and parental ability or inability. Admittedly, there were also public campaigns and initiatives to ban the violent punishment of children. In the US, a series of three reform movements aiming at some child protection had already started in the nineteenth century. Still it was their primary objective to save society from future delinquents, not to save children from cruel or abusive parents (Pfohl, 1977, p. 311).

Debates on children and violence are haunted by two sets of fears, fear for the child and fear of the child, which intermingle and together may instigate concern as well as legitimate strict adult domination (Donzelot, 1979). The child as being endangered and at the same time dangerous is a common idea in the past and the present and is inextricably linked to discourses on marginal groups,

race, and class (Sheper-Hughes, 2005). Consequently, the idea of a complete ban of corporal and humiliating punishment on the grounds of human rights gained traction only recently and cautiously. In 1979, the Swedish Government was the first to order a complete ban of physical punishment and announced it to the population through an intensive campaign. Other countries followed some time later, but mostly refrained from such campaigns. For some years now, international organizations have also been strongly supportive of these efforts, especially UNICEF and WHO. Their success in individual countries varies, as do the efforts of nation states to support the international initiative. This will be shown in several chapters of this volume. And while modernity may have become more peaceful with regard to the public government and life, this is grounded in a rather violent domination of individuals while they are children and hence novices of society.

### **A NEW SOCIOLOGY OF VIOLENCE AS EMERGING FIELD – BEYOND GENERATION**

In the last few years, sociology has increased its efforts to address violence, calling this research an “emerging field” and attempting to establish it as a research field in its own right (Hartmann, 2017; Walby, 2013). This was done against the background of immense violence occurring in civil wars, civil unrest, and so called “new wars” that undoubtedly challenged the idea of a less violent modernity (Campbell, 2009, 2011; Dorronsoro & Grojean, 2014; Kaldor, 2006). Triggers for this development in violence research were also new topics that had been placed on the research agenda by affected groups from the Global South and women, especially women of intersecting dimensions of marginalization (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991; Walby, 2013). This newly emerging field wants to do justice to the claim of not only adopting common definitions of social problems, such as the assumption that the disadvantaged are more violent than the powerful (Collins, 1998), but also making visible the violence of the powerful towards the disadvantaged, “foregrounding the experiences of the less powerful and the South” (Walby, 2013, p. 98). If, on the other hand, one looks at the compilation of phenomena that are taken up in the new field of research, one can easily detect a list of topics that may be understood as an “emancipatory knowledge” (Konstantoni & Emejulu, 2017, p. 8). It is a knowledge that supports and empowers certain groups in society which are close to the researchers in the scientific community, groups that they are advocating for or that they represent.

Violence against children isn’t part of this list. Hence, the very claim of this newly contoured field, to work out the distinctiveness of violence as a scientific topic and not to exhaust itself in the addition of single phenomena, cannot yet be regarded as fully realized. It would be important that such research on violence, when identifying the phenomena to be examined, does not simply follow everyday definitions that are articulated particularly strongly in its scientific environment. In this way, this new sociology of violence falls prey to a critique of sociology that was articulated by Herbert Blumer decades ago, stating that

sociology was unable to identify social problems by itself: “Instead, sociologists discern social problems only after they are recognized as social problems by and in a society” (Blumer, 1971, p. 299). This in turn leads to the “indifference of sociologists and the public, alike, to many questionable and harmful dimensions of modern life” (Blumer, 1971, p. 299). In our case, it is indifference towards violence against children, which has no place on the list of articulated public concerns beyond the dramatization of individual cases of fatal child maltreatment. Some studies gave attention to the effects domestic violence might have on children (Eriksson, 2013; Hearn, 2013; Mullender et al., 2002). However, they conceived of domestic violence as partner violence only, and in this way did not consider the full extent and content of violence against children.

## **VICTIMOLOGY – A SIDESTEP TOWARDS THE CHILD IN THE NAME OF SOCIAL CONTROL**

Since the 1970s, and most notably in the US and Canada, victimology of child abuse and neglect emerged as a field of survey-based epidemiological research (Fallon et al., 2010). Concentrating on the dark field of violence against children, victimology ascertains the incidence and prevalence rates for different phenomena of corporal punishment, child abuse and neglect, and other crimes. It shows that a stable majority of children and young people are subjected to victimizations. For the US, the research by David Finkelhor and colleagues repeatedly shows a lifetime victimization rate of 70–80% for the age group of under 18 years and that they suffer a high risk of being victimized in multiple ways. The major domains of victimization for children are both family and peers, while the sole victimization by community (i.e., the public space) remains a residual category (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2009; Turner, Shattuck, Finkelhor, & Hamby, 2016). Available data shows that the private sphere is indeed a violent space. In a study on spanking in the US, Straus, Douglas, and Medeiros (2014) found that almost all of the participating children (over 90%) answered positive to being hit as a toddler.

This victimological approach has been taken up by international NGOs which undertake comparative surveys on a global level. Shiva Kumar and colleagues state that 1.7 billion children are subjected to corporal punishment per year, which is about 75% of all children worldwide under the age of 18 years. The same source estimates that corporal punishment at home ranges from an average of 53% in industrialized countries to 86% in West and Central Africa (Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). In this way, victimization research provides a solid base for research on violence against children worldwide, and it shows how this violence is executed by the powers that be against a visibly disadvantaged group – the children. And this violence is inherent to the children’s closest relationships, no matter if the researchers come from the Global South or North. However, victimology is less interested in violence against children as a structural feature of society than in its psychological, behavioural, and medical sequelae (Ford & Delker, 2018). For all intents and purposes, victimization research is mainly concerned with adverse conditions of childhood development

(Finkelhor, 2008), the improvement of sentinel systems, risk assessment, and service provisions (Gelles, 1996), as well as the negative outcomes of violence for society in the form of crime rates and mental health problems (WHO, 2013; Widom & White, 1997). Instead of grounding their research in the individual integrity of children as holders of rights, victimization research remains dedicated to a functionalist perspective on social order. Although they give an impressive account of the dark side of the private sphere, their main concern is social control. One can make out the contours of the “dangerous child”, the red thread of public debates on childhood.

## OUR DIRECTION: VIOLENCE AND GENERATIONAL ORDER

This is the lesson we learned: one can easily overlook the generational aspects of violence. It is in no way evident that these forms of violence are appropriately considered. And this is true not only for society in general, but also for sociological research, which at best conceives of it in a reductionist way. Each of the three approaches shows this in a different way. Research that operates with the assumption of a *peaceful modernity* does not take the private life into account, thus blacking out the violence as it occurs along the asymmetries of gender and generation. The *newer intersectional approaches* subsume children to domestic violence among adults, at best equating the interests of women and children (Gordon, 1990), and at worst not considering children to be a relevant group in need of scientific attention. And while *victimization research* shows the extent of violence and crimes children suffer, it is mainly concerned with the dysfunctional conditions and social control. For our purposes, we cannot follow any of these directions. Instead, we propose to investigate this very basic problem, “how does the nexus of children and violence enter social reality?” and we will do this by raising three questions, which we see as interrelating with each other:

- (1) How is violence against children perceived and defined? This question is concerned with the identification of victims and perpetrators as well as with the properties that are applied to qualify an act as violent or severe enough to instigate institutional responses. To what degree are gender aspects relevant for these perceptions?
- (2) How do societies react towards violent acts involving children? This question is concerned with the ways that different societies deal with children as perpetrators and victims, and this allows us to compare different societies and their responses – up to the point where the boundaries of age and gender as social categories may be re-drawn or rejected. To what degree can we still find the idea of dangerous and endangered children guiding such reactions?
- (3) What are the social conditions for those responses? Here, we can ask for the actors involved (e.g., states, expert groups, social movements, national and international organizations) as well as the prevailing forms of social order



that allow or hinder the recognition of and responses to violence against children.

Our inquiry into the interplay of these questions is guided by *childhood sociology*. Studying the variation of structurally consolidated definitions of age categories and their incorporation into societies' dispositives and modes of domination promises a more comprehensive approach to children and violence. Such a perspective starts from a relational perspective on categories of age, which structure the social arrangements between the respective groups of such a "generational order" and other categories of membership and inequality (Alanen, 2009). Furthermore, tying in generation with gender and phenomena of violence makes the interweaving of the public and the private space visible. Such a perspective makes explicit how the inferior status of children across institutions is inextricably linked to the ways children are subjected to domination in the private space. This is what our reflections on the history of public and private order revealed. And this is valid even for institutional responses specifically designed to intervene in cases of abuse and neglect in the private space. In an earlier study, we found that child welfare agencies had a strong orientation towards preserving or re-establishing what they considered to be a proper family life, resulting in an almost complete ignorance of the child and her suffering (Alberth & Bühler-Niederberger, 2015). We already argued that the silent agreement between public authorities and private life with regard to the child's domination was challenged only recently. Our volume shows that the immediate authorities of the public – the nation states and the local and regional authorities – are still sluggish in complying with international demands to honour children's rights, as this fits their interests in many respects.

## CONTEXTUALIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS

The contributions in this volume are structured according to our three guiding questions.

### *Perceptions and Definitions*

The four contributions in the first part of this volume deal in different ways with the perception and definition of possibly or evidently violent acts and hence the identification of victims and perpetrators as such. It is a matter of course that such perceptions depend on moral points of view. If parental rights are highly-valued, the vulnerability of children may be of lesser importance. In particular, it is a moral exaltation of the mother as a loving and self-sacrificing person that is opposed to her identification as a perpetrator. This is what the contributions of Alberth and of Douglas and Lee show. Both chapters present an analysis of child welfare workers in child protection services: Alberth for Germany and Douglas and Lee for the US. While the studies use different methodological approaches, they converge in their main insight. Mothers are only hesitantly perceived to be violent, and this in turn reduces the chance of recognition of the violence inflicted upon the child. On the basis of in-depth interviews, Alberth

analyzes how social workers in child protection frame their cases. He finds that mothers are rarely defined as perpetrators and children rarely as victims. The cases are rhetorically presented in the logic of stories of mothers with limited agency due to difficult conditions, which is also the way they are handled; to support mothers and to encourage mothers while children are ignored. Meanwhile, Douglas and Lee mainly use the data of questionnaires to reveal what they call the “misconception commonly held by professionals that men perpetrate Child Maltreatment Fatalities at higher rates than women.” The authors argue that this is also due to a gender-based paradigm on which family violence research was founded, in which women and children were perceived to be the victims of violent men.

Jud and Voll point to further conditions influencing the identification of parental behaviour as harming the child, be it by maltreatment or neglect. These may be professional presets to work either so called “family oriented” or oriented towards child protection. There may be lists of criteria that are defined by the agencies. In their study in Switzerland, the authors found that such criteria may vary, even in narrow geographic areas, and more so in a country with different languages and cultures – this is the Swiss case. Additionally, they may hardly be explicit. While assembling their material for the first national study of reported incidents of child maltreatment – of which their chapter presents many results – Jud and Voll experienced some agencies having to look up their definitions of child maltreatment in their manuals or handbooks. And while larger agencies with a specialized and centralized support unit were more likely to have documented definitions, the handbooks and manuals were not always in regular use by frontline workers. Taken together, these conditions produce considerable variations with regard to the amount of cases that are defined and treated as maltreatment.

While we could still take the generational and gender bias of child welfare workers to be a problem of adequate training or their use of valid handbooks, Jud and Voll tell us that the problem is not so easy to solve. The difficulties of identifying possibly violent acts are not just the problems of practitioners and their views which may be insufficiently evidence-based or biased by moral judgments. Scholars struggle with definitions as well, and especially if the behaviour they have to define is not limited to clear physical injury but includes psychological assault and injury or the broad array of behaviour that is addressed with the concept “neglect”, which may end fatally as well. Even the definition of a clear physically violent act is difficult enough. This is what Fairbairn, Sutton, Dawson, and Jaffe show in an impressively scrupulous and diligent attempt to define what makes a domestic homicide. The chapter results from the work of these authors within the frame of the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations (CDHPVP). With consistent and transparent definitions, the authors want to allow for stronger research across jurisdictions and to increase the ability to understand and prevent domestic homicide. The authors are also aware that any definition excludes cases, and they admit that definitions may be wider or narrower in accordance with the purpose for which they are intended. While the chapter focuses on the special