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Child protection in armed conflict: Norm transfer in the UN

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Abstract

In tracing the source of delivery failures in the United Nations framework (from hereon in known as the 'framework', 'workstream' or 'infrastructure') for protecting Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CaAC), scholars (Lee-Koo 2011; Carpenter 2016) have suggested that many of these problems stem from the effects of underlying conceptual norms about conflict-affected children that are at play both within and outside of the UN workstream. Yet such scholarship has engaged in analysis that is *either* broad or narrow but deep in analysing these norms – leaving room for a more comprehensive approach to identifying, mapping and understanding the influence of these norms. This thesis therefore contributes to the existing literature by marrying the broader, descriptive approach of existing critical feminist IR theory with an analytical methodological insight of Carpenter (2016), whose work suggested that systematic coding methods could be appropriate for the mapping of norms.

This thesis employs systematic use of a comprehensive coding tree which is deployed as a methodological tool to produce a contextualised study of a particular section of the wider CaAC ecosystem. This code tree schematic traces and clarifies which norms are significant in a particular area of the CaAC workstream. This examination of language in policy material from specific offices in the CaAC UN infrastructure demonstrates that certain norms about conflict-affected children are present. Temporal patterns can be observed regarding the presence of these norms, and clues as to how they reach this area of the infrastructure from the wider CaAC infrastructure can be identified.

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Contents

ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
CONTENTS.....	IV
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	VIII
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XI
LIST OF TABLES.....	XI
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background.....	3
1.1.1 Origins of the Children Affected by Armed Conflict infrastructure	3
1.1.2 Development of the Children Affected by Armed Conflict infrastructure	4
1.2 The research gap.....	6
1.2.1 Theorising norms of conflict-affected children	6
1.3 Chapter outline	8
1.4 Summary	11
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	14
2.1 Introduction.....	14
2.2 ‘Children’	16
2.3 The focus on ‘women-and-children’ and children as girls.....	19
2.3.1 Archetypal victims	20
2.3.2 The specific issue of ‘women-and-children’	22
2.3.3 Examples of the normative influence of ‘women-and-children’: children as girls	26
2.3.4 NGOs as an important additional site of normative influence	27
2.4 Child soldiers.....	29
2.5 Theoretical home(s)	32
2.5.1 Why norms matter.....	40
2.5.2 Symbolic technologies as political tools	41
2.5.3 The impact of norms on the workstream	42
2.6 Conclusion	44
CHAPTER 3 THEORY, METHODOLOGY AND METHOD	47
3.1 Introduction.....	47
3.1.1 Symbolic technologies: A means of measuring the representation of ideas	48
3.1.2 Research contribution – theory and methodology	50
3.2 Methodological framework.....	54
3.2.1 Sequential explanatory design.....	57
3.2.2 Stage 1.....	62
3.2.3 Stage 2.....	65
3.2.4 Stage 3.....	66

3.3 Methods within these stages	67
3.3.1 Sampling	67
3.3.2 Interviewing	69
3.3.3 Semi-structured interviews	70
3.3.4 Conducting the interviews	72
3.3.5 Thematic analysis	73
3.3.6 Coding	75
3.3.7 Codes for analysis	78
3.4 Bringing together the methods for each stage	80
3.4.1 Methods for Stage 1	80
3.4.2 Methods for Stage 2	84
3.4.3 Methods for Stage 3	84
3.5 Ethics	86
3.6 Project limitations	87
3.7 Conclusion	89
CHAPTER 4 DECONSTRUCTING PHRASES IN THE SEARCH FOR NORMS – INVESTIGATING DATASET 1	91
4.1 Introduction	91
4.2 Research stage recap	92
4.3 Defining frequency	94
4.4 Overall observations	96
4.5 The child soldier norm	99
4.6 ‘Women-and-children norm’	104
4.6.1 ‘Signposts’ of norm influence	105
4.7 Children as girls	107
4.8 Conclusion	110
CHAPTER 5 INVESTIGATING DATASET 2: OPERATIONALISING NORMS	112
5.1 Introduction	112
5.2 Frequency results	114
5.3 Thematic analysis results from Dataset 2	118
5.4 ‘Women-and-children’ in the wider dataset	118
5.4.1 Policy documents/programmatic guides vs field guidance	118
5.4.2 Conflict sensitivity	121
5.4.3 Peacebuilding and peacekeeping	123
5.4.4 The application of the norm in Best Interests Determination/Unaccompanied and Separated Children contexts	129
5.4.5 Mediation and monitoring and reporting	138
5.5 Conclusion	140
CHAPTER 6 ‘WOMEN-AND-CHILDREN’: WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY, AND CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT	142

6.1 Introduction	142
6.2 Confirming ‘women-and-children’ as norm	143
6.2.1 Scholarly work on ‘women-and-children’: contextualising the connection to WPS	143
6.2.2 Women-and-children and the CaAC workstream	144
6.3 Women, peace and security as normative influence	147
6.3.1 Propagating norms	147
6.3.2 The presence of the ‘women-and-children’ norm as normative influence	149
6.3.3 Confirming the focus on ‘women-and-children’ in need of protection.....	151
6.3.4 Confirming points of divergence	154
6.4 Mainstreaming actors	159
6.4.1 UN Women	159
6.4.2 UNICEF.....	160
6.4.3 Special Representatives of the Secretary General.....	161
6.4.4 UNHCR and IAWG-UASC	163
6.5 WPS and CaAC dynamics	165
6.5.1 Mainstreaming WPS into CaAC.....	166
6.5.2 Generating norms at the WPS and CaAC nexus?	168
6.5.3 The impact of sexual violence workstreams on the intersection of WPS and CaAC	170
6.5.4 A closing note on gender diverse children and conflict-related sexual violence	173
6.6 Conclusion	173
CHAPTER 7 ‘AGENCY’ ACROSS THE DATASETS	175
7.1 Introduction	175
7.2 Norm presence, meaning and negotiation in dataset 1	177
7.2.1 Changes in the norm frequency in 2005.....	179
7.2.2 Changes in the norm frequency from 2015	180
7.2.3 Norm negotiation.....	182
7.3 Norm presence and application in dataset 2	183
7.3.1 Straight 18.....	183
7.3.2 Peacebuilding/transitional justice and comparisons to agency in conflict	190
7.3.3 Child soldiers or CAAFAG	193
7.4 Conclusion	196
CHAPTER 8 NGOS AND CAAC NORM TRANSFER	198
8.1 Introduction	198
8.2 NGOs and norm development	198
8.3 Dataset 1: Sites and directions of norm flow at the high policy level	201
8.3.1 Which NGOs are relevant?.....	201
8.3.2 Recognition of the role of NGOs.....	202
8.3.3 The Arria Formula and other informal mechanisms	204
8.3.4 Formalised means for shaping policy and practice	205

8.4 Dataset 2: Sites and issues in norm flow in the field	206
8.4.1 General NGO cooperation in the field	206
8.4.2 Unaccompanied and Separated Children: the Handbook	208
8.4.3 Unaccompanied and Separated Children: additional documents	210
8.4.4 Information Management.....	213
8.4.5 'Women's groups' and 'religious groups'	214
8.5 Conclusion	219
CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION	221
9.1 Answering research question 1	222
9.2 Answering research question 2	225
9.3 Answering research question 3	226
9.4 Further research	227
9.5 Closing note	230
REFERENCES.....	231
APPENDICES	256
Appendix 1: Annual reports of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary- General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict	256
Appendix 2: Interview information sheet	258
Appendix 3: Code tables – Dataset 1	260
Appendix 4: code tables – Dataset 2	269

List of abbreviations

AoR: Area of Responsibility

BIA: Best Interests Assessment

BID: Best Interests Determination

CaAC: children affected by armed conflict

CAAFAG: children associated with armed forces and groups

CPAs: Child Protection Advisors

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child

CTFMR: Country Task Force for Monitoring and Reporting

DPO: Department of Peacekeeping Operations

DPPA: Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

ECOSOC: Economic and Social Council

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

GBV: gender-based violence

GHN: Global Horizontal Note

IAWG-UASC: International Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children

IC: Iterative Categorization

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

IDPs: internally displaced persons

IM: Information Management

INGO: International Non-Governmental Agency

IOs: International Organisations

IOM: International Organisation for Migration

IR: International Relations

ISIL: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

LRA: Lord's Resistance Army

MRM: Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism

OCHA: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs OSRSG: Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

OSRSG-CaAC: Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict

PBSO: Peacebuilding Support Office

PKO: Peacekeeping operations

PoC: protection of children

SCWGCAC: Security Council Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

SGBV: sexual and gender-based violence

SOGIE: sexual orientation and gender identity and expression

SRSR: Special Representative of the Secretary-General

SVC: sexual violence in conflict

UASC: unaccompanied and separated children

UN: United Nations

UNDAW: United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women

UNHCR: United Nations High Commission for Refugees

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNIFEM: United Nations Development Fund for Women

UNMISS: United Nations Mission in South Sudan

WASH: water, sanitation and hygiene

WPS: women, peace and security

YPS: Youth, Peace and Security

List of Figures

Figure 1: The norm life cycle, informed by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998)	38
Figure 2: Carpenter’s code tree schematic (2016)	53
Figure 3: Basic diagram of the sequential explanatory design used for this research.	62
Figure 4: Code tree used for analysis	65
Figure 5: Thematic analysis notes example.....	75
Figure 6: Detailed research design	82
Figure 7: Child soldier norm prevalence in OSRSG-CaAC reports by publication year	99
Figure 8: The ‘women-and-children norm’ in OSRSG-CaAC reports by publication year	104
Figure 9: Children as girls norm prevalence in OSRSG-CaAC reports by publication year	107
Figure 10: Conceptual map of thematic norm organisation in the dataset – how two other norms fit into a wider status quo of ‘women-and-children’	140

List of Tables

Table 1: Code frequency results for OSRSG-CaAC reports from 1998–2004	92
Table 2: Code frequency results for OSRSG-CaAC reports from 2005–2011	93
Table 3: Code frequency results for OSRSG-CaAC reports from 2012–2020	94
Table 4: Frequency tables for dataset 2	114
Table 5: Documents included in dataset 2 by order of date of publication	115

Chapter 1 Introduction

If you want to help somebody...you have to involve them in that decision-making. And find out what, exactly, they want. (Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

In 2019 the United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* turned thirty. Academics and policymakers are now assessing the progress of the last three and a half decades, noting that intra-state conflict is rising, and a greater proportion of the world's children are being displaced than ever before. There is no doubt that armed conflict has a significant impact on children, yet we still do not fully understand how best to observe and understand how ideas – conceptual norms – about child protection in the international arena form, circulate and impact practice¹.

Conceptual norms – that is, what we understand certain phrases, concepts or categories to mean – have an impact on the real world through policy and practice (see, for example, Lee-Koo 2011; Carpenter 2016; Rosert 2019). Meaning can be created by labelling things, or types of people, in a way that others recognise, but in doing so this can also oversimplify or stereotype the reality of the subject. Problematically, however, the existing scholarship on the conceptual norms (henceforth called 'norms') relating to child protection *either* engages in analysis that is broad (e.g. Lee Koo 2016) *or* narrow / deep (e.g. Carpenter 2016) in identifying the existence of these norms and in analysing their dynamic influence. Hence although norms relating to conflict-affected children have been identified within the wider UN and humanitarian infrastructure for Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CaAC) (Berents 2016; Lee-Koo 2013), and examined in the context of certain agencies (Morris 2015); there is not yet a comprehensive understanding of these norms and how they present in, and transfer through and between, the different policy levels and practice environments of what is a large and complex infrastructure. This leaves room for the development of a more comprehensive approach for identifying, mapping and understanding the influence of norms in the

¹ In the area of Children and Armed Conflict (CaAC), academics, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and UN agencies alike have in the past identified unhelpful norms that have impeded the goal of protecting and supporting children affected by conflict. For example, the annual report of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CaAC) of 2010 identified that male victim-survivors of conflict-related sexual violence are negatively impacted by erasure, because victim-survivors are commonly thought of as female only (paragraph 21). The literature review chapter in this thesis goes into further detail on this history.

case of child protection. In particular, there is room in this and the wider literature on norms to look to build a more generalised model to assist in tracing the process of norm development, movement and dynamism that could potentially be applied to other contexts.

This thesis therefore asks what child protection norms exist within and between elements of the UN system (from the 'highest' policy level – OSRSG-CaAC reporting – to the more practical field programming level), how have they developed over time, and what the existence of these norms means for practice – all within the context of creating and testing a refined code tree model. The thesis purposefully builds on Charlie Carpenter's (2016) work where they considered the presence and movement of norms within the publications of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the topic of civilian protection in conflict. Carpenter (2016) found a code tree schematic appropriate to enable the effective measurement of norm presence and movement in a very specific body of civilian protection subcluster written material. This thesis develops and further refines Carpenter's initial code tree model into a more nuanced and context-appropriate schematic, additionally drawing on the benefits of engaging in a sequential design methodology and demonstrating the usefulness of this model via its application to the UN's Child Protection system. The code tree schematic traces and clarifies which norms are significant in a particular area of the CaAC workstream, identifying potential patterns of norm transfer, and examining the relationship between policy norms and practical action in this workstream area.

It is this detailed description, and then contextual use, of a code tree developed to measure these norms that is this thesis' key contribution – building a model for norm tracing that could potentially be replicable elsewhere. Hence the overall contribution of this thesis to new knowledge is twofold: provision of a more thorough understanding of child protection norms, and, more importantly, the more systematic development of a norm tracing model that can be utilised in other contexts.

The thesis asks the following three research questions:

- 1) What conceptual norms about conflict-affected children exist in the CaAC workstream and how did they develop?
- 2) How do these norms translate into operational guidance for UN and NGO field workers?
- 3) What perspectives on norms about conflict-affected children can be offered by actors involved in different areas of the workstream – policy and field work?

In seeking to answer these questions, the empirical aspects of this study were carried out via textual analysis of annual reports of the Office of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG hereafter) across the 22-year-period since its inception, and then through a search for these same norms in field policy manuals from UN offices involved in the child protection sub-cluster. Some interviews with relevant practitioners were then used to help contextualise these textual sources.

This introductory chapter now moves to provide some further context to the topic at hand before presenting a chapter outline for the thesis. This chapter outline explains how the rest of the thesis will unfold, indicating how these chapters work together to identify what dynamic conceptual norms, at-times-disjointed operational priorities, and varying interpretations of meaning by practitioners can tell us about the impacts of child protection norms in the UN system.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Origins of the Children Affected by Armed Conflict infrastructure

This thesis centres around the United Nations Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CaAC) infrastructure. For the purpose of contextualising this study and orienting the reader, the following section provides a brief background of the workstream itself and how it came to be. This is further expanded upon in Chapter 2 which includes an examination of scholarly perspectives on the CaAC infrastructure.

The reader will note that the terms 'infrastructure' and 'workstream' are used interchangeably in this thesis. These terms refer to the large body of UN agencies, such as UNICEF, UNHCR, the OSRSG-CaAC itself, Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO), as well as NGOs such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Save the Children, which work together at both the policy and field level to design and administer the child protection mandate. These organisations have connections as expert contributors through the Security Council but have also built strong relationships over time (for example, UNICEF and the ICRC have worked closely together since WWII – see Morris 2015). They come into contact with one another through multiple policy dialogues at various levels; not just at the UN headquarters, but also on a myriad of other

committees, at conferences, special reports and research projects, and of course in the field through response to conflict.

The CaAC infrastructure itself has expanded significantly from the beginnings of UN child protection-focused efforts in conflict zones during and after the Second World War. These were managed by UNICEF at that time and up until the 1990s (Morris 2015). However, high profile intrastate conflicts in the 1990s drew significant media attention to the plight of children in conflict zones. Prior to the 1990s, the narrative of ‘new wars’ (Rosen 2005) was not yet prevalent, and the visibility of children as victims of conflict did not tend to be central to media accounts of war. Atrocities against children in Somalia, Rwanda, Sudan, and the Balkans, however, made headlines and gained donor sympathy. It became clear that civilian protection needed to take a more central position in UN policy and the security issues in play demanded that it not be relegated to the development arms of the organisation. Accordingly, the UN General Assembly and Committee on the Rights of the Child appointed Graca Michal to conduct an inquiry into the effects of armed conflict on children. The subsequent report, published in 1996, led to resolution 51/77, and the appointing of the inaugural Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The report is notable for being the first high-level dedication of resources to an analysis of conflict-affected children.

1.1.2 Development of the Children Affected by Armed Conflict infrastructure

Several important resolutions have since been made expanding the UN’s child protection infrastructure.² Resolution 1261 in 1999 identified six grave violations of children in armed conflict: recruitment, killing and maiming, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, sexual violence, and blocking humanitarian access (United Nations 1999). This Resolution also granted the Special Representative the mandate to report on these violations. Initially, according to Resolution 1379, recruitment was the only violation that would lead to a party’s “listing” in the Secretary General’s annual report on armed conflict (United Nations 2001). The listing of a party is intended to function as a soft-power deterrent to the violation of children during conflict; however, as the literature

² Note here that the issue of the protection of children in armed conflict is referred to throughout this thesis as “child protection”. This may seem obvious but is being noted to ensure we differentiate child protection in this context from the term’s meaning in, for example, the public health field, in which child protection usually refers to the administrative dimension of interventions of state relating to children at risk of domestic violence, sexual abuse etc.

review will show, the impartiality of the mechanism has been questioned. Subsequent resolutions added the other violations as listable offences. In 2005, resolution 1539 devised a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism to identify violations, and shortly afterward the Security Council Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict (SCWGCAC) was created to operate this mechanism.

A total of 12 resolutions specific to conflict-affected children have been made. As a body of directives, these achieved the purpose of setting up a monitoring and reporting infrastructure and encapsulating some of the key normative conceptions of conflict-affected children that reached the Security Council. Norms reach this level of the UN through a complex system of NGO and International Non-Governmental Agency (INGO) fora, member state case-making, international civil society and academic lobbying, and reporting from other UN bodies, most significantly the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict.

Moving further into the twenty-first century, global child protection infrastructure has become a well-established web of lateral and hierarchical relationships among various UN bodies including SCWGCAC, the Special Representative's office, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO), the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, NATO, the European Union, the African Union and more. Also relevant to this study are NGOs that function as policy and field work contributors in cooperation with the UN. These relationships have built up over time from a foundation of Security Council resolutions, working groups, specific research projects commissioned by the Special Representative – or the Secretary General themselves, in the case of Graca Michel's 1996 report; and field responses to particular conflicts. While the infrastructure is well-established, it is also quite opaque due to its size and the number of policy fora it comprises.

This brief overview suggests that the current state of the international child protection infrastructure is broad and complex. Moreover, as the following chapters establish, there are certain conceptual 'frames' that dominate the concept of child protection that add to this complexity. That is, the conglomeration of 'women-and-children' or the emphasis on child soldiers have been noted by scholars as potentially significant conceptual norms that could impact upon

child protection practices. The theorisation of norms and their transfer within, and into, the UN infrastructure is central to the issue of uneven service delivery, and thus also to this thesis.

1.2 The research gap

1.2.1 Theorising norms of conflict-affected children

Existing scholarship has raised concerns about the perceived nature of certain norms surrounding child protection. Lee-Koo (2011, 2019) and Berents (2016, 2020a), for example, argued that norms by which we describe and understand conflict-affected children are heavily gendered, which has various effects on children themselves; girls' experience of conflict can be limited to victimhood in humanitarian and popular discourse; and boys' experience limited to the stereotype of child soldiers. Indeed, Lee-Koo and Berents (and D'Costa) have produced research of a more descriptive nature based on their field work that speaks to the existence and movement of these norms in a broader child protection context.

Others have also contributed to this discussion. Rosen (2005), for example, noted that the norm of understanding conflict-affected children primarily as child soldiers, and especially as apolitical victims of coercion in a soldiering context, did not reflect the reality of many conflict situations and denies the agency of young people in conflict. However, while these observations have been made regarding the wider CaAC UN infrastructure and particular humanitarian campaigns (for example, Berents 2016), there are few studies of the existence and movement of such norms in specific areas of the infrastructure.

Given that scholars studying norms are often interested in knowing what the origin and movement paths of norms are, it seems that studying specific policy areas of the infrastructure would be useful in building a comprehensive picture. Indeed, as Carpenter has suggested: The first and sometimes overlooked task for a student of international norms is to figure out whether they are evident at all (2016 p.14).

In their work on civilian protection, then, Carpenter (2016) canvassed existing descriptive literature for the identification of norms in the general, more broad civilian protection infrastructure itself, then they selected a particular area of policy within this infrastructure, and did a close reading via content analysis in order to demonstrate the existence and prevalence of these norms in a

pinpointed area. In this way, Carpenter extended what the wider literature said about norms present in the civilian protection infrastructure by providing a highly magnified and detailed study of a particular area, allowing a better mapping of the relative presence of norms.

In undertaking their work, Carpenter (2016) examined repetitive phrases, utilising Laffey & Weldes' concept of "symbolic technologies" (1997) to explain how a phrase functions as a signpost, or discursive manifestation, of a norm within a particular workstream. Carpenter's use of a code tree schematic to measure these symbolic technologies was particularly effective – hence the code tree they developed will be adapted in this study with the aim of extending Carpenter's methodological insight into the CaAC framework specifically, whilst also contributing to the comprehensive, overall mapping of norms in the child protection space by critical feminist IR scholars.

In answer to research question 1, *What conceptual norms about conflict-affected children exist in the CaAC workstream and how did they develop?*, the concept of a code tree is demonstrated by this thesis to be a useful means of tracing and measuring the presence of norms (via symbolic technologies) in the sampled body of literature: effectively holding a magnifying glass over a particular aspect of this broader child protection system and revealing norm presence. However, the addition of a purposefully sequential research design further strengthens the code tree idea deployed by Carpenter.

This thesis therefore adds to the existing body of literature by generating and applying a rigorous methodology to a particular dataset to identify and then closely examine the existence, nature, and influence of child protection norms in those areas. In doing so, the research builds a more comprehensive map of norm presence and movement across different aspects of the child protection infrastructure than currently exists. Moreover, and given the ties between these policy streams and field practitioners' material (as in Dataset 2), this further enables us to explore norm influence on these actors in the field. Were this particular research gap not addressed, it would not be possible to build a more comprehensive map of norm presence and movement across different aspects of the child protection infrastructure; and given the ties between these policy streams and field practitioners' material (as in Dataset 2), a lens on norm influence on these actors in the field would be unexplored. The thesis finds that examining language in policy material from specific offices in the CaAC (Children in Armed Conflict) UN infrastructure demonstrates that certain norms

about conflict-affected children are present. Temporal patterns can be observed regarding the presence of these norms, and clues as to how they reach this area of the infrastructure from the wider CaAC infrastructure can be identified.

1.3 Chapter outline

The chapters in this thesis represent the process of progressing through the sequential explanatory research design, the results found, and then discussion of different themes that arose in those results. Accordingly, this first chapter has introduced the premise of the thesis. Since the key contribution of this thesis is in the methodological approach of developing a useful and replicable code tree model, and the accompanying theorisation of norm measurement/presence in this particular child protection context, the first, second and third chapters of this thesis are most consequential (canvassing the introduction and contribution, literature review and methodology). However, as Carpenter also found, the central process of testing the measurement of norms via a code tree also revealed other themes in the document set, indicating the presence of untested norms. Mentions of particular tested-for phrases are necessarily read in context, at times connecting them to other themes. Therefore, the remaining chapters discuss these themes and their relationship to the norms that were tested for, extending these connections and suggesting areas of normative influence, and possible areas for further research (in which other studies could 'magnify' norm presence and movement to contribute towards overall mapping of norms in the child protection infrastructure).

Chapter one has so far outlined the research problem, presented the research questions, and considered the importance of the research in light of the intended contribution theoretically and empirically to new knowledge. A brief overview of the research design has been presented. From here, adopting a sequential design, this thesis moves first into a literature review to set the intellectual 'scene' for the research, by summarising key normative themes in the literature. Then, having established that context, it presents the methodology and methods. This is because examining the literature for an indication of which norms to look for in the datasets was the first step in the sequential model, and therefore the reader will better understand the methods once these norms have been explored. The thesis' broader contribution to the literature is that it seeks to build on Carpenter's model to provide a clear and comprehensive model for norm tracing, and part

of this model is the use of a clearly delineated sequential approach to assist in more accurately unpacking our understanding of how norms around child protection form, evolve and influence.

The second chapter in this thesis is the literature review. This covers the theoretical groundwork necessary for understanding the project. Firstly, the UN's CaAC workstream and relevant humanitarian infrastructure is introduced, briefly charting its development through time, and noting the most important actors and focal points within the workstream for this thesis. The issue that this project seeks to address – that is, insufficient service delivery in parts of this workstream – is also introduced. Secondly, theoretical approaches to norms within the feminist/constructivist security studies and IR literature are examined in order to introduce the epistemological approach that this thesis takes. Other related areas in which similar theorising has been applied are included to help demonstrate the utility of this approach. Thirdly, methodological ideas relevant to this epistemological orientation are identified.

The third chapter then explains and discusses the methodology employed for this thesis. It describes the model best suited to tracing norm presence in this area of the child protection infrastructure; the research questions and their relationship to sequential explanatory design model are introduced, providing a discussion of the utility of this design in answering these particular questions. It explains how Carpenter's model has been built on and developed to suit this context, with the aim of being replicable in different norm-measuring contexts. The research rationale is also further explained with reference to other research in this area in the feminist/constructivist security studies and IR spaces. Also included here is an integrated discussion on the challenges and obstacles that had to be worked through in completing this thesis during the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic. This section of the chapter therefore touches on how the thesis was necessarily re-wrought and the impacts that the Covid-19 pandemic had on this study. Here, too, recent research on the impact of the pandemic on relevant research methods is included and discussed.

The fourth chapter discusses the results of the first research stage. This first stage involved a textual analysis of annual reports of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children affected by Armed Conflict (hereafter OSRSG-CaAC) from 1998 to 2020. This textual analysis began with counting coded phrases associated with particular norms and

examining these phrases in order to provide an evidence-based analysis of the changes in frequency and use of these phrases over time. The chapter presents a broad discussion of the immediate findings by norm measured, followed by some brief conclusions drawn about other themes that unexpectedly presented in the dataset.

The fifth chapter discusses the results of the second research stage. This stage involved comprehensive document analysis of twelve long field guidance documents. The documents included here are those produced by various UN bodies and INGOs (and combinations of such) to help inform and guide those workers engaging with CaAC. This chapter again presents the findings relating to norms measured, as well as offering up a wider discussion on other normative themes that came up during the analysis, noting that there were several held in common with those norms revealed in the first dataset.

The sixth chapter explores the wider theme of the 'women-and-children' discursive norm, with the purpose of clarifying the ways in which phrases (symbolic technologies) represented this norm in the datasets, and providing insights as to the movement of, and relationships between, these phrases. While this in itself was a norm measured for in the research stages, unlike the following theme of 'agency', it was notable for being found throughout all the analysis that presents itself as either 'sub-norms' or theoretical starting points in the development of other norms about CaAC. As is discussed in the literature review, the assumption that women and children have the same needs and capabilities in armed conflict situations has been noted as potentially underpinning much of the wider humanitarian protection mandate in the UN, and even among NGOs. The chapter returns to delve more deeply into existing literature on this topic whilst exploring the expression of this wider theme across datasets and highlighting some observations about areas where this norm might be crossing over between the CaAC workstream and others.

The seventh chapter explores one of the most prominent wider themes revealed in the results of the examination of the two datasets: agency. The agency of conflict-affected children itself was not a tested-for norm in the original research design; however, norms that were examined did reveal important observations on the relevance of this concept to the measured norms. For example, the norm of the 'child soldier', as a summative description of the experiences of all CaAC, encompassed a sub-theme of agency in the recruitment of CaAC. However, a wider theme of

agency was also evident across all measured norms and is a central theme in the relevant academic literature, as well as policy language in the workstream. As such, it is a useful framework in which to contextualise many of the findings of this research and suggests that the pragmatic methodological approach undertaken here has been important for enabling non-tested-for norms to come to the surface and be counted.

The eighth chapter focuses on the role of NGOs as norm entrepreneurs, distributors, and movers within, and into, the CaAC workstream. This wider theme became apparent in the research results across datasets. Literature relating to the theorisation of NGOs in this role is therefore examined and compared before indications about norm travel within and from NGOs in the datasets are examined. This chapter aims to elucidate the central role NGOs play as sites of norm transfer within UN workstreams, at both policy and field levels, and explore possible patterns regarding types of NGOs and norm transfer that were observed in the research results. This thematic chapter therefore serves to illustrate the norm relationships and sub-themes that can be revealed through the use of the research model, the first clues being revealed through the measurement of norm presence using the code tree (and then subject to further analysis in the following research stages).

Finally, the concluding chapter summarises and completes the thesis, and closes with suggestions for further research that could expand upon and make use of this thesis in the process comprehensively mapping norm transfer around the UN CaAC workstream.

1.4 Summary

Norms are important sites of investigation in IR. Child Protection is a growing area of concern. This thesis combines a curiosity in understanding how norms function, move and influence with an interest in how the concept of child protection has evolved, been understood and implemented.

The thesis makes its way through an exploration of the literature and a comprehensive discussion of the methodology and methods used, before providing findings and some general analysis from each of the two datasets examined in this research, in relation to the relevant norms. The thesis demonstrates its key contribution in the utility of the code tree developed and applied to this particular context. It provides an analysis of the results according to a thematic structure; each of

these chapters being thematically related to the measured norms ('women-and-children' and the role of WPS – chapter six, and 'agency', chapter seven), or another very central norm that was not initially sought, but was recognised as vitally important in the datasets (the role of NGOs – chapter eight), elucidated through the use of the model.

These thematically focused chapters reflect the mode of sequential analysis whereby the researcher returns to the data multiple times as it is revealed, familiarising themselves with different thematic aspects. In doing so, the aim is to contribute to the literature on norms, on child protection, on the UN framework and to demonstrate the potential utility of sequential analysis for helping to unpack the process of norm transfer in other sites of inquiry.

Disclaimer: The impact of covid-19

This thesis was originally intended to involve interviews conducted in person with staff at UN offices in Bangkok, Tokyo, and New York throughout mid and late 2020. This research stage was designed to add a layer of depth to the research findings by examining the perspectives of UN policymakers and field workers across geographical space, to seek insights about norm localisation and its effect on policy and practice within the workstream. The project plan was finalised, and grants were obtained from multiple donors to fund travel to three different regional offices in Bangkok, Tokyo, and New York. Travel was booked and plans put in place to leave in July of 2020. Just weeks before departure, however, the Covid-19 pandemic began. It quickly became apparent that travel was going to be a significant problem, and shortly thereafter the New Zealand government closed our international borders. This caused serious disruption to the research project, not only necessitating a redesign of much of the thesis, but there was a significant administrative workload to address – such as working with a travel broker to try and recover donors' funds and negotiating the return of these funds. For a PhD student, this was a challenging roadblock to navigate as much of the future possibility of international travel was uncertain.

The resulting redesign of the project had to remove the need for international travel, and I hoped instead to remotely interview selected UN staff. In this situation, the snowball sampling I had intended to use to source interviewees while onsite overseas was, however, less feasible, and my

supervisors and I worked to try and set up contact with potential interviewees that we had some access to by way of existing professional relationships.

However, even this process was fraught. It was becoming clear later in 2020, and moving into 2021, that the Covid-19 pandemic was severely impacting workforces around the globe, through a combination of stay-at-home orders, a newly oppressive burden of never-ending virtual meetings for employees, sickness, and other factors. Despite a long list of contacts and the use of personal connections, I struggled to reach many potential interviewees and make plans.

On top of these extrinsic disruptions, I was required to work at home throughout New Zealand's periods of lockdown, trying to manage my family responsibilities as well as trying to make progress on the thesis. Eventually, I made the decision to amend the third research stage to suit the very small number of interviews I was able to conduct (though, luckily, these were very insightful).

Here it is also worth noting that, since the outbreak of Covid-19, a significant body of research has been carried out into the impacts of this disruption on women academics (Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya 2021) and managing the disruption to my research as well as the parallel changes to family life felt like a burden. These events delayed my project significantly and led to a protracted organisational load as I negotiated the new terms of funding with my donors.

I had been warned from the beginning that research inevitably involves disruption, change, and the need for resilience, but this event also brought into focus on the fact that research is an iterative process that seldom goes as planned. Lessons were learned in the production of this thesis that I will carry with me into my professional life; and it is hoped that any students who read this research are further encouraged to continue to pursue their own research in the face of adversity.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

South Sudan has a very clear and strong legal base which provides for the rights of children. It also explains what is allowed, and not, in the Constitution...and in even in the Child Bill...South Sudan Child Act of 2018. At the same time, it has existing culture. You know? Sometimes the law and the culture agree on how to protect children; sometimes the infighting was...you know, to protect girls and boys, and how it should be done. This is the problem. So, we will talk about that, but you see, you know, the military person or even the government official, you know, marrying a child. Or forcing a girl child to get married to an old man. (Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

2.1 Introduction

Children are framed in a variety of ways by a variety of actors in relation to armed conflict. Different institutional bodies of the United Nations (UN), designed to protect the interests of children in armed conflict, subscribe to particular ideas about children in conflict and their characteristics. Indeed, the academic literature on children in armed conflict is clearly critical of existing UN mechanisms and the official discourse these institutions generate.

This chapter canvasses and interrogates the academic literature on the subject of conflict-affected children and the UN mechanisms designed to protect them. The first section of this chapter provides a critical examination of the way that conflict-affected children tend to be categorised in the UN workstream. This section introduces some of the critical feminist/constructivist authors whose work was influential in the approach and design of this thesis. In the second section of this chapter, theoretical approaches to norms within the feminist/constructivist security studies and International Relations (IR) literature are examined more deeply in order to introduce the epistemological approach that this thesis takes. Other, related, areas in which similar theorising has been applied, are also included to help demonstrate the utility of this approach. In the third section of this chapter, methodological ideas relevant to this epistemological orientation are briefly discussed as a precursor to the following chapter.

The literature on child protection as a broad category is comprised of work from a wide variety of disciplines, perhaps due to the varying perspectives from which child protection is traditionally viewed, as well as the complex nature of armed conflict which affects so many spheres. The forthcoming literature review is situated predominantly within International Relations (IR) literature. However, contributions to the discussion on who exactly is a 'child', and what their needs and capabilities are in conflict, have also been made by scholars of anthropology, sociology, education, public health, psychology, development studies and disaster research, among other fields; and these connections have been welcomed by IR scholars. Here, again, there is an obvious trend of criticism of the UN – and even NGO – mechanisms among this varied literature. Pederson & Sommerfelt (2007 p.255) write, for example, that the definition of "child" has been completely neglected in data gathering efforts to the detriment of practical effectiveness. Jacob (2013 p.34) echoes other scholars in asserting that there has been an "uncritical reproduction of data on children in armed conflict" which has led to the promulgation in official sources of facts that cannot be verified. And the Security Council itself, in its 2017 Report: *Children and Armed Conflict: Sustaining the Agenda*, states that the existing infrastructure is insufficient to face contemporary challenges of child protection in armed conflict.

Overwhelmingly, it is thought that the characteristics of children in armed conflict which are assumed by these mechanisms are not well-defined, appropriate, or representative, and have failed to achieve the expected level of practical effectiveness. Essentially, it is intimated in the abovementioned report that practical efforts undertaken in UN interventions are suffering because the normative conceptions about CaAC within the UN workstream are not widely applicable or accurate representations of conflict-affected children.

Given the multi-faceted nature of the topic, the review of the literature that unfolds below considers a variety of academic critiques as well as noting particularly relevant UN commentary in discussing 'the child', 'child protection', and in drawing out the main themes of 'women-and-children' and 'child soldiers' that have been suggested by some of the existing literature, (see, for example, Lee-Koo 2011, Carpenter 2016, Jacob 2016, Rosen 2005, etc.). It is important to note that the body of literature on child protection in armed conflict is fairly nascent compared to many areas of IR scholarship. As such, there are only a few seminal authors in this area; particular experts include

Lee-Koo, Carpenter, D'Costa and Jacob, the works of whom are central to this thesis and hence these authors will be mentioned frequently throughout.

An important issue at heart of the academic critique is the promulgation of unhelpful ideas about who, exactly, conflict-affected children are; for example, stereotyping the experience of the conflict-affected child as a child soldier (Rosen 2005) or as a victimised girl (Berents 2016). This chapter begins by addressing the issue of who qualifies as a child. Accordingly, this leads into an examination of particular normative ideas about these children that are raised by the literature: children as being indistinct from women, or children as being girls only. In examining these ideas in the literature, a wider postcolonial critique of such normative constructions is encountered. This section will address the normative ideas first (addressing the ideas of children as girls, and as indistinct from women, simultaneously), and then examine the postcolonial context of the critiquing literature, which influences the discussion chapters of this thesis. The final part of the chapter will examine the third (highly critiqued) norm of conflict-affected children – children being stereotyped as child soldiers.

2.2 'Children'

A central issue of this thesis relates to the conceptualisation of conflict-affected children and the promulgation of certain conceptual norms about their experiences. That is who are considered 'children' and why?

In the latter decades of the twentieth century, the 'world child' norm (Tabak 2020) was extended throughout various United Nations mechanisms. This consolidation included a strict definition of a child as any person under the age of 18 years. Formalised in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) in 1989, it is described thus in Article 1: For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

This 'Straight-18' position on childhood, whereby any person under the age of 18 is by definition a child, is a concept born out of the Western industrial revolution and consequent periods of state consolidation and influence over the private sphere (Linde 2016), or what Jacob calls "Western historical tradition" (2014 p.15). Linde describes the development of the norm of state intervention

in the raising of children in Europe and America, beginning with universal schooling and the establishment of social services. Sociology has examined conceptions of childhood comprehensively since the 1990s (James & Prout 1990), but IR has been slower to do so. Berrick, Gilbert & Skivenes (2023), for example, have recently carried out a comprehensive assessment of the ways different countries currently define 'children' and their normative approaches to child protection, in which the heritage of Western thought tradition about childhood can be seen applied to the international sphere.

The specific motivation for enshrining this Straight-18 definition in international law has been discussed across a wide array of disciplines, including childhood and human rights studies (Sheppard 2000), anthropology (Rosen 2007) and critical security studies (Beier 2018, Berents 2019). Greenbaum, Haj-Yahia & Hamilton (2020) argue that the 'Straight 18' position as codified in the CRC is the morally correct definition of childhood, and "thus strengthens the moral and philosophical base for the study of the effects of [exposure to political violence] on children, efforts at intervention with such children, and the prevention of [exposure to political violence]" (p.9). Post-colonial security studies scholarship, however, has examined and castigated the concept for its role in imperialist intervention in the Global South (Lee-Koo 2011). What these literatures reveal is that the development of definitions and concepts such as the 'child' are not neutral. In particular, the lack of disaggregation of the category of 'child' is identified by scholars as a problematic aspect of existing norms around children in armed conflict. There are several norms, and associated symbolic technologies,³ alleged to exist in the discourse but not measured, which do not allow for the separation of the category of 'child' into age-disaggregated data (in particular), when it is obvious that the experience of an infant of any given event is going to differ markedly from that of an older adolescent (Mazurana, Benelli & Walker 2013). The common critique here is that this is a result of the Western idea of childhood pertaining to all people under the age of 18, as is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Critical feminist scholars (see, for example, Lee-Koo 2011 and Brockelhurst 2017) have also pointed out that the demarcation of choosing the age of 18 is often inappropriate in cultural contexts of conflict.

³ As explained in the Chapter one, the term 'symbolic technologies' is used by Laffey & Weldes (1997) to describe a norm/idea and the machinery of practices involved in reproducing it. In this research, phrases were identified as representative of symbolic technologies to enable the identification of norms.

The question of agency also intersects with the absence of age disaggregated data because of the variations in autonomy of people aged below 18, to say nothing of disability (Schiariti 2022), limitations caused by ethnic or class prejudice (Pejic 2001) or similar. Sex-disaggregated data gathering does occur as evidenced by the 2017 UN Secretary General's report on Children in Armed Conflict (referred to earlier); however, UN literature is silent on data pertaining to boys which may reflect norms that prejudice the interests of male civilians (Carpenter 2016 p.9).

Recent literature has therefore increasingly considered how the construction of who constitutes a 'child' serves neo-colonial interests by denying agency to children in the Global South where it might be afforded to those in the Global North. Berents (2016), for example, makes a postcolonial argument in her analysis of social media campaigns which construct narratives of Global South girlhood. She notes that the construction of childhoods in the Global South creates an implicit dichotomy with Global North childhoods, which may be at least somewhat agentic, compared to the 'complete childhood' of youth aged under 18 in the Global South. Similarly, Pruitt (2020) examines the postcolonial nexus of conceptions of non-agentic women-and-children in the Global South. Here Lee-Koo (2011) usefully illustrates this contrast by comparing the Australian Defence Force's 2009 'Gap Year Challenge' with the work of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, focused on the Global South; pointing out the differences in common normative assumptions about the agency of those aged under 18 depending on where in the world they are.

Holzcheiter (2020) and Higgins & Lopes Cardozo (2019) have also explored the impact of norms and the question of agency in relation to the UN's more recently defined category of 'Youth', encapsulated in the 'UN YOUTH' workstream, noting that youth have exercised agency in this context as well as in peacebuilding (see an extension of this discussion in Chapter 7). Yet, the characterisation of 'youth' as agentic, in the context of conflict (particularly the Youth, Peace and Security agenda) has also been criticised as being neoliberal and limiting in character (Altiok, Berents, Grizelj & McEvoy-Levy 2020) and through a post-colonial lens as reinforcing global hegemonic order (Sukarieh & Tannock 2018). Such analyses suggest that children of the Global North may exist in a 'third category' of agency whereby they can consent to certain things – such as their *eventual* deployment – but not others, before they are 18. Yet children of the Global South are subject to a strictly binary interpretation of agency in which those below 18 cannot even

consent to militarisation at a point in the future, because they lack comprehension of local political factors (Lee-Koo 2011).

In probing further at the motivations for such different conceptualisations of who qualifies as a child, Tabak (2020) has explored the utility of such a conception of children (particularly in the Global South) for the function of producing, or reproducing, stable and secure societies.

The child is a site for investment, with the end goal of societal return (Berents, Grizelj & McEvoy-Levy 2020). This child is the one that was surely envisaged by drafters as an ideal product of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – psychologically secure, protected and non-political; a citizen in training. The vast global humanitarian infrastructure, comprising the UN as well as NGOs and International Organisations (IOs), aims to promulgate this norm of childhood. Tabak terms this archetype the ‘world child’ (2020 p2). In this sense, the world child plays a role not just as the kind of child ‘we’ aim to produce in the Global North as the inheritor of ‘our’ supposedly stable and enlightened systems of governance; but also as a civilising agent in peacebuilding in the Global South. The ideal child in the post-conflict society is rehabilitated, politically involved in peace processes, and a stabilising actor for their future state. They are considered completely capable of – and indeed, almost duty-bound to – engage in consultative peacebuilding and transitional justice processes after conflict has ceased; in this context, their political foresight about the organisation of their society has weight.

The construction of ‘the child’ is therefore enmeshed with exercises of power, as is the portrayal of the nature of ‘the child’ through two dominant narratives: the child as elided with ‘women-and-children’ or ‘children-as girls’; as well as the notion of ‘child soldiers’.

2.3 The focus on ‘women-and-children’ and children as girls

In this section we unpack some of the themes that dominate narratives about children in conflict. Beginning with the agency-denying notion that children (alongside women) are always victims, this section also specifically explores the enmeshing of ‘children’ with ‘women-and-children’. As discussed in Chapter one, these are some of the norms that the literature on the child protection infrastructure has described as being generally present across the system; though deeper, more magnified examinations of the presence of these norms in particular areas of the system are still

limited. This thesis seeks to measure the presence of these norms in a particular focus area of this system, contributing to the wider goal of mapping them. Here the chapter moves into a discussion about the influence of a parallel agenda that has unfolded within the UN system: the Women Peace and Security agenda. Finally, this section investigates the frequent assumption that the phrase 'children' can be gendered: that is, that there tend to be assumptions at play about 'children-as-girls'.

2.3.1 Archetypal victims

Children's suffering is not a phenomenon specific to contemporary conflicts. Child casualties of the Blitzkrieg and Operation Gomorrah during WWII are well-documented. However, these child casualties were conceived of, alongside women, as being primarily 'civilian' in terms of defining characteristics. Even at the time in the Allied consciousness, children were considered to be complete victims and their wellbeing was viewed as a global responsibility, a concept still applied today and summarised well as Tabak's 'world child' (2020). In this regard, at this point in time, children were required to share an 'identity' with women, who may have been engaged in war work at home, but very rarely were believed to be active combatants (at least in the Western collective conscious). The legacy of this characterisation of conflict-affected children lives on in the popular imagination and has informed the early formalisation of a child protection mandate in global governance. For example, the suffering of children, *alongside women*, was the founding concern of the charity operations of UNICEF (although now officially called the United Nations Children's Fund, it maintains the acronym for its original conception – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund).

The origins of UNICEF's homogenising focus on women-and-children as victims of global conflict occurred at least in part due to funding priorities of the United States, which considered the strength of the traditional family to be a key pillar in the defence against communist ideology (Morris 2015 p.3). Policy priorities of the United States were therefore interwoven with UNICEF's mandate since its origins. Furthermore, already established NGOs in target areas of Europe shared similar conceptions of the sanctity of the family, often having a religious origin (such as in the case of Save the Children or Caritas, for example), and the work of these NGOs served as the blueprint for UNICEF's field operations during and after WWII.

UNICEF's imagining of women-and-children as archetypal victims became increasingly ingrained in the Western imagination as its mandate evolved after the war (Jolly 2014). In the 1950s UNICEF shifted its approach from relief provision to long-term protection and became responsible for the majority of development and conflict-related child protection concerns (Morris 2015; Hendel 2022), with the General Assembly tasking it to create "favourable conditions for the development of the long-range economic and social programs of the United Nations and the specialized agencies" (Hendel 2022 p.722). The suffering of children affected by local or internal conflicts was increasingly used as a propaganda tool by various governments to encourage support for engagement in war as the twentieth century unfolded (Hyndman 2010), and this norm within popular political discourse, reproduced in media, paralleled the mandate of UNICEF.

Moreover, this hyper-politicisation of the suffering of conflict-affected children has also occurred in more recent times, notably in the 1991 Gulf War with popularised, yet ultimately fictitious, stories of Iraqi troops bayoneting babies in incubators (Darda 2017), and throughout the War on Terror via the declared need to liberate women and children from various so-called aggressors in the Middle East, such as the Taliban. The Bush Administration's rhetoric following the invasion of Afghanistan, with its hyper-altruistic imperialism, clearly frames children in this way:

Life under the Taliban is so hard and repressive, even small displays of joy are outlawed. Children aren't allowed to fly kites. Their mothers face beatings for laughing out loud (Bush 2001, para. 4).

Cathy Russell, then US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, further stated in a 2014 op-ed about the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant that:

Girls as young as 12 or 13 have been forced to marry extremists or sold to the highest bidder – like cattle at an auction. These are young girls, mothers, and sisters facing imminent rape, trafficking, and forced marriage. These are women and girls who *pleaded to be killed in airstrikes rather than be brutalized by ISIL* [emphasis added] (Russell 2014, para. 4).

This type of emotive description makes good use of victimhood norms relating to the domination of the vulnerable (children and women) by brutal and barbaric warlords.⁴ Hence we arrive at the issue of the elision of 'women-and-children'.

2.3.2 The specific issue of 'women-and-children'

Scholars have thus expressly noted that children often appear in UN discourse, and some IR and development literature, as part of an inseparable duo with women (Lee-Koo 2011, Jacob 2016, Pruitt 2020). This thesis specifically identifies and measures this norm within a particular subpart of the child protection infrastructure to help in quantifying this general statement; but first some noted sites of this norm's presence is discussed here, in order to demonstrate how it is described in the literature. Indeed, it is often the conglomeration of 'women-and-children' as the victims in conflict that has been enshrined in various international law instruments. The 1974 *Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict* is one such example, the purpose of which was to protect 'civilians' as women and children first and foremost.

There is a long tradition in humanitarian contexts of referring to 'women-and-children' affected by conflict as essentially homogenous. This tradition spans both UN agendas and NGO work. Morris (2015) gives an account of how traditional Western ideas of women and children occupying the same domestic sphere influenced the development and purpose of UNICEF after WWII. Carpenter (2016) discusses the evolution of the norm of civilian protection, particularly in the UN peacekeeping context, and how the label 'civilian' has become synonymous with 'women and children':

Insofar as [transnational advocacy networks] have been successful at placing the issue of civilians on the UN agenda, it has emerged as a profoundly gendered discourse: essentialist assumptions are embedded in both the category "innocent civilian" and the category "especially vulnerable" (p.2).

⁴ Such emotive Western characterisations of children's suffering, but particularly of soldiering, were popular even years earlier than that, during the Iraq-Iran War. Ahmadi's feminist analysis of the intersection of gendered spaces and socio-economic status on boys' enlistment in the war (2018) discusses Western imaginings of these child fighters, and a Western reliance on dismissing the boys as corrupted victims of religious fanaticism encouraged by the state.

Lee-Koo (2019), however, notes that a civilian man does not necessarily have any more agency, or less vulnerability, than a civilian woman in a conflict context (p.34). These gendered assumptions are frequently embodied using the phraseology of ‘women-and-children’, a “rhetorical flourish” (or symbolic technology) that helps to convey the urgency of the plight of civilians by eliciting sympathy (Carpenter 2016 p.15; Johnson 2022). Dogra (2011) analyses the representation of women-and-children in photographs in INGO literature:

At an overwhelming 72 per cent of the total people or characters shown in INGOs' messages in UK national newspapers during 2005-06, children and women in general, and mother and child in particular, project, even at a quick glance, a ‘different’ MW full of women-and-children. Of these, children make up the larger proportion at 42 per cent, while women form a significant 30 per cent of the overall persons shown (Dogra 2011 p.335).

Dogra’s analysis illustrates Carpenter’s point that notions of women-and-children impacted by conflict as innocent and vulnerable victims – and as civilians – have a function in propagating INGO materials by appealing to a sympathetic audience. Berents (2020a) also supports this theory: “Humanitarian and advocacy organizations have long used images of children to prompt donations and support for causes, often in frameworks that are paternalistic, reductive, and neo-colonial” (p.47). Girls, in particular, are reproduced in INGO materials, UN policy and public discourse as ‘sites’ of suffering relative to conflict (Berents 2016; Pruitt 2020), and often appear in such photographs or discursive devices – like recurrent phrases – alongside women; “refugee camps are frequently visualized through seemingly more generic images of ‘women-and-children” (Berents 2020a p.41). Lee-Koo & Gordon (2022), in their research on conflict-related forced marriage of girls, have thus since argued for an age and gender responsive, disaggregated method of conducting studies into conflict impact where the issue spaces of women and children do need to intersect.

In theorising the presence of the norm represented by the phrase ‘women-and-children’, we can consider sites from which this norm may be moving into the CaAC workstream. The literature identifies the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda as one site in which this same discursive norm is influential, and which has regular contact with the CaAC workstream through joint policy initiatives and similar projects.

2.3.3 The contribution of the Women, Peace and Security agenda as a site of norm influence

In investigating the issue of the ongoing elision of ‘women-and-children’, scholars have also noted that, again in more recent years, the WPS has provided an additional impetus for the popular use of the concepts of ‘women-and-children’ in UN policy (Pruitt 2020). The WPS agenda was first formalised in the UN through the passing of Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 after protracted advocacy work by civil society. It appears, then, that norms move from sites of influence into new workstreams and collide or become augmented, pushing them again closer to internalisation; and indeed, this thesis found that from 2020 the ‘women-and-children’ norm enjoyed renewed presence and frequency in the child protection infrastructure area that was examined. Chapter five examines possible norm transfer between these agendas in more detail.

The WPS agenda was intended to draw attention to the impacts of armed conflict on women, and it allowed for four ‘pillars’ of action: protection, prevention, participation, and relief and recovery. The participation aspect of the agenda has been largely neglected in favour of purely protection-based interventions; and it has been argued that this is due to normative conceptualisations of women present in the agenda (Pruitt 2020). Indeed, the phrase that is identified in the literature on CaAC as representing the problematic norm of women-and-children as indistinct from one another – “women-and-children” – appears in the text of Resolution 1325 itself, identifying these groups as particularly at-risk as opposed to ordinary “civilians” (UN 2000). Critics thus assert that women have been infantilised in the WPS agenda by being regarded as inherently a part of the same sphere as children (Lee-Koo 2019).

Considering the issue as to why there is such an elision of ‘women-and-children’ in UN policy, the Security Council itself recognised that “from a statistical and demographic point of view, there appears little reason to combine [women and children] into one statistic...[it is] unsuitable for programmatic reasons” (UNSC 2000). This begs the question of why the UN employs such an approach without justification. Yet, policy in the civilian protection area, and especially in WPS, has done just this. The 1974 adoption of the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict by the General Assembly perhaps reflected norms of civilian status from an era in which women generally could not enlist in the military and were thus necessarily

civilians, if involved in the conflict sphere at all; but more contemporary UN policy still has not comprehensively addressed this conflation of women and children, as the findings of this thesis will demonstrate.

Instead, this focus on 'women-and-children' has continued to emerge in recent UN policy. Johnson (2022) has examined the gendered conception of child protection in peacekeeping, for example, exploring its connections to the WPS agenda; considering the degree to which women peacekeeping staff are considered the default protectors of children. Furthermore, as recently as 2015, a Statement by the President of the Security Council on the subject of transnational organised crime referred to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which entered into force in 2000. The President's statement includes the following:

The Security Council notes the particular impact that trafficking in persons in situations of armed conflict has on women and children, including increasing their vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence. The Security Council expresses its intention to continue to address this impact, including, as appropriate, in the context of its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, within its mandate, and in the framework of its agenda to prevent and address sexual violence in armed conflict. (UN 2015)

The report makes reference to ISIL and Boko Haram, which at that time had received considerable publicity for trafficking and abducting women. The same report subsumes trafficking and abductions carried out by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Of the 25-38,000 children thought to have been abducted by the LRA between 1986 and 2006, only 24% were female (Pham, Vinck & Stover 2008 p.404).

The case of the LRA is therefore a case in which a women-centred conceptual framework around trafficking does not necessarily best address the concerns of children as a distinct category. While sexual violence suffered by girls in that conflict should, of course, have been a protection priority, there may have been urgent issues that needed addressing which pertained to the 74% of returned children who were male (Pham, Vinck & Stover 2008 p.404), and which could and should have been assessed independently of a WPS framework.

The WPS and CaAC agendas cross over at various sites in policy and programming and have, in turn, influenced one another. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 6. However, below we will investigate how the impact of these two agendas combined is notable in various UN workstreams and can be seen in several illustrative examples – most expressly in the association of ‘children’ with ‘girls’.

2.3.3 Examples of the normative influence of ‘women-and-children’: children as girls

UN policy has also suggested the conflation of ‘women and girls’ and also ‘children as girls’. The report that emerged from the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW) and UNICEF’s expert group meeting on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child (2006) is titled: *The Girl Child and Armed Conflict: Recognising and addressing grave violations of girls’ human rights* (Goonesakere 2006). *There is no corresponding UN mechanism or report describing grave violations against boys.*

This 2006 report states that children’s motivations for joining conflict are “often gendered” and that girls may engage in conflict to “expand their experiences outside the rigid gender dimensions in their societies and cultures” and for “empowerment as females” (p.4). Such comments noticeably ‘other’ the societies and cultures in which girls join conflict. These quotes also conflate girls’ motivations for engaging in conflict to the assumed motivations of women; hence their gender is deemed more important than their status as children. Here, then, the ‘children as girls only’ norm is evident.

Interestingly, the disaster response literature has something to add on this criticism of data that is not adequately disaggregated by different genders, ages or other categories that might enable more effective and targeted intervention. Development studies and terrorism studies often bridge the gap between IR and disaster studies; disaster response generally connotes natural disasters but in fact the field includes humanitarian and, to a lesser degree, conflict disasters. Jang & Ha (2021) examine, for example, the impact of a lack of data disaggregation on children with disabilities in disaster response and note specifically that disasters encompass both natural and ‘man-made’ crises such as conflict (para. 2). Seager (2014) demonstrates the conceptualisation of norms of gender and age as an important aspect of disaster impact research, arguing that despite

a longstanding body of research finding the same, practical disaster response does not yet interrogate these norms in the collection of data.

The normative theme of 'children as girls' is explored further in Chapter five, alongside the examination of the 'women-and-children' norm. Instead of exploring this issue further in this chapter, then, for now we move to considering how some of the crossover between the WPS and CaAC workstreams occurs in the realm of NGO activity as connected to the UN infrastructure.

2.3.4 NGOs as an important additional site of normative influence

NGOs play a role in normative transference in the context of their involvement in both workstreams, and they also appear to play a role as a site of normative influence themselves.

NGOs engage in the UN framework via their involvement in roundtables, in expert advisory groups, and even through their role in undertaking field work. The use of the code tree schematic for this research revealed the role of NGOs in connection with the norms tested for, as a central sub-theme. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the code tree model for this purpose and speaks to both the second and third research questions about how NGO field workers encounter these norms in operational guidance material, as well as what related perspectives actors associated with these NGOs have about conflict-affected children.

Notably then, to start our consideration of the roles that NGOs play in this space, NGO policy also appears to conflate 'women-and-children' as well as 'children-as-girls'. Carey, in his evaluation of gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping, refers to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) developing new guidelines to "protect and assist women and girls" in armed conflict (2001 p.57). The guidelines' focus on sexual violence carried out by peacekeepers may explain this intersection of the needs of women and girls, as both populations experience significant risk of sexual violence in armed conflict. However, that is arguably not reason to include women and girls as one homogenous group when considering their overall protection and assistance in armed conflict.

'Women', according to the UN definition are over the age of 18, live in quite different cultural spheres to 'girls', who may be anywhere from 0–17 years old and thus have highly varying needs. Indeed, it is possible that even in the context of sexual violence, risk factors in armed conflict might be different for 'women' than for 'girls'. The influence of the WPS agenda is clear in this case as

the 'girl child' is often specially mentioned as part of the overall category of women and girls. While sexual violence against girls surely requires specific addressing (because girls are vulnerable to sexual violence for different reasons than boys are), it seems an oversight to allow the gender mainstreaming approach to subsume child protection too much as children, comprised of both boys and girls of varied ages, also have common vulnerabilities that set girls apart from women and boys apart from men. Yet, there is a distinct lack of instruments created to specifically protect boy children in armed conflict. This is problematic as, for example, in the case of Afghanistan, where more sexual abuse of boys than of girls has been verified by the UN Country Task Force team (UN 2017).

Similarly, Hyder & MacVeigh (2007) write about Save the Children UK's response to gender-based violence (GBV) from a gender-mainstreaming development perspective. Although their discussion is about GBV, the authors make more mention of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000), and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) as policy background than they do of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). It is clear that GBV against children is again tackled from the perspective of WPS.

Finally, the UN and related NGOs are not the only institutions to exhibit the popular use of terms such as 'women-and-children', these terms can also be seen in regional multilateral agreements. However, given the focus on a deep dive approach to understanding norm development, for the purposes of this thesis regional and multilateral spaces are *acknowledged* as important additional sites of that norm development but are not investigated in any significant way. Here, then, we simply note that, in ASEAN, for example, Linton (2008) in her discussion of the ASEAN Commission on Women and Children, "takes no position" on the question as to whether or not women and children should be included together in the same commission (p.441).

The point at which women and children intersect in this conceptualisation of the child, then, is one at which agency supposedly does not exist; and at which protection must be the overarching consideration. And, just like the 'women-and-children' norm, the norm of homogenising the experiences of conflict-affected children into that of the 'child soldier' also raises challenging questions of vulnerability and agency.

2.4 Child soldiers

As noted in the previous sections, the framing of women-and-children as inseparable in the CaAC agenda not only suggests that 'girls' are of particular significance but also works to occlude the fact that children may have agency in conflict settings, just as women may.

Children have probably always fought in warfare and certainly did in modern history – including in the American Civil War, for example (Rosen 2005 p.5) – yet agency is afforded in few places in humanitarian discourse about child soldiers. Rosen (2005) thus writes that "...the child soldier as an abused and exploited victim of war is a radically new concept" (p.6). He analyses the agency of children involved in twentieth-century conflicts with his examination of the "ghetto fighters" of Warsaw and demonstrates that children and young people in fact orchestrated high-level political and combative resistance during such conflicts.

Furthermore, the experience of the conflict-affected child may not be wholly negative or non-agentic; Barber (2008) has demonstrated that some children who have been impacted by political violence show positive outcomes over the longer term. Blattman's (2009) study of Ugandan children impacted by violence similarly found that some made positive personal choices, such as exercising political agency where possible. Dekel & Nuttman-Shwartz (2009) also reported a positive correlation between post-traumatic stress and post-traumatic growth in Israeli children who had witnessed rocket fire. Chaudry (2017) found that Pakistani children developed narratives of resilience in relation to their experiences of conflict; and Denov & Akkesson (2017) compiled a collection of research involving conflict-affected children directly, challenging the assumption that children should be relegated to victimised subjects only where conflict experiences are concerned. Finally, Capone (2020) notes the way the normative associations with term 'child soldier' is limiting: the term *child soldier*, which for many automatically triggers the image of a boy fully armed and ready to fight, appears to be too narrow to describe a phenomenon that goes beyond placing children on the front line (p.447).

Such children seem to have envisaged themselves as agentic and capable freedom fighters. Yet popular discourse surrounding the role of children in these conflicts does not recognise this role as an *active* form of participation – in part because of the 'women-and-children' focus, but also in part because another frame, that of 'child soldiers', has tended to suggest children are in these

combatant roles due to coercion and powerlessness. Haer (2019) therefore argues for further research into the role that voluntary enlistment (as complex as the concept itself is; can a child truly enlist voluntarily?) plays in child soldiering to better understand the role of agency in this process.

Prior to 2009, only the recruitment of children for the purposes of soldiering was grounds for blacklisting a country or party in the annexes of UN reporting. And indeed Nyland (2016) is clear that there has been measurable progress made in the area of addressing child soldier recruitment. Here Pederson & Somerfelt (2007 p.254) agree, but also stipulate that the idea of the “child soldier” itself is ill-defined; and thus the data gathered is not age-disaggregated and provides little information on children at different ‘stages’ of the soldiering process, and voluntary versus non-voluntary recruitment is often not recorded. Blattman & Annan (2010) argue that data on child soldiers necessarily succumbs to selection bias, because those who come into contact with field workers or intervention programmes are the survivors (or less severely injured). As well as this criticism, these scholars also argue that data on other violations is not recorded effectively.

Writing from an anthropological perspective, Rosen (2007 p.304) explicitly attributes this to political context: “The child soldier ‘crisis’ is a modern political crisis, which has little to do with whether there are more or fewer children in wars today than in previous eras”. Rosen is joined by Stańczyk (2015) and Francis (2007) in arguing that the trope of the child soldier, as informed in the West by media imagery, does not fit the realities of children’s activity in complex conflict situations, particularly in cultures where Western understandings of the role of children are not salient. This is supported by Achvarina & Reich (2006) and Capone (2020) who note that child soldiers make up a small proportion of the overall number of children impacted by war in ways relevant to other grave violations.

Yet, recruitment is still considered one of the most pressing conflict-related challenges affecting children; and the level of intra-state conflict currently occurring does expose a significant proportion of children to the risk of recruitment. Østby, Rustad, Haer & Arasmith’s (2023) recent stocktake of recruitment research finds that 1 in 8 of the world’s children are living in a zone in which recruitment is reported. Stańczyk (2015) elaborates on Rosen’s (2005) analysis of ghetto fighters during the Warsaw Uprising (noted above), arguing that in a very local context, these child soldiers were treated as glorified martyrs, complete with agency, in contrast to the popular Western image

of the child soldier-victim enshrined in UN discourse. While Stańczyk does not allow here for temporal changes in attitudes to childhood (given the decades between these cases) his general point fits the trend among those scholars in IR who discuss the focus on child soldiers. Francis (2007), for example, also points out further practical issues with this particular concept of the child soldier using the cases of African conflicts: not only is the Western idea of childhood or even adolescence not appropriate in many of these cases due to cultural perspectives on coming of age; but international norms of law just do not reach most militias on the ground as there is no institutional means of communication by which to transmit these norms.

Scholars of terrorism studies have also raised criticism surrounding this popular and institutional imagining of the child soldier. Mahmood (2016) and Piazza (2011) identify child recruitment by Islamist terrorist organisations as a significant contemporary concern. Capone (2020) notes that complex political and ideological factors play an important role in recruitment to such organisations. Pervasive propaganda, ethnic dimensions, and religious notions of martyrdom are all dimensions of the recruitment of children which are not encapsulated by the traditional media image of the child soldier; what Kat Lee-Koo has described as typically an African boy, appearing as a traumatised victim, solidifying colonial ideas of Africa as a “morally defunct zone of tragedy” (Lee-Koo 2011 p.731).

Finally, more recent work by Feminist Critical Security scholars has also made major contributions to this debate. D’Costa (2016), for example, identifies the insufficiency of the ‘child soldier’ stereotype for encapsulating the complex reasons why children might engage in warfare, with a nuance not evident in the UN literature examined above. They may, for example, head their own households after having lost older family members. Lee-Koo and D’Costa, together with also use a more targeted gender analysis to criticise the realist tradition of measuring warfare casualties, with a purpose of elucidating the actual experiences of children (Huynh, D’Costa & Lee-Koo 2015).

This chapter so far has outlined the key normative themes raised in the literature pertaining to conflict-affected children and has examined some of the critiques in the literature of these themes. Thus, the main norms that were searched for in policy documents for this research project have been identified: ‘women-as-children’ and ‘child soldiers.’ The next section situates this thesis in an ideological framework, explaining the theory of norm life cycles that guided the research.

2.5 Theoretical home(s)

Having considered dominant norms and picking up on the brief overview provided in the Introduction to this thesis, this section now further outlines why a combination of constructivism and critical feminist IR both offer an appropriate start point from which to examine those shifting conceptual norms about conflict-affected children.

Critical feminist IR theory is the most appropriate lens through which to approach investigations of discourse as a function. Its intellectual heritage in Foucauldian critical theory equips it to illustrate the connection between power and technologies of language (understood in this thesis as phrases which represent normative ideas) and to theorise the real-world impacts of this relationship. The existing body of critical feminist IR work in the CaAC sphere has produced strong theorisations of how reproduced norms impact children affected by armed conflict, though there remain many specific contexts in which critical feminist theory has not yet comprehensively employed constructivist methods to demonstrate norm movement. Critical feminist IR traditionally emphasises the limitations of a state-centric approach to IR. It argues that such an approach ignores the agency of non-state actors and the ways in which traditional conceptions of state power impact on these actors – such as children. The utility of such an approach is therefore clear in trying to assess the impact of the reproduction of norms upon populations such as conflict-affected children.

In contrast, theoretical approaches such as neorealism and neoliberalism are not effective in conceptualising such a project. These approaches primarily centre the state and liberal institutions for examination. Though neoliberalism theorises the individual as a being with agency in some contexts – such as with regard to positive rights – it ultimately privileges institutions and does not strongly theorise the impact of norms upon populations subject to discourses of power in particular contexts. Indeed, Keohane (1989) famously acknowledged the reflexivity of critical theory as an answer to the areas and actors of IR that remained untheorised by neorealism and neoliberalism (though he subsequently challenged critical theory to produce measured and quantified solutions rather than simply critique).

The marriage of critical feminist theory and constructivism that this thesis utilises is also not unique; Lee-Koo, D-Costa, Berents, Jacob and Carpenter (as below) have all produced work that

is grounded in a critical approach, yet acknowledges the necessity of a somewhat positivist methodology for acknowledging and measuring the impact of norms. In this sense, this critical feminist work is not positioned fully in a post-modernist theoretical space but rather it has a stronger connection to classic critical theory/modernist work.

In examining this methodological tension further, Price & Reus-Smit (1998) recognised that some Third Debate critical theorists have criticised what they see as a contradiction in the use of positivist methodologies centred in critical approaches. However, Price & Reus-Smit compellingly argue that constructivism complements the tenets of critical theory by bolstering its empirical strength. This essentially positivist attribute of employing mechanisms of measurement need not contradict the critical position; instead, applying measurement to make an empirical observation *in a specific context* is making what is referred to as a “small-t” truth claim (Price & Reus-Smit 1998 p.272). That is to say, constructivists acknowledge the critical theory position that an objective, or “large T” truth, an overarching form of truth, does not exist, and claims to truth are impacted by the positionality of researchers. However, they assert that a common language for the observation of phenomena must necessarily exist for research to advance, and for constructivists to answer Keohane’s call to provide solutions. Therefore, a constructivist must make small-t truth claims, albeit with both the specificity of context and positionality and limitations of the research acknowledged. A move toward this recommendation of Price and Reus-Smit also aids in building a consensus of approach, a unified sense of purpose in critical IR that can focus more practically on these “small-t” truth claims; thereby addressing a further criticism of critical IR theory – that it tends towards abstract ideological posturing and directionless infighting.

Cunliffe (2020) argues that the proliferation of critical theoretical approaches in IR has contributed to a stifling of the discipline through a focus on utopian and aspirational urging, sacrificing stringent analysis. Cunliffe’s criticism is not unfair in that, as Keohane has argued, strengths of the critical approach lie in exploring under-theorised actors in IR rather than in articulating quantified solutions to IR problems. The criticism of critical IR as having a tendency towards utopianism – while a valid articulation of critical theory’s weaknesses in general – is less relevant to this project specifically. This research project focuses specifically on an under-theorised group within IR (conflict-affected children), and on a very specific context, in which measuring the presence of discourse does have an impact on real-world outcomes; because that discourse is present in the very material that is

used to make decisions at the coalface of the child protection subcluster in the field. Therefore, the criticism of critical IR as tending towards utopianism – while a valid articulation of critical theory’s weaknesses in general – is less relevant to this project specifically. The language included in these written materials for use in the field can in fact be changed, should a body of research analysis (that this thesis aims to contribute towards) conclude that associated norms are having practical negative impacts in places within the CaAC infrastructure. A change in language could thereby result in positive changes to practice.

This speaks to Jahn’s (2021) assessment of the contemporary ‘crisis’ of critical theory as a fundamental misunderstanding of its metatheoretical core. Jahn notes that even critical theorists are vulnerable to interpreting the idea that critical theory has not led to a fundamental change in society as a failure. But critical theory has led to the institutionalisation of a multitude of perspectives and initiatives – hence the existence of criticisms such as Cunliffe’s that it despite such institutionalisation, it has not transformed society. In this very success, though, it becomes vulnerable to the criticism of no longer being able to provide an alternative vision of society (as well as becoming vulnerable to the pressures of neoliberalism in the academy – demands to produce some kind of practical benefit).

Yet (and despite the Habermasian hope that critical theory could be fundamentally emancipatory), critical theory does not promise any wholesale transformation of society, and has as a whole not been wedded to any teleological predictions. It simply “posits that the transformation of society as whole may be possible” (p.1288), while holding that even critical theoretical assumptions exist within our inherently self-constitutive knowledge base. Jahn argues further that in the post-liberal and increasingly populist world order - and with intersectionality taking the place of broader hegemonic power relations in critical theory - it has necessarily fractured into critical *theories*, which are, as they have always been, focused on the relationships between actors – but at a plurality of sites of knowledge. At these more local sites of knowledge production, critical approaches acknowledge that they can contribute to and alter these relationships – which this project seeks to do. However, critical theory still does not seek to claim it will create full societal transformation; and while the rise of populism may prove that the institutionalisation of critical theory has not done so, it does not prove that emancipation through critical theory is not possible, particularly in the pluralised forms it now takes.

This thesis, therefore, centres itself in a critical feminist perspective, suited to examining norms as impactful phenomena that interact with conflict-affected children as actors in IR. But it applies a specifically constructivist approach in the theorising of norms, and it utilises a mixed-methods research approach in order to measure patterns and make empirical conclusions.

Social constructivism is valuable in that it offers the concepts of norms, strategic framing of discourse, and 'frame distortion' which are ideal for applying to this case. Critical feminist IR theory offers precedents for alternative ways of conceptualising children as well as pointing out ways in which children's identities in armed conflict have been assumed and prescribed. To best make sense of the intersection between critical feminist IR and constructivism which provides the theoretical 'home' of this study, the contribution of constructivism is first discussed in further detail – that is, the next section works to identify how constructivism lends itself to research on the evolution and distortion of norms, and, in this case, child protection norms.

Theorising norms in constructivist literature

Norms may be defined in various ways by constructivist scholars but, however they are defined, they are considered central to international politics. One of the clearest definitions is provided by Krook & True who consider them to be "structures that shape interactions among states and non-state actors, although originating in the initiatives of purposive actors" (2012 p.104), and note that they are "anchored in language and revealed by repeated speech acts, lending to a semblance of permanence or institutionalization" (p.105). This definition is one of the more granular available and is the chosen definition for this thesis.

Norms are thus understood as structures, or ideas, that can be identified and traced in a body of language (in this case, policy documents) by the presence of repeated and familiar phrases (speech acts). As Krook & True argue, there is a body of scholarship that identifies how norms are taught, disseminated, advocated, internalised and contested throughout an identifiable life cycle (for some of the early works in this space see Florini 1996, Keck & Sikkink 1998, Risse et al. 1999).

This thesis does not seek to comprehensively chart entire norm life cycles within the CaAC infrastructure, but rather to find insights where possible around any stage of the life cycle for the particular norms examined. It identifies the presence of these norms in a specific area, giving an

indication as to their strength and internalisation, and investigates their association with different actors within this area, identifying these actors as potential entrepreneurs and/or advocates.

Combined with further close examinations of norm presence in different areas of the infrastructure, this study contributes to a wide mapping of norms in the CaAC framework which can be used to illustrate the life cycles and movement of these norms.

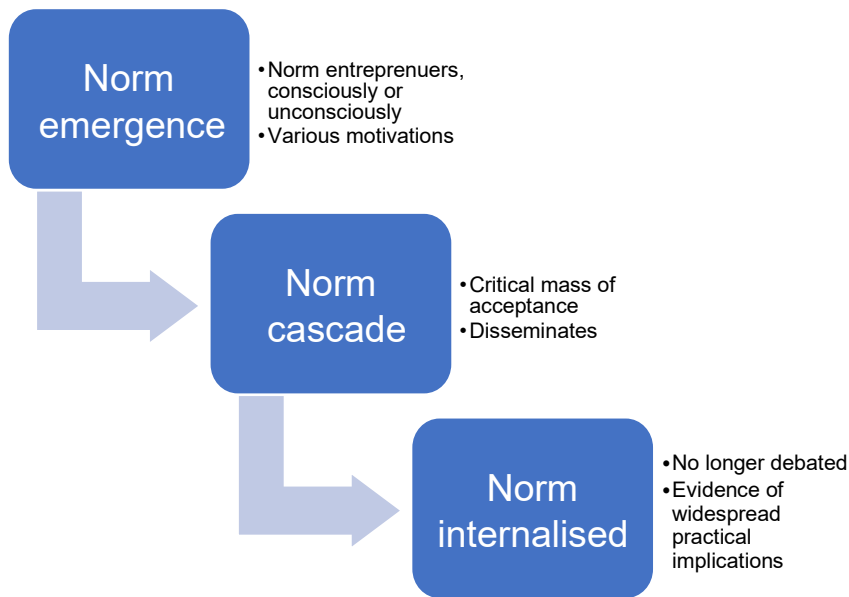
Theorisation of the life cycle of norms has had different models proposed; the diagram below illustrates one foundational view on the life cycle of norms (Fig. 1). The norm is first generated – for whichever reason – by norm “entrepreneurs”; and if it reaches a certain “tipping point” of publicity and acceptance, it will begin to cascade throughout relevant actors at a greater speed and with less opposition (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998 p.893). The cascade is complete when the norm becomes internalised. Finnemore & Sikkink identify this phase as the point at which the norm is no longer seriously debated – this is an important feature to remember for the purposes of this thesis.

Internalisation is described by Krook & True (2012) as being the point at which the norm “becomes a taken-for-granted feature of domestic and international politics” (p.107). However, they note also that this does not mean the norm goes uncontested. Norms are in a permanent stage of contestation and reproduction across different contexts, even once internalised; they are acted upon by agentic figures (in this context these include, for example, NGOs and INGOs). In this sense, the stage of internalisation cannot be divested from the concept of power; internalising a norm inherently involves an agreed (at least ‘for now’) definition, which has developed due to actors advocating the norm.

The findings of this thesis demonstrate the internalisation of certain norms in the CaAC infrastructure, and the actors that have some connection to this process, including particular NGOs and INGOs, which go beyond simply being norm entrepreneurs. The nature of norm championing and internalisation by and among such actors is inherently nebulous, and involves various channels of dissemination across policy pathways (for example, from field observations into internal NGO reports, then back again into field manuals). This thesis does not attempt to describe these pathways exactly or isolate individual actors responsible for the internalisation of specific

norms, but instead to provide general insight into these norm movements and associated actors in this specific area of the wider child protection infrastructure – the CaAC framework.

Figure 1: The norm life cycle, informed by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998)



Finnemore & Sikkink also identify norms relevant to bodily integrity and legal equality of opportunity as an example of norms which are particularly likely to complete the life cycle (1998 p.896). They also recognise that certain international institutions, including the World Bank and UN, limit the norms their own actors are able to generate (p.899). However, while there is some discussion of entrepreneurship there is not a great deal of discussion in their work of the *motives* behind norm generation for any actors other than states, nor is there explicit acknowledgement that norms may sometimes be generated unconsciously. Some constructivist scholarship also exists on norm contestation (Weiner 2007, 2014) and the ways in which norms localise and embed in a regional context (Wolff & Zimmerman 2016); for the purpose of this discussion, a perspective more aligned with these non-state-centric views of norms is helpful to explore further. Here, Keck & Sikkink (1998) have examined the useful example of the norm of banning land mines as a norm which cascaded very quickly to reach internalisation. Usefully, too, the role of graphic media images in connection with this cascade is also examined. Their work will therefore provide a useful starting point for considering how norms are generated, shared, and internalised. However, Payne (2001) extends the idea of the life cycle of a norm with an additional phase that may or may not be reached. This phase is that of “frame distortion”.

The word 'frame' refers to the strategic social construction of the norm itself. After the norm has become internalised, actors may seek to shift the theoretical frame of the norm to change the meaning of the phrase which represents it. Carpenter (2005) brings this concept of frame distortion to life in her critical feminist IR research. Her work on the strategic social construction of the 'civilian' in armed conflict thus provides an example of frame distortion at work. Carpenter looks at a norm that will be examined in the context of this project – the concept of 'women and children'. Her work is therefore a useful conceptual model for this thesis as, as Holzcheiter (2020) has noted: "...most of the seminal studies on the global diffusion of international norms, transnational advocacy, or social movements have fully ignored children and young people as research subjects and agents alike" (pp.71-72), though norm life cycles have been examined in the concept of humanitarian subjects impacting children, such as the outlawing of cluster munitions (Rosert 2019) and the child death penalty (Linde 2016). Carpenter's analysis, though, examines the distortion of this particular symbolic technology, the norm of women-and-children inhabiting the same issue-spaces – generally media images of women and children suffering or otherwise appearing as victims. Her research indicates that this norm has come to represent the idea of "civilians" in discourse about armed conflict, even though civilians may, obviously, not be women or children. Through the strategic 'frame' shifting of this norm by various actors, 'women and children' and 'civilians' are now synonymous in certain armed conflict discourse.

This thesis makes use of this example to inform methodology. While Carpenter examined the connection between 'women and children' and 'civilians', this project will involve examining the way 'women-and-children' may have 'frameshifted' in another direction; towards encompassing the category of children in armed conflict. In particular, Carpenter's methodological tool of analysis – a specially-designed code tree schematic – is a major contribution to this field of analysis, as it is demonstrated to be a useful tool for measuring symbolic technologies, representing norms, in a body of literature (Carpenter 2016). Given the aim of building a more comprehensive understanding of the presence and movement of norms across the entire CaAC framework, this tool has been further adapted and utilised for this thesis.

Although it may be possible for norms to be generated unconsciously by actors, Carpenter's analysis, like Finnemore & Sikkink, does not discuss this possibility. Florini (1996 p.40), writing before Finnemore & Sikkink articulated their theory on norm change, critiques the constructivists

for not explaining this change. She proposes that norms change because of a non-teleological process of evolution comparable to gene inheritance, rejecting power as the primary cause. Although Carpenter's position on frame distortion is the theoretical home of this project, it may be that *some* norms develop organically, as a result of subconscious psychological processes in actors, and a strategic cause cannot be found. A study of the presence and development of norms may thus help to clarify whether or not the frame distortion that has occurred is the result of deliberate strategic framing, or rather, 'frameshifting'. This research did identify some areas in which norms seem to be consciously 'shifted' across workstreams, such as collaboration between Special Representatives for the Secretary General that leads to the cross-pollination of phrases across different workstreams, like Women, Peace and Security and child protection. It also identifies a range of other areas in which it was not possible to determine whether or not the shifting was intentional.

But why should it matter that these norms are present in certain areas of the child protection infrastructure? What real-world impact do they have and what can be the consequences of norms in child protection programming? Why would it be important to try and identify where in the infrastructure they are generated, travel to and from, and what the relationships between them are? This next section examines arguments in the literature – as well as some introspective reporting from UN bodies themselves – for the serious impact that norms about conflict-affected children can have.

2.5.1 Why norms matter

Prior to 2009, only the act of recruiting child soldiers could result in a party being blacklisted in the Secretary General's annual report on Children and Armed Conflict. Anthropologist David Rosen (2007 p.304) argues that the reasons for this overwhelming focus on soldiering are fundamentally political. But if norms are the problem in stymieing attempts to successfully address the full suite of issues faced by children in conflict, or if they are just a significant contributor to this problem, then why is recruitment the only arena of success despite the proliferation of romantic and inaccurate phrases representing the child soldier?

The proliferation of norms is significant not least because it impacts the generation of funding and donations, as it both encourages and is enhanced by public concern. Therefore, when these norms

have reached a high level of saturation of the public imagination, large amounts of funding may aid in producing 'results' even if these are not as targeted or as appropriate as they could be if the norms were more representative. The use of norms in such a way is one strategy political interests may use to interfere with the functioning of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism or MRM. Political will, and the lack of it, significantly influence the MRM and broader CaAC mandate to the point where effectiveness is inhibited. Political interests may adopt and utilise norms/symbolic technologies; however, they may also interfere by applying diplomatic pressure.

2.5.2 Symbolic technologies as political tools

Earlier in this chapter, the use of norms – symbolic technologies – for political purposes was introduced with the mention of official American statements about children and women in the wars against Afghanistan and ISIL. These are obvious examples of norms being utilised for political purposes: in those cases, strategic warfare. The proliferation of norms about the suffering of women-and-children in Afghanistan, for example, encouraged American civilians to support the war effort of the United States against the Taliban, who were accused of harbouring Al Qaeda terrorists. However, norms can be employed in more subtle ways to reinforce broader political interests.

Rosen thus argues that the Graca Machel report of 1996, the real genesis of the CaAC mandate, makes use of a particular symbolic technology and attempts norm entrepreneurship. In particular, Rosen references Machel's emphasis on the idea of "new wars" (2005 p.298); the proliferation of intra-state conflict that was demonstrated particularly the civil wars in Africa in that decade. These wars are supposedly more brutal than war was in the past; more atrocities carried out against the vulnerable, and a blurring of the distinction between soldier and civilian (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2005; Holsti, 2004; Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008). The picture painted by the language is one of barbarism, lawlessness, and savagery. This fits with the colonial sentiment that post-colonial scholars, as discussed above, critique (Lee-Koo 2011, Beier 2018, Berents 2019). The 1990s had heralded in an era of humanitarian intervention. After largely ignoring the Rwandan genocide in 1994, and earlier atrocities in Somalia, the UN and NATO were facing serious criticism and public backlash. As a result, an informal norm allowing for humanitarian intervention developed. However, proxy power plays across Africa have since revealed the extent of global power competition on that

continent. France, traditionally coveting influence, continued its involvement and China began to aggressively forge economic and trade relationships. Rosen (2005) argues that contemporary humanitarian discourse, such as the idea of “new wars”, favours state over non-state actors because of its demonisation of rebel and insurgent militia who are more reliant on younger child soldiers (p.298). It is easy to see how this favours top-down imperialism and allows large powers authority over local actors – and resources.

Political constraints thus clearly affect the operation of the MRM to some degree, outside the use of norms. Indeed, in the aforementioned Security Council report of 2017 on the CaAC agenda, this political interference is explicitly acknowledged, referencing to the controversial removal of the Israeli Defence Forces in 2015, and Saudi Arabia in 2016, from the annexes (UNSC 2017 p.2). In the years following this report there has been open criticism by non-governmental organisations about the political nature of listing decisions, including the recent addition to the reports of a separate category of perpetrators who are praised for providing some evidence they are making improvement (Otekunrin et al. 2020). Political interference is a commonly accepted caveat of global governance. However, it is surely not too much to be expected of specifically mandated task forces that they produce net positive results across more than a small portion of their reporting areas.

2.5.3 The impact of norms on the workstream

While the CaAC workstream has produced improvement across the recruitment of children, by the Security Council's own admission even this area of previous success is faltering as arenas of recruitment in conflict zones change. As for the other grave violations, 2018 was the worst year on record for the killing and maiming of children. The Secretary General's report for 2019 states that the number of violations carried out by state groups remained steady across the 2018 reporting year; but the increase in violations carried out by non-state groups was alarming.

One of the reasons for the continuing lack of success in this area is due to the fact that non-state groups such as militias in isolated local areas may be more or less invulnerable to largescale international mechanisms like the ‘name and shame system’ of the MRM, because conflict societies can struggle to implement these across all localities (Francis 2007 p.210). Local militias have no global diplomatic concerns and do not rely on outside funding or external aid. However,

there is a broader problem with the listing mechanism as evidenced by paragraph 20 of resolution 2427, passed in July 2018:

[The Security Council] Reaffirms that the monitoring and reporting mechanism will continue to be implemented in situations listed in annex I and annex II (“the annexes”) to the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, in line with the principles set out in paragraph 2 of its resolution 1612 (2005), and that its establishment and implementation shall not prejudice or imply a decision by the Security Council as to whether or not to include a situation on its agenda. (UNSC 2018)

Anyone in the habit of reading Security Council resolutions will be familiar with this kind of political caveat. In this case, though, it is essentially an admission that even the listing of parties who commit grave violations against children in armed conflict will not necessarily be discussed openly by the Security Council. The Council would rather the mechanism operate quietly and still function in the intended way of shaming perpetrators. For this reason, this caveat in this particular mandate may seriously hinder the effectiveness of the MRM.

As stated in the 2019 report (OSRSG-CaAC 2019), killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals had increased significantly and caused severe devastation. Importantly, then, these violations do appear to have an emphasis over recruitment in the report; however, the situations in question were Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan among others. Cluster munitions, air strikes and unexploded ordnance caused a high proportion of this suffering. It is no surprise then that it is the violations which relate to military activities of powerful global players which have not seen any improvement.

The lesson from all of this is that it appears that the prevalence of certain norms has hindered the UN in its attempts to protect children in armed conflict. This makes it salient to be able to measure and chart the existence and prevalence of these norms in the varied areas of the CaAC infrastructure. Intervening to change outcomes will rely on knowing where norms are impacting practice. The emphasis on images of the (first African then Arabic) child soldier helped to generate a civilising emphasis on halting recruitment with some success. However, this has ensured that other grave offences went unpunished. Moreover, the non-state status of many actors enables them to be less impacted by such norms and laws, whilst powerful states

manoeuvre to escape censure. While conflict is always going to present challenges to data-gathering about impacted children (see, for example, methodological challenges identified by Blattman and Annan 2010 and Bebbler & Blattman 2013), norms could be used as a powerful force of prevention if the naming-and-shaming system of the MRM were more effective and less open to political interference.

2.6 Conclusion

The 2017 Security Council report *Children and Armed Conflict: Sustaining the agenda* vented frustrations about the political nature of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms for grave violations against children in armed conflict. The report admitted that “new challenges” require new infrastructure and that the UN is not as equipped as it should be to deal with contemporary challenges.

Pederson & Sommerfelt (2007 p.255) write, for example, that the definition of “child” has been completely neglected in data gathering efforts to the detriment of practical effectiveness. Jacob (2013 p.34) echoes other scholars in asserting that there has been an “uncritical reproduction of data on children in armed conflict” which has led to the promulgation in official sources of facts that cannot be verified. And the Security Council itself, in its 2017 report on CaAC, states that the existing infrastructure is insufficient to face contemporary challenges of child protection in armed conflict. Overwhelmingly, it is thought that the characteristics of children in armed conflict which are assumed by these mechanisms are not well-defined, appropriate, or representative, and have failed to achieve the expected level of practical effectiveness. Essentially, practical efforts undertaken in UN interventions are suffering because the normative conceptions about CaAC within the UN workstream are not widely applicable or accurate representations of conflict-affected children.

The literature on the effectiveness of child protection efforts is both critical of UN policy for its lack of coherence and lack of connection between concept and practice, and it notes a dominance of “child soldier” and “women-and-children”/“girls and women” frames within that policy and practice. Two issues stand out as common themes across this literature, in response to the question of why conceptual norms around children in armed conflict are not an accurate reflection of experience:

- 1) A lack of agency is afforded to children; and
- 2) Norms represented by broad symbolic technologies, e.g. the image of a 'child soldier' or of 'women-and-children', are not disaggregated enough to reflect the various experiences children in conflict may have, and thus cannot inform research which gives useful data from which to design appropriate interventions.

The lack of agency is significant because it may reflect notions of complete victimhood ascribed to children in armed conflict. However, it is not clear as to what stage of internalisation such norms are at within different parts of the UN system and, more importantly, what they mean for the practice of child protection. A broad and comprehensive body of knowledge on the extent of these norms throughout the UN CaAC workstream would enable very clear analysis of the life cycle of these norms throughout policy streams, including their adoption/internalisation; how they are traveling through policy streams vertically from head offices to the field and vice versa; horizontally between cooperating offices at policy level or at field guidance level, or even agencies cooperating in the field itself. It would also provide insight into whether or not the generation of such norms in the workstream is done by external actors, intentionally or simply as a result of the duplication of relevant phrases from workstream to workstream. This research therefore aims to contribute to developing a deeper understanding of how these norms have evolved.

This chapter has identified some of the challenges encountered in both defining who qualifies as a child and in framing the nature of children in particular ways in policy and practice. It has introduced literature from across IR, security studies and related disciplines (for example anthropology) that engages with this dilemma and analyses it in the context of conflict. Of particular relevance is the research available in the critical feminist and constructivist literature, including those which utilise a post-colonial perspective, that theorises the life cycle of norms, both in general and specifically relating to children and conflict.

Three main normative themes in this literature have been identified and discussed in this chapter, as subjects of particular critique. These are the norms that will be tested for among the policy documents in both datasets used in this research. However, as noted in the Introduction, although there is some literature that has examined aspects of this issue of child protection norms in the wider CaAC infrastructure, a deeper, more fine-grained analysis of these norms and how they

operate in particular policy environments and parts of the infrastructure is missing. The following chapter outlines how this thesis seeks to help to address this lacuna.

Chapter 3 Theory, methodology and method

Culture alone is our challenge. (Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter began to ask what sorts of norms and ‘frames’ may have already been identified by other authors working in this research space, whilst the Introduction noted that, despite the existence of some important literature in this space, that there is still room for further contribution in undertaking a more systematic look at these potential norms in play. What currently exists is a picture of the presence of these norms, and theorisation of their life cycles, from a much broader perspective of the wider child protection infrastructure; this is complemented by some more specific studies of norms in particular sub-contexts (like Carpenter (2016) examining a particular body of policy on civilian protection). However, much more nuance can be revealed at more ‘micro’ levels of the infrastructure by explicitly measuring norms in these smaller spaces. Rather than conceiving of norm actors, for example, as large INGOs, the Security Council or even nations, these much more ‘local’ investigations can conceive of actors as specific divisions of subcluster NGOs, or even a form used to categorise internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the field (and the normative assumptions therein). This can help to better inform both academic understandings of these closer contexts, and better field practice.

This chapter introduces the methodological framework for the research, including the sequential explanatory research design, and discusses its suitability with reference to research methods literature. It then discusses the core of the contribution of this thesis – the coding practices that enabled identification of shifting norms as expressed within existing UN documentation. It goes on to articulate how the thesis explores the perspectives of some people involved in different areas of the mandate, and how they view the impact of these norms on policy and practice, by including interviews with significant actors (amended from the original interview plan for research question 3 due to Covid-19 disruptions). Finally, limitations of the research approach are also discussed.

3.1.1 Symbolic technologies: A means of measuring the representation of ideas

Symbolic technologies are defined by Laffey & Weldes as “inter-subjective systems of representations and representation-producing practices” (1997 p.209). Laffey & Weldes theorise symbolic technologies as entire norm systems themselves; the manifestation of an idea through discourse and communication, including anything recognisable which is used to represent a norm – these can be phrases, photographs, symbols, metaphors, or tropes in narratives; in the case of this thesis, there is a particular focus on phrases. Norms can come to be represented in policy by certain sets of words (Greenblatt 1991); they are “sets of capacities with which people can construct meaning about themselves, their world and their activities” (Laffey & Weldes 1997 p.210). This research therefore used phrases as signifiers of symbolic technologies – norms – throughout the process of analysis, and uses phrases to discuss the presence or absence of the relevant norms. The intent is not to reduce the concept of symbolic technologies to phrases alone, but to represent the idea that discourse is a key practice and product of symbolic technologies, which produces and reproduces dominant understandings. Long (2004) notes that norm-producing and reinforcing phrases make possible certain actions and understandings, but necessarily preclude others; and, as such, have a function in reproducing or altering power structures (p.27). Phrases such as ‘child soldier’ and even the more benign ‘women and girls’ when used in the context of armed warfare, conjure a certain type of image. It is possible to write a literature review about the presence of these phrases and what they are and are not meant to encompass; and indeed, prior work has examined, in particular, the function of the ‘women and children’ phrase in various humanitarian workstreams (Carpenter 2003, 2016; Lee-Koo 2011; Brocklehurst 2017).

Central to this thesis, Carpenter (2016) demonstrated the use of a code tree schematic to measure symbolic technologies, as representations of norms, in a body of official literature relating to civilian protections, focusing on the phrase ‘women and children’ and connecting this strongly to a particular normative conception of civilians. However, there is no comprehensive stocktake and analysis as to how widespread the norms are, or how they are exercised, in the CaAC workstream. And this matters. It matters because scholars of norm emergence, in particular foundational theorists Finnemore & Sikkink (1998), have noted that there is a critical point at which the presence of norms is widespread and deeply held enough to result in the internalisation of those norms. Contemporary scholars such as Adachi (2021), Rosert (2019) and Müller & Wunderlich (2013)

have built on the heritage of earlier norm scholarship to analyse the process of norm emergence and internalisation in the area of international conflict. From here, those norms then, and only then, necessarily influence possible courses of action. Indeed, Carpenter (2016) notes that internalised norms can be seen to matter, because actors exhibit forms of compliance; whether this is weak or strong compliance (Carpenter uses the examples of “justified violations” and “unthinking compliance” - p.55), there is a presumed baseline of action that *should* be complied with. What has been missing from this body of literature is a mapping of how far and wide these norms pervade throughout the Child Protection system; and the relatively newly established cluster of scholars of norms in the child protection infrastructure have conducted separate, closer studies of norm presence in different areas, which all contribute towards achieving this wider goal. A more generalised coding schematic that could be replicated to assist in the tracing of norms across these closer examinations is needed.

Annual reports of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CaAC), which make up the reports analysed in Research Stage 1, demonstrate conclusively that norms matter in a study of the UN child protection infrastructure. The 2004 report focuses on a newly declared “era of application” of norms, and refers to the deliberate creation and dissemination of norms:

The campaign for the “era of application” encompasses four key components: advocacy and dissemination of norms relating to children affected by armed conflict...[and] the mainstreaming of concerns relating to children affected by armed conflict into the programmes and mechanisms of key institutions, within and outside of the United Nations (para. 3).

This indicates that the use of normative language in these reports is not non-reflexive; codifications of particular norms are deliberate, and intended to go beyond this particular office and disseminate within the UN system and “outside” (where exactly is unclear). The fact that a wide international infrastructure has subsequently built up around child protection, to which a vast number of INGOs, UN bodies and states all subscribe, speaks to the relevance of Carpenter’s argument about measuring norm salience through compliance. However, the particular norms that these reports

argue should be disseminated are not defined or interrogated; it is simply a non-specific reference to normative change.

This thesis therefore asks how we might best trace norms, their development and their influence, in and through the UN's Child Protection system. It seeks to understand what child protection norms exist within the UN system, how have they developed over time and what the existence of these norms means for UN practice. As such, the thesis engages with an array of documents and other material, including elite interviews, to understand not only how these norms have come to be but how they have been translated into operational priorities, and to better understand what practitioners think of the appropriateness of these conceptual norms to field realities. Importantly, the core contribution of this thesis centers on the use of a code tree schematic that is tested as a tool for measuring and revealing insights about these norms. In doing this, the thesis is based on particular epistemological commitments, as described below.

3.1.2 Research contribution – theory and methodology

Methodological situation

This thesis was conceived as a means of problem-solving within a particular area of the child protection infrastructure. In order to chart the presence and movement of norms through different actors within the same workstream, it was felt that neither a strictly positivist nor interpretivist epistemological approach would be sufficient. Firstly, to begin the process of examining the evolution of norms, one must confirm their existence in the area to be studied (in this case, the annual reports from the OSRSG-CaAC, which made up Dataset 1). Identifying a 'signpost' of norm presence (in this case, phrases as symbolic technologies) is thus necessarily a positivist exercise. In then performing textual analysis to examine the context of these signposts, the researcher is beholden to an interpretivist perspective.

This project is also informed by several disciplines and sub-disciplines, which provide varying traditional epistemologies; yet the literature that informs the project best, namely the work of feminist critical security studies scholars, typically demonstrates the use of pragmatist methodologies in this subject area (particularly Jacob 2016). This kind of approach has at times been referred to by scholars such as Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) as the "third paradigm".

Work in this “third paradigm” can make use of research models informed by both positivist and interpretivist traditions with the goal of creating a non-dogmatic, contextualised and robust research project. Each more traditional epistemological approach has been critiqued; on the one hand for not being sufficient to describe nuanced and subjective experiences or phenomena (positivism), and on the other, for generating unreliable and vague results (interpretivism) (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004).

Mixed-methods research scholars have further identified the benefits of a pragmatist approach (Jick 1979; Howe 1988, 2009; Patton 1990). Jick (1979), in a discussion primarily focused on quantitative analyses, makes the point that triangulation should not simply refer to statistical validation, but some sort of examination of the wider context of findings. Howe develops this thesis into an argument for the ‘pragmatist’ approach (1988) and argues that an experimental paradigm simply may not be the most suitable way to address some questions (2005). Patton (1990) further argues that pragmatist approaches prevent dogmatic adherence to either positivist or interpretivist paradigms in research design which can inhibit the suitability of models.

In other words, the primary consideration in constructing a pragmatic research model should be that it is well-suited for answering the research question(s). In line with this type of understanding of the purpose of methodological choice, Hitchcock & Onwuegbuzie (2020 p.64) provide this advice: “Quality should be judged by whether a research question at hand can be adequately addressed by the analytic steps that have been taken.” While any researcher is likely to make the claim that a suitable model is their primary consideration, advocates of a pragmatist approach argue that an over-focus on the traditional processes of either positivist or interpretivist epistemologies can obscure this purpose. This thesis therefore pursues a pragmatist approach in seeking to utilise a range of literatures, methodologies and methods in an effort to more comprehensively understand the issue of child protection norms. It does this by employing a sequential explanatory research design, comprising content analysis, document analysis and semi-structured interviews.

The topic itself also sits within a nexus of security studies, politics, development, and international relations. Traditional epistemologies differ across these subjects; though researchers in all these subjects now utilise both quantitative and qualitative approaches within different paradigms, and

the popularity of mixed-methods research continues to grow. Bernhard (2019) states that mixed-methods research in general has led to a large increase in cross-discipline collaboration. As such, it is a fitting approach to discussion on a topic that sits across various disciplines and puts scholars from different fields into dialogue with one another, valuing and taking inspiration from their different methodological approaches. This is outlined further in the following chapters.

Key contribution: developing a method of measuring norms that can be replicated in different contexts

With the methodological approach established, the key contribution of the thesis can be described. This contribution is primarily methodological, in the extension and development of the code tree model used by Carpenter (2016) to measure the presence of norms in a dataset.

Carpenter was interested in measuring the presence of gendered norms in a particular area of the civilian protection infrastructure, namely policy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) within a five-year period. As in this thesis, Carpenter began by identifying the norms described already in the literature about the wider civilian protection infrastructure more generally, thus gaining an idea of which norms to code for in their particular interest area. These norms pertained to the contextualisation of gendered categories; for example, women being discussed in the context of parents, versus men being discussed in the same context. Such phrases were conceptualised as symbolic technologies – units of language that represent a norm. Carpenter then developed a simple code tree to measure the frequency of these instances (Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Carpenter's code tree schematic (2016)

Context of Sex Reference	Frequency
Women and children	163
Women and children to signify civilian	44
Especially or including women and children	60
Women as vulnerable	56
Women as parents or peacemakers	29
Special protection needs of women and children	33
Women and children as victims	79
Women and children as deliberate targets	42
Women and children as primary victims/targets	27
Women as combatants	6
Men as victims/targets	6
Men, women and children	9
Men specifically mentioned as civilians	3
Men as vulnerable	1
Men as parents	1
Men as perpetrators/combatants	7

Using these measurements, Carpenter illustrated the way in which civilians were imagined in these policy documents in accordance with gendered norms. Carpenter described a norm as clearly gendered when there was a much higher frequency of mentions of one category over another – essentially, a ratio of difference; for example, the symbolic technology of women being vulnerable appeared 56 times, whereas men imagined as victims/targets, only 6. From this can be drawn conclusions about the gendered conceptualisation of vulnerability in this document set.

However, Carpenter uses a very simple schematic and does not clearly lay out its role as part of a wider methodological investigation. The same study also utilises document analysis and interviews, but does not explicitly describe itself as a sequential approach, rather being ostensibly a mixed-methods approach that combines different methods of enquiry without separating stages.

This thesis expands upon and elaborates the code tree model, adding 'sub-categories' under wider norm categories (represented by phrases) to account for more narrow themes associated with each norm. It seeks to take inspiration from Carpenter's model and draw it out into a schematic that groups normative sub-themes together and allows them to be measured; and it also applies this code tree to both the office policy of a relevant UN body, and field policy, to trial its utility in somewhat different document contexts. Furthermore, it situates the code tree as part of a content

analysis that makes up the first phase of a clearly delineated three-stage sequential explanatory research design. This design aims to have the researcher repeatedly revisit the material and reflexively examine conclusions as they go. Therefore, as well as developing and expanding the code tree model, and applying it to different contexts, this thesis also situates it within a different and more clearly elaborated research model. This model is elaborated upon in Chapter 3. Overall, the aim is to further develop the code tree and demonstrate its utility in new contexts, and thereby its versatility in the aim of magnifying and examining norm presence in different areas of the child protection infrastructure.

3.2 Methodological framework

As discussed above, this thesis centres on constructivist ideas of norms and 'frame distortion', that is, it is interested in the evolution of norms as symbolic technologies (represented by terms and imagery) in ways that those norms come to encompass ideas that were not originally part of that norm. Critical feminists in IR have argued that frame distortion is making practical intervention in the humanitarian sphere unfit for purpose, and that it leads to outcomes not in the best interests of those who need intervention. Both theoretical positions (constructivism and critical feminism) have typical research methods that are comparable and that are ideal for this project.

The methods deployed in constructivist and critical feminist IR are usually qualitative. These approaches also often utilise semi-structured interviews as well as discourse analysis. Cecilia Jacob has done research in this way, although she also included quantitative textual analysis of the presence and nature of norms (Jacob 2013). Jacob also refers to the importance of the 'practise turn' in critical security studies, conceived of by Salter & Mutlu (2013); in-country field work is essential to understand security situations. In keeping with these ideas, a mixed-methods approach was employed in this project, utilising both quantitative and qualitative analyses as well as field research. As discussed further below, Salter's notion of engaging with a practise turn was no longer an option for this research after Covid-19; however, the inclusion of interviews with field staff still augments this work in broadening the design and providing field-level insight.

Finally, there is another body of literature mentioned briefly in the review section which has important methodological insights to offer: the disaster response literature. There is a trend in this

literature which matches the IR literature on the topic of child protection. That is, as Peek et al. (2017 p.248) note, over half of the research on children in disasters has been conducted in the past 11 years, although the topic first came about in the 1940s. Children are thus increasingly important subjects of study for both disciplines.

It is not surprising then, considering that the two fields are connected and follow similar trends regarding the increasing prescience of child protection, that some useful methodological insight can be gained from also surveying the disaster literature. The most important point to note from this literature is that as Peek et al. and others have promoted, data gathering models should be disaggregated for age beyond the two categories of 'child' and 'youth' (as well as for other factors), as there is clear evidence in disaster research that different age groups respond differently to trauma. This is an excellent argument for critically analysing the way norms inform categorisation of children in conflict and can be an example to child protection researchers in IR – and it underscores the contribution that this research can make as it seeks to bring such other disciplinary insights to bear on existing understandings in the IR literature.

The nature of this thesis is explorative, measuring the spread and effect of certain norms; but it was based on a foundational first stage of research which must initially identify whether or not these norms are present in the literature. Such a project called for a balanced mixed-methods approach in which each separate stage of research was addressed in the most suitable way. This thesis therefore utilises a mixed-methods approach in three separate stages of research.

The overall research design is one of a sequential explanatory design, using the model described by Creswell & Plano Clark (2023). This design allows for the incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative methods, which are used where most appropriate across the three research questions. The 'quantitative' aspect in this thesis is very nominally so, in terms of traditional conceptions of the style; there was no statistical analysis applied beyond counting the frequency of coded phrases and considering ratios of frequency. However, because of the importance afforded to the frequency of said technologies and the temporal trends observed across documents (dated 1990-2020), the stage can be considered to be quantitative in the stricter sense.

Building upon Carpenter's model to design a replicable code tree schematic

This sequential model makes use of a further expanded and refined code tree, based upon the model used by Carpenter (2016) in their study of civilian protection norms. Carpenter takes a mixed-methods approach including content analysis (through the use of the code tree), document analysis and interviews. The basic code tree is utilised to measure the frequency of phrases associated with certain norms in the context of civilian protection.

Carpenter's model was determined to be a useful base because their inquiry was similar to that posed by this thesis. Carpenter aimed to trace the prevalence of norms in a certain protection context (that is, civilian protections), as well as discover any further patterns or insights relating to these or other thematic norms. Carpenter had also first canvassed the wider literature on civilian protection, to see which norms were alleged to be broadly present in general across the infrastructure; as was done for this thesis. Therefore, Carpenter was left needing to apply a model of coding to a set of documents representing a specific context within this wider protection infrastructure, in order to hold a magnifying glass to the activity of the norms which may have been present there. Carpenter's code tree tests for phrases associated with these norms. However, it lists only one level of 'category' of phrases, without the inclusion of sub-themes; it also does not use any key or numbering system to organise the codes.

The model developed for this thesis uses a numbering and lettering key to list codes, allowing for organisation of categories – key phrases representing a norm, then phrases that match sub-themes within the norm. This allowed the researcher to hand-write a key (for example, 'A.1', corresponding to the theme of 'Child soldiers [A]: Recruitment as problem [.1]'). This allowed for easy counting and categorisation once the full document had been coded, as well as a clear record of the coding determinations made, to support the researcher's re-familiarisation when looking back at the data through stages of the sequential project.

The code tree needs to reveal something about the prevalence of the norms tested for. With this in mind, a simple method of measuring base frequency was developed for this analysis. The average number of pages per document across the dataset was 20.59. All documents were within the range of 14-24 pages except one outlier of 34. 'Frequent' has been defined as 20+ occurrences in a document, which implies roughly one occurrence per page.

But backing up this somewhat subjective determination of numerical frequency is the relative frequency, also measured in the tables provided; this is useful because it gives an idea of the normative priorities of any given document. Relative frequency may indeed be the more significant factor in this analysis, both in terms of comparing norms within the same document set, and in measuring fluctuating emphases on different normative foci over time. Indeed, Carpenter (2016) argues that relative frequency self-evidently indicates the importance and centrality given some norms over others in the documents examined, because the number of times an idea is mentioned as part of the totality of the document clearly indicates its thematic importance. But deciding whether or not a norm is 'frequent' is not the key aim of the content (stage 1) or document (stage 2) analyses; the numbers of occurrences are evident in stage 1, and the relative frequencies are rather focused on in interpretation and discussion of those results; it is not the goal of this thesis to specifically and rigidly determine which norms are 'frequent' and which are not in this particular context, but rather to provide a nuanced view of the presence and activity of all norms identified in the documents from a more relative perspective, and thus the interpretation of the numerical results is more thematic in nature.

The code tree model used by Carpenter has therefore been significantly developed and extended, as well as being applied to both:

- a) a new thematic context (child protection infrastructure); and
- b) two comparative aspects of this context – office policy of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, and field guidance for workers in the child protection subcluster.

This extended model proved to be effective in revealing insights about the prevalence of norms in this context.

3.2.1 Sequential explanatory design

The sequential explanatory design approach is a mixed-methods research model which consists of a research project separated into distinct stages, each of which generally corresponds with separate research questions. This, too, speaks to the contributions of this thesis; the code tree model used by Carpenter has not only been developed further and refined, but employed as part of

a sequential explanatory design. While Carpenter does use various research methods in their model, there are no explicitly delineated phases, and therefore it is implied the phases were concurrent. This project instead favours a sequential approach, both for its utility in suiting a project with multiple research questions, and for the added aspect of single-researcher triangulation. There are various typologies of sequential explanatory models which have been described by scholars. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) and Creswell, Fetters & Ivankova (2004) discuss several important considerations in the design of this model; two of the most relevant questions to this project are whether the research stages should be concurrent or sequential; and whether quantitative and qualitative methods should be given an equal or unequal importance in the model. In a sequential model, the stages are carried out mostly in chronological order rather than simultaneously. This allows the researcher to practically assess which approach to research is going to best fit with separate research questions. For a project in which multiple questions of differing degrees of 'open-endedness' are required, it is therefore a good fit (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick 2006).

In this approach the researcher moves through their research stages, maintaining a focus on the most practical type of approach for each one; yet, as they move to each stage, they can allow the analysis of the new data set to inform their outlook on the previous stage's data set. This functions as both an inductive means of improving the robustness of the overall project's analysis, as well as a method of triangulation (Creswell, Fetters & Ivankova 2004). As discussed above, for example, the alphabetical and numerical keys used in the code tree allowed the researcher to return to the hand-marked documents in following research stages and clearly identify what phrases had been coded according to which categories.

The defined move through each stage encourages the researcher to avoid dogmatic defences of either quantitative or qualitative approaches, by prioritising the practical and adaptive nature of the knowledge-seeking process. It is important to note that, while the sequential design differs from the concurrent design in that the stages are not carried out simultaneously, it still allows the researcher to return to the results of their first research stage and add further discussion based on later results. This is particularly the case when employing the sequential approach outlined by Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003), and used by Ivankova, Creswell & Stick (2006). This model

prescribes a quantitative investigation as the first research stage, followed by a qualitative analysis. Ivankova, Creswell & Stick justify their model as follows:

The decision to follow the quantitative-qualitative data collection and analysis sequence in this design depends on the study purpose and the research questions seeking for the contextual field-based explanation of the statistical results (2006 p.10).

This suggests that such a model is valid for this current research project which aims to do the same – examine norms in a set of documents (producing not a statistical analysis, but a basic map of presence and frequency), and then to examine the literature from the wider operating environment to further deduce contextual trends.

Ivankova, Creswell & Stick (2006) also note the importance of deciding how integrated the different research stages should be with one another, even within the sequential model. In their example the authors conducted a survey of a wide group of university students (first dataset). When this was complete, they then examined the results and selected students to interview for their next research stage (their second dataset) based on the answers given in the initial survey. In this way, the second stage is informed by the results of the first stage, making use of a basic and essentially quantitative exercise to generate leads for qualitative analysis.

This thesis follows a similar approach. The first dataset illuminated the roles of various UN offices and NGOs which appeared to have a connection to the presence of sought-for norms in the documents, and I was then able to select documents for my second research stage which had been published by these particular parties. Here, as in Ivankova, Creswell & Clark's exercise, the quantitative research stage performs an extra function by not only producing its own dataset, but also by itself elucidating some context which can be elaborated on in the qualitative stage.

There are several prominent criticisms, or at least caveats, that must be considered when applying this research design. Ivankova, Creswell & Stick (2006) themselves argue that the model can be tricky to implement in a robust way, and deciding how to communicate the analysis can be a challenge, noting the importance of considering “the stage/stages in the research process at which the quantitative and qualitative phases are connected and the results are integrated” (p.4). Speaking of mixed-methods designs more generally, Freshwater (2007) argues that robust results are less common in mixed-methods studies; Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003) refer to a large increase

in mixed methods methodologies as being generally inconsistent and confusing. Jick (1979), despite arguing that qualitative contextualisation compliments quantitative data well, notes that researchers can fail to be explicit about how exactly they are gathering data. Bryman (2007) writes that findings from different datasets are often not synthesised enough in mixed methods analyses. Giddings (2006 p.195) also raises the point that some mixed methods designs perpetuate the “continuing hegemony of positivism”, by implying that qualitative analyses in themselves are not robust enough without some sort of quantitative dimension.

In order to ameliorate some of these limitations, this project was designed with several safeguards. Firstly, a clear, step-by-step discussion below will explain exactly how each stage of research has been conducted. The selection of sources, analytical process (and use of coding), discussion, and visual presentation of data have all been designed with reference to authoritative sources so that readers can follow the research process clearly and understand how results were reached.

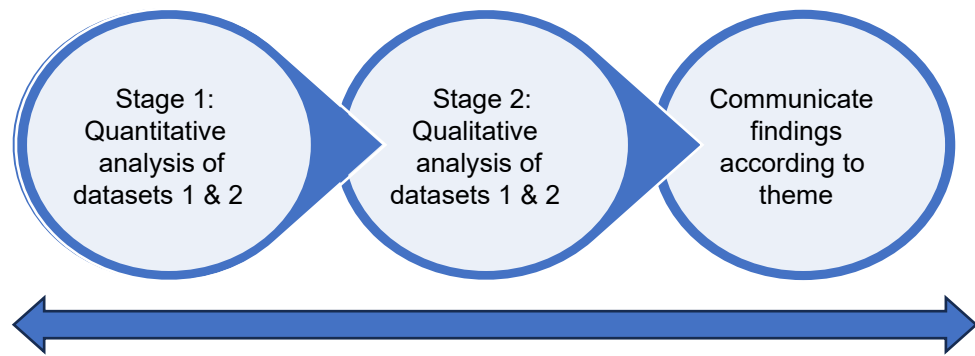
Secondly, the iterative nature of the sequential explanatory model allows for a means of simultaneous triangulation and contextualisation between datasets, building a complete picture of results. Thirdly, the analysis of documents and interviews is carried out via a manual coding process which compliments the contextualising nature of the model, allowing the researcher to examine the data several times between research stages and become very familiar with it (Mattimoe et al. 2021 p.3). Fourthly, the structure of this thesis aims to counteract any potential for disjointed discussions of the different research stages’ findings; each dataset chapter includes its own applied discussion, but the latter few chapters of the thesis are wider discussions by theme, incorporating all sets of results and synthesising findings. Finally, the sequential explanatory model (as opposed to strictly concurrent models) allows for autonomy on the relative importance afforded to qualitative and quantitative approaches in the design; in this project I afforded slightly more importance to a qualitative design and justified why, counteracting Giddings’ concerns of tokenistic qualitative analysis.

As explained prior, the project itself, being situated in the pragmatist paradigm, sought to avoid any adherence to positivist versus interpretivist – or quantitative versus qualitative – dogmatism, recognising that each approach has its uses when applied to the appropriate question. Note that here even the quantitative aspect was arguably not wholly quantitative as it involved no in-depth statistical analysis beyond simply charting frequency (though in purpose, it sought to measure and

establish the presence of something in a given set of sources; thus I have defined it as essentially a positivist and quantitative research stage).

The sequential explanatory model thus enables a partially quantitative first stage which can establish the presence or absence of norms in one data set, answering the first research question; the following two stages explore the spread and evolution of norms in two further data sets, answering the second and third research questions. Using multiple methods helped to triangulate the assessment of how norms in the policy are affecting operations. Following is a general outline of the methods that were employed across the three research stages before outlining in detail the processes that were involved.

Figure 3: Basic diagram of the sequential explanatory design used for this research.



Notes: Stage 1 involved measuring the frequency of normative phrases according to a code tree. Stage 2 involved a textual analysis of documents to reveal contexts and trends regarding these normative phrases.

3.2.2 Stage 1

The first stage of research corresponds to the first research question: What conceptual norms about conflict-affected children exist in the CaAC workstream and how did they develop?

The scope was well-defined for this stage. Twenty-two (22) annual reports were examined from across the period of the creation of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CaAC), until the present (see the list of reports at Appendix 1); and the 12 Security Council Resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict were also examined as primary sources, providing further context, but not directly included in the dataset (see below). This office was selected because the OSRSG-CaAC is responsible for all high-level advocacy of conflict-affected children to the Security Council. The OSRSG-CaAC is the top of the reporting chain for the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations against children affected by armed conflict (MRM). The office is also responsible for public awareness campaigns on the issue involving social media (utilising phrases and photographs).

The twelve resolutions of the Security Council on children affected by armed conflict were examined as primary sources, but not directly included in the dataset, primarily for reasons of scope and because lesser relevance. While these resolutions are discussed earlier (see Chapter 1) to explain the establishment of the CaAC infrastructure, the Security Council is detached to a degree from the norm ecosystem of that infrastructure, and makes resolutions on the advice of the OSRSG-CaAC. In any case; much of the language is directly copied. This is not to discount the significant civil society work that goes into lobbying the Security Council; or the fact that Security

Council primacy affords funding (and therefore influences field realities indirectly). While this speaks to the reproduction of norms, it is in quite a different context; this thesis focuses on the CaAC infrastructure as described by current critical feminist literature (such as Lee-Koo and D'Costa) spanning this area, which has parameters focused on direct communication pathways to and from the conflict and post-conflict field context (as the OSRSG-CaAC does). The role of the Security Council as an actor in regard to norms pertaining to conflict-affected children is a wider area of research to be developed, and indeed some interviewees had interesting experience in the area of civil society advocacy to the Security Council at UN Headquarters, noting that member states' submissions on potential resolutions could completely exclude certain language from being reproduced that civil society might advocate for. For example, an interviewee who works for a large multinational NGO noted Russia's intransigence regarding the inclusion of language referencing gender-queer children. However, this is out of scope for this particular research, which focuses on norm pathways that intersect with the field context. The OSRSG-CaAC is informed directly by field reporting as well as NGO and INGO field reports.

The temporal spread was examined so that patterns in norm presentation could be measured. This encapsulates the period over which the CaAC mandate has operated as well as delimiting a sensible scope for the available time and resources. Documents were accessed from publicly available UN library interfaces.

With the right dataset identified, then, the developed and extended code tree was utilised as a method to reveal insights about the prevalence of the expected norms.

Deductive coding was used to define three phrases that represent the norms which arose in the literature review and use these as 'signpost' codes under which to group related phrases.

Frequency of relevant phrases was measured in a content analysis using manual coding and analysis: children as child soldiers, children as non-distinct from women, and children as girls only.

A close reading of the source documents – a textual analysis – overlaid on the content analysis allowed the differentiation between instances of a given phrase, to make sure they clearly fell into the specified code categories. This stage of analysis contained a quantitative aspect, as frequency is being measured, though a deep statistical analysis was not necessary.

This code tree model is the key contribution of this thesis as a method of measuring and examining norm presence in a given dataset. It builds usefully on the model proposed by Carpenter (2016) by allowing greater nuance and organisation in the grouping of sub-themes. In providing a clear picture of the presence of phrases associated strongly with each norm, as well as showing these to have relationships with other themes and sub-themes, the code tree was proven to be an effective method of tracing norms in the child protection infrastructure context.

Figure 4: Code tree used for analysis

CODE TREE

Generated from literature review; close reading of SRSR CAAC 1998

<u>A</u> CHILD SOLDIERS	A
<u>1</u> Recruitment as problem	<u>A.1</u>
<u>a</u> Agency	<u>A.1.a</u>
<u>2</u> Voluntary/non-voluntary recruitment.	<u>A.2</u>
<u>3</u> Militia vs terrorist actors	<u>A.3</u>
<u>4</u> Detention of child perpetrators as problem.	<u>A.4</u>
<u>5</u> Domestic duty focus	<u>A.5</u>
<u>6</u> Sexual slavery	<u>A.6</u>
<u>7</u> Resolutions/other documents	<u>A.7</u>
<u>B</u> WOMEN AND CHILDREN	B
<u>1</u> Civilian casualties contemporary warfare	<u>B.1</u>
<u>2</u> “women and children” no context	<u>B.2</u>
<u>3</u> Female-headed households focus	<u>B.3</u>
<u>a</u> Agency	<u>B.3.a</u>
<u>4</u> Assertion of intersecting needs	<u>B.4</u>
<u>5</u> Sexual violence	<u>B.5</u>
<u>6</u> Displacement	<u>B.6</u>
<u>7</u> Resolutions/other documents	<u>B.7</u>
<u>C</u> CHILDREN AS GIRLS	C
<u>1</u> Sexual violence girls focus	<u>C.1</u>
<u>2</u> Female-headed households focus	<u>C.2</u>
<u>a</u> Agency	<u>C.2.a</u>
<u>3</u> Human trafficking	<u>C.3</u>
<u>4</u> WPS	<u>C.4</u>
<u>5</u> Resolutions/other documents	<u>C.5</u>
<u>D</u> OTHER	D
<u>1</u> General CAAC resolutions/documents	<u>D.1</u>
<u>E</u> CHILDREN AS VICTIMS *	E
<u>1</u> Psychological needs	<u>E.1</u>
<u>2</u> Trauma	<u>E.2</u>
<u>3</u> Function as cultural capital	<u>E.3</u>

3.2.3 Stage 2

The second stage of research corresponds to the second research question: ‘How do these norms translate into operational priorities?’ The sampling utilised was, again, purposive; however, in this stage the policy documents examined were operational manuals and field guides rather than internal policy. The offices assessed were therefore different. The most relevant offices from which to examine policy in this stage were the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO),

UNHCR and UNICEF. These offices were chosen based both on preliminary investigation into the publication of field manuals in the general child protection context as well as specific manuals designed for application in local contexts, and because of the directions offered by the first dataset. The intention in selecting this type of publication was to identify to what extent norms in internal policy are influencing actual intervention operations carried out by the child protection sub-cluster. As well as searching for evidence of the previously measured norms impacting these manuals, an inductive approach to analysis yielded more norms. Textual analysis was the best method to utilise in this stage, as the attention to context allowed greater exploration of lateral movement of norms across departments. This examination of lateral movement, as well as the identification of other norms in the data set, then informed a comparison with notes from the first dataset, allowing an iterative re-examination.

O'Leary (2014) offers a guide for textual analysis which served as a useful backbone for this project. This model involves 8 steps, focusing on a critical assessment of documents' authenticity, origin, biases, tone, et cetera. Some alterations were made to this model to ensure it best suits this project. This is discussed further below.

3.2.4 Stage 3

The third stage of research corresponds with the research question: 'What perspectives on norms about conflict-affected children can be offered by actors involved in different areas of the workstream – policy and field work?'

In this stage, it was intended that semi-structured interviews would guide practitioners towards discussion of the norms in question. Again, constant feedback and analysis between all three datasets could inform further analysis of any of the data sets. The interviewees that were to be chosen were involved with, or had previously been involved with, child protection sub-cluster efforts in a UN office or NGO capacity.

Initially, as noted in Chapter 1, the original research plan for this thesis was to involve a natural degree of triangulation in the interview stage. Interviews were to be carried out at various levels of policy in three different locations. The idea was that, as well as acting as a mechanism of triangulation, this approach would give an idea of the lateral spread of the impact of norms on policy. However, this original research plan was significantly impacted by the advent of the Covid-

19 pandemic. Interviews with practitioners were still pursued as they are useful to provide additional context to the document analysis, but the pressures of the pandemic limited even online interview opportunities. Instead of viewing my interviews as a fully separate body of documents – transcripts – to analyse, I therefore re-conceptualised these interviews as an opportunity to attain personal insights only, rather than the representative data that a larger body of interviews would reveal. As such, there is no separate results chapter for the third research stage; findings from my interviews are instead incorporated into discussion on other research findings and in the chapters focusing on wider themes, as complementary perspectives on indications I picked up through document analysis. Despite the very small number of interviewees (only three, despite concerted attempts to gain a larger sample), these interviewees happened to be extremely well positioned to share perspectives on the impact of norms on the CaAC infrastructure and shared highly relevant personal experiences. Therefore, despite the ultimate frustration of not being able to achieve a representative third dataset through interviewing as originally intended, the accommodations made did still allow for useful insights within the parameters of what was possible.

The material above outlines the main overarching framework used to investigate and assess child protection norms and their impacts as well as outlining the unexpected need to move away from original research plans. The following section now outlines more specifically the details of each of the methods to be utilised.

3.3 Methods within these stages

3.3.1 Sampling

The sampling method used in this project was almost entirely purposive. In stages one and two, this was the only method used. In stage three, it was originally envisioned that travel to local offices would allow for snowball sampling to be carried out for interviewees. This was not possible after the disruption of Covid-19, so a purposive approach was taken. Interviewees were selected and approached based on the relevance of their job positions and experience.

In accordance with the research model, the sampling method must be purposive because of the nature of the questions asked. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method which makes use of appropriate biases to select informants or units for analysis – as opposed to random

sampling methods, in which “each unit of the population has a known, non-zero chance of being included in the sample” (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim 2016).

Tongco (2007 p.147) summarises the use of purposive sampling for selecting informants, though in the case of this study, this also applies to documents for analysis: “The purposive sampling technique is a type of non-probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain with knowledgeable experts within”. In this case, the ‘cultural domain’ is the UN child protection workstream. The ‘knowledgeable experts’ are those located in the particular offices charged with the mandate of child protection in armed conflict, whether this is high-level advocacy (the OSRSG-CaAC) or field-level efforts (UNICEF, UNHCR, DPO). The sample selection therefore takes place from within repositories of specific policy types produced by these groups. Having conducted a review of the literature, the researcher employing purposive sampling uses their informed biases to decide which units from a given lot should be analysed to form a dataset. The use of the sequential explanatory design model encourages the researcher to carefully select the most appropriate sampling method for each stage of research. Stages one and two required the analysis of documents that have been published according to a specific mandate, and within a specific timeframe, from a wider pool of thousands of documents produced by multiple working groups. This is why purposive sampling was essential to the project. The aim of questions one and two was first to establish the presence of specific norms, and then to examine their lateral spread into operational policy. Documents selected for datasets were therefore:

- a) Produced by an appropriate subsidiary of the United Nations;
- b) Published within the specified timeframe; and
- c) Pertain directly to children affected by armed conflict.

Requirements A and B will be simply satisfied. As described above, the appropriate subsidiary for research question one was the OSRSG-CaAC, due to the function of this office in mandate representation at the Security Council level as well as in conducting outreach campaigns that make use of norms. For research question two, the appropriate bodies were DPO, UNHCR and UNICEF (in some cases with input from NGOs).

Requirement C is less clearly able to be met, as papers produced by working groups can at times pertain to multiple topics or be general resolutions about the group’s mandate, function etc rather

than policy documents. To meet requirement C, the document therefore needed to both have a title *and* preamble that made specific reference to children affected by armed conflict, or a relevant conceptual norm (e.g. 'child soldiers', 'women-and-children'); or have specific chapters or other large sections devoted to the topic.

For example, several documents analysed for research question two were produced by UNHCR, whose mandate is not specifically limited to children affected by armed conflict. However, field guides produced by UNHCR make specific mention to conflict-affected children as a key theme, usually with one or more chapters devoted to the subject, or sections within multiple chapters. Also, general discussions of displaced or refugee children contain discussion of conflict-affected children in which broader symbolic technologies can be identified. This reflects the field context that UNHCR operates in; this may at times be connected with natural disaster or ongoing IDP camp situations rather than conflict, however conflict makes up a large part of disasters that UNHCR responds to and UNHCR performs considerable triage activity as part of the broader child protection cluster.

3.3.2 Interviewing

Initially, this project was envisaged as involving interviewing as a method of obtaining some significant data from a reasonable sample size. The third stage of the research design was to be analysed in its own separate results chapter, and inferences drawn about wider institutional perspectives from this data. However, the impact of Covid-19 significantly altered the plan for interviewing. The project itself was considerably delayed, leaving less time to approach a large number of interviewees and design a schedule for larger-scale work. Travel to actual UN offices was cancelled, meaning ease of access to different interviewees (via a combination of purposive and snowball sampling) was severely hampered. Contact with UN office representatives was also inhibited due to the nature of the global upheaval of workstreams; repeated attempts to get in touch with contacts or to secure interviews were unsuccessful.

With this disruption in mind, the third stage of the research model was altered to include a smaller number of interviewees. The data that was gained from interviews was therefore not intended to be used to infer any wide or significant trends about the child protection mandate itself. Instead, the intent is that insights gathered from the interviews are analysed via semantic and latent discourse

analysis and simply used to compliment findings from the first two stages of research. As noted above, the findings are therefore incorporated throughout into the thematic discussion chapters.

3.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

The most fitting method of interviewing for this revised plan was semi-structured interviewing.

Adams (2015 p.494) describes the most suitable projects for the use of semi-structured interviews; one such scenario is “If you need to conduct a formative program evaluation and want one-on-one interviews with key program managers, staff, and front-line service providers”. This effectively describes the purpose of the third stage of this research design; although it is not a formative evaluation of the mandate as such, it seeks the perspectives of staff of differing levels on the delivery of a particular programme. Adams also writes here that semi-structured interviews are particularly useful in mixed methods designs, most relevantly where “you want to explore “puzzles” that emerge (or remain) after you have analyzed survey or even focus group findings” (p.494).

This parallels the purpose of this model’s third research stage, which aims to explore puzzles revealed by the first two sets of document analysis; namely, how norms travel laterally between different offices in the mandate and how this impacts the approaches staff take in designing field guides or working in the field. Turner (2010) also writes that the semi-structured interview is an appropriate choice when the interviewer is already familiar with the subject matter to be discussed, supporting the case for semi-structured interviews in mixed methods projects (and the sequential explanatory model specifically). Barribal & While (1994) similarly support semi-structured interviews for examining participants’ opinions, values, or perceptions of complex issues (applicable to norm transfer and frame distortion).

However, in their overview of available guides on semi-structured interviewing, Kallio et al. (2016) write that guidance on the rationale that should inform question types is generally unclear. This poses a problem for planning a rigorous and trustworthy interview schedule. Rubin (2005) writes that the interview ‘questions’ should be designed prior to the interview based on the interview guide, however they should not be rigid. Taylor (2005) describes the interview guide as a schema of topics and phrases that should define the general direction of the interview.

The interview guide, then, is arguably the focal point of rigour in the semi-structured interview. It functions as a standardising means of directing each of the interviews conducted in a given study,

but also allows for the flexibility and responsiveness that makes semi-structured interviewing a useful qualitative tool. This project made use of an interview guide to be employed in all interviews (Appendix 2). The topics, or themes, for inclusion were based on insights from the first two datasets, in accordance with the sequential explanatory research model.

In thinking about how this process can be refined further, Taylor (2005) stresses the importance of researcher ability to “reflect upon themselves as part of the research process” (p.44). This involves being aware of the researcher’s own assumptions in the creation of the interview guide and interviewing style, as well as how participants perceive them and their knowledge on the topic. Keeping a reflexive journal as the researcher listens to/watches their interviews during the analysis stage can aid in assessing variables that may have impacted participants’ behaviour, such as the degree of directiveness (Whyte 1986).

Rigour must also be ensured in the analysis of semi-structured interviews. This is an area in which researchers sometimes obscure their processes (see above). To prioritise rigour in interview analysis, this project applied the same coding process to interview analysis as was used in the document analyses in the first two datasets. However, it must also be noted that phrases representing norms do not present in the same way between these datasets – language is necessarily different when used by an individual in an informal interview setting to language used in official reports. Therefore, while the initial code tree will be employed to identify themes, an inductive process was used to connect phrases with the relevant norms in the code tree (and to add new norms), using semantic and latent discourse analysis.

Notably, Taylor (2005 p.49) suggests that, particularly among feminist scholars of qualitative methods, the researcher can potentially receive deeper data if they share a culture or identity with the participant, because norms will be easily recognised during the latent analysis phase. The sequential explanatory design used in this research therefore has an advantage in that I had already become familiar with norms and institutional priorities in this workstream; hence phrases could be easily recognised in interview transcripts despite the differences in the formality of language.

3.3.4 Conducting the interviews

In undertaking the interviews, Adams (2015 p.496) advises that taking up too much of the participants' time, or threatening to do so, is one of the greatest risks to engaging or retaining the subject for a successful interview. This issue grew in importance in light of the disruption caused by Covid-19 and the need to both make contact and conduct interviews virtually. Not only are workstreams pressurised, putting workers under time pressure, but employees may suffer from virtual fatigue after months of meetings being conducted in such a format. As Sy et al. (2020 p.2) noted at the time, with the spread of the pandemic, researchers, and employees in the interprofessional environment are suffering personal uncertainty around employment, funding and personal circumstances, which potentially may lead to stress and disengagement. This was the greatest area of concern in the interview planning stage, though it was also important to consider the impacts of engaging in virtual rather than face-to-face discussion.

As this thesis developed, the body of research on conducting virtual interviews in the Covid19 era bloomed (Roberts, Pavlakis & Richards 2021; Adom 2020; Dodds & Hess 2021; Lobe et. al 2020; Sy et al. 2020) to supplement the pre-existing body on the use of virtual techniques under non-pandemic conditions (Salmons 2021; Moylan et al. 2015). These literatures address various aspects from recruitment to ethical considerations.

Roberts, Pavlakis & Richards apply Salmons' Qualitative e-Research Framework (2016) to their work under pandemic restrictions in 2020, making the case for a holistic evaluation of the interview methodology in the knowledge that virtual interviewing does require a different planning process. Sy et al. (2020 p.3) provide guidance on ethical and practical considerations in the use of videoconferencing technology, as well as advice for establishing rapport, arguing that it can be more difficult to do so using software than in person. However, there are methods that can be taken to mitigate this, including engaging in a brief email conversation to introduce the project. Drabble et al. (2016) also found that strategies which increase rapport during videoconferencing itself include sharing personal information, vocalising acceptance of a point made by the interviewee to demonstrate responsiveness, and clearly vocalising appreciation of the value of disclosures. While several authors (Sy et al. 2020; Roberts, Pavlakis & Richards 2021) point out that videoconference interviews may be impacted by the equity issue of participants' access to

technology, this is not likely to be a problem when interviewing UN office staff. Nor is any ethical concern around the technological skill needed to view and sign virtual consent forms. In fact, remote interviewing may increase accessibility in some instances, such as where participants have mobility issues (Sy et al. 2020 p.3).

Notably, a significant potential limitation of semi-structured interviews via a videoconferencing tool is that, despite best efforts at rapport-building and the demonstration of responsiveness, participants may not speak as freely on the subject matter as they might in person. Krouwel et al. (2019 p.6) found that participants spoke with slightly less depth on a given range of topics when interviewed virtually as opposed to in person. The authors do not make claims as to why this may be, noting that they did not perceive any difference in rapport between the two interview modes (p.6), but do note that the interviewer was experienced in conducting videoconferencing interviews. This indicates that the best option for ensuring the success of videoconferencing interviews as a beginner researcher is simply to emulate best practice in rapport-building, informed by the literature, to the highest degree possible. From here, close consideration then needs to be given to understanding how best to interpret material generated by both by the datasets and by the interviews.

3.3.5 Thematic analysis

In addition to unpacking the role played by interviews it is also necessary to clearly describe the method of analysis that was employed in the project, rather than simply implying an analytical process when presenting discussion. This section introduces the models that were followed to conduct analysis of the text, including models for thematic analysis and coding.

In considering how best to understand the material generated by online interviews, Braun & Clarke (2014) provide a comprehensive guide to conducting rigorous thematic analysis of interview transcripts. They prescribe a six-part process of conducting thematic analysis to ensure clarity and rigour (p.60) which reconciles neatly with the approach taken to coding and analysis in datasets 1 and 2. Although they acknowledge the potential for opaque and uninformed application of the method, they support it for its flexibility and accessibility (p.58), which is relevant here as part of an investigation into complex norms conducted by a beginner researcher. This process was therefore selected to help inform analysis of interview transcripts.

O'Leary's (2014) model of analysis was another useful starting point for the beginner in the analysis of documents. The model is specific to interview transcripts and so it was considered pertinent to identify a model of textual analysis specific to documents for datasets 1 and 2. As such, it has a necessarily broad focus and certain aspects relate more specifically to discourse analysis than to the kind of wider thematic analysis required in this project. However, some steps were omitted to better fit the model to the current project. The 8 steps are as follows:

- 1) Gather relevant texts.
- 2) Develop an organisation and management scheme.
- 3) Make copies of the originals for annotation.
- 4) Assess authenticity of documents.
- 5) Explore document's agenda, biases.
- 6) Explore background information (e.g., tone, style, purpose).
- 7) Ask questions about document (e.g., Who produced it? Why? When? Type of data?).
- 8) Explore content.

O'Leary reminds the researcher to assess the bias, intended audience etc of a document. For the documents utilised in research question one, it is known exactly which group is the publisher, and the documents can be obtained through official databases; and the very subject of the investigation itself is to identify bias in the form of normative phrases. For these reasons, steps 4, 5 and 7 are not wholly relevant. However, steps 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8 all pertain to this question. After having gathered, organised, and made copies of documents, notes on the background information of each document are kept in a metadata log. This process of metadata keeping has multiple benefits; apart from increasing data credibility, becoming familiar with metadata as the researcher works can inform and deepen the process of textual analysis.

It is logical that step 8 – exploring content (prior to thorough reading) – could provide three benefits at the outset of analysis:

- a) Immediately identify any obvious trends, or broader themes that a more thorough, myopic and focused reading could miss;
- b) Eliminate any irrelevant documents that may have been missed in steps 1 and 2; and

- c) Increase the depth of the actual analysis, to follow, by initially acquainting the researcher with the text.

From here, the researcher is ready to begin coding.

Figure 5: Thematic analysis notes example

UNICEF works mainly in prevention prior to and during disasters to prevent separation. It makes available facilities where required. It also manages a database called the Inter-agency Child Protection Information Management System which contains info on individual children (wonder how much). UNICEF also leads the Global Child Protection Working Group (CP AoR) which the IAWG-UASC works under.

Also involved in the International Organisation for Migration which works with UNHCR and ICRC in reunification, and is cluster lead on camps in natural disasters as well as working on emergency evacuations and transfers of UASC in armed conflict.

Ch 2 “Characterizing family separation in emergencies” likely to be more relevant.

P51 refers to understanding the causes of separation in varying contexts and notes that this informs better prevention and protection measures. UASC may already have been separated prior to emergency; may be separated by emergency; or after. May be accidental or deliberate; may be complicated by response; and UASC are highly vulnerable to being targeted.

P54 important: “Aid-induced separation results from the humanitarian response itself. In some emergencies, media coverage of ‘orphaned’ children can generate pressure to identify quick and visible solutions, such as residential care or adoption, and may cause separations. It is important to raise awareness among media and donors of the risks of inappropriate actions.”

P56 – classification of UASC is difficult as an aspect of mixed migratory flows. Their status may change over time – IDP, migrant, asylum-seeker, refugee, accompanied vs unaccompanied etc.

P57 is a 2015 testimony of an IOM protection officer about the Libya crisis in 2011. IOM workers, UNICEF, UNHCR and Save the Children set up a UASC response at the Tunisian border and were able to differentiate between different ‘types’ of UASC to recommend different solutions. This testimony is accompanied by photo of smiling boy. [doc 2]

P60: “...it is important to recognise children’s resilience and seek to support their capacity to protect themselves rather than focusing only on their vulnerability.”

P64: key aspect of preparedness is also cluster members knowing who is responsible for UASC in which contexts.

P65: discusses how preparedness involved both disaster risk reduction and child protection systems strengthening. It is implied that disaster risk reduction doesn’t just apply to natural disasters 9in this context, same principles would apply anyway).

3.3.6 Coding

Neale’s model of Iterative Categorization (IC) provides a clear and prescriptive guide for the practical steps of coding and analysis. Criticism of document analysis has focused on a tendency of researchers to omit sufficient explanation of their analytical process, instead recording only their coding method and then results of analysis (Neale 2016; Richie & Lewis 2003). IC contains clear criteria for recording the analytical process. Neale also prescribes Microsoft Word as the most suitable tool for analysis using IC, especially where there is a relatively small sample size. It might be argued that using a coding and analysis software such as NVivo could make a much larger scope possible. However, in their chapter on qualitative research, Stewart-Withers et al. (2014) warn against selecting software to conduct qualitative analysis just because it seems like a more modern or legitimate method. They argue that an important part of qualitative analysis is careful and attentive reading, which can illuminate nuances and make use of a critical mind as the data is

examined. Software may risk over-simplifying the process of analysis and encourage complacency, especially if the researcher is not conscious of this risk. Neale echoes this concern whilst Basit (2003 p.152) argues that while electronic coding can eliminate some of the tedium of manual coding, it does not remove the need to spend considerable time conceptualising code categories and making sense of them. Although Basit does support the use of electronic methods for large datasets this is not applicable to this particular project.

In thinking more broadly about the issue of software versus 'manual' coding, Williams & Moser (2019 p.47) write that coding processes informed by grounded theory "require[s] the researcher to be present and be aware of the dynamic nature of the data, its thematic connectivity, intersectionality, and emergence toward theory creation". Presence and awareness could be impacted by complacency if the researcher is relying heavily on software programmes to elucidate themes. Also, it was my intention in the first dataset to identify the presence of certain coded items (phrases representing norms, or symbolic technologies), and then to gather clues as to where they might be coming from, from offices *outside* the mandate of the OSRSG-CaAC. This approach to the data would not be possible using coding software without first analysing the text to find such clues anyway, as the names of offices connected with these norms would have to be known and inputted first in order to reveal any relationships.

Furthermore, there was a less important, but significant, practical consideration regarding coding that had to be made when Aotearoa New Zealand was placed into lockdown during this project. I was not able to be present at my university campus during this time and there was uncertainty around the likelihood of any further access to the campus during the lifetime of this project. I did not have quality computer equipment at home to use, nor the means to purchase any should it be required; so to protect the integrity of the datasets and wider project, manual coding was sensible. The risk of data corruption or project interruption with unreliable hardware, as well as a lack of access to workplace IT support services in the use of software, supported the decision to use manual coding where intimate personal analysis of the data was valued, and where the datasets were relatively small-scale in any case.

The IC model proposes the use of the 'code tree' schematic for representing the process of organisation according to codes. This necessarily begins from a place of broad code headings and

then identifies smaller units that are organised beneath these. Neale argues that there is risk inherent in beginning with a large and complex code tree, as the researcher may begin to presuppose the nature of data rather than performing a true, close analysis (p.1099). However, Miles & Huberman (1994) have argued for the usefulness of an initial code schema informed by the literature. Although this is less in keeping with a fully 'grounded' theoretical approach in which all aspects of coding are inductive (Glaser & Strauss 1967), it still allows for iterative code creation during the process of analysis, as each broad code that was present in the initial code tree will have 'sub-codes' added to it as the researcher becomes familiar with themes in the data.

This type of coding is also called 'selective', with an initial process of 'open' coding undertaken to identify the broadest code categories (Williams & Moser 2019 p.48). There are various ways to represent an initial code schema; Basit (2003 p.148) utilises a map of concepts in which phrases are surrounded by bubbles, and the relationships between phrases are represented laterally. A code 'tree' was used in this project to map the broad deductive code headings applied prior to analysis, and then to add subcategories within those code headings during analysis. See Figure 3 for the code tree utilised for research questions one and two. A vertical 'tree' was chosen as a schema design for this project because it seemed more intuitive, since the objective was to identify the presence of three distinct norms and find out how each was moving through the literature in isolation (although in fact, this did not prevent the identification of relationships between the norms through textual analysis).

Research question two follows much of the analytical framework of question one. Purposive sampling was again pertinent, and the basic models of O'Leary and Neale provided guidance on the textual analysis required. This question involved a different body of documents for analysis: operational/field manuals designed for UN actors in conflict or immediate post conflict situations.

A potential limitation with analysing DPO peacekeeping materials is caused by complications stemming from the history of sexual abuse perpetrated against children in conflict environments by peacekeepers. It is possible this enduring issue of abuse is indicative of an institutional culture which may, or may not, result in UN actors being required to spend proportionally large amounts of time and resourcing on sexual violence-focused interventions and mandates.

3.3.7 Codes for analysis

The code tree for research questions one and two was developed after a review of the literature (see above), identifying norms which are alleged to be present in official child protection literature. In accordance with Jacob (2016), alleged norms must be tested for and not simply assumed to exist. The three broad code categories chosen as the 'base' of the code tree, reflecting three categories of ideas found in the literature review, are: 'child soldiers', 'women-and-children' and 'children as girls'.

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is alleged by scholars that child soldiers are focused on overmuch in child protection mandates, to the probable detriment of children of other kinds who are affected by conflict. It is further alleged – and shown in Jacob's analysis of terminology used in relation to women in armed conflict – that 'women-and-children' is used commonly in humanitarian literature to refer to war-affected civilians, even where the connection between the situations of women-and-children is not immediately clear. Furthermore, scholars argue that there is a trend in literature to focus on the interests of girls specifically, to the degree that children are sometimes conceptualised only as girls and the particular concerns of boys, or concerns which affect both girls and boys, are not examined. These norms are therefore alleged to exist in the broader, higher-level child protection infrastructure as a whole; however, the scholarship of norms in IR is still building comprehensive maps of how this actually looks in closer sub-contexts. This is what Carpenter (2016) investigated in the civilian protection context; and what this thesis aims to do in the child protection context. Magnifying the activity of norms at more specific levels will give greater clarity to how they are generated, how they interact, and how they move laterally and vertically through these complex infrastructures, with the aim of not only elucidating these processes for academics, but also helping to provide better programming and interventions in the field for practitioners. It is all well and good to state that general norms are impacting the entire global child protection infrastructure, or even the philosophy and practice of one large INGO; however, to actually make a difference to outcomes at a programming level, more nuance is needed in understanding how norms impact practice in much more specific sub-contexts.

Three broad codes were therefore developed: A ('child soldiers'), B ('women-and-children'), and C ('children as girls'). Based upon the literature review, subcodes were added to include various

issues grouped under each heading which the researcher could expect to find (see Fig. 4). Some subcodes were included under more than one broad code. For example, sexual violence was included under all three broad codes as A.6 ('child soldiers' > 'sexual slavery'), B.5 ('women-and-children' > 'sexual violence'), and C.1 ('children as girls' > 'sexual violence girls focus'). This was done in order to allow the context of each instance of sexual violence to be examined, according to the joined quantitative/qualitative ethos of this research stage. Similarly, the concept of agency came under two further subcodes; A.1.a ('child soldiers' > 'recruitment as problem' > 'agency') and B.3.a ('women-and-children' > 'female-headed households focus' > 'agency'). In this way, the researcher can distinguish discussions of agency that relate to children being recruited, as in voluntary or non-voluntary recruitment, and discussions about the relative agency versus victimhood of children who are the heads of their households.

This reflects the 'code tree' design chosen for the project, as described by Neale (2016). Guest & McLellan (2003) describe this as a "taxonomic tree" (p.188), created conceptually and with the aim of achieving a specific research objective. Although Richards (2005) describe this type of coding schematic as a top-down, theory-driven approach, it is not strictly so, as the smaller subcodes are created inductively as the researcher moves through the data.

A particular instance of text may be encompassed by more than one code. Saldaña refers to this as "simultaneous coding" (2021 p.94) and discusses the uses and limitations of the practise. While it allows one to analyse complex social phenomena appropriately, it may also leave the researcher open to accusations of vagueness and a lack of clear research purpose. In applying the practice to this research, however, there is a clear purpose and rationale: different norms in the UN policy literature often address the same issues from different perspectives, in different workstreams. This is demonstrated both in the literature review and in the researcher's own preliminary reading of the documents for analysis (as per step 8 in O'Leary's model). This is unsurprising given the interwoven nature of UN workstreams, particularly those under the remit of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which involve many actors consulting with each other in evolving conglomerations. For example, a group of NGOs and advisory groups on sexual violence may convene to advise on sexual violence under the CaAC mandate, but then again at a different place and time under a broader development mandate. These are ideal conditions for the downward, upward, and lateral spread of norms and associated phrases. Therefore, like the inclusion of the

same subcodes under different broad codes – which tracks the same norm ending up in different spaces – simultaneous coding can track the presence of different norms where they have ended up in the same spaces.

3.4 Bringing together the methods for each stage

3.4.1 Methods for Stage 1

The question for Stage 1 is a closed question that had to be answered using a primarily quantitative method. The structure of this question reflects the importance, as Carpenter argues, of firmly establishing the existence of norms and their prevalence prior to researching their effects (as opposed to assuming them) (2016 p.14). The first part of question 1 was best answered by conducting a partially quantitative textual analysis of UN literature to examine the frequency of terms and imagery which are alleged to be present as conceptual norms by the literature. Carpenter (2016) used this technique in her analysis of the norms of 'women-and-children' and 'civilians' in humanitarian discourse. In this thesis I developed Carpenter's coding model (discussed above) and applied it specifically to OSRSG-CaAC literature and tested for the following norms as discussed in the literature review, testing its replicability in different contexts:

- a) Children as child soldiers;
- b) Children non-distinct from women; and
- c) Children as girls only.

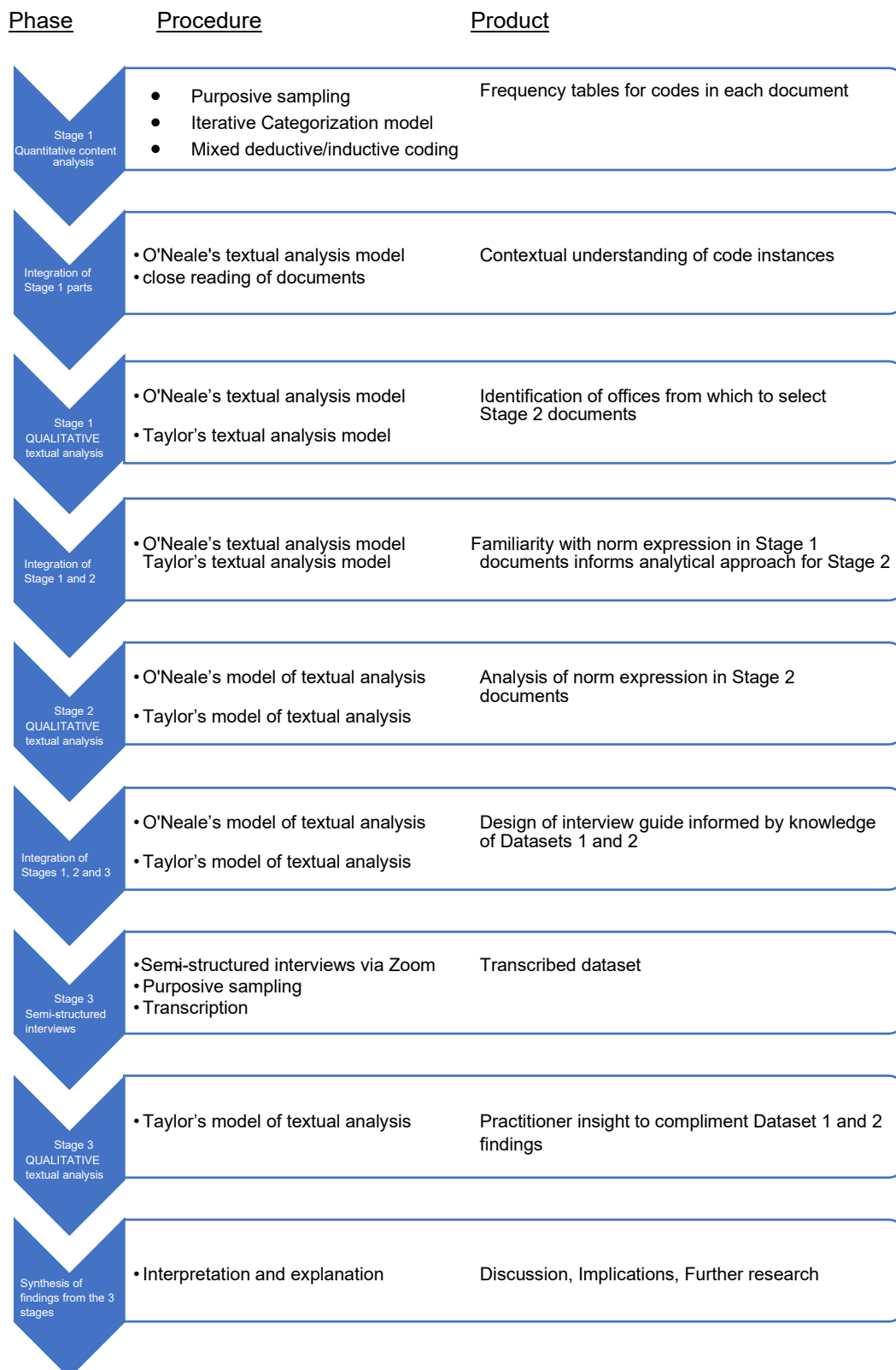
In the first stage of examination, I analysed the results numerically to simply acknowledge and present the frequency of these terms. The refined code tree model proved effective in demonstrating prevalence and ratios of these thematic and sub-thematic phrases, and therefore the associated norms.

Terms of language are the means by which "symbolic technologies" (Laffey & Weldes 1997 p.194) conceptual norms are flagged for readers in academic literature. A conceptual norm may also include a popular image that is usually seen in media or NGO literature. For example, in the case of child soldiers, this will involve an obviously militarised child, often holding a weapon; in the case of 'women-and-children', both will be included in the image, perhaps clinging to one another, sharing an air of victimhood; and in the case of children conceived of as girls only, the image may

include a group of exclusively female children, maybe conducting domestic tasks or similar. It can be argued that terms are included in policy literature much more deliberately than images, because generating those terms is part of the policy process itself whereas the accompanying image might be chosen at a late stage of publication by someone else. My content analysis tested primarily for the three terms above; images as a rule are not included in this set of reports, due to the limitations of scope.

However, this code tree model could be refined more in further research, to possibly include alphabetical and numerical codes for categories of images. The system of organisation by letters and numbers could potentially be expanded significantly to apply to multiple levels of sub-themes in a variety of different contexts, and therefore is highly replicable and adaptable.

Figure 6: Detailed research design



As discussed above, the sampling method for choosing literature was purposive. There is an overwhelming amount of literature produced by various UN bodies and careful selection must be made for reasons of relevance and scope. Literature initially assessed for suitability included: policy documents, reports of meetings and conventions, lectures and speeches, and press releases produced by either the Secretary General, UNHCR, UNICEF, the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and the Special Rapporteur for Children in Armed Conflict which are relevant to situations of armed conflict (rather than specifically related to situations of poverty or natural disasters unless in a conflict or post-conflict zone) and published in since the enactment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990. The 12 resolutions on Children Affected by Armed Conflict were also examined and read carefully as context-setting primary sources, though not included in the datasets because the contributing policy pipeline and influencing actors on Security Council resolutions are much broader and more numerous than annual reports of the OSRSG-CaAC, presenting problems of scope and relevance. After conducting this initial assessment and comparing it to what was learned in the literature review stage, it was decided that annual reports of the OSRSG-CaAC were to be used for stage one (see above). This covers a temporal period of 22 years which allowed for answering of the second part of question 1.

Certain other UN bodies sometimes produce reports commenting on the topic of child protection, such as UNDAW; however, groups without specific child protection mandates as their primary purpose were not included for two reasons:

- 1) the scope of literature would have become too large to canvas in the available timeframe; and
- 2) including these groups may have biased results due to norms imported from other humanitarian discourses – for example WPS. If these norms have influenced groups with child protection mandates conclusively, then it would be more accurate to measure them only within the specific child protection literature.

The results of this analysis have been presented in a frequency chart with accompanying discussion of the results and limitations in Chapter 4. A sample size of 20-25 documents allowed

for a spread across the three decades in which the OSRSG-CaAC has been active, without causing problems of scope.

The second part of the question involved a discourse analysis and cross-referencing literature to chart the lateral spread, or dissemination, of terms or images encountered. This sub-stage took a more qualitative approach. The results have been presented using thematic and taxonomic maps with accompanying discussion in Chapter 4. Microsoft Excel and Word were used to design these. Overall, Question 1 was answered with a quantitative/qualitative split of data collection methods, notable for being the only research stage employing quantitative methods of any sort.

3.4.2 Methods for Stage 2

Answering Question 2 How do these translate into operational priorities? – involved a discourse analysis of operational field manuals designed for child protection field workers in armed conflict or immediate post-conflict situations, such as active battle zones, designated ‘safe zones’ and IDP camps. A qualitative discourse analysis was used here, as opposed to a content analysis designed to find numerical frequencies, because the nature of the research question was explorative. I wished to examine and understand the way norms appear in field manuals in connection with their frequency in policy literature. The temporal period was aligned with that used in Question 1 – the 22 years since the CRC was enacted – to best make connections to the development of norms in the policy literature. However, this is a considerably smaller analysis because field interventions focused on children in conflict were not as prolific in previous decades as they are currently, with the observed rise in intra-state conflict and refugee flows (Berdal 2003 p.483). The most relevant field documents were found to not be as numerous as OSRSG-CaAC annual reports. Finally, these documents were very long, so the size of the document set was necessarily limited to include the most relevant documents.

3.4.3 Methods for Stage 3

The final question asks What perspectives on norms about conflict-affected children can be offered by actors involved in different areas of the workstream – policy and field work?

This question was answered by gathering qualitative data using semi-structured interviews via videoconferencing software ‘Zoom’ with two child protection subcluster staff at the field level, as

well as a high-level policy negotiator at the UN representing a global children's NGO. The sample size was not large; practical disruptions caused by Covid-19 made the recruitment of interviewees extremely challenging; yet, as semi-structured interviews focus not on generalised data, but more on both semantic and thematic analysis of a comparatively smaller number of interviewees, the three interviews conducted still provided useful insight into the other data gathered in this project.

Initially it was intended that 15-20 participants would be sought through a combination of purposive sampling (facilitated by pre-existing professional relationships) and snowball sampling at regional UN offices. However, as indicated previously travel had to be abruptly cancelled in 2020 due to Covid-19. A revised plan was constructed whereby all candidates would be contacted online and interviewed via Zoom; however, recruitment was exceptionally challenging. In the thick of the early Covid-19 pandemic, many emails went unanswered; a consequence of workforces – UN workforces in particular – moving into online meetings seemed to be a sort of video-conferencing fatigue. In the end, after concerted recruitment efforts, it was possible only to recruit three candidates during the timeline available. Fortunately, these candidates shared illuminating and highly relevant perspectives that complemented the project's other data well as illustrative accompaniments.

The purpose of choosing returned field workers where possible was to locate people who are both exposed to operational field manuals (as well as organisational discourse) in which norms may be present, and who are responsible for formulating policy through feedback mechanisms that assesses children who are present in the field. Useful insights were shared on these topics by the two candidates who work for the Romeo Dallaire Foundation in child demobilisation field efforts in South Sudan. The children's NGO representative to the UN, also interviewed, shared important perspectives on the role of normative language in negotiating policy at the highest levels of the CaAC mandate.

The idea behind this process was to be able to examine both the discourse (semantics) used by the interviewee as well as the deeper themes present in their response. Roulston (2014) notes that this method, influenced by Grounded Theory, is popular in the social sciences because it allows the researcher to become aware of themes that may be pertinent to the research question, but which were not conceived of in the planning stage, allowing for further insights. This is an

appropriate method to use in the study of norms (see section above), themselves essentially being conceptual 'themes'.

The overall purpose of analysing the interview data was to examine the role of frame distortion relating to norms around children in armed conflict and see if any existing norms are, or remain, relevant to field workers in protecting the best interests of children. But here it was also important to recognise there were ethical considerations at play.

3.5 Ethics

This research required, and received, a low-risk ethics approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (reference number 4000021929). All research carried out with human participants at Massey University must meet the requirements of the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants (the Code of Conduct), accessible here: <https://www.massey.ac.nz/research/ethics/human-ethics/>.

The Code of Conduct has a set of universal principles, as well as being beholden to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi). The principles of Te Tiriti are especially relevant in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, however they offer notable value to any researcher working with human beings. This project aimed to meet the principles of Manākitanga and Mana in particular, concepts from Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) which have ethical relevance.

Manākitanga is translated in the Code of Conduct as cultural and social responsibility, but is also considered to mean hospitality in a wider social context. It comprises reciprocity, cultural appropriateness, respect and sensitivity to the needs of one's guests or associates – or in this case, interviewees as well as children potentially impacted by the body of research this work contributes to. It was necessary to be mindful of my own potential cultural biases whilst interviewing my Sudanese respondents about their local child protection context. Similarly, at the heart of this thesis is the consideration of what solutions would be overall most appropriate to the particular needs of children, without the assumptions of others projected upon them. Mana, an interrelated concept, means the respect, dignity and authority held by individuals and the obligation to recognise and respect this. In this context, the most significant meaning of Mana is the recognition that those who are experiencing the impact of conflict are the experts on their own

needs, and the hope that research in this sphere will move towards a default consideration of issues of agency.

In terms of the universal principles of ethics identified in the Code of Conduct, Autonomy and the Avoidance of Harm were highly relevant and tie in with the significance of both Manākitanga and Mana. Those who the research will affect should have their agency considered and respected. Also, those who are participating in interviews must provide fully-informed consent and be free from undue pressure or coercion. In this research, I clearly explained the purpose of potential interviews in my initial contact with respondents and offered to send an information sheet about the project (including reference to its Human Ethics approval) – this information sheet is attached at Appendix 2. Interviewees were informed that their names and job titles would not be used; that data would be kept, with appropriate metadata, on a secure computer system until publication of the thesis; and that they were able to conclude the interview at any time.

The principle of Research Adequacy has been met by adequate consultation throughout the completion of this thesis with my thesis supervisors, who are well-qualified in this area of research; frequent meetings and feedback have helped to strengthen the quality of this project. Furthermore, the close manual coding and analysis of my data in this project, as well as the sequential design which required me to move back and forward between research stages and become well-acquainted with my data, functioned as a form of triangulation (Stewart-Withers et al. 2014). These sequential aspects were central to the model-building aim of this thesis, namely, utilising a refined code tree model as part of a sequential explanatory research design, to measure and reveal insights about norms in a particular context.

Overall, this project required only low-risk Human Ethics approval; however, the research principles identified in the Code of Conduct, both universal and based in Te Tiriti, guided the conduct of this project.

3.6 Project limitations

Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge that the project has limitations that cannot be fully ameliorated. The scope is not large, as the resources available did not allow for this; there were no research assistants for the project, and time was limited with the disruption caused by Covid-19.

The set of documents analysed for both stages one and two are relatively small in size (smaller for stage two as these documents were very long). Additionally, the cancellation of travel and subsequent inability to attend UN offices in person significantly complicated the ability to interview staff.

This project was envisaged as involving in-person discussions with subject matter experts during travel. This access would have provided contextual knowledge about operations in UN office and between UN staff, and perhaps insight into in-office policy processes. It would also likely have allowed a snowball approach to finding interviewees. After the travel had to be cancelled due to Covid-19, a plan for online interviewing was created instead. It was possible to create an evidence-informed approach for this method of interviewing, focusing on challenges such as establishing trust and maintaining rapport over video calls. However, an unanticipated challenge was the outright difficulty in connecting with interviewees to recruit. Many email requests for video interviews went unanswered. Talking informally to a New York based interviewee yielded a relevant local perspective: employees at UN headquarters were overwhelmed and fatigued with video conferencing. With Covid-19 causing a large burden of sickness and other disruptions among staff, as well as lockdowns, video conferencing was one of the only methods of meeting for work purposes and enthusiasm for unnecessary meetings was wearing thin. Recent research has explored this notion of 'Zoom fatigue' during the pandemic using such sociological tools as the technostress model (Bullock, Colvin & Jackson 2022).

Furthermore, even though the iterative nature of the sequential explanatory model may counteract the effects somewhat, manual coding processes can be vulnerable to the biases, errors, and memory selectivity of the researcher (Guest & McLellan 2003 p.191). As mentioned above, the communication of results analysis can also be complex and unusual (in terms of the way findings and analysis are usually separated neatly in publications).

There is a risk with content analysis (in this project, counting the frequency of phrases) that frequency may not provide an accurate picture of thematic importance. When using content analysis, the primary aim is to describe the phenomenon in a conceptual form (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The content analyst views data as representations not of physical events but of texts, images, and expressions created to be seen, read, interpreted, and acted on for their meanings,

and must therefore be analyzed with such uses in mind (Krippendorff, 2004). However, it has been claimed that content analysis in nursing research can be applied to various levels of interpretation (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). In contrast, thematic analysis applies minimal description to data sets, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

If in content analysis only the frequency of codes is counted to find significant meanings in the text, there is the danger of missing the context (Morgan, 1993). Therefore, researchers employing content analysis are sometimes accused of removing meaning from its context. The problem is that a word or coding category may occur more frequently in the speech of one person or group of people than another for different reasons. Frequent occurrence could indicate greater importance, but it might simply reflect greater willingness or ability to talk at length about the topic (Loffe & Yardley, 2004; Shields & Twycross, 2008). In this way, using both content and thematic analysis in this project aims to buffer the limitations of content analysis by providing context to the frequency of normative phrases.

3.7 Conclusion

Based in constructivism/critical feminist theory, this thesis seeks to apply a sequential explanatory design which involves 2 main research stages and then progresses to a main analysis stage (bearing in mind that the process is reflexive, and analysis really occurs throughout all stages). This method has been presented in both a simplified and detailed graphic to illustrate the different stages, and supported by literature which communicates the advantages and disadvantages of this design, and its ultimate suitability for this project. Importantly, the model employs a unique code tree model that has been refined and extended from the original utilised by Carpenter (2016), with the aim of testing its use in this different context; and, therefore, identifying a useful model for replication in other specific contexts within the child protection infrastructure. Together, investigations across these contexts can build a comprehensive, closely-analysed map of norm activity.

The bulk of this thesis (two out of three separate research stages) uses a qualitative approach. The first stage of the research is addressed using a mixed quantitative/qualitative approach, simply because this is the most sensible approach for answering the corresponding research question.

The question asks, “Do the norms identified in the literature review exist in the internal policy documents of relevant organisations? Is there an indication of how the frequency changed over time?”. This is a closed question that seeks to confirm the presence or absence of the particular norms identified by scholars as apparent in UN policy documents relevant to child protection in armed conflict. It also seeks to examine the data set (which is drawn from documents spanning a 22-year time period) for evidence of any change in frequency in these norms or a spread across organisations over time.

Overall, aspects of the research design had limitations which were considered and ameliorations added (for example, supporting content analysis with thematic analysis to provide a contextual picture of code frequencies). Major limitations were related primarily to disruption caused by Covid-19, however the research was manageable nonetheless and produced definite results. The code tree was proven to provide useful and nuanced information about the norms in question. The next chapter presents the results of the first research stage, examining annual reports of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, and conducts a general ‘overview’ analysis of these results. The following chapter does the same for the second research stage. Thematic chapters then go on to deepen the analysis according to relevant normative themes.

Chapter 4 Deconstructing phrases in the search for norms – investigating Dataset 1

And as an adult, I cannot say there's a good reason for a child to be engaged in conflict. You know. Why? Because, given the situation now in South Sudan, most of them are regretting, the ex-child soldiers, they're regretting losing their future. They even say, the others...always say, 'I wish I didn't join the army'. You know? And uh, what does that mean? Because that means to me that he or she was forced. He or she maybe joined because of outside influence, but not knowing what is the impact. You know. So, uh, there are too many push and pull factors.

(Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

4.1 Introduction

The chapter will first briefly recap the model of research for this stage and will then discuss the findings in regard to each tested norm. This chapter begins to put the code tree model discussed in Chapter 3 to work. As a reminder as to how this approach proceeds, the presence and frequency of each norms' phrases (women as children, children as girls, child soldiers, and their associated sub-themes represented by phrases) will be presented, along with analysis of contextual information drawn from the documents. This research stage speaks in particular to the utility of the code tree model, showing its use in revealing information about norms in the dataset. This answers Research Question 1, identifying an effective method for charting the presence of norms in this specific child protection context.

For each norm, clues were derived from the documents about connections between the presence of related phrases and other 'sites' of influence in the broader Children and Armed Conflict infrastructure; for example, discussion about the contribution of some NGOs, or reference to particular types of community groups, seemed to cluster alongside instances of norm-related phrases. These 'clues' are outlined for each norm, with the aim of signposting connections that will be further elaborated on in Chapters 5-8. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a summary of the overall results and present some graphics for the purpose of illustration and for clearer rendering of the coding approach at work.

4.2 Research stage recap

This chapter covers results from the first research stage. In this stage, 22 annual reports from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CaAC) were examined using a textual analysis model for evidence of specific norms. Each norm was represented in the analysis by certain coded phrases assigned via a code tree schematic. The analysis revealed that the norms tested for were present throughout the document set, but their frequency varied between norms, and over time. Below are tables representing code frequency results in all reports examined, broken into sets.

Table 1: Code frequency results for OSRSG-CaAC reports from 1998–2004

Code	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
A	2	5	9	4	4	4	2
A.1	18	17	14	10	9	7	6
A.1.a	9	9	4	1		1	
A.2	2	2				1	
A.3							
A.4		1		1	2	1	
A.5	2	1					1
A.6			1		1		
A.7							
B							
B.1	5	7	1				
B.2	8	15	8	3	1	1	3
B.3		1				1	
B.3.a							
B.4	5	1			1		
B.5	5	4	4		3	4	5
B.6	8	16	11	3	10	5	
B.7							
C		1	3		1	1	
C.1	5	5	1	3			1
C.2					1		
C.2.a							
C.3		9	5	4	4	4	1
C.4					1		
C.5							
D							
D.1		17		20		9	16
E							
E.1	9	9	7	14	5	5	9
E.2	4	10	4	1			2
E.3	3	2	2	1		1	

Table 2: Code frequency results for OSRSG-CaAC reports from 2005–2011

Code	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
A	1	4	6	2	2		1
A.1	8	6	36	13	15	8	12
A.1.a		4	1	2	1	1	5
A.2		6					3
A.3							
A.4			9	2	7	5	7
A.5						1	
A.6							
A.7							
B							
B.1		1	1		1	1	1
B.2			2	2			1
B.3							
B.3.a							
B.4		1	1				
B.5	3	3	20	8	12	11	3
B.6	3		6	1	9	7	2
B.7							
C	2	1	4	2		1	2
C.1		4	2	1	2	3	
C.2		1					
C.2.a		1					
C.3	3	7	5	3	4	2	
C.4							
C.5							
D							
D.1	11	12	35	17	22	27	30
E							
E.1	4	8	22	7	5	4	
E.2		3	4	2		2	
E.3		1				1	

Table 3: Code frequency results for OSRSG-CaAC reports from 2012–2020

Code	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
A	7	6	2	12	7	7	6	6	5
A.1	29	32	22	20	24	13	24	11	14
A.1.a	6		1	1					
A.2	3		1						
A.3		2	2	4	5	1	4	2	1
A.4		5	2	6	11	1	4	3	7
A.5	1								
A.6	1			1					
A.7									
B									
B.1			1						1
B.2									
B.3									
B.3.a									
B.4								1	2
B.5	2	7	8	3	4	2	9	9	13
B.6	1	4	2	3	6	4	4	1	2
B.7									
C		1	1	1	1	1		1	
C.1	2		1				1		
C.2									
C.2.a									
C.3			1	4	3	3	8	3	4
C.4									
C.5									
D									
D.1	15	24	21	27	22	17	19	24	30
E									
E.1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	4
E.2				2				1	1
E.3		1			1				

4.3 Defining frequency

In analysing the data, the researcher must decide how best to measure frequency of code occurrences. Within mixed-methods research there is a growing trend of using characteristically quantitative statistical formulae to measure this frequency, in part as a reaction to criticisms that qualitative analysis often does not rigorously describe its methods (Oleinik 2011). However, this presents challenges, especially for the doctoral student; “The [mathematical] assessment of the reliability of qualitative coding requires time and substantial human resources. Budget constraints limit the scope of involving at least one additional coder, let alone several, especially in the case of doctoral research” (p.861). This is especially true when under lockdown as a result of pandemic restrictions, without access to workplace resources.

Keller (2017) further identifies two ways in which the frequency of a code can be assigned significance: “one can assume, that on the one hand a code is relevant the more often it is mentioned within a single information source. On the other hand, a code is important the more information sources contain the respective code” (p.1102); and states that “...the more often a code appears in an information source relative to the other codes the more important the aspect is within this source” (p.1103).

In the vein of Keller, Carpenter (2016), whose work was a strong inspiration for this research design, utilises a straightforward method of coding and measuring frequency. Frequency of codes in their study is not measured through a formulaic statistical analysis, but rather represented using plain numerical values in frequency tables. This is logical for two reasons. Firstly, Carpenter has examined the phrases they have coded for across the wider literature and proved that these particular phrases exist across many different spheres of the humanitarian environment and have been identified by other authors as normative tropes; therefore, their general salience is already known – she is testing for their particular prevalence and importance within one sub-context (p.301). Secondly, the relative frequency of the code occurrence is the most significant factor in her dataset, as opposed to an arbitrary standard of frequency, because she is tracing the centrality of such norms across document sets (as in this study). Carpenter also discusses this in her article, noting that frequency can explicitly demonstrate the importance of some norms over others; if one norm is associated far more frequently with one given concept (represented by a word) than another, it is clear that that concept is connected more strongly to that norm. For example, Carpenter examines the connection of both ‘women’ and ‘men’ as categories to the concept of ‘parents’, and finds that ‘parents’ are far more frequently described as women than men, therefore indicating that a norm exists as to the assumption of which category better fits the idea of ‘parent’. Therefore, a simple method of measuring base frequency was developed for this analysis, centered around number of occurrences of a given phrase relative to the length of the document. The average number of pages per document across the dataset was 20.59. All documents were within the range of 14-24 pages except one outlier of 34. ‘Frequent’ has been defined as 20+ occurrences in a document, which implies roughly one occurrence per page. However, this is discussed in more general terms as part of the document analysis making up research stage 2,

which allows the context of the phrase occurrences to be considered as well as simply the frequency.

This model of measuring frequency could be more robust if there were more available time and resources during the planning stage – i.e. if this were not designed, as was necessary, under pandemic conditions. Access to qualitative analysis software, tutorials and workplace support, and other researchers and funding to support triangulation could increase the rigour; however, measuring the number of times a coded phrase occurs in text is an established method of content analysis (Bazeley 2018 p.146).

In the second part of this research stage, documents were subject to a textual analysis, informed by the model of O’Leary (2014). The documents themselves take the form of an annual report, generally of approximately 30-50 pages in length, with numbered paragraphs in the typical legal/policy style. Each report begins with an introduction, in which some reports will outline the history of the CaAC infrastructure briefly and others will simply outline a significant change in circumstances within the infrastructure, for example if a significant war broke out in the reporting year or new violation against children was added to the ‘listing’ mechanism in the Secretary-General’s annual reporting. The rest of the report is typically divided into sections based on the type of activity undertaken by the OSRSG in that reporting period, including for example country visits, or the initiation of celebrity endorsements or social media campaigns. A section may also focus specifically on a type of violation or conflict circumstance that is considered by the OSRSG to be a particularly significant problem in that reporting period. Each report ends with a concluding paragraph and set of recommendations.

Some overall observations on the results are presented below, followed by an analysis of results by each norm tested for in the dataset. The chapter will then conclude with a discussion of key observations from this data, as well as the limitations of the research stage.

4.4 Overall observations

The three phrases I was testing for were ‘children as child soldiers’, ‘women-and-children’, and ‘children as girls only’. The three broad categories of my codes represented these three phrases.

These normative ideas are all present to differing degrees throughout the report, and changes in frequency over time can be noted.

It is clear, then, that the norms tested for are present in the dataset. In particular, the frequency of references to child soldiers is especially notable throughout the 22-year time period (recruitment specifically). Much emotive language is used to discuss the issue of recruitment; initially this only refers to abductions and violence as the means of recruitment.

Eventually, though, there is a sort of grudging acceptance that sometimes children choose to join armed groups; however, agency is never afforded them. This (the 'choice to join') is asserted to only occur because of coercion, or at best because of local conditions of poverty, pressure to support family, or similar. An enormous proportion of most of the earlier reports is dedicated to discussing recruitment and reintegration. Eventually the reports become self-aware and start to try and justify this over-attention, and advocate for an increased focus on other violations (around the time the MRM appears). However, even when other violations are included, recruitment continues to dominate reports, even up to 2020.

As suspected, too, a large proportion of NGOs referred to in 'civil society' outreach sections across all reports specialise in child soldiers. Given the 'Arria formula' feedback loop with NGOs, this is a likely explanation. Arria formula meetings enable non-members of the Security Council to meet with member state representatives in a 'free and frank' setting at UN headquarters in New York; member states may call such a meeting when they want to receive expert knowledge, reports, or accounts outside of a formal debate setting ([securitycouncil.org](https://www.securitycouncil.org)). The first such meeting was held in 1992. Representatives of NGOs are frequently present at Arria formula meetings relating to conflict, given their role as subject matter experts and publishers of research relied upon by UN agencies. Shepherd (2008) examines the role of Arria formula meetings in the construction of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the relative influence that NGOs played in the inclusion of particular thematic issues.

In terms of the norm of 'children as girls', most content relating to this norm focused on sexual violence. Reports between 1998 and about 2010 focus only on girl victims. In earlier reports this is not identifiable as a 'mainstreaming' effort, but the subjects of sexual violence are always girls or women as an implicit assumption. In reports from about the mid-2000s, girls are specified using

odd phrases which appear to reflect mainstreaming efforts from the WPS (Women, Peace and Security) sphere, which would make sense in terms of timing: “victims of sexual violence, *especially girls*”, for example, but then with no discussion of male victims at all. Male victims finally start to surface in 2013/14. They are initially unspecified and there is no elaboration; moving into 2017/2018 there is discussion of *bacha bazi*;⁵ sexual violence against boys in detention settings; and one particularly interesting comment about the challenges to boys of reporting sexual violence in nations where homosexual acts are punishable by law.

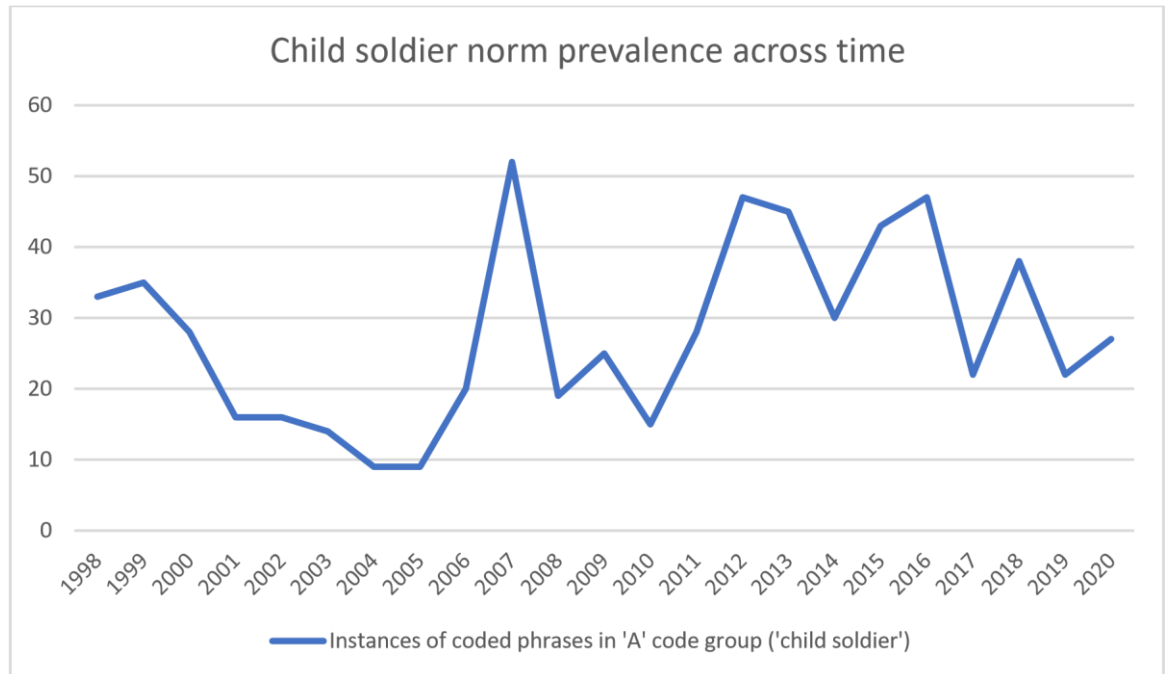
The ‘women-and-children’ norm is also evidenced in the dataset. Codes relating to this norm reduce from 1998 to 2005; then increase significantly until 2010; they drop again from 2010 to 2015, and then finally reappear quite suddenly in the 2020 report. There are points in the dataset, as with the ‘child soldiers’ norm, where the OSRSG demonstrate some reflexivity and awareness of the presence of this norm in previous reports (notably the 2007 report).

However, as with the ‘child soldiers’ norm, this reflexivity does not result in the relevant language disappearing from future reports. This speaks to a more fundamental question posed by this study: what kinds of norm movements are occurring between this office’s policy stream and other actors, including NGOs and UN workgroups? Is there some sort of feedback mechanism whereby norms return to the OSRSG’s lexicon where they have previously been avoided? Each section below on the three different norms identifies some possible avenues of norm movement and influence.

⁵ A practice that is frequently raised as problematic in OSRSG-CaAC reports where sexual violence against boys is mentioned. In rural and semi-rural areas of Afghanistan, wealthy male elites may buy boys from poorer families for the purpose of sexual entertainment. See Borile (2019).

4.5 The child soldier norm

Figure 7: Child soldier norm prevalence in OSRSG-CaAC reports by publication year



It was clear in conducting the textual analysis that the norm of the 'child soldier' was present in the report set. Specifically, here I am referring to the characterisation of war-affected children as primarily child soldiers. Child soldiers were far more visible throughout the report set than civilian children according to the amount of space within each report afforded to these categories of children. Interestingly, in the 2007 report, it is acknowledged that there is an over-focus on recruitment as a violation in conflict; however, paragraph 8 of the 2008 report devotes its attention entirely to the issue of recruitment while all other violations are discussed together in a different paragraph (United Nations 2007, 2008).

There are two more narrow norms in the category of the 'child soldier' norm that were also evidenced by subcodes. The first is the overwhelming focus on the issue of recruitment and the complete denial of agency to recruited children; and the second is the obvious gender split whereby boy children are characterised as soldiers, and girls as victims of sexual violence.

The frequency of references to recruitment more generally is very high throughout the 22-year period. Much emotive language is used to discuss the issue of recruitment and initially this only refers to abductions and violence as the means of recruitment, with agency completely denied:

Children simply have no role in warfare. (United Nations 1998 para. 18)

Reports after the year 2000 increasingly acknowledge that some children may *perceive* that they have agency in becoming involved with armed groups:

...in many devastated impoverished, highly polarised or ideologically charged environments, children are lured into joining in hostilities for reasons other than forced recruitment. (United Nations 2001 para. 79)

It is perhaps difficult to argue that a starving child engaging with armed groups to achieve food security, for example, is truly agentic. However, it is maintained that even when a child has an ideological motivation for engaging in conflict, this is imposed on them by coercive actors. Any political or personal motivation must be purely extrinsic, a product of 'polarised' or 'ideologically charged' environments. To illustrate this, a child protection field worker based in South Sudan noted in their interview that there is "no really good reason [for children to engage in conflict], because...this child is being brainwashed" (interview with child protection field worker, 29 June 2021).

The logical extension of this argument is that children are expected to be purely non-political. After all, it is usually considered justified for adults to enter conflict on the basis of grave political concerns; such opposing perspectives between two warring parties would probably be described as polarised. Here we can see one dimension of Tabak's 'world child' – although expected to be a site of future political cohesion and stability, the child must not engage in politics.

Starting from the year 2000, the "era of application" is announced (United Nations 2000, para. 29). This is described as an agenda of normative spread; an effort to disseminate norms about conflict-affected children with the aim of raising awareness with the general public, as well as mainstreaming the subject throughout the UN mandate. It is not surprising, then, that such norms have been bouncing around in the wider child protection workstream. This office is intended to be the authority on everything in the sphere of conflict-affected children; at once (supposedly)

informed by field work, and also directing its priorities, in a reciprocal policy relationship. Media outreach is discussed at length in this report.

Moving into 2006, the language of norm spread is more formalised, still with reference to the broad “era of application”, but also referring to “destinations for action” (United Nations 2006 para. 43) in the context of mainstreaming said norms in other UN workstreams (here, the Human Rights Council). Reports from hereon refer to partnerships with various celebrities such as Priyanka Chopra and Jackie Chan, with the goal of raising awareness of the supposed universal plight of the non-political child soldier. It is clear that the era of application is synonymous with the popularisation of a certain conception of the conflict-affected child, and particularly the child soldier.

Overall, a trend in the discussion of recruitment – and agency in the process – is evident. The incidences of associated symbolic technologies (phrases) are very high in the earliest reports, but steadily drop to a low point in 2005. They flatline until 2010, at which point the frequency increases quite rapidly until its highest point in the 2015 report. It then drops off almost as rapidly, reaching a mid-point in the 2020 report. Interestingly, 2005 was the year of the landmark Resolution 1612, establishing the MRM for grave violations against children in armed conflict. In this sense, the trend reflects a growing conceptualisation prior to 2005 of a six-part characterisation of the experience of the conflict-affected child. The relative absence of the norm between 2005-2010 may reflect its new role as part of this wider characterisation. Interestingly, even though the prominence of recruitment as the salient problem is reduced by this change in the OSRSG-CaAC reports, it was still apparently considered the most significant violation; until Resolution 1882 in 2009, it was the only violation that could result in an armed group of state party being listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict.

The rapid increase in discussion around recruitment and agency after 2010 can partially be attributed to the growing inclusion of the Syrian civil war; aside from issues of recruitment, the use of children for terrorist activities such as suicide bombing begins to enter the report set. In the 2012 report, some further theorising on children’s agency is apparent:

“[The SRSG] argued therein [in front of the ICC] that there was in fact no distinction between voluntary enlistment and forced recruitment, pointing out that children were not always recruited through abduction or the brute use of force” (United Nations 2012 para. 9);

“...children could not give “informed” consent because they possessed limited understanding of the short-term and long-term consequences of their choices and actions and did not control or fully comprehend the structures and forces with which they were faced” (United Nations 2012 para. 11).

This discourse presents an absolute binary answer to the question of whether or not recruited children have agency. In this document set, norms clearly prescribe agency to people over 18 years only. By virtue of the ‘Straight 18’ position, any person below 18 years of age is not capable of political agency in conflict; does not fully comprehend the political context. Yet, reflecting on Lee-Koo’s (2011) discussion of the Australian Defence Force’s ‘Gap Year Challenge’ campaign, it is clear that children of the Global North are disaggregated to a degree that children who are the subject of OSRSG-CaAC reports are not. Children of the Global North enjoy a third category of being; there is a period somewhere in the couple of years preceding their 18th birthday in which they are judged to have at least some degree of agency. It may not be agency enough to enter combat, but it is agency enough to consent to being militarised. The analysis of this report set establishes that the norm identified by Lee-Koo, among others, exists and fluctuates in the highest level of policy representation of the CaAC mandate.

The reason for the climax of frequency at 2015, and subsequent decline, can also be speculated on. 2015 was the year that Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security was passed. According to the official website of this mandate, powered by UNDP and the United Nations Inter Agency Network on Youth Development, this new normative agenda seeks to upend commonly held misconceptions about young people in conflict:

In countries affected by conflict and violence, young people are commonly perceived as either perpetrators or victims...In reality, the role of young people in relation to peace and security is poorly understood and much more complex than these stereotypes suggest (UNDP & United Nations Inter Agency Network on Youth Development, n.d.)

These stereotypes appear to be very much in line with the norms discussed throughout this chapter as conceptualisations of conflict-affected children. However, Resolution 2250 is clear that it defines a ‘young person’ as aged between 18-29 years. This is not analogous with the meaning of ‘youth’ as defined by other UN organisations (also acknowledged in the Resolution), which apply

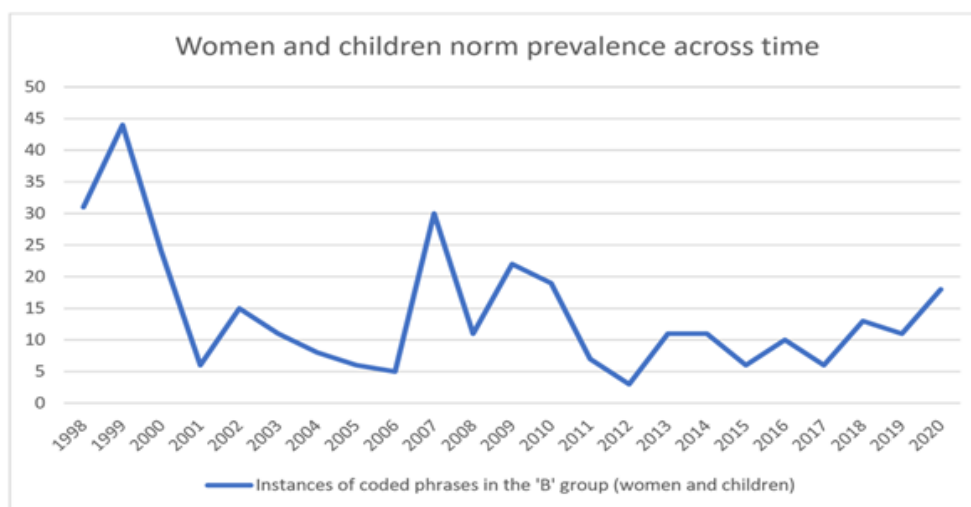
the term to people aged 15-24 – thus constructing the ‘third category’ that, in discussions of conflict, is reserved solely for children of the Global North. Nonetheless, the inception of such an agenda makes redundant a norm of lesser agency for young people *over* 18 in the wider UN protection mandate. It is possible that this new norm transferred into the OSRSG-CaAC report set as a result of lateral movement from another office, as well as collaborative work between different ‘Special Representatives’. This may have resulted in less willingness to characterise the agency of children, a ‘vulnerable group’ as youth once were in UN parlance, in such reductive terms. The question of whether this comprised a level of self-awareness or was an intentional discursive decision to reduce scrutiny of the norm of the non-agentic child, would require further research to answer.

After recruitment, the second, more specific norm within the broader category of the ‘child soldier’ that was evident in the dataset was the gender split between boys as soldiers, and girls as victims of sexual violence. Girls do begin to enter the discussion of child soldiers eventually, but they are not referred to as soldiers; rather, there is a focus on sexual slavery (and occasionally, domestic work for soldiers like cooking or portering). Despite this binary presentation in the report set, it is well-known that a decent number of child soldiers are girls and they do engage in combat (Stevens 2014).

Interviews with child protection field practitioners further revealed that girls associated with armed forces were encountered as “wives of commanders”, “with child” and “breastfeeding”; the existence of girl soldiers in Sudan was remarked on by one interviewee, who stated “you cannot have access to them”. This particular interviewee was aware through local knowledge of the presence of girls in armed forces, but found or considered them nearly impossible to demobilise due to their often dual function of combatant and domestic servant, hidden behind barrack walls.

4.6 ‘Women-and-children norm’

Figure 8: The ‘women-and-children norm’ in OSRSG-CaAC reports by publication year



The ‘women-and-children’ norm was found to be present in the dataset, with waning frequency over time. The exception to this was in the 2020 report, in which coded phrases for this norm suddenly returned and were numerous.

References to women-and-children together were split into several different subcodes. ‘Women and children (no context)’ was applied to references to women-and-children that used generalised language without any context or reason given, for example: “Children, women and the elderly have all become fair game in the single-minded struggle for power” (United Nations, 1998 para. 28); or “In Afghanistan, children and women suffer doubly...” (para. 46). These emotive and generalised phrases were frequent in early reports – the relevant code appeared 8 times in the 1998 and 2000 reports, and 15 times in the 1999 report. The 1999 report also included reference at para. 182 of the SRSG’s new awareness campaign title: “Go Women, Go Children, Go Local”. Such references were usually included in introduction sections where the overall language used to describe the mandate was typically more generalised and highly emotive. Instances reduced through the mid-2000s and were very infrequent by 2009/2010.

Another subcode under this norm category was called ‘women-and-children – civilian casualties contemporary warfare’. This code refers to discussion of civilian casualties as women-and-children

only, or assertions that women-and-children are worst-affected by conflict, as a rule. Examples include “[The SRSG] works with [agencies and bodies] to unblock difficult political situations and to seek access to civilian populations in distress, the worst affected of whom are always women-and-children” (United Nations 1998 para. 15); and this reference to the Rome Statute: “The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted July 1998, classifies war crimes against children and women” (United Nations 2000 para. 113).

The final subcode for this norm category was called ‘women-and-children > sexual violence’. This code refers to discussion of sexual violence as an issue space in which women-and-children have homogenous needs. Sexual violence was also included as a subcode under the final norm tested for (Children as girls), but this will be discussed separately below. Instances of this particular subcode often referred to joint activity between the SRSG and Special Representatives for other mandates:

It has been agreed that the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict will take the lead on all matters related to sexual violence, including on obtaining commitments from parties to conflict where appropriate, and in close consultation with the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict for matters relating to children. (United Nations 2011 para. 73)

The 2007 report includes some reflexivity in regard to this norm; one of the recommendations is that “all stakeholders must give particular attention to the specific needs of child survivors [of gender-based violence], as distinct from those of women” (Rec 8, para. 110 (b)). However, as can be seen in the graph at the top of this section, the wider norm of ‘women-and-children’ as a homogenous group continued to increase in frequency after this report until 2010 (and then again after 2015).

4.6.1 ‘Signposts’ of norm influence

Throughout the report set, there were certain identifiable ‘sites’ of influence that appeared in connection with the presence of codes for this norm. These results cannot definitively show that each site of potential influence was responsible for the presence of the norm in the OSRSG-CaAC workstream. However, they can offer clues as to where further research may be conducted to

better illustrate these norm flows into and out of the workstream. These sites are discussed further in following chapters but are outlined here in relation to the results of research stage 1.

It was surprising to find that, even in light of some self-awareness regarding the use of this norm in some reports of the mid-2000s, the women-and-children norm returns abruptly to the dataset in the 2020 report, with discussion of sexual violence in particular being situated within this normative space.

Firstly, the possible role of NGOs in recycling particular norms should be noted. In an effort to expand advocacy and awareness-raising across the lifetime of the Office of the Special Representative, relationships with specific NGOs have cycled to such a degree that the civil society groups with which the Office collaborates have essentially completely refreshed themselves. It appears from some of the mandates and names of NGOs listed in the reports that this norm is coming partially from the civil society sphere. There is increasing reference to the importance of collaboration with “women’s groups” as time goes on; some of these are local groups formed in collaboration with churches; some simply express a “women-and-children” mandate or are named in such a way. There is also increasing collaboration with religious groups, including the Holy See⁶. The ‘women-and-children’ idea is strongly represented in Christian charity traditions – as well as in the history of UN working groups (e.g. origins of UNICEF).

The second site to consider is the collaboration occurring with other Special Representatives in the later reports, including the Special Representative for Violence against Children and the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict. Many cross-mandate fora, working groups and campaigns are referred to. It is apparent that even if the mandates of women-and-children have been separated and provided their own resources, there is still an assumption that all of these posts are working in essentially the same issue space. There is also increasing discussion of sexual violence through a Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) lens, referring specifically to Goal 5: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.).

This is another potential source of feedback. The language used here is characteristic of WPS policy and may reflect the transfer of norms from that agenda through to the SDGs, as inclusion of

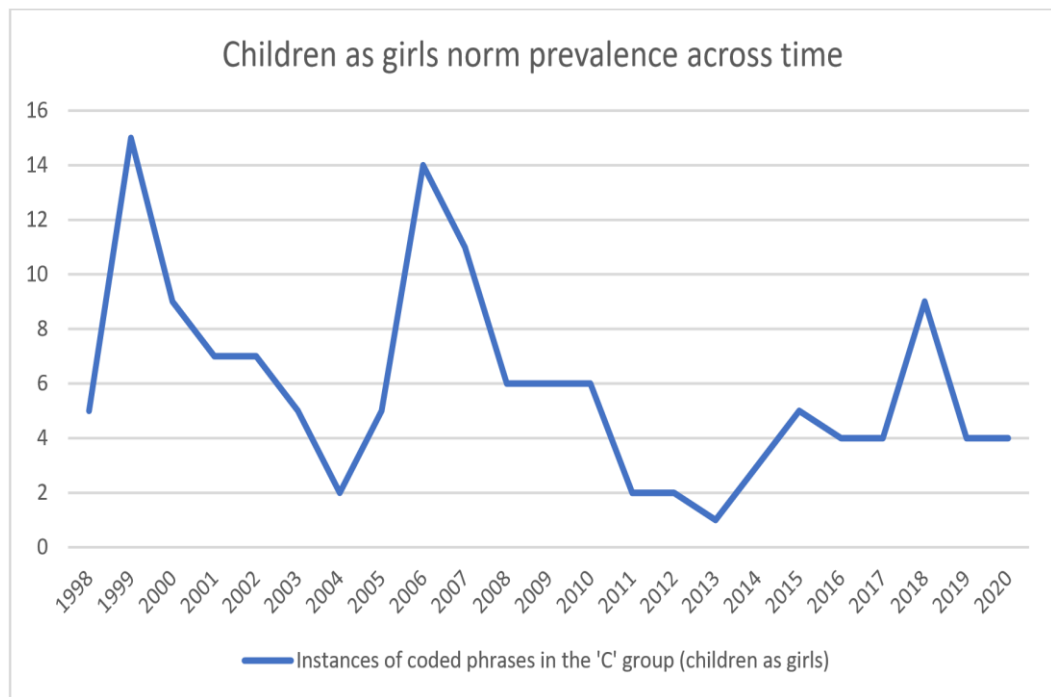
⁶ Central governing body of the Roman Catholic Church.

Goal 5 was advocated for by offices within the WPS workstream (Yoshida 2019). Certain Special Representatives of other workstreams are identified in the reports as having collaborated with the OSRSG, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict. This Special Representative was established through Resolution 1888 – on the subject of WPS. O’Gorman (2019) views this Special Representative as a significant direct institutionalisation of WPS concerns in armed conflict. The relationship between WPS and the CaAC infrastructure is therefore probably multifaceted, as these agenda come into contact with one another through various fora; whether WPS resolutions specifically, or alignment of CaAC with SDGs, for example. This relationship, and its significance for norm transfer, is discussed further on in the thesis.

Finally, this also appears to suggest that consultation with academia, which is emphasised in later reports as an essential focus of the mandate, is not occurring thoroughly. If it were, surely we would not see ‘women-and-children’ returning as a central normative theme in the 2020 report. Leading academics in the field such as Lee-Koo, who have critiqued this idea, have even worked for UNICEF Innocenti, a UN research organisation dedicated specifically to war-affected children. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, scholars such as Berents (2016) & Carpenter (2016), have been critical of the presence of this norm elsewhere in the CaAC infrastructure as well as in general humanitarian policy discourse.

4.7 Children as girls

Figure 9: Children as girls norm prevalence in OSRSG-CaAC reports by publication year



The final norm tested for in the dataset was the conception of children as girls only. This norm was anticipated to show up in specific discursive contexts, for example in relation to sexual violence; it certainly did so, however it was surprising to find that some more general discussion of conflict-affected children included phrases referring to the exceptionality or overt prioritisation of girl children in the CaAC infrastructure. An example of such language is the phrase ‘especially girls’, as used here: “...children, and *especially girls*, have been made the targets of sexual abuse and gender-based violence on a large scale” [emphasis added] (United Nations 1998 para. 7). While it is true that the specific needs of girls regarding sexual violence victimisation must be considered, the phrase itself is used across a variety of contexts and not limited to discussion of sexual violence; the 1999 report refers the OSRSG’s role as “protecting the rights of children and youth, especially the girl child” (para. 75(C)).

While this norm does reduce throughout the dataset, *it does not follow the pattern of the two norms previously discussed*, that is, it does not appear to be reintroduced significantly to the reports over time. Several later documents do still contain generalised references to the prioritisation of girls. However, the bulk of the incidences of this norm throughout the dataset are in relation to sexual violence, considering girls as inherent victims or the only victims; and this tendency decreases with time. In the 1998 report, paragraph 51 states: “The categories of children identified as having

special protection needs include ex-combatant youth, refugee and internally displaced children, sexually abused girls and unaccompanied street children”. Paragraph 133 of the same report says: “...one such priority area [for research] is sexual abuse and violence, particularly against girls and young women”. This second example provides an illustration of how such phrases could have an impact on field activity; while it is useful to be mindful of the fact that girls may be more likely to experience sexual violence in a given setting, setting a research agenda that seeks to find sexual violence victims/survivors among girls but not boys may cause significant information bias.

Later reports begin to include generalised comments on the potential for conflict-related sexual violence to affect boys, with the first mention being in 2009; but maintain that this is an essentially difficult phenomenon to measure:

Girls remain the main victims of sexual violence in armed conflict. However, there are increasing reports of sexual abuse committed against boys. This phenomenon is still not adequately understood, and is yet to be comprehensively addressed in advocacy, monitoring, reporting and response. Knowledge about sexual violence against boys continues to be thin, in part because boys are more reluctant to speak out against sexual violence and there is inherently a bias against questioning boys about such abuse. (United Nations 2010 para. 21)

The presence of discursive norms in the dataset that, up until (and even beyond) this point, ignore boys’ experience of sexual violence in conflict supports the idea that there is an inherent bias against considering boys as victims/survivors of sexual abuse. However, as with other norms measured in this dataset, this does not necessarily translate to a more critical use of the same essentialising language in future reports.

In 2009, specific sexual violence concerns vis-à-vis boys begin to be discussed, with later reports including the practice of *bacha bazi*. Detention is described as a risk factor for sexual violence against boys, beginning from 2009. In 2015, more generalised conflict vulnerabilities relating to boys, in particular trafficking and abduction, begin to be included, with discussion of the abduction of 150 boys by ISIL on their way home from school exams in Aleppo (para. 5).

Aside from sexual violence, children affected by conflict may be conceived of as girls in an attempt to ‘make visible’ girl children where mandates for child protection and gender mainstreaming cross

over. Paragraph 47 of the 2002 report refers to “a photo exhibition on the impact of armed conflict on girls, held in collaboration with UNICEF, the Government of Canada, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and non-governmental organisations...”. The intersection of actors involved in collaborating on this agenda promoting activity is an illustration of the different mandates that could be acting as sites of norm influence on the CaAC mandate. Although this took place before the formalisation of WPS as a UN workstream, this event blurred workstream boundaries between the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, NGOs and UNICEF/the OSRSG, which allowed for the confluence of norms and may have been an early site of norm and discourse transfer between mandates.

4.8 Conclusion

The results of the first research stage demonstrated some interesting and notable trends in norm prevalence over time. The ‘women-and-children’ norm group appeared to decline over time and was subject to self-aware criticism within the policy stream itself. However, it reappeared with greater frequency in the 2020 report. The reappearance of this norm is further examined and critiqued in the following chapter, but additional research would be needed to determine why this occurred. The ‘children as girls’ norm group also reduced in frequency over time and was less populous across the dataset than the other two norm groups.

The ‘child soldier’ norm group appeared to fluctuate in frequency over time, with several spikes. Some significant events relevant to the CaAC workstream may have impacted this pattern; further research and close reading of policy pathways into the OSRSG-CaAC from the time of these events may provide more insight in this area.

As well as frequency (both numerical and relative) of each norm group, context of code occurrences within the reports was examined using a content analysis, which helped to give a greater idea of the parameters of normative phrases and potential sites of influence outside of the OSRSG-CaAC.

The process of analysis of this dataset formed part of the sequential explanatory design model by generating further, inductive prepositions about the character of the norms measured; during the

examination of some reports, the initial code tree schematic was added to, and code categories altered slightly. This provides both useful perspective and a measure of self-triangulation. The learnings from this research stage were taken forward into research stage two, discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5 Investigating Dataset 2: operationalising norms

Sometimes...some of these [training] materials are being delivered from outside. And then now they are being given to you to deliver. Some of them you have not contributed...like, the universal human rights and all those other things...there [is] quite different training regarding children associated with armed forces and groups... you are given the resources and you have to deliver. And sometimes it's quite challenging because those who created the context...they are not in your country, and they're based somewhere, probably in the US, in Canada...so they may not really reflect your context. Because the context is quite different. But you are compelled to do that, exactly. And some situations may not actually reflect, actually what you're doing, you know. And that can be so challenging in training. (Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter communicates the findings with respect to norm presence in the second dataset – field programmes and guides for child protection – corresponding to Research Stage 2. The question guiding this stage of research was: How do these [norms identified in stage 1 dataset] translate into operational priorities?

This question was answered by a dual process of content and thematic analysis; first, determination of the frequency of coded phrases using the same code tree schematic as was applied to the first dataset; and then a closer iterative examination of the documents. This mirrors the process for Research Stage 1, communicated in the previous chapter.

The main purpose of this research stage, was to apply the developed code tree model to another context/set of documents, and therefore further test its replicability and efficacy while revealing insights about the norms tested for. In the first research stage, the code tree model was applied to policy produced by a UN office, written in essentially the same style as the OCHA documents examined by Carpenter (2016). This second stage, took the further refined code tree based on

Carpenter's model, and applied it to a different policy context in which the language utilised is different – field guidance. It found the code tree model to be useful in measuring and revealing norm presence and associated themes in this context, supporting its replicability for different types of document sets and policy contexts. Together, these two contextual applications of the code tree demonstrate its use for further work that aims to reconcile the role of norms in policy that impacts both higher level UN office/NGO work, and field level operations. The documents chosen for this dataset span from 2011 to 2020. This timeframe was chosen for two reasons; it was much more difficult to access field guides and collaborative inter-departmental programming guides from much earlier, because the humanitarian infrastructure (as regards peace operations in particular) was not so well-developed publications intended for field use were much more difficult to find from this period. It appears that formalised programmatic guides produced by actors from the child protection sub-clusters⁷ were produced far less frequently prior to 2011, which may simply reflect the fact that inter-agency policy coordination has improved with greater exposure to intra-state conflict situations over time. Secondly, this timeframe gives an idea of norm presence and movement in recent and current years, since the research question relevant to this stage is asking how these norms present *now*; whereas the previous research stage examined a document set over time to try and identify clues about norm origins in the wider CaAC infrastructure. Given limitations of scope with this project, and the length and complexity of these documents, it would also have been challenging to include further documents.

The documents are all relevant to programming and field responses for conflict-affected children. There were three general categories of documents: field guidance, programming guides, and departmental policy. Authors of these documents were UNHCR, UNICEF or DPO, or a combination of these offices, plus others (with NGO input), in the form of an interagency working group.

Some other factors of note were apparent in this dataset, some mirroring those discovered in Dataset 1 (see previous chapter); specifically, the role of NGOs in normative agendas was

⁷ A subcluster refers to the group of NGOs, UN agencies and other actors in a local conflict context who have responsibility for a particular humanitarian workstream. This is UN terminology, used in particular by DPO and UNICEF. The subcluster will generally be formed by consensus and supported with resources by a designated lead agency – in the case of child protection, this is almost always UNICEF, though UNHCR can lead in refugee situations (see <https://emergency.unhcr.org/coordination-and-communication/cluster-system/protectioncluster>).

illustrated very clearly in this dataset, providing good grounds from which to analyse their role in the lateral transfer of norms into, within, and out of the CaAC infrastructure. This will be addressed briefly at the end of this chapter, however the issue will be examined thoroughly in Chapter 8.

Another related issue is the influence of various UN bodies and offices which seem to be primarily responsible for WPS-linked mandates in the CaAC infrastructure. Various Special Representatives of women-specific conflict issues are referred to in the dataset and their role in relation to the child protection infrastructure explained. It is apparent that there are clear pathways for normative transfer between these offices and those which are specific to children affected by armed conflict. This issue will also be addressed briefly in relation to the Dataset 2 results at the end of this chapter and will be explored more fully in Chapter 6. Overall, the ‘women-and-children’ norm was by far the most salient of the norms measured in this dataset. The other norms seemed to fit into this one; discussions of children in general, and child soldiers, were rarely separated from the topic of gender and frequently expressed relative to gender. In accordance with the sequential explanatory research design, this chapter re-engages with the literature to a degree, to help contextualise and make sense of the results in a thematic way. Frequency results of coded phrases are first introduced, with a graphic. Then the results of the thematic analysis of the documents are presented according to the key theme: ‘Women-and-children’ in the wider dataset. Several sub-themes are identified and expanded upon to illustrate the ways in which other norms connect with the ‘women-and-children’ norm in this dataset: the differences between policy documents/programmatic guides and field guidance; documents focused on the conflict sensitivity context; peacebuilding and peacekeeping; The application of the norm in BID/Unaccompanied and Separated Children contexts; and mediation and monitoring and reporting.

5.2 Frequency results

Included here are the coding tables for Dataset 2. Refer to Figure 4 for the code tree that explains the meaning of each code. Below the frequency table is another table with a key explaining which document is which, with details of author(s), year of publication and type of document.

Table 4: Frequency tables for dataset 2

Code	Doc 1	Doc 2	Doc 3	Doc 4	Doc 5	Doc 6	Doc 7	Doc 8	Doc 9	Doc 10	Doc 11	Doc 12
A	1	3	2	9	1	5	23	21	17	4	9	12

A.1	3	5	3	11	2	3	19	19	22	2	4	11
A.1.a				2			3		1			
A.2												
A.3												
A.4	4			5		2	9	4	5	2		2
A.5		1										
A.6												
A.7												
B												
B.1										1		
B.2			1			1			2	28		2
B.3												
B.3.a												
B.4	1				1			1				
B.5	21	10	5	9	3	17	18	9	6	36	45	30
B.6	8	7		1	1	8	1		1	6	20	2
B.7												
C			1	3				1				
C.1		1					7	2	1			
C.2		1										
C.2.a												
C.3	5	7		19		6	8	1	1	1	63	14
C.4												
C.5												
D												
D.1	3	2	17		3	27	8	7	20	8	3	7
E												
E.1	11	14	2	10	11			3	1			
E.2		3		5	1	4	4				1	
E.3					1		1		2	1	1	

Table 5: Documents included in dataset 2 by order of date of publication

Title	Year	Authors	Document Type
A systems approach to protection of children of concern to UNHCR: A framework for protection programming for children (Doc 1)	2011a	UNHCR	Programming guide
Field handbook for the implementation of UNHCR BID guidelines (Doc 2)	2011b	UNHCR	Field guidance
Guidelines: Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict (Doc 3)	2014	OSRSG-CaAC, UNICEF and DPO	Field guidance
Field handbook on unaccompanied and separated children (Doc 4)	2016	Interagency working group on unaccompanied and separated children (IAWG-UASC)	Field guidance
Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding (Doc 5)	2016	UNICEF	Programming guide
Toolkit on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (Doc 12)	2017	Interagency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (IAWG-UASC)	Field guidance
Best Interests of the Child: A Guide for Policy and Practice (Doc 6)	2018	UNHCR	Field guidance

Specialised training materials on child protection for United Nations peacekeepers (Doc 7)	2018	DPO	Field guidance
Manual for child protection staff in United Nations peace operations (Doc 8)	2019	DPO, DPPA	Field guidance
Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict (Doc 9)	2020	OSRSG-CaAC	Field guidance
Core Commitments for Children in humanitarian action (Doc 10)	2020a	UNICEF	Departmental policy
What works to protect children on the move (Doc 11)	2020b	UNICEF	'Rapid Evidence Assessment'/programming guide

An overall observation of the results for Stage 2 is that the presence of coded phrases for the 'women-and-children' norm was very significant – particularly in discussions of sexual violence. Reference to women-and-children as a homogenous group in terms of surviving sexual violence was more common in programmatic guides and policy documents than it was in field manuals. While less dominant, the 'children as girls' norm was also notable. Much of this discussion was related to gender mainstreaming and discussions of girl victims of sexual violence, so this was connected to the 'women-and-children' norm, sharing normative space within the documents. The frequency of the 'child soldier' norm varied considerably by author, with some documents produced by groups for whom this area is more of a mandate than others. Of the three tested norms, this one was the least frequent throughout Dataset 2. However, the related discussion of the agency of children in conflict came through as a normative theme which is discussed further below. Certain documents also function as outliers in this space due to a heavy thematic focus on Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups (CAAFAG) in the field context.

It is interesting to note that the document with the most instances of the 'B' code group (representing the 'women-and-children' norm) was authored by UNICEF in 2020; *What Works to Protect Children on the Move*. It was predicted that documents authored by UNICEF would be likely to contain the highest prevalence of phrases associated with this norm. There is further discussion on this point in Chapters 2 and 8; essentially, the intellectual heritage of the organisation is difficult to separate from the concept of women-and-children as inhabiting the same issue space in conflict (and development more generally). However, it is also illustrative to note

that the frequency of this norm in a document published in 2020 aligns with the relevant findings of dataset 1, that is, that the 'women-and-children' norm enjoyed renewed prevalence in the OSRSG-CaAC's report of 2020 after having been deliberately interrogated for several of the preceding years.

The document with the second most instances of the code group 'B' was also published by UNICEF in 2020; the *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action*. As the author and publication year are both the same, conclusions cannot be drawn as to the significance of the year 2020 in this case; but the only other document in the dataset to be published in 2020, the OSRSG-CaAC's *Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict*, has comparatively far fewer instances. Considering this is the same office that produced the reports analysed in dataset 1, this might be considered surprising; however, this particular document is unique in that it inhabits a programmatic space where the focus must necessarily be on CAAFAG (and the frequency of the 'A' [child soldier] code group reflects this). Overall, it cannot be concluded from this dataset that the year 2020 reflects the same prevalence of the 'women-and-children' norm as it does in the first dataset; it seems more likely that the norm is here associated with some agencies more than others.

The 'C' code group was generally of low frequency, besides an extreme outlier in UNICEF's *What Works to Protect Children on the Move* (unsurprising due to the particular subject matter).

However, although this norm group was not a central focus across documents, the relatively few instances of discussion of this norm were entwined with the idea of agency in very illustrative ways. In particular, the discussion of child-headed households in the UASC (Unaccompanied and Separated Children) and BID (Best Interests Determination) spaces grappled with this; this was examined during the thematic analysis of the documents and is discussed further below.

General norm frequencies were therefore fairly illustrative in this dataset, and allowed for direction in thematic analysis of the content (following the Iterative Categorisation model, the researcher needs an initial, deductive, level of familiarity with the texts which will then be supplemented by the iterative thematic analysis process).

5.3 Thematic analysis results from Dataset 2

This stage involved an analysis of the same themes as in the first stage, using the same code tree schematic to test for the same three norms; children as soldiers, 'women-and-children', and children as girls only. The relative frequency of coded phrases within and between texts was examined and the texts were further read closely to examine the context of code incidences.

The textual analysis was carried out according to the adapted version of O'Leary's model described in Chapter 3. This involves organising and categorising the set of documents according to author, tone, purpose and biases; then using an iterative process of thematic exploration to become familiar with the content of each document and take notes. Once this is done, the researcher can then begin coding the notes by means of a coding model (in this project Neale's Iterative Categorisation model is utilised).

5.4 'Women-and-children' in the wider dataset

This dataset contained numerous references to the 'women-and-children' norm, in relation to various areas of child protection practice. This norm has emerged somewhat as the most central of the three tested norms in the CaAC workstream. Many of the same themes that the norm interacts with in this dataset were present in the first dataset – including sexual and gender-based violence, consultation with women and children as a supposedly homogenous group in conflict and peacebuilding contexts, et cetera – and thereby elucidate an important set of trends. These themes also intersect with the other norms in relevant ways; for example, the issue of agency and consent is relevant to the child soldier norm as well as the 'women-and-children' norm, as discussed in further chapters. For this reason, this chapter focuses on the results of the second stage of research in relation to the 'women-and-children' norm primarily, with reference where appropriate to the other norms.

5.4.1 Policy documents/programmatic guides vs field guidance

As introduced above, the 'women-and-children' norm was the most prevalent of the three measured norms in the second dataset. Incidences of this norm were noticeably more frequent in

policy documents and programmatic guides than field manuals. Each document was carefully examined using textual analysis for incidences of this norm.

The results of this the wider thesis research demonstrate plentiful examples of phrases indicating the presence of the 'women-and-children' norm. It was noted in the first dataset that this norm is highly frequent in early annual reports of the OSRSG-CaAC. Examples from the earliest reporting years are particularly illustrative:

The Special Representative, together with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, organizations of the United Nations system and NGOs, supports instituting controls for the transfer of arms to conflict zones, especially where children and women are being abused and brutalized. (United Nations 1998 para. 38);

In Afghanistan, children and women suffer doubly.... (ibid. para. 46);

[The SRSG] works with [agencies and bodies] to unblock difficult political situations and to seek access to civilian populations in distress, the worst affected of whom are always women and children. (ibid. para. 15);

Children, women and the elderly have all become fair game in the single-minded struggle for power. (ibid. para. 28);

The international community must exert greater and concerted political efforts to address directly the real issues in conflict situations. This is the only way to end the suffering of so many children and women. (ibid. para. 151)

As well as presenting children and women as a site of suffering and emotive value, the reports also tend to 'other' women and children by including them as separate to, but a necessary inclusion alongside, references to an affected population in general:

...children, women, refugees and other vulnerable populations. (United Nations 2000 para. 45);

... children and civilians.... (ibid. 2000 para. 63)

The frequency of this norm language then reduces slowly through the early 2000s before dropping off significantly from about 2010. However, the norm suddenly reappears in the 2020 report, again

with high frequency. In the second dataset, the norm was found to be present in different degrees in field documents produced by various UN agencies and NGOs.

Notably, those documents primarily produced by UNICEF contained a much higher frequency of instances of the norm than documents produced by any other agency. Instances of the norm in UNICEF field documents were often without context and reflective of similar normative language used at the higher policy level – as in the OSRSG-CaAC reports of the first dataset. Typical phrases include references to children and women as somehow separate and distinct from ‘vulnerable’ or ‘affected’ populations:

Advocating with national/local authorities...to respect, promote and fulfil women’s and children’s rights, and to improve policies and programmes for children, women and communities. (UNICEF 2020a p.19);

... children, women and communities. (UNICEF 2020a p.19);

...at risk populations, including children and women (ibid. p.29);

...mainstream the protection of children, women and affected populations...Target the most disadvantaged children, women and communities. (ibid. p.30)

It was also found that documents produced by UNHCR and the Inter-Agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (IAWG-UASC) similarly contained clusters of this norm language (though to a lesser degree), centred around discussion of the Best Interests Assessment and Best Interests Determination processes in the field. Documents produced by primarily by DPO contained some instances of the norm language, mostly relating to peacekeeper training and staffing practice.

And finally, the one document in this data set produced by the OSRSG-CaAC itself, a field manual for mediators, also contained some norm language reflective of OSRSG-CaAC annual reporting and making reference to relevant language in peace agreements already achieved by mediators, such as the following agreement signed in the Central African Republic:

Recognizing that the majority of the population of the Central African Republic is made up of children and women who have been deeply affected by the armed conflict...[Parties] To

refrain from...sexual and gender-based violence, in particular against women and girls.
(OSRSG-CaAC 2020 p.45).

In this dataset, UNICEF documents were not training manuals or practical field manuals but more general guidance for child protection practitioners, regarding broader UNICEF's approach to conflict-affected children; this is a possible reason for the greater presence of the 'women-and-children' norm in the UNICEF document set. Documents produced by other agencies tended to be more technical field manuals which were less focused on broader organisational priorities.

Due to the outright frequency and salience of this norm in the dataset, further discussion of the thematic analysis centre around this norm. This discussion is grouped into sections that broadly cover the different issue spaces into which the documents are sorted, helpfully demonstrating how the norm functions in different aspects of the conflict and immediate post-conflict field environment. The first point of discussion is in the *conflict sensitivity* and in the *peacebuilding space*, comprising relevant UNICEF and DPO documents. Following this is a discussion of *Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) and Best Interests Determination (BID) procedures* and the more technical application of the 'women-and-children' norm, in particular, in this context. Finally, the *arena of mediation and Monitoring and Reporting* is considered.

5.4.2 Conflict sensitivity

One of the most relevant documents produced by UNICEF, the *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action* (2020a, referred to as the CCCs), is a broad manifesto of UNICEF's purpose regarding children in conflict and development settings and contains frequent plain-language reference to both women and children as central to the organisation's mission. This is interesting in light of UNICEF's gradual move away from its roots as a relief organisation set up to provide aid for the twentieth-century, homogenous discursive construction of the conflict-affected mother and child (this is expanded further upon in the discussion of NGO influence in Chapter 8). The overall findings of this research suggest that a good deal of the frequency of the "women-and-children" norm in UN CaAC policy can be explained by the persistence of this norm in UNICEF's work.

In UNICEF documentation, women are often included along with children in ways that do not make the rationale clearly apparent. For example, UNICEF's CCCs document states: "The CCCs must be used by every Country Office (CO) as a framework to monitor the situation of women and

children and take appropriate preparedness and response measures, in order to deliver predictable, timely, principled and child-centred humanitarian response” (UNICEF 2020a p.7). In this case, it seems it is considered important that the in-country situations of both women and children are considered in order to carry out a local response that aids children; since the CCCs document is explicitly focused on humanitarian responses for children. If this is not what was intended to be communicated, then the inclusion of women with children here must be arbitrary.

The CCCs also refers to its being a tool for advocacy and partnership with other organisations. In this way, it could function as a means of transmitting norms about women and children between different UN workstreams, and potentially from other streams into the child protection stream. In Chapter 6 of this thesis, norm flow between different UN organisations and bodies as well as gender-focused NGOs, including between UN Women (or what was originally known as UNIFEM), is examined. Like the instances discussed in that chapter, this document’s role as a tool for advocacy and collaboration appears to affect the frequency of the ‘women-and-children’ norm within.

The CCCs do also refer to humanitarian law and legal precedent regarding women and children in a general ‘civilian’ context (see Chapter 6), especially Women, Peace and Security-related resolutions: “This legal framework is supplemented by...Security Council resolutions, particularly on children and armed conflict, protection of civilians, women, peace and security.” (UNICEF 2020a p.10). ‘Women’s and children’s rights’ are also frequently referred to throughout UNICEF mandate descriptions for different staff roles in the CCCs.

As is the case in many of the documents examined in the wider dataset, the CCCs refer to women and children relative to wider populations in interesting ways. This is reminiscent of a trend in the first dataset (see Chapter 4) whereby women and children are at times discursively separated from general populations. For example, page 19 of the CCCs, refers to “children, women and communities” (ibid.). On page 30, the need to “...mainstream the protection of children, women and affected populations...” and to “Target the most disadvantaged children, women and communities” is emphasised (ibid).

Another example is included on page 50 of the CCCs:

[UNICEF must] place a deliberate focus on the most marginalised children and women to reduce inequities (right in principle) and improve impact on the most vulnerable groups (right in practice). All forms of malnutrition are increasingly concentrated among the poorest and most marginalised children, adolescents, women and households. (ibid.)

Yet – one particularly interesting instance of reference to general populations was included in the same document in a definition for the term “Accountability to affected populations”:

This results in the ability of all vulnerable, at-risk and crisis-affected girls, women and men supported through UNICEF humanitarian actions to hold UNICEF as an organisation to account for promoting and protecting their rights and generating effective results for them... (ibid. p.101)

In this instance, men are included alongside girls and women, yet, boys – discursively separated from men in almost all other instances in UNICEF documents – are invisible. These conflicting references to either women, children, girls, or boys alongside discussion of general populations makes redundant the discursive function of separating out any of these population sub-groups. If boys are singled out from general affected populations in some instances, for example, but not in others, it is unclear why this is done.

It is worth noting too that the CCCs are specifically designed to contribute to the progression of the Sustainable Development Goals (ibid. p.5). As an organisation with a mandate that crosses over many sectors, UNICEF is well-positioned to exchange norms with a very large number of NGOs and other organisations – including UN bodies – in which normative language specific to particular workstreams is employed. With development being perhaps the most significant aspect of UNICEF’s mandate, it is unsurprising that development initiatives contribute to this norm flow. The fifth Sustainable Development Goal, focused on gender equality, refers to “women and girls” (see discussion of this discursive practice in Chapter 6) and thus has a strong normative emphasis on the intersecting interests of women and girls as a semi-homogenous category.

5.4.3 Peacebuilding and peacekeeping

As well as its organisational focus on development, UNICEF is heavily involved in peacebuilding, and many of the documents in this dataset discussed women and children in such a context. The

beginning overview of UNICEF's *Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Guide* (2016) states UNICEF is, in fact, uniquely situated to contribute to peacebuilding because of its multi-sector access – noting that this allows UNICEF to include marginalised voices, such as “children, youth and women” (p3), presumably through local consultation.

It is generally asserted in the documents in this dataset that both women and children are essential to peacebuilding efforts, though the rationale behind this is not often elaborated on; usually this is not extended beyond the importance of consultation with women and children at a community level – particularly including ‘women’s groups’. At times it is argued that unequal social dynamics that do not favour women and children create tenuous peace:

...further insights have continued to be gained on the gendered dimensions of peacebuilding efforts. This includes the importance of enhancing efforts to address power structures, dynamics, roles and relations between women/girls and men/boys (UNICEF 2016 p.9).

In discussions relevant to the programmatic areas in which child protection and peacebuilding crossover, there is a focus on MRM interaction and gender mainstreaming. The Conflict Sensitivity guide recommends that religious leaders and women’s groups are engaged at community level. It is argued that these community representatives are ideal loci at which to access both women and children and protect their interests during the peacebuilding process – as well as being simultaneously empowered by peacebuilding consultation itself, thus contributing to sustainable and equitable community-led arrangements. Interestingly, page 44 of the Core Commitments refers to “local women’s and children’s organisations/groups” in this context, an example in which even local NGOs are reduced to the ‘women-and-children’ norm.

As well as engaging at a local level with ‘women-and-children’, UNICEF documents bring this norm to the fore in discussion of peacebuilding negotiations at a broader government level, both local and national. The Core Commitments refer to “...Advocating with national/local authorities...to respect, promote and fulfil women’s and children’s rights, and to improve policies and programmes for children, women and communities” (2020a p.19).

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO) produced a significant document in the dataset relevant to the ‘women-and-children’ norm. This is the *Specialised Training Materials on*

Child Protection for United Nations Peacekeepers (2018). This manual is targeted at operational staff and includes teaching them specifically about possible child protection issues in the field prior to deployment. As a result, the language is more accessible as the highly technical and normative language is simplified and more generalised than in some of the dataset's more technical documents. The two main ways in which the 'women-and-children' norm appears in DPO's documents is in the context of conflict-related sexual violence, and in the actual gender of staff members.

The manual is divided into several learning modules. Module 1 is called "Children in armed conflict" and has four learning outcomes: "Understand who a child is and why children are most at risk during armed conflict", "Understand the changing nature of conflict and its impact on children", "Know and understand the six grave violations", and "Be familiar with gender concerns and vulnerabilities that boys and girls face" (ibid. p.9). By the time this document was published in 2018 the CaAC workstream had moved into explicitly acknowledging the impact of conflict-related sexual violence on boys, as was demonstrated in the results of the first research stage. Therefore, it is not surprising that the fourth learning outcome avoids the erasure of boy victim-survivors. In fact, the manual includes a discussion on sexual violence in the context of the Grave Violation of rape which is fairly unique relative to the rest of the documents analysed for this research in terms of the space provided for boy victim-survivors. While the discussion does stress that girls are especially vulnerable to sexual violence in conflict (ibid. p.21), there is also a specific heading for boys; "Boys are also victims of sexual violence in conflict". It is noted here that boys may be forced to commit rape in conflict situations. Two sexual violence examples are given in the wider discussion of rape as a Grave Violation; one is the example of the *bacha bazi* practice in Afghanistan, which impacts boys primarily. The second example is a non-gendered one about the proportion of rape victims who were children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo 2006-07 (ibid. p.22). In all CaAC documents examined as part of this research, this is one of the few examples of a sexual violence scenario which does not include any reference to the gender of affected children. However, moving beyond the discussion of rape as a Grave Violation, other learning tools in the manual are considerably more reductive in terms of gendered themes relevant to the "women-and-children" norm. The learning topic entitled "Gender issues in child protection" (ibid. p.24) utilises the language of "women and girls" and "men and boys", showing familiar discursive patterns from

elsewhere in the CaAC workstream, but also utilises other trademarks of the norm. The narrative of rape being used as a “weapon of war” is presented uncritically, and women and children are described as being vulnerable without “men to protect them” (ibid.). From a practical field perspective, the likelihood of encountering girl “wives” of commanders is discussed. Here also, the ‘new wars’ thesis presents itself; “Violence against civilians, particularly sexual violence, is a prevalent feature of current conflicts” (ibid.). The inclusion of this idea is interesting considering by 2018 it was declining in popularity, having been also subject to enormous academic criticism, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Pages 25-30 of the DPO manual contain a fascinating learning exercise based around gendered experiences of children in conflict. This is an activity where learners must listen to two testimonies read out, that of a girl and that of a boy – Jacques and Jasime. A male learner should read Jacques’ one, and a female learner should read Jasime’s. They then should consider what factors put the two children at risk; how being children increased their vulnerability; and how their gender made their experiences different. ‘Suggested responses’ say that even though Jacques appears to have joined voluntarily, he in fact could not have done so due to his age (and associated lack of agency). Jasime became pregnant, suffered significant stigma from her former community, and therefore remained reliant on the soldier who fathered her child. Both are traumatised. The exercise narrative concludes: “At the age of 16, Jasime now has to take care of a baby on her own” (ibid. p.27).

It is useful to note that for this exercise there is a gender-based division of labour among staff; There is occasional reference across documents to the need for staff (from various agencies in the subcluster) dealing specifically with local women and/or sexual and gender-based violence concerns to be women themselves. In some instances, there is no rationale provided at all. This crosses into an area in the CaAC workstream which is not frequently illuminated yet crops up from time to time. These findings support Johnson (2022), who has more specifically examined this gendered staff division with DPO itself and found it to be connected to the ‘women-and-children’ norm.

In addition to a seemingly arbitrary recommendation for a gendered division of staff in the above example (a rationale is not provided anywhere in the document, though one may have existed),

there are other areas in these policy documents where similar recommendations occur. The *Toolkit on Unaccompanied and Separated Children* produced by the Interagency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (IAWG-UASC 2017), is examined further below in Section 5.4.4; however, its reference to Global Protection Cluster instructions for what to do if one finds an unaccompanied child are relevant here (ibid. p.197). These instructions for field workers note that if they are required to leave a child with anyone, they should make sure it is a woman. No context is provided here. This appears to be an assumption that any given local woman is not likely to be a risk to children in any way, whereas a man would inherently be. In terms of human resources, the same guide also notes that “Ideally, case workers should work in mixed gender pairs” (ibid. p.136).

However, UNICEF’s *What Works to Protect Children on the Move* document does refer to a study which found that female social workers were more likely than males to adopt gender-sensitive interviewing techniques with children after undergoing training (86 vs 71%) (UNICEF 2020b p.55); perhaps there is further evidence for the efficacy of such approaches.

Returning to DPO’s (2018) *Specialised Training Materials on Child Protection for United Nations Peacekeepers*, further comment on the human resources aspect of child protection in the field indicates that the “women-and-children” norm is very much active. On page 87 it is explained that “...at the UN Infantry Battalion level, a single officer under the supervision of the XO/2IC will perform the responsibility of “Gender and Child Protection”. While it can be assumed that infantry officers have many competing priorities in the field, it appears that this designation has been made to include both women (in this case synonymous with “gender”) and children in their role as vulnerable and passive inhabitants of the field environment. Similarly, page 88 notes that the role of DPO’s Women Protection Advisors is to “Advise on sexual violence issues”; one presumes that this would encompass the nexus of sexual violence against both women and girls.

The training manual content that speaks to the PKO mission in Mali provides an illustrative example of high-level policy transferring these norms into field-level programming. Page 106 notes that Resolution 2100 (2013) on Mali requires the mission to include explicit protection for women and children. Page 47 gives an example of a mandate given by the Security Council to the mission:

(c)(ii) To provide specific protection for women and children affected by armed conflict, including through the deployment of Child Protection Advisors and Women Protection Advisors, and address the needs of victims of sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict. (DPO 2018 p.47)

Much of the of content relating to sexual violence in this manual is about accountability of peacekeepers, and the policy of zero tolerance of sexual abuse (Westendorf & Searle 2017). This can be understood in the context of the well-publicised sexual abuse scandals involving peacekeepers which first garnered media attention in the early 2000s (but which continue today – see Wagner 2022). This abuse and misconduct was, and is, perpetrated against both adult women and children; notably, in the DRC, the presence of peacekeepers notably inflates the local child sex industry (Wagner 2022 para. 12). This may be a potential contributor to the centrality of the ‘women-and-children’ norm in the context of DPO’s peacekeeper training on sexual violence – both women and children are subsumed into a protectionist discourse that focuses on the harms of sexual violence to both, because DPO is hyper-aware of its responsibility to manage this issue.

The child protection staff manual produced by DPO, with the assistance of DPPA (Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs), also demonstrates the practice of situating children and women together in the sexual violence issue space. Page 20 notes that staff developing training materials for components should work with the ‘gender unit’ and ‘sexual and exploitation and abuse unit’ where possible to create “common tools and handouts”.(DPO & DPPA 2019) The implication is that these units vary depending on the mission; further research could explore the connection/norm flow between these units by being present for such training sessions and accessing materials in context.

The child protection staff manual also includes an interesting note on the decision in 2016 to consolidate the CaAC and conflict-related sexual violence protection mandates within peacekeeping missions (ibid. p.91). The cited purpose is to avoid poor coordination and streamline these protection concerns. The mission’s Head of Human Rights component is to be responsible for this. While also perhaps an encouraging demonstration of responsiveness to some critiques of the CaAC protection mandate, this would indicate an increased likelihood of norm transfer between these two workstreams. Yet, the change may be mostly nominal – at least in the sphere of DPO; it

appears that the structure of both the child and sexual violence protection streams was already very similar, in terms of staff titles and areas of responsibility. There are parallel 'Women Protection Advisors' (alongside the Child Protection Advisors) which appear to have the same role of designated representative within mission (ibid. p.92). This title 'Women Protection Advisor' comes up more frequently across different UN workgroups in the field space; it is not isolated to DPO.

In sum, having examined the themes of the dataset in relation to the conflict sensitivity and peacekeeping space with a focus on UNICEF and DPO documents, this discussion now moves into another area in which the 'women-and-children' norm was found to be central, and material in its programming impacts: Best Interests Determination (BID) and Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) contexts.

5.4.4 The application of the norm in Best Interests Determination/Unaccompanied and Separated Children contexts

The 'women-and-children' norm is highly prevalent in field guides and programmes which focus primarily on the Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) and Best Interests Determination (BID) spheres of conflict and immediate post-conflict intervention.

These documents are an enlightening and illustrative part of the dataset, even if not strictly focused on the immediate theatre of conflict, per se. I chose to include these documents in this dataset because there are highly relevant thematic issues that are necessarily broached by the processes of identifying and triaging UASC and of BID.

The act of triaging UASC necessarily requires workers (belonging to UN groups, NGOs et cetera) to make judgements which categorise those children into various typologies and risk categories. Examining the relevant documents did indicate that stringent guidance is given on this front, and multiple toolkits are included to guide decision-making. Explanations are generally given for the need to use particular categories and interventions, often with reference to research evidence. However, the worker must still use their judgement when assessing UASC, both in apparently clear-cut situations and in those where a child or young person's needs may be more difficult to define. Examining the categories and typologies used in this process gives useful insight into the way the 'women-and-children' norm impacts data gathering and interventions.

The BID process on the other hand, while also demonstrating categorisation and typification, has more utility in illustrating the complex issue of children's agency and how this applies to girls and young women (this is discussed further in Chapter 7). Many BID triage processes include deciding where to place young women who may be considered to be vulnerable to sexual harm, and interplay therefore with issues of self-guardianship and autonomy; and, of particular interest, how to address those considered 'children' who are also mothers.

The utility of documents pertaining to these processes therefore adds clear value in this dataset. Furthermore, though it could be argued that these processes are, conceptually, more strictly related to the post-conflict and peacebuilding sphere than the traditional armed conflict field environment described in the CaAC workstream, conflicts are rarely neatly categorisable as 'ongoing' or 'finished'. Conflict often breaks out sporadically after initial frays. This means that UASC and BID processes are often carried out in between periods of active conflict, or short distances away from active conflict.

The *Field Handbook on Unaccompanied and Separated Children* (UASC Handbook) is the main guide for UASC identification and triage procedures for the UN child protection cluster. The guiding principles are laid out on page 15: family unity; best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; participation of the child; and non-discrimination. Non-discrimination "includes, in particular, girls and their specific needs, as provided for in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols" (IAWGUSC 2016).

Also included as central principles in the guide are disaster risk reduction good practice principles, adapted from a UNICEF Disaster Risk Reduction internal note from 2011: "Actions are based on a comprehensive multi-hazard, risk, vulnerability and capacity assessment of the particular risks faced by children, women, youths, the disabled, the elderly and single-headed households" (p.66). These guiding principles do not specifically refer to the needs of boys; as in other documents in the dataset, boys are invisible in much of the discussion of particular needs.

However, boys and men do occasionally appear as categories; in a guide on birth registration access, the handbook sometimes randomly uses the term "boys and girls" in place of "children" (IAWGUSC 2016 p.69). As discussed in previous chapters, boys' needs are occasionally referred to in the CaAC workstream particularly in more recent years. Page 263 of the handbook notes that

repatriated “Boys and girls will have different [follow-up] needs, which are likely to vary according to gender, age, disability, ethnicity and experiences during separation”. Page 269 addresses the potential for boys to be victim-survivors of sexual violence, noting this as “a problem that is often hidden and largely undocumented”. In a discussion of mapping local and national capacity to respond to UASC, it is also suggested that workers assess “Level of representation, participation and consultation with boys, girls, women and men, including groups with specific needs within formal and informal structures and services” (p.103). Specific mention of men as a group with potential needs is much rarer. This occurs once again the handbook at page 130, explaining that UNHCR conducts Participatory Assessments annually in country ‘situations’ (where displaced people and refugees may be residing during or post-conflict), talking to “women, girls, boys and men” about their protection needs and proposed solutions.

In discussing categories of UASC in general, though, the handbook has a heavy focus on the disaggregation of different ‘types’ of girls. Some learnings from prior situations are included as case studies to demonstrate to readers the importance of considering gender-sensitive responses to UASC. Some of these studies are general illustrations of the need to consider ‘women-and-children’ as over-represented in displacement contexts: “Many children and women were travelling into Kenya’s Dadaab refugee camp...” during the 2011 Horn of Africa famine (ibid. p.91). Others have more specific learnings; page 182 includes a case study entitled “Additional risks to unaccompanied women and girls fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic”. This study discusses the Jordanian requirement for refugees who had entered without a visa to be vouched for by a Jordanian citizen before being released. The result was that many women and girls were induced to enter into marriages and other dubious transactional or predatory relationships.

In terms of the types of categories that UASC workers should consider, the handbook disaggregates girls clearly by age and considers relevant vulnerabilities for each group. There is an emphasis on young children and infants and the potential for them to be ‘missing’: “Sensitive inquiries should be made to ensure that infants, very young children and girls are not missed or hidden, especially where analysis of data shows a gender imbalance among identified UASC” (ibid. p.170). Further, “Separated girls are often far less visible and may be living in abusive or exploitative situations. Information campaigns may need to specifically target infants, very young

children and girls.” It is noted that girls are less likely to be registered in camps because they may be married off, used as domestic labour, or trafficked. (ibid. p.176).

These considerations regarding ‘missing’ girls are supported by the responses of an interviewee who worked in South Sudan as part of a global NGO, to identify children held at barracks by military commanders during and post conflict. The interviewee describes one such mission in which they and their fellow workers went with the UN mission to engage in parley with some commanders:

We went with UNMISS...I was just, uh, curious to see if there are children there. Even though we went there basically to have a meeting with someone. My intention was also to find if there were children, you know, on the barracks. But you know, when we had this meeting...even though I saw them [children], the commander denied it. You know, children, you see...there are very many kids, including girls, carrying...you know, those who are [with] child. Some of them are breastfeeding. They are all there, and you see them but...you know, the guy, he denied. (Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

Working alongside UNMISS to try and secure the release of children engaged with armed forces, the interviewee remarked:

I mentioned that there are quite a lot of girls associated with armed forces and groups. But when it comes to the release...you see only a handful of girls. And that, you know...it affects me quite a lot. Because most of these girls, I think they are used somehow. Often they have children...the wife of the commanders, they’re working...they’re doing a lot of work. In there. So, oftentimes they are not released, and it really breaks my heart to see that. (Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

In particular, the connection between girls and motherhood elicits emotion from the interviewee; and this gravity is reflected in the UASC handbook, which treats the issue of “children who are parents” (p.106) – but really only girls who are mothers – as one worthy of unique attention. Page 269 discusses the community resistance and stigma that girls may face if they have suffered sexual violence, are pregnant or mothers upon reunification. The stigma can result simply from being a victim of rape, from being an unmarried mother, or in particular from bearing the child of an

enemy. The question of whether a girl who is a mother has the same level of agency and independence as an adult mother is not answered, but is included as an important consideration; discussions of 'child-headed households' as a particular risk category are frequent (but there is not one specific mention of boys who are fathers in the handbook).

Page 206 notes that "...girls with babies, who need the independence to establish themselves as young mothers without feeling undermined by foster mothers, may still benefit from the support of community members or mentors." There is discussion of making needs assessments about child-headed households to determine whether they should be allowed to live independently, or placed in foster care situations. It is not clear whether the girls themselves are consulted in this matter, but discussion of needs assessments relating to child-headed households do appear to note the importance of input from the children themselves.

Page 106 of the handbook introduces one of the tools to assess typologies of separation (separation, in the UASC context, meaning separated from adult guardians). Knowledge of the context is emphasised as necessary, as well as experienced staff. Methods should involve community and child input and be sensitive to community context, but should also sensitise respondents to the issue. Numbers of UASC should be disaggregated by age and sex; and the priority is "Identification of groups of children at special risk, such as those who are disabled or chronically ill, associated with armed forces or groups, or in detention (or whose parents are in detention) children who are parents and head households, adolescent girls, babies and very young children" (ibid. p.106).

Of course, the level of input children could provide in their own assessments would depend on age and other factors; but this becomes a more complex question when a teenage girl, for example, is the guardian of her own child and thus has the capacity for legal, as well as perhaps moral (in terms of the usual conception of maternal authority) responsibility for her child.

Although not a document focusing on UASC or BID contexts, UNICEF's Core Commitments guide (2020a) makes comment on technical programming in an intervention context, including both humanitarian and displacement planning scenarios, which echoes the ideas raised in the UASC handbook. The Core Commitments document was published four years later than the UASC handbook, but still uses the 'women and children' phrase quite frequently: "...at risk populations,

including children and women” (UNICEF 2020a p29). This corresponds to the findings of the first research stage of this thesis, which noted the renewed frequency of the phrase in OSRSGCaAC policy documents in 2020. In discussion of gender-based violence, though, the Core Commitments document does discuss a need for gender-responsive programming to meet the needs of “women, girls, men and boys” (ibid. p.68). Like the UASC handbook, protection programming is heavily gendered with a focus on girl children despite this nominal reference to boys. Some programming areas, though, naturally need to consider the intersection between women and girls for practical reasons and would thus demonstrate this connection whether or not the norm were particularly influential – for example, birth registration – as one must identify who gave birth in order to register it.

The *Field Handbook for the Implementation of UNHCR BID Guidelines* (2011b), produced by UNHCR, appears to be quite reflexive about the risks of propagating norms through categorisation of children. Page 18 notes: “Child protection programming has tended to focus on categories of children (e.g. victims of abuse, girl mothers, street children, child soldiers, etc.) rather than taking a holistic view of children’s entire protective environment”.

In terms of its own practice of triage and categorisation, UNHCR has a “women (and girls) at risk” category specifically for children in resettlement assessment (UNHCR 2011b p.63). Notably, the BID field handbook has more of a focus on consultation with the local community in doing the work of BID than the UASC handbook outlines. Page 26 notes that in family tracing, “Capacity building and the strong involvement of national and local child welfare authorities, as well as local NGOs, CBOs (community-based organisations) and women’s groups, are essential.” As mentioned above, there may be processes involved with obtaining things like birth information that would be hastened by consulting with ‘women’s groups’; yet the inclusion of the phrase echoes its use elsewhere in these datasets as representative of local parties intrinsically tied to children (see Chapter 6).

The BID handbook, like the UASC handbook, does discuss the challenges of identifying unaccompanied girls where they may be ‘hidden’; “Generally, unaccompanied and separated boys are more easily identified than girls” (p.32).

Interestingly, the BID handbook also comes closest to addressing the issue space of boys who are fathers. A discussion of young parents’ potential vulnerabilities on page 42 actually refers to child-

headed households as potentially being headed by boys or girls, but notes that girls are at more risk of exploitation.

The *Guidelines on Assessing and Determining the Best Interests of the Child*, produced by UNHCR in 2018, is a more specific conceptual guide to making BID assessments – as opposed to the practical aspects of implementation. Questions of gender categorisation are central to this process. There is discussion of categorisation and prioritisation of children for resettlement; it is noted that girls may be a specific category of children at risk who should be prioritised for resettlement, depending on context (UNHCR 2018 p.110).

An enlightening template for a Best Interests Assessment form is included on page 129 of the UNHCR field handbook. The form is described as having ‘specific needs’ codes. In this format, letters are assigned to different typologies of child and listed down the page, accompanied by checkboxes for the assessor to fill in. Each ‘type’ of child is labelled with a name/phrase. The rationale behind the chosen types is not included on the template itself, but is discussed in the wider document. Alongside each ‘type’ is a basic needs assessment box, including spaces for info on nutrition, education, psychological state, protection, and necessity for referral to UNICEF for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) interventions. These added assessment aspects form a portal by which the children are ‘transported’ to other UN groups and agencies to have their needs met as a consequence of this process of categorisation.

There are several different codes for various types of sexual and gender-based violence; one type is ‘CAAFAG’ (see Chapter 7). Others are ‘child spouse’ and ‘teen pregnancy’. Each category necessarily reproduces an identity for the child being assessed by creating a label for them which associates them with a certain type of conflict impact. It is possible that, through the presence of norms focusing on girls, women and their dual association to one another through the lens of conflict-related sexual violence, assessors in this process will reproduce norms such as ‘women-and-children’ (or the focus on conflict-affected children as essentially being girls only) in the way they view and then reimagine children they are assessing.

Such a possibility seems to be increasingly likely when issues such as custody disputes in the UASC/BID field context are considered. Page 90 notes: “In the case of separation of parents and custody disagreements, in addition to situations where custody issues put the child at risk of

abandonment or harm, UNHCR has been requested by its Executive Committee to take actions for the resettlement of women and children at risk and to facilitate a speedy departure for women at risk and their dependents” (UNHCR 2018). This appears to imply that the potential risk of abandonment or harm to children as a result of custody disputes is a concern centered around men. The phrase ‘women and children’ is used to signify the victims in such a situation, focusing on the apparent inevitability of ‘dependants’ being rightfully in the custody of women; and it must be assumed from the wording that this particular UNHCR policy does not make provision for swift resettlement in the case of custody disputes where a man and his dependents may be at risk, or where his dependants may be at risk of abandonment or harm by another guardian. The *Toolkit on Unaccompanied and Separated Children* (IAWGUSG 2017) was designed as a companion to the field handbook. It contains several assessment tool examples to demonstrate how workers in the field can categorise UASC according to perceived risk factors. There is a significant focus on sexual violence as a risk category; and in places, this is made specific to the risk posed by peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, interestingly. The toolkit notes that “though teenage girls are often the target [of sexual violence], it is important to be aware of and sensitive to boys who may experience sexual violence, which often occurs in detention settings” (p.13); yet, “women and children” should also be involved in camp design with aim of reducing abuse (p.11). Although there is specific reference to boys as victim-survivors of sexual violence and to a relevant context in which this happens, the ‘women-and-children’ norm is thus still present within discussions of sexual violence.

Interestingly also, and reflecting the interviewee who is quoted earlier in this chapter, sexual violence in armed forces/groups context is conceived of as affecting ‘wives’ (p.13). Women and girls abducted and held in sexual slavery thus have another identity constructed for them through a phrase which, while it may reflect local traditions in places, seems inconsistent with the usual language of sexual violence victim-survivors (this language is also present in the DPO’s training manual for peacekeepers [DPO 2018] – see above).

Also in this toolkit are examples of phraseology which seems to obscure men, not necessarily on purpose but as a consequence of focusing particularly on women, children and other ‘categories’ within society: “Registration of vulnerable women, children and families (including unaccompanied women and children and female-headed households) is crucial in order to ensure they have

access to life-saving assistance (such as food, shelter and medical care)” (IAWGUSG 2017 p.30). On page 91, a questionnaire is titled “Protection of children, women and other vulnerable persons”, although it does have provision to assess whether women, children and/or men feel unsafe at the given site.

In terms of the impact that BID or UASC processes may have on the autonomy and agency of children through categorisation, it is relevant to note the statement on page 74 that supervised group living can be an option for adolescent UAS boys only, but is not appropriate for adolescent girls: “This option is not appropriate for adolescent girls who should be placed in [foster] family in the current context”. Although no reason for this is given here, this same topic is referenced in UNICEF’s *Children on the Move* report (2020b p.97); there is evidence that independent living was a successful strategy to prevent recruitment for boys, but not for girls. The report is an evaluation of prior child protection and UASC interventions. The most useful contribution of this document in the dataset is in demonstrating the proportion of interventions that targeted solely girls versus solely boys. Interestingly, the programmes studied targeted a roughly equal number of either only girls or only boys (although most interventions targeted both). Most interventions targeted children aged 13-18 (UNICEF 2020b p.37). This result was surprising, as with the frequency of the ‘women-and-children’ norm examined in other documents produced fully or in part by UNICEF, it might have been expected that more interventions would target girls specifically.

Some conclusions in the *Children on the Move* report do also focus on the specific vulnerabilities of boys; for example, in the Middle East and North Africa region children in female-headed households who had recently arrived in their host country were most at risk of exploitation – especially boys (ibid. p.78).

Having discussed the UASC/BID context and the impact of the ‘women-and-children’ norm, and other norms found to exist there around its thematic periphery, this discussion now considers the normative themes in the mediation and Monitoring and Reporting space and the salience of the ‘women-and-children’ norm.

5.4.5 Mediation and monitoring and reporting⁸

The documents examined that are specific to mediation, and monitoring and reporting, occupy a space that sits slightly closer to the 'higher' or more detached policy examined in the first dataset. These are field manuals like the rest of the documents examined in this chapter; however, they are designed according for processes that take place at a level somewhat removed from immediate needs assessment in the field. Both documents connect to a policy stream that is closer in practice to the OSRSG-CaAC; mediation 'in the field' (though generally somewhat removed) results in accords and agreements that are codified at a diplomatic level, and Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism reporting goes up the policy chain to the Special Representative's office.

The first relevant document is the OSRSG-CaAC's *Practical Guidance for Mediators to Protect Children in Situations of Armed Conflict* (2020). Although more removed from immediate field activities, it includes a guide for mediators to assess child protection priorities in a situation of concern, which involves a process of categorisation not unlike that involved in UASC triage and BID. The central question is: "Who is considered a child in this situation? Is there a difference between boys and girls in this regard?" (OSRG-CaAC 2020 p.32). There is a note here also that community, faith-based and 'women's organisations' can represent children's voices (as in the BID handbook produced by UNHCR); but that caution must be exercised to ensure that children's needs are truly being communicated. This document also continues existing examples of mediated agreements between parties to conflict. These are worthy of brief discussion in terms of their relationship to the norms examined in this chapter, due in main to their inconsistency. Page 45 references an agreement made in the Central African Republic: "Recognizing that the majority of the population of the Central African Republic is made up of children and women who have been deeply affected by the armed conflict..."; "[Parties] To refrain from...sexual and gender-based violence, in particular against women and girls". The language involved here echoes some analysed in the first dataset; while it has normative familiarity, it seems to function as an erasure

⁸ The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) was introduced as a concept in Chapter 2. Although it is managed at the highest policy levels of the child protection infrastructure – namely the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children affected by Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CaAC) –, reporting is carried out at the field level by representatives of the office embedded within the mission, and is then passed up the policy chain to be analysed.

of men and boys as parties affected by both conflict in general, and sexual violence more generally. Page 51 cites an agreement made in Nepal, the language of which is less absurd but still clearly reproduces the 'women-and-children' norm; "all types of violence against women and children"; "special protection to the rights of women and children".

The second relevant document is the UNICEF/DPO/OSRSG-CaAC's *Guidelines: Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Violations Against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict* (UNICEF 2014). This manual presented fascinating results, because of its contradictory characteristics. Firstly, in some aspects it includes highly reflexive ideas regarding conflict-affected children which appear to intentionally rebuff norms such 'women-and-children', as well as an explicit reference to a "culture of enforcement of norms" and "child protection norms" (p.43). However, conversely, it includes quite clear gendered assumptions about certain actors.

The manual does address the nuances required in the disaggregation of data, and the necessary categorisation that follows; page 13 focuses on gender mainstreaming, stating that reports should be disaggregated, at the very least, by sex (with the acknowledgement that reports through the MRM channel can be notoriously piecemeal and lacking in data). It also recognises the "specific needs and coping mechanisms of girls and boys" – "In respect of all violations, girls and boys have different ways of experiencing violations, different coping mechanisms and different needs" (ibid. p.13). The manual includes continuing discussion throughout of the differing needs of boys and girls. Therefore, this document did not reproduce the erasure of boys that was encountered in others. Page 37 implores "stakeholders concerned to pay particular attention to children, including girls exploited by armed forces and groups, in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes". This is another occurrence of a phrase in which girls are separated from children 'in general' by being specifically mentioned as a separate category of child; yet, this type of occurrence differs from those in which boys are erased because of the word *including*. The interpretation of this phrase, then, while still encouraging a focus on girls, does not necessarily imply a hierarchy of needs in which girls should be privileged; as opposed to examples earlier in this chapter which use the word *especially* rather than *including*, implying that the needs of girls should be paramount.

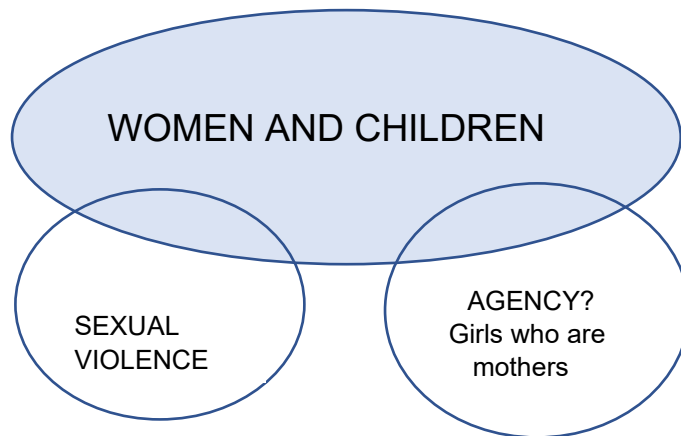
However, on page 27 a discussion of sexual violence presumes that perpetrators of sexual violence are male; “Try to identify the armed group/force. Some people will be able to identify the perpetrator by recognizing the uniform. Be sure to ask if the perpetrator was wearing a uniform and, if not, how the respondent was able to identify his group membership”. While men commit the majority of sexual violence in conflict (Leatherman 2011), it is hard to see the rationale for the use of the pronoun ‘his’ when the option of ‘they’ was possible.

5.5 Conclusion

The second dataset provided useful insights across both the content analysis stage (examining frequency of coded phrases) and the thematic analysis stage. This data speaks to the aim of research question 2, by revealing insights into how the relevant norms are operationalised and interpreted in the child protection subcluster field context. Research stage 1 showed that the norms were present and elucidated norm activity in ‘higher’, more abstract office policy, but how does that translate to a field context to which that office is connected? How are field actors encountering these norms in their training, guidance, and field evaluation tools – and how therefore are children in the field encountering them?

The ‘women-and-children’ norm was particularly frequent across this dataset, with variations depending on the authoring agency of each document. Instances of other, less frequent norms provided useful insight into relevant themes that run through this thesis as a whole, including agency. These norms were found to exist around a kind of thematic periphery of the ‘women-and-children’ norm in the dataset; that is to say, normative themes seemed to begin from a conceptual space in which the ‘women-and-children’ norm was the intellectual status quo, and the idea of ‘children as girls’, or the agency of children, tended to be discussed in relevant issue spaces (such as girl victims of sexual violence being discussed in relation to workstreams designed for ‘women-and-children’, or the agency of girls who are also mothers).

Figure 10: Conceptual map of thematic norm organisation in the dataset – how two other norms fit into a wider status quo of ‘women-and-children’



Three main areas of field application stood out as thematic homes to the norms examined: conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding; UASC and BID contexts; and mediation and Monitoring and Reporting. These areas were discussed as illustrations of the presence of the various norms in this dataset.

The themes uncovered in this, and the previous chapter are discussed further in Chapters 6-8 focusing on the 'women-and-children' norm and the influence of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in particular; the broader theme of 'agency' and its connection in particular to the 'child soldier' norm; and the influence of NGOs as normative actors. This type of thematic analysis and discussion represents the reflexive and iterative process of bringing results back into discussion with the literature as the researcher moves through the sequential explanatory process.

Chapter 6 ‘Women-and-children’: Women, peace and security, and children and armed conflict

Why I say that...women has the key roles in playing...to play, to play, to protect the rights of children, because: one, they are mothers. Two, they are the...they say childhood begins at home. And they are the right people who ensure that if they talk to these children, and uh...their voices can be heard. Because when we take traditions and cultures, uh, culturally in South Sudan, mothers are the ones taking care of the children. A hundred per cent – ninety per cent – of the parental care is from the mother. When the child is sick, when the child is hungry, when the child has basic needs; uh, unlike in other communities, where the man, the father takes the role of paying school fees. But when you look at the percentage, the biggest percentage goes to the mother. So...and the pain that the mother goes through, that uhh...about the children; they know more than the men. And uh...if they speak, and I'm sure if they raise their voices, on behalf of the children, I think they will be heard, and these children will be protected.

(Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the research as they relate to the ‘women-and-children’ norm that has been so dominant in the dataset material. In keeping with the sequential explanatory research design, this chapter extends and deepens an analytical discussion of the literature according to this theme, incorporating the research results. For the purposes of discussion, the ‘children as girls’ norm that was coded for in each dataset (both the reports of the OSRSG-CaAC examined in Research Stage 1, and the field guides examined in Research Stage 2) will be included in this discussion as a subsidiary topic. Chapter 2 briefly introduced both this norm and scholars’ observations about its presence in the CaAC workstream, including among the humanitarian community more broadly. This chapter begins with a section that extends this discussion by elucidating the presence of this norm in the OSRSG-CaAC specifically (at a ‘high’ policy level in the CaAC workstream), and at the field level in manuals and guidance documents for

staff of various UN organisations and NGOs. A second section extends the material noted in previous chapters by examining the parallels between the CaAC workstream and WPS, identifying the WPS agenda as a site of normative influence that contributes to the presence of the ‘women-and-children’ norm in the CaAC workstream. A third section then examines the role of key actors in the mainstreaming process, whilst the closing section considers the consequences of mainstreaming WPS into CaAC, the generation of new norms at the nexus of these two agendas, and the specific case of sexual violence in these two agendas.

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how the relevant norms show up specifically in field programmes and guides for the child protection subcluster. It also provides insight into potential areas of concentration of this norm (where it is coming into the workstream from), as well as noting potential problem areas for practice. It canvasses the insights revealed about norms specifically tested for, but also extends the discussion to other sub-themes that were revealed through document analysis in association with the relevant norm codes, therefore further demonstrating how the coding model utilised is useful and replicable in providing deep insight about norm relationships.

6.2 Confirming ‘women-and-children’ as norm

This section begins by briefly returning to the literature to remind the reader of concerns already noted about the elision of ‘women-and-children’ by the UN and other institutions. It then considers specific concerns about the relationship between the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the CaAC agenda. Having illuminated the main issues at play this first section then discusses the direct contributions made by the research presented in Chapters 4 and 5 to this discourse.

6.2.1 Scholarly work on ‘women-and-children’: contextualising the connection to WPS

Lee-Koo (2019) writes that “The tendency to collapse ‘women-and-children’ into a single conceptualisation of victimised civilians can stifle and misrepresent both agendas” (p.2). In security studies literature on this topic, it has commonly been argued that relegating women and children to a homogenous group of victims has the effect of infantilising women. This literature was examined in Chapter 2, and is briefly revisited here to set the scene for the discussion of WPS. Carpenter writes that “The category ‘women and children’ conflates infants, who are indeed both innocent and

vulnerable, with adult women and adolescents who may be neither” (Carpenter 2016 p.1).

Carpenter and Lee-Koo thus make similar arguments about the justification that underpins the grouping of women and children affected by conflict, by primarily examining conceptions of *women*.

The second relevant conception of women embodied in the “women-and-children” norm is of women as automatically being responsible for the protection of children (see Johnson 2022).

According to this norm, women gain their cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977) from their capacity to be mothers; advocating for the protection and care of children is seen as within the realm of women’s responsibilities. The intersection of women and children that characterises the practice of motherhood was central to the development of UNICEF, the UN’s first formal aid organisation (Morris 2015), and UNICEF appears to continue to situate itself in the role of advocating for women and children despite now having a workstream exclusively focusing on children. As well as the examples included above of relevant norm language, there is also frequent reference in UNICEF documents to the role of ‘women’s groups’ in taking responsibility for local child protection issues, often in itself relegating women’s groups to the same sphere as children’s; “local women’s and children’s organisations/groups...” (UNICEF 2020a p.44). This trend is reflected elsewhere in the documents analysed, including in particular in the first dataset – annual reports of the OSRSG-CaAC (see Chapter 8 for discussion about conceptualisations of ‘women’s groups’).

6.2.2 Women-and-children and the CaAC workstream

It has generally been assumed that children, at least below an age at which questions of agency become controversial in the CaAC workstream (see Chapter 7), are unquestionably vulnerable in any context. In this regard, their characterisation as part of the ‘women-and-children’ norm differs from that of women, who may be regarded as having some responsibility and agency in mothering. Yet, the conceptual relegation of women and girls (girls in particular), to the same sphere, may obscure particular needs and rights that girls have in conflict and dissuade actors in the CaAC infrastructure from considering age-related differences in need between girls and women. Similarly, in some contexts it risks conflating the needs of all children with women – without any consideration of the needs of boys.

Pruitt (2020) argues that the ‘women-and-children’ norm has performed exactly this reductive function in the consideration of girls’ needs in conflict, calling for a more differentiated analysis of

the various needs of girls of different ages and a less binary distinction between girls and adult women; “After all, recognizing how age and gender intersect is necessary to adequately explore how girls’ experiences and participation are shaped by gender norms, how they might participate in building peace, and how conflict impacts them” (p.211). Yet, this is buttressed by the acknowledgement that in theatres of war, distinctions in appropriate societal roles based on age tend to distort; the pathway to adulthood can be warped and rerouted as children of various ages are transferred into conflict roles.

Recent reporting by NGOs has started to reflect concerns regarding the issue of the conflation of women and girls of different ages (Puechguirbal 2010, Pruitt 2020). Save the Children’s gender analysis of the Grave Violations against children in armed conflict (2020) also contains some useful reflexivity about the impact of the ‘women-and-children’ norm, and perhaps alludes to the influence of complicit agendas like WPS: “Developments related to gender have, at times, risked conflating the needs of girls with their adult counterparts” (p.21).

Furthermore, along with the risk of conflating the needs of children with women, the binary construction of women and children as a category necessarily homogenises children themselves. The report explains that the needs of specific other ‘categories’ of children, including boys, girls, younger children, older children, and children of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) can therefore be overlooked (Save the Children 2020 p.11). It is also stated that while children are homogenised, so are women and girls assumed to have the same needs in some contexts, and men and boys.

Another risk in interrogating the ‘women-and-children’ norm, though, is the potential for recreating the very hierarchies of importance and agency that lead feminist security studies scholars to take issue with this norm in the first instance. Problematizing the conjunction of women and children, only on the grounds that it infantilises women, upholds a dichotomy of ‘women versus children’ which necessitates the denial of children’s agency and essentialises their experiences (Berents 2020b, Pruitt 2020). When different actors focusing respectively on either women or children pull apart the term ‘women-and-children’, one category is inevitably privileged; and if these actors are policy creators, the result may be a harmful distribution of resources. While over-conceptualising the ‘women-and-children’ agenda as women-focused first and foremost, resources may be

redirected from efforts to address issues facing children. Similarly, some actors may prioritise (female) children over women based on popularised notions of girls' productive potential: "As a World Bank managing director phrased it, 'investing in women is smart economics, and investing in girls, catching them upstream, is even smarter economics'" (Koffman and Gill 2013 p.89, in Pruitt 2020 p.203).

The challenge in interrogating this norm, then, lies in a nuanced approach to discourse analysis; "...while seeing value in feminist IR contributions that have sought to break down conceptualizations that lump children and women together, it is also important to critique the way the terms have been pulled apart and reconstituted, often in hierarchical ways." (Pruitt 2020 p.209). Berents (2020b) extends this recommendation to more of the normative language typically used in the CaAC workstream, and speaks to the necessity of complex analyses of such categories:

Burman (2008) urges us to look beyond dichotomies such as work versus play and women versus children, the latter being 'neither equivalent nor separable'. And, as Enloe (2010 p.218) argues, we also need to be "conducting a more energetic analysis – one that does not refer lazily to 'families,' 'children,' 'parents'...as if women and men related identically to each". To think about children's security therefore it would be better to consider women and children's enabling and disabling of each other. The "complex – even positively messy – understanding of in/security as a discursive terrain" (ibid. p.41).

Scholars argue that the CaAC agenda had an innate focus on gender from its inception (Pruitt 2020, Lee-Koo 2019). Though the CaAC gender is technically slightly older than the WPS agenda, the 'women-and-children norm' appears to have influenced the development of these almost parallel workstreams. The WPS agenda was driven in large part by civil society actors, who campaigned to draw attention to the issue at the highest levels of UN policy-making. It is also not insignificant that the first WPS resolution, 1325, was passed in 2000, two years after the establishment of the OSRSG-CaAC.

Pruitt (2020) and others have therefore highlighted the role of the 'women-and-children' norm in the development of both agendas:

Although the conflation of women and children has a long history of critique, even UN Security Council Resolutions propagate the conflation of women and children by assuming

in policy and practice that children will gain ‘trickle down’ benefits from generalised post-conflict attempts at redressing systemic problems, which marginalises their ideas, issues, and needs (Watson 2008). Such notions may have fundamentally shaped the first WPS landmark resolution, UNSCR 1325, adopted unanimously in 2000. (p.211)

Lee-Koo (2019) also argues that the CaAC agenda was strongly influenced, from the beginning, by early ideas of gender mainstreaming and the attendant language, with concurrent resolutions in the year 2000 and beyond containing similar emphases on the importance of incorporating gender perspectives at all levels of policy. Lee-Koo’s analysis of the language encoded in WPS resolutions further supports the point; she finds that the phrases “women and children” and “women and girls” are always used when reference to children is made (2020 p.614). She gives the example of the first WPS resolution, 1325, which includes the following: “...civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict” (UNSC 2000). It is illuminating to note the similarity with language included in contemporaneous reports of the OSRSG-CaAC, as discussed above.

This section demonstrates that there are clear linkages between WPS and CaAC. But what is less clear is exactly how these linkages operate and the extent to which they are present.

6.3 Women, peace and security as normative influence

This section examines the parallels between the CaAC workstream and WPS, identifying the WPS agenda as a *site of normative influence* that contributes to the enduring presence of the ‘women-and-children’ norm in the CaAC workstream. In particular, this section notes the emphasis confirmed in the datasets on ‘women-and-children’ as being those in need of protection as well as confirming some of the sites of divergence between WPS and CaAC noted by other scholars.

6.3.1 Propagating norms

Gendered norms about conflict-affected children are propagated and transported around UN workstreams by actors who intentionally use “recycled language” (in the words of an interviewee) to direct the conceptual framing of workstreams. This language also transfers between International NGOs and UN organisations, and then impacts discussions between larger and more

local NGOs and groups; normative language clearly associated with the higher levels of a particular multi-national NGO regarding the 'women-and-children' norm was clearly identified in interviews with that NGO's child protection field workers in Sudan, for example, who were Sudanese in origin and involved in local initiatives. A 2020 Save the Children report highlights the method used: "To ensure children's protection in conflict is mainstreamed across peace, security and broader humanitarian agendas, the use of recurring normative language that is age and gender-sensitive, and consistently championed across various fora, is essential." (Save the Children 2020 p.12). This is the practical application of the practice known as 'mainstreaming' or advocating for the centrality of an agenda across multiple different organisations or workstreams with the intent of securing meaningful progress. Section 6.5.1 (below) examines this practice further in the context of norm transfer from other workstreams into CaAC.

In terms of how this process works, Carpenter (2016) has theorised the way in which such gendered norms develop in their analysis of the norm of civilian protection. Note that central to understanding this process is the distinction between 'gender norms' and 'gendered norms'.

The norm of civilian protection is argued to be a 'gendered norm', because even though it does not explicitly proscribe the expected behaviour of a given gender, it has a gendered meaning; it is conflated with 'women-and-children'. The language used in developing the civilian protection norm has resulted in a constitutive effect on the norm; that is, the norm itself has 'warped' or 'frame-shifted' from its original meaning:

Ideas embedded in broader normative understandings can generate an application of a broader norm that is inconsistent with its own internal logic. The implicit beliefs (or sub-norms) are not constitutive of the broader norm, nor do they by themselves cause the norm to be implemented. Rather, they distort the way in which norm effects are manifest, while masquerading as a proper application of the norm. (Carpenter 2016 p.12)

In undertaking her work Carpenter does not agree with Kinsella (2005) that the 'moral innocence' norm of women-and-children explains the entirety of the intellectual tradition of the immunity norm; arguing instead that these are two separate norms that have been conflated over time and through the use of language (p.26). This illustrates the power of language as a contribution to

symbolic technologies in workstreams like CaAC, which then has an impact on policy and programming.

6.3.2 The presence of the ‘women-and-children’ norm as normative influence

The results of this thesis reveal plentiful examples of phrases indicating the presence of the ‘women-and-children norm’. It was noted in the first dataset that this norm is highly frequent in early annual reports of the OSRSG-CaAC. Examples from the earliest reporting years (e.g. 1998) are particularly illustrative:

The Special Representative, together with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, organizations of the United Nations system and NGOs, supports instituting controls for the transfer of arms to conflict zones, especially where children and women are being abused and brutalized. (United Nations, OSRSG-CaAC 1998 para. 38);

In Afghanistan, children and women suffer doubly.... (ibid.para. 46);

[The SRSG] works with [agencies and bodies] to unblock difficult political situations and to seek access to civilian populations in distress, the worst affected of whom are always women and children. (ibid. para. 15);

Children, women and the elderly have all become fair game in the single-minded struggle for power. (ibid. para. 28);

The international community must exert greater and concerted political efforts to address directly the real issues in conflict situations. This is the only way to end the suffering of so many children and women (ibid. para. 151).

As well as presenting children and women as a site of suffering and emotive value, the reports also tend to ‘other’ women and children by including them as separate to, but a necessary inclusion alongside, references to an affected population in general:

...children, women, refugees and other vulnerable populations. (OSRSG-CaAC 2000 para. 45);

children and civilians.... (ibid. para. 63).

The frequency of this norm language then reduced through the early 2000s, dropping off significantly from 2010 and reappearing in the 2020 report, again with high frequency. In the second dataset, the norm was found to be present in different degrees in field documents produced by various UN agencies and NGOs. Chapter Five showed how the documents primarily produced by UNICEF contained a much higher frequency of instances of the norm than documents produced by any other agency. Instances of the norm in UNICEF field documents were often without context and were reflective of similar normative language used at the higher policy level – as in the OSRSG-CaAC reports of the first dataset. Typical phrases include references to children and women as somehow separate and distinct from ‘vulnerable’ or ‘affected’ populations:

Advocating with national/local authorities...to respect, promote and fulfil women’s and children’s rights, and to improve policies and programmes for children, women and communities. (UNICEF 2020a p.19);

children, women and communities (ibid. p.19);

...at risk populations, including children and women (ibid. p.29);

...mainstream the protection of children, women and affected populations...Target the most disadvantaged children, women and communities. (ibid. p.30)

One particularly interesting instance of relevant normative language was included in the same document (UNICEF’s Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action) as a definition for the term “Accountability to affected populations”:

This results in the ability of all vulnerable, at-risk and crisis-affected girls, women and men supported through UNICEF humanitarian actions to hold UNICEF as an organisation to account for promoting and protecting their rights and generating effective results for them.... (UNICEF 2020a p.101)

In this instance, men are included alongside girls and women; yet boys – discursively separated from men in almost other instances in UNICEF documents – are rendered invisible.

It was found that documents produced by UNHCR and the Inter-Agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (IAWG-UASC) also contained clusters of this norm language (though to a lesser degree), centred around discussion of the Best Interests Assessment

(BIA) and Best Interests Determination (BID) processes in the field. Documents produced by primarily by DPO contained some instances of the norm language, mostly relating to peacekeeper training and staffing practice. And finally, the one document produced by the OSRSG-CaAC itself, a field manual for mediators, also contained some norm language reflective of OSRSG-CaAC annual reporting and making reference to relevant language in peace agreements already achieved by mediators, such as the following agreement signed in the Central African Republic:

Recognizing that the majority of the population of the Central African Republic is made up of children and women who have been deeply affected by the armed conflict...[Parties] To refrain from...sexual and gender-based violence, in particular against women and girls (OSRSG-CaAC 2020 p.45).

These findings are important because they contribute further evidence to support scholarly concerns about the dominance of the 'women-and-children' paradigm in child protection and elsewhere.

6.3.3 Confirming the focus on 'women-and-children' in need of protection

The analysis of OSRSG-CaAC reports as discussed in Chapter 4 demonstrates the abundance of gender mainstreaming language early in the set. The 1999 report refers to the Special Representative having established links with academic institutions to encourage research on "knowledge gaps in important areas affecting women and children caught up in conflict" (para. 84). The 2001 report lists WPS resolutions as relevant to the child protection workstream, and the first direct reference to WPS is in the 2002 report (para. 9). This same report also provides examples to illustrate the association between a gender mainstreaming policy approach and the use of 'women-and-children' normative language, signalling 'sub-norms' like the contextless grouping of women and children, or the invisibility of boys. Paragraph 47 (f) describes "A photo exhibition on the impact of armed conflict on girls, held in collaboration with UNICEF, the Government of Canada, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and non-governmental organisations..." (OSRSG-CaAC 2002).

Holding a photo exhibition to make audiences aware of the impact of conflict on girls does not necessarily imply, alone, that the impact on boys was not considered by the OSRSG-CaAC;

however, as discussed in this chapter, specific impacts on boys did not even feature in reporting until years later. Perhaps the most interesting example of ‘women-and-children’ normative language in the early OSRSG-CaAC reports is the announcement of a new awareness campaign in the 1999 report called “Go Women, Go Children, Go Local”: “...the Special Representative has been very moved the examples of ordinary people – mostly women – doing extraordinary things at the local, community level. The international community needs to get closer to such local actors, learn from their examples and support their efforts” (UN 1999 para. 182). The title of the campaign exemplifies the presumed homogeneity of women and children in the armed conflict space, inhabiting the ‘local’ realm, reinforcing the domesticity of both groups. Exactly what “extraordinary things” women were doing and what their “efforts” were in pursuit of is not specified – the language used is vague and reinforces the “ordinary” nature and domesticity of both groups. Interestingly, though, this language is at times reinforced at the local field level; an interviewee employed as a child protection worker spoke of the realm of local women’s groups as being inherently protective of children, due to the inclusion of mothers:

Why I say that...women has the key roles in playing...to play, to play, to protect the rights of children, because: one, they are mothers. Two, they are the...they say childhood begins at home. And they are the right people who ensure that if they talk to these children, and uh...their voices can be heard. (Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

Such a perspective, rooted as it was in local observation of the role played by mothers, may be an isolated phenomenon. However, this particular interviewee was employed by a large INGO that contributed to some of the field literature examined in dataset 2. This may, then, be a site of normative influence on that INGO through upward feedback; or perhaps even vice versa. Another, different interviewee employed in field child protection work for a different INGO noted; “Strengthening the capacity of women-led organisations has been also our priority...we are currently working with them to ensure that uh, they are able to reach out to their communities and you know...the issue of uh, child recruitment and also violence against children” (pers. comm. June 29, 2021).

This interviewee discussed the centrality of “UN resolutions” to their work and had previously worked on contract for UNICEF in the field, demonstrating a possible site of influence in terms of normative thinking; this quote demonstrates the way that women’s groups are considered key to the localisation of child protection norms even in very generalised terms, such as recruitment and general violence.

Another contribution of the work covered in Chapter Four is that it confirms other concerns raised in the WPS space. For example, scholars of the WPS agenda have already been at pains to point out that the greatest area of progress, and successful mainstreaming, has been in the ‘protection’ pillar of WPS (as opposed to the ‘recovery’ or ‘relief’ pillars). Lee-Koo has demonstrated the resulting effects on language relating to children in the WPS agenda: “References to girls and children are primarily made within the protection pillar or to a much lesser extent in the relief and recovery pillar” (2019 p.9). Importantly, Pruitt’s analysis supports Lee-Koo’s by also finding that children, or otherwise girls specifically, are presented as homogenous with women in Resolution 1325:

A further simple analysis of UNSCR 1325 finds that the term ‘women’ appears in the resolution a total of 33 times. This includes 13 instances in which the phrase ‘women and girls’ is used. Significantly, every mention of ‘girls’ in the resolution is as part of the phrase ‘women and girls.’ This framing suggests that girls are presumed connected with, yet subsidiary to the needs and perspectives of adult women. (Pruitt 2020 p.211)

This example speaks to the characterisation of children, like women, as vulnerable, as *primarily in need of protection*. At this crossroads, issues with the implementation of both WPS and CaAC are identified. More recent work on WPS has identified resistance within the UN to mainstreaming any aspects of the WPS agenda that relate to participation (de Almagro 2018). This has also been common to the CaAC workstream.

The research presented in Chapters 4 and 5 therefore helps to confirm that both workstreams succeed in mainstreaming norms that pertain to vulnerability and a need for protection yet face resistance where meaningful involvement, and an agentic conception of women or children, is advocated for (this issue of agency is covered in more detail in Chapter 7).

While the distinction between the success of the protection versus participation pillars of WPS is noted by several scholars, Hultman & Sellström (2019) further problematise the practice of language mainstreaming in and of itself; noting that "...a steady increase in language on gender has not necessarily enhanced protection. In 2016, 48 percent of Council resolutions included references to the WPS agenda, but the depth of these references with regard to coercive enforcement of protection is uneven" (p.6).

The practice of mainstreaming 'symbolic technologies' (phrases) associated with norms is therefore considered variably successful in the WPS agenda. Here, as is noted in the first dataset examined for this project (that is the OSRSG-CaAC annual reports), the mainstreaming of certain phrases at the high policy level within the CaAC workstream did not always translate to real-world success over time either. The "era of application" was a reflective attempt to manage a lack of progress in this area but mainstreaming attempts continue to be made across the WPS agenda *in to* the CaAC workstream.

6.3.4 Confirming points of divergence

Lee-Koo (2019) has highlighted some areas in which the WPS and CaAC workstream differ and have begun to diverge. Firstly, the WPS agenda has evolved since its inception to encompass strong research-based representation in global affairs, including in multilateral agreements and commitments. This might be considered one of the core successes of WPS. Lee-Koo notes that 63 member states now have National Action Plans for domestic WPS implementation; and that this is supported by robust NGO monitoring as well as sufficient academic attention (pp.7-8). Yet, the CaAC workstream has not had such significant success in terms of either a research base (though this is growing within the field of security studies and international relations), or global political representation.

The practical approach to centring WPS in high-level workstreams – mainstreaming using language – has therefore not had the same success in the CaAC workstream despite areas of workstream overlap. Given the issues of political will that have led to uneven success in embedding different pillars of WPS, perhaps the CaAC workstream will face the same issues of patchy implementation, or it may be that there is something about how children are conceptualised that is inherently more politically controversial.

In considering the challenges met in implementing the CaAC workstream, an interviewee employed at a large child-focused NGO, and who regularly engages in negotiations with UN member states over language included in CaAC-relevant resolutions, spoke to their challenges in reconciling the level of agency some states' representatives were willing to ascribe children. The interviewee's perspective was that resistance to a norm of children's agency were rooted in traditionalist and/or religious ideas about the sanctity of the nuclear family as a microcosm of societal values; an interesting reflection of the values behind the establishment of organisations such as UNICEF.

Secondly, Lee-Koo found that after the year 2004, "CaAC resolutions no longer reference Resolution 1325 or the WPS agenda in the Preamble, and no longer reference either 'women and girls' or 'women and children' in the text of the resolutions. The adoption of gender neutral language is an important shift in the Council's conceptualization of the agenda" (2019 p.8).

A possible reason provided for this shift is the increasing prominence of acknowledgements in the workstream about the impact of certain violations, especially sexual violence in conflict, on boys. In 2005, the UN investigated allegations of sexual abuse by peacekeepers and found a number of the survivors were boys. Lee-Koo argues that this realisation led to some acceptance within the workstream that the experiences of adults in conflict may not be the most suitable basis on which to conceptualise the impact of conflict on children (ibid.); and therefore, it followed that an approach centred in WPS may not be able to fully address issues as they pertained to children.

Insights gained from the first dataset examined in this thesis clearly demonstrate that the OSRSG-CaAC annual reports, specifically, follow the trend identified by Lee-Koo in that language signifying the 'women-and-children' norm declines in frequency from the mid-2000s and has negligible presence in reports after approximately 2010. There is an increasing presence of the use of the phrase 'boys and girls' in place of 'children' over time too.

Drawing on dataset 1, the change in focus in OSRSG-CaAC reports from about 2008 to include explicit reference to boys as victims of sexual violence supports Lee-Koo's argument that the CaAC agenda began to diverge in several ways from WPS. Initially this is limited to the inclusion of the phrase "girls and boys" in references to sexual violence: "The stigmatization of victims of sexual violence, which often leads to their being ostracized or marginalized, requires

comprehensive community-level interventions for affected girls and boys” (2008 para. 41).

However, this develops into acknowledgement of a lack of data-gathering and wider attention to the issue, and specific ways in which sexual violence may impact boys:

Although cases of sexual violence against boys are sometimes reported, insufficient attention is paid to this particular dimension, and such violations remain largely undocumented. Some research indicates that boys are especially vulnerable to sexual violence during military operations in civilian areas or during military conscription or abduction into paramilitary forces. They are also especially vulnerable in refugee and internally displaced settings and in detention. (2009 para. 17);

Girls remain the main victims of sexual violence in armed conflict. However, there are increasing reports of sexual abuse committed against boys. This phenomenon is still not adequately understood, and is yet to be comprehensively addressed in advocacy, monitoring, reporting and response. Knowledge about sexual violence against boys continues to be thin, in part because boys are more reluctant to speak out against sexual violence and there is inherently a bias against questioning boys about such abuse. (2010 para. 21).

The 2010 report makes specific reference to the Furundzija case at the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, in which the court ruled that forcing an individual to witness sexual violence is considered sexual torture under international law. This paragraph argues that the trauma experienced by boys forced to witness sexual violence is “underestimated” (2010 para. 22). In later reports in the set, the consideration on the impact of sexual violence on boys is more nuanced and includes consideration of the extent to which it is underreported – and even asserting that sexual violence against boys is more likely to be underreported than violence against girls:

Rape and other forms of sexual violence remained significantly underreported, in particular when perpetrated against boys, owing to stigma, the involvement of powerful perpetrators, the lack of services and as a result of concerns about the protection of survivors and witnesses. (2019 para. 11);

Boys may face additional reporting barriers due to stigma related to perceived gender roles. There may also be criminal repercussions as the rape of boys may not be criminalised and

may fall instead under the criminalisation of same-sex conduct, which impedes reporting for fear of prosecution. (2019 para. 15);

Rape and other sexual violence remained significantly underreported, a continuous trend in all countries on the children and armed conflict agenda, particularly when perpetrated against boys. (2020 para. 14)

Notably, too, an interviewee for this project noted that there is considerable tension at the higher negotiation level of the CaAC workstream, particularly regarding Security Council resolutions, between NGOs regarding the now frequent references to boys on the topic of sexual violence. The interviewee stated that a particular NGO was mostly responsible for the inclusion of such language through determined lobbying, but that other NGOs had argued that such inclusion would obscure the gendered nature of SGBV (see Chapter 8 for further discussion).

Yet, it is clear that WPS still has influence on the CaAC agenda at different levels of collaboration; the following statement from 2008 is explicit on areas of agenda overlap at the time:

The Office of the Special Representative continues to work closely with the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and participates in the task force meetings that are convened on a regular basis...The Office of the Special Representative has also regularly provided inputs to the Secretary-General's report on women, peace and security, and to the United Nations-wide action plan on sexual violence. The Special Representative welcomes the adoption in June 2008 of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security and will continue to advocate for the implementation of key provisions relating to children and armed conflict of this important instrument (OSRSG-CaAC 2008 para. 19).

Similarly, the 2017 report demonstrates that workstream overlap continues to be significant and that events organised across the agendas treat women and children in conflict as still, essentially, inhabiting the same issue space:

The Office of the Special Representative also took part in an annual workshop on children and armed conflict and women, peace and security, organised by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany in Berlin in April 2017. Concrete opportunities for Member States and

regional organisations to deepen their engagement with regard to the protection of children affected by conflict were put forward at that occasion. (OSRSG-CaAC 2017 para. 37)

Moreover, while the bulk of ‘women-and-children’ norm language was increasingly absent from OSRSG-CaAC reports as the 2000s went on, the most notable finding in the first dataset results was that language associated with this norm was suddenly present again in the 2020 report. This language is often used in relation to outreach events that the Special Representative has been involved in throughout the reporting period; for example, reference to a conference at the University of Liege, Belgium, called: “Violence against women and girls in conflict”, where the Special Representative was a keynote speaker (OSRSG-CaAC 2020 para. 73). Paragraph 76 of the same report includes reference to the R2P agenda, and recounts collaborative statements issued by the Special Representative and other officials:

In [November 2019], together with other high-level United Nations officials, [the Special Representative] issued a joint statement on human rights and humanitarian concerns related to women and children affected by armed conflict in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic...In February 2020, she joined the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Representative on Violence against Children in issuing a statement deploring continued reports of human rights abuses against civilians, including women and children, in the south-west and north-west regions of Cameroon. (OSRSG-CaAC 2020 para. 76)

These inclusions indicate that cross-cutting workstreams involving other Special Representatives and UN officials may be influencing the return of ‘women-and-children’ normative language to OSRSG-CaAC reporting.

Further research to accurately identify exactly why this norm re-entered the CaAC agenda at multiple levels around the year 2020 could provide an important addition to the literature, although Chapter Eight presents a hypothesis that arrangements of formal and informal interaction between NGOs and UN organisations in the workstream may have contributed to this norm recycling. In the sections below, however, we consider the roles of other actors responsible for attempts to mainstream norms across the WPS and CaAC workstreams.

6.4 Mainstreaming actors

In this section we consider the role of different actors involved in attempts to mainstream WPS and other initiatives.

6.4.1 UN Women

UN Women has the central responsibility of mainstreaming the WPS. Dersnah (2019) provides a clear analysis of the role of UN Women in this capacity and challenges it faces. UN Women has built a strong reputation at the higher policy level of the UN and is acknowledged as the WPS system coordinator in the peace and security field; it has dedicated support from the Intergovernmental Support Division and System Coordination Division. It considers its role to be focused on coordinating and mainstreaming across departments, including DPO, the OHCHR, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and DPA. Although Dersnah writes that “It [UN Women] is mainstreaming gender into the work that takes place in fragile, conflict and post-conflict countries to ensure that the WPS agenda is advanced in practice” (2019 p.4), they also state that UN Women struggles to achieve field influence at the level enjoyed in the higher policy space: “UN Women continues to have a relatively small presence in-country, especially compared to other major players. Consequently, it has not yet been able to consistently define its “value-added” in comparison to these existing actors in these contexts” (2019 p.6).

It is interesting to consider this question of mainstreaming in light of the results of dataset 2, which demonstrate a very significant presence of the ‘women-and-children’ norm in some documents (namely by UNICEF) and negligible presence in others. It would appear from these results that UNICEF is in fact the core driver of WPs-related intellectual heritages, such as the ‘women-and-children’ norm, in the field space, as UN Women does not usually have a direct line of input into these field documents (and, in fact, it is notable that UN Women is hardly mentioned at all throughout these UNICEF documents).

The OSRSG-CaAC reports, on the other hand, do indicate that UNIFEM (as it was known at the time) was involved with the Special Representative’s working group on specific missions, such as in Côte d’Ivoire, from as early as 2004 (para. 19) and thus had a direct line of influence at the high policy level in the CaAC agenda. The 2010 report supports the policy influence of the newly-named

UN Women, stating it has the “broad workstream to coordinate the global efforts of the United Nations on gender-related issues as a whole” (para. 25), including representation at the General Assembly level for matters relating to sexual violence in conflict.

6.4.2 UNICEF

In thinking about how these themes come together in CaAC practice, UNICEF is an organisation which perhaps uniquely spans the conflict space and the development space. The beginning overview of UNICEF’s Conflict Sensitivity document, included in the second dataset, states that UNICEF is uniquely situated to contribute to peacebuilding because of its multi-sector access; this allows it to platform marginalised voices, such as “children, youth and women” (2016 p.3). This may account for some of its focus on ‘women-and-children’ in the second dataset, as several documents produced by UNICEF are for use in various kinds of complex emergencies, including development-specific situations, as well as conflict. UNICEF’s ordinary workstream is heavily-development focused, and in the field UNICEF is typically responsible for the coordination of things like WASH (sanitation) programmes as well as maternal and infant health, areas in which the utility of a joint women-and-children area of responsibility are obvious. The influence of the SDGs is apparent in documents post-2015 and they are referenced with reasonable frequency. UNICEF’s *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action* states specifically that they are intended to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs (2020a p.5).

Overall, while it has already been argued that UNICEF has a tradition of influence by the ‘women-and-children’ norm, it appears also to be increasingly influenced by norm flow originating from the WPS space, whether through mainstreaming attempts in the CaAC workstream or through the development route. The Core Commitments refers specifically to “Security Council resolutions, particularly on children and armed conflict, protection of civilians, women, peace and security” (UNICEF 2020a p.10).

Dersnah (2019) offers the useful observation that “the proportion of [budgetary] allocations targeting gender equality as a program’s principal objective has increased too, for example, with UNICEF’s proportion over three years increasing from 11 to 19 percent in 2014” (p.5). Save the Children makes a relevant comment on the areas of workstream complementarity and the potential role of UNICEF in further blending the SDG and CaAC frameworks, due to the utility of the SDG

framework for gathering disaggregated data: "...data captured for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – particularly for indicators 16.1.2 on conflict related deaths and 16.1.3 which includes tracking for the proportion of the population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence – could be potential mechanisms for gathering systematically disaggregated data" (Save the Children 2020b p.49), and furthermore identifies areas of almost complete crossover in the field: "Additionally, UNICEF and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have been working on how to record and track recruitment under goal 8.7 on the worst forms of child labour" (ibid. p.49). The gendered analysis of the Grave Violations focuses on opportunities for more accurate, disaggregated data in the MRM mechanism by harnessing areas of complementarity between WPS and CaAC focused field actors. And these areas of complementarity are important sites for norm development too.

6.4.3 Special Representatives of the Secretary General

Another factor that facilitates the blurring of different agendas with CaAC is the involvement of different Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. In particular, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict has essentially a specific workstream pertaining to women and children across WPs and CaAC spheres. The Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict works with the OSRSG-CaAC at the high policy level as well as conducting field visits in which they convene with Child Protection Advisors and Women Protection Advisors. This creates a site of normative input at both policy levels, as well as creating duplicate workstreams on the same issues in which consultative parties vary slightly. Special Representatives across issue areas have a unique role with their direct access to higher-level UN processes, and as such are conceptualised as potential solutions to problems of inefficacy as well as inaccurate normative conceptions of field environments; "The strong emphasis by the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence on ending impunity may be a way forward in developing a wider array of tools for offering civilian protection equally for the whole civilian population" (Hultman & Sellström 2019 p.8).

However, it may be argued that because of the normative spaces inhabited by Special Representatives such as the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, sitting across

multiple agendas that contain iterations of the 'women-and-children' norm, it is unrealistic to expect that they will alter normative conceptions within these workstreams.

Save the Children identifies the cross-cutting frameworks that this Special Representative works on, and suggests the continued cohesion of the agendas can provide practical improvements:

The Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) on conflict-related sexual violence: As part of the broader WPS agenda, the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC) was established in 2009, followed by the Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) on conflict-related sexual violence in 2010. Similar to the MRM, the MARA verifies and reports upon sexual violence, though against both adults and children. Both the MARA and the workstream of the OSRSG-SVC were intentionally designed to be separate from the MRM. While not specific to children, the MARA and the OSRSG-SVC pave the way for additional identification, documentation. (Save the Children 2020b p.20)

Here, though it is acknowledged that the MARA is not specific to children, it is not problematised as a tool for data gathering on children's issues specifically; the question is whether or not the use of field tools that are inherently influenced by the normative baggage of their workstreams can, indeed, provide useful and accurate information on groups that have differing needs. This practice was, in fact, questioned as long ago as 2007 in the OSRSG-CaAC report dataset; the 2007 report states that "Despite improvements, reporting is rarely disaggregated, making it difficult to discern the extent to which funding patterns match children's needs...In most of the common humanitarian action plans, children were included as part of "vulnerable groups", deflecting attention from child-specific priorities" (para. 7879). The same report emphasises in its Recommendations that "all stakeholders must give particular attention to the specific needs of child survivors [of gender-based violence], as distinct from those of women" (para. 110 (b)). Yet, parallel advocacy work with both the Special Representative of the Secretary general for Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Violence against Children, is frequently referenced in the OSRSG-CaAC reports, and continues to be associated with 'women and girls' normative language (e.g. OSRSG-CaAC 2013, 2019). Further challenges specific to the use of

field tools like Rapid Assessments or MRM monitoring are discussed below in relation to data disaggregation.

6.4.4 UNHCR and IAWG-UASC

Dataset 2 presents an illustration of the ways that normative language about women and children might impact field practices. Five of twelve long documents analysed in this dataset pertain primarily to unaccompanied, displaced or refugee children in emergency contexts, primarily authored by a combination of UNHCR and the IAWG-UASC. While these agencies do not have a specific CaAC workstream, the emergency contexts in question are often post-conflict settings, or disaster settings in which conflict is occurring or likely; conflict is frequently included as a consideration in the documents. Furthermore, due to the complex nature of the child protection subcluster, there is considerable interaction between these agencies and other UN organisations – primarily UNICEF, who usually leads the subcluster and coordinates child-focused response – and NGOs.

The process of ‘Best Interests Assessment’ (or ‘Rapid Assessment’) and ‘Best Interests Determination’ of unaccompanied children, led in the field by either UNHCR or ICRC, necessitates field workers making normative judgements about the children they encounter. These workers may belong to UNHCR, or to NGOs. Workers are required to use paper forms to place the child in categories of vulnerability using codes; UNHCR’s Best Interests Determination guide includes a sample form, including the codes ‘CAAFAG’, ‘child spouse’, ‘teen pregnancy’, and several different codes related to sexual violence (2011b p.129). The IAWG-UASC handbook on UASC describes the necessity of identifying “groups of children at special risk, such as those who are disabled or chronically ill, associated with armed forces or groups, or in detention (or whose parents are in detention), children who are parents and head households, adolescent girls, babies and very young children” (2016 p.106). The codes are inputted into ProGres, UNHCR’s information management (IM) system; and these may be shared with UNICEF or other agencies or NGOs when referrals are made by workers for children to access necessary services (e.g. WASH, psychosocial support). The same workers are also required to complete MRM reporting if they encounter children who have been subject to grave violations. The gendered space of response to children who are mothers, and heading households, is an area in which workers are required to

judge whether or not a girl mother is 'adult' enough to remain in charge of her family unit without intervention; the IAWG-UASC handbook recommends that needs assessments are made on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not such family units should be placed in foster care (2016 p.206).

Yet, despite the clearly defined process of categorisation laid out in these field guides, UNHCR's Best Interests Determination Handbook notes: "Child protection programming has tended to focus on categories of children (e.g. victims of abuse, girl mothers, street children, child soldiers, etc.) rather than taking a holistic view of children's entire "protective environment" (2011b p.18). While the field documents analysed often reference a 'systems approach' to child protection in the field, with the aim of avoiding this consequence of data disaggregation, the practical process of data-gathering remains category-centred – ostensibly for practical reasons.

While gender is a central issue in rapid assessment discussions, much of this appears to be supported well by context and evidence and does not appear to be contextless normative signposting. For example, considerations around the lower visibility of unaccompanied girls are based squarely in the argument that, particularly in CAAFAG contexts, they can be relegated to the domestic sphere by men (IAWG-UASC 2016 p.176), and therefore extra care should be taken to inquire where hidden girls are suspected to be. There is also frequent acknowledgement of the different needs of girls and boys, and examining these in a nuanced and context-based way is encouraged: "Boys and girls will have different [follow-up] needs, which are likely to vary according to gender, age, disability, ethnicity and experiences during separation." (IAWG-UASC 2016 p.263). Documents pertaining to UASC also tend to avoid a reliance on 'women-and-children' normative language in the area of sexual violence, with consideration of the impact on boys as "a problem that is often hidden and largely undocumented", and discussion of the importance of making space for boys to receive support (IAWG-UASC 2016 p.269). The MRM field manual produced by OSRSG-CaAC, UNICEF and DPO (2014) is clear that data should be disaggregated based on age and gender in as nuanced a way as possible.

Generally, the most important result from this dataset in relation to the 'women-and-children' norm was the demonstration of how central normative judgments about children are to field practices, and how it might be concluded then that the influence of the 'women-and-children' norm in the field

would impact said judgements. However, there were also some explicit examples of field guidance in which the rationale for conglomerating women and children was not immediately clear:

Registration of vulnerable women, children and families (including unaccompanied women and children and female-headed households) is crucial in order to ensure they have access to life-saving assistance (such as food, shelter and medical care). (IAWG-UASC 2017a p.30);

Protection of children, women and other vulnerable persons (Title of a rapid assessment tool, IAWG-UASC 2017a p.91).

Similarly, the familiar normative phrase ‘women’s groups’ appears several times among these documents, in particular in relation to these groups’ usefulness in family tracing processes (UNHCR 2011a p.26).

Although practical references to gender, including women and children, in documents relating to rapid assessments in the field tend to have a context that appears logical, it appears that ‘women-and-children’ normative language does exist at points in the documents authored by staff-contributing agencies. It has also been shown throughout this chapter that the norm itself is present throughout the wider CaAC workstream, including in policy of the OSRSG-CaAC specifically, and UNICEF, which both contribute field guidance as well as higher-level direction of the agenda. Given this is the case, it can be assumed that field workers who are required to categorise children may be impacted by the ‘women-and-children’ norm in their assessments. This illustrates some of the challenges present in the disaggregation of data about conflict-affected children, including the central tension identified earlier in the chapter between true disaggregation and the mainstreaming of gender language – the requirement to centralise ‘women-and-children’.

6.5 WPS and CaAC dynamics

In this closing section we consider the consequences of attempts to mainstream some aspects of the WPS agenda into the CaAC agenda as well as the possible generation of new norms through contact between these agendas. We then move to focus specifically on the issue of sexual violence as an area where the two agendas collide.

6.5.1 Mainstreaming WPS into CaAC

While the WPS and CaAC agendas share some common normative heritage and mainstreaming approaches, and mainstreaming in WPS has had varied success, the attempt to mainstream normative language from the WPS agenda into CaAC has had complicated results. WPS-focused gender mainstreaming plans are now a focus of all UN agencies that cover workstreams related to peace and security, or development. Some agencies central to the CaAC workstream consequently have an increased focus on gender.

However, altering the 'women-and-children' norm in gender mainstreaming has not been consistently successful, with the complex question of exactly where the boundaries are between women and children, and between different age groups within these categories, causing challenges. Dersnah (2019) articulates the issue as described in a 2015 report by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee:

...a recent study of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's 2008 Gender Policy showed that the way gender, age, and diversity WPS inside the United Nations are addressed and incorporated into the directives and operational guidelines of the committee were highly inconsistent. This is in part because of the variation between entities within the committee as well as the lack of strong leadership on gender from within that would ensure gender is consistently incorporated (IASC 2015). This inconsistency can include anything from differing definitions of gender to the total omission of any reference to gender equality in their documentation. (p.7)

These challenges of definition speak to the discussion, above, of deeper tensions that arise when the 'women and children' norm is interrogated. The IASC's report identified that strong leadership on gender within separate agencies is lacking, and that there was considerable variation in the willingness to include gender at all, or in more nuanced, disaggregated ways that take account of age, in documentation.

This speaks to *norm resistance* within parts of the UN itself that neither UN Women, as a mainstreaming lead, or entities within the CaAC workstream are consistently overcoming. As has been mentioned, interviewees have suggested that member states may find the intersection of gender (women and non-traditional gender identities specifically) and age to be particularly

politically challenging. UN entities themselves may struggle with normative traditions that address ideas of agency and participation over vulnerability. Associated NGOs who consult with sections of the CaAC agenda may also struggle with this (see Chapter 8).

However, some NGOs at the global level appear to be actively advocating for *new normative conceptions* of both girls, and children in general, at the intersection of WPs and CaAC. NGOs who work at the higher policy level on negotiating language for resolutions and other important thematic documents may be free of the political considerations that states consider necessary in representing their interests. For example, Save the Children's recent gender analysis of the Grave Violations (against children in conflict) recommends that common ground should be reached between the different peace and security agendas, inasmuch as a more complex understanding of affected groups' characteristics allows: "UN actors responsible for developing and implementing Children and Armed Conflict (CaAC), Protection of Civilians (PoC), Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) (with Sexual Violence in Conflict (SVC)) policy frameworks should recognise the individual specificity and points of complementarity between these agendas" (Save the Children 2020a p.12). Save the Children identifies the lack of coherence between the WPS and CaAC agendas in addressing concerns relating specifically to girls, arguing that using WPS as a conceptual framework in this area has thus far failed to achieve better results for girls because of normative assumptions about the homogeneity of women and girls (ibid. p.26).

Development is one specific and parallel area in which the dominant normative conceptions of women and children as homogenous to a degree, as well as children being almost synonymous with girls, continues to impact norms in the CaAC workstream. Dersnah discusses the impact of gender mainstreaming in the UNDP: "For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has their *Eight Point Agenda for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Crisis Prevention and Recovery*. This policy emphasises practical, positive outcomes for women and girls in crisis" (2019 p.4). Beyond specific agencies, the Sustainable Development Goals also include a particular focus on gender with Goal 5, which demands equality for "women and girls" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). Here, the binary categorisation in language between two categories of 'female', both the adult and the child, is present. The WPS agenda and SDGs cross over significantly, with UN Women in prominent policy leadership roles;

and the SDGs are cited within the CaAC workstream increasingly as a useful contribution to the conflict-related challenges faced by 'women and girls' (Dharmaraj & Balakrishnan, 2018).

6.5.2 Generating norms at the WPS and CaAC nexus?

While some norms at the nexus of the WPS and CaAC space appear to be longstanding and persistent, and normative change seems to be resisted at points, other norms appear to have developed as a result of the contact between these agendas.

Documents in both datasets sometimes refer to women UN staff, particularly peacekeepers, as having a particular affinity with children in some way, and therefore best-placed to communicate with children. In discussing this normative trend, it is important to note the context, post-2005, of the acknowledgement of sexual offending by peacekeepers by DPO. In response to this scandal, the wider child protection agenda began to focus heavily on a zero tolerance for sexual abuse policy and on ways that staff might be utilised to minimise risk and be sensitised to the impacts of sexual violence on children. It is considered best practice in the interviewing of children about sexual violence that staff of different genders are available – for example, girls may not be comfortable relaying their experiences to men. These considerations explain some of the reference to women's ability to communicate with children in the documents analysed; for example, the IAWGUASC field handbook specifies that "Ideally, case workers should work in mixed gender pairs" (2016 p.136). UNICEF's *What Works to Protect Children on the Move* also notes that female social workers more likely to adopt gender sensitive interviewing techniques after training (86 vs 71%) (2020b p.55).

However, the characterisation of women in this way sometimes appears to be based on normative assumptions that have been derived from this basis and extended into the notion that only women can empathise with girls, or survivors of sexual violence, for example, or that women are inherently safe around children while men are not. For example, the *Toolkit on Unaccompanied and Separated Children* document produced by the IAWG-UASC includes Global Protection Cluster instructions for what field workers should do if they find an unaccompanied child; including that, if they are forced to leave the child with someone, they should make sure it's a woman (2017 p.197).

DPO's peacekeeper training manual also includes a training exercise in which staff are to be separated into gender groups; men should then read a fictional case study about a boy who is

recruited by an armed group, and women should read another about a girl who is impregnated by a combatant and becomes an underage mother (2018 p.27). Staff are then asked to consider how each child's gender made their experiences different. The utility of separating staff by gender to carry out this exercise is not clear, except for the possibility that women staff might be deliberately relegated to working with girls to mitigate perceived risks of sexual violence presented by men staff. However, if this is the reason for separating staff to learn about the experiences of children of different genders, then it would not be surprising at all that women staff would be found to be more responsive to the needs of girls, and men less so.

Notably, the Save the Children Gender Analysis report points out that the Vancouver Principles reproduce the same perspective:

The accompanying implementation guidance [to the Vancouver Principles] details ways to apply a gender lens. In accordance with the broader Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, they recognise the contribution of women to peacekeeping operations, citing their capacity to “often access populations and venues that are closed to men...” and to “communicate and engage with children differently. (2020a p.20)

The idea that women staff can reach populations that men staff may not be able to is not new and makes contextual sense in terms of gendered norms in field environments. However, the rationale for women having an ability to “communicate and engage with children differently” seems to be less context-focused and more grounded in gender essentialisms: the very normative traditions that result in women and children sometimes being considered homogenous.

Secondly, as is discussed above, the increasing visibility of boy victims of conflict-related sexual violence has impacted the CaAC agenda over time, altering normative language around the issue in documentation. While this is classified by some scholars as a move away from WPS intellectual tradition, the Save the Children report illustrates that this change in conceptualisation may also be occurring within the WPS agenda itself:

Moreover, in April 2019, Germany – a vocal proponent of the WPS agenda – tabled a resolution at the Security Council to improve justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. In addition to underscoring the exposure of men and boys to conflict-related sexual violence, the resolution makes clear

the need for additional support to children born as a result of wartime rape, as well as to their mothers. (2020a p.43)

In this example, the intersection of women and children at the site of conflict-related sexual violence is defined using the issue of “children born as a result of wartime rape” (language, incidentally, that an interviewee described as unacceptable and prejudicial, and as having no place in the CaAC agenda due to its stigmatising function). This phrase, and similar, come up sometimes in the documents examined in this project and represent what is clearly seen as an area of congruence between women’s and children’s experiences of conflict that sits somewhere alongside the issue of demobilised girls who are mothers.

Sexual violence more broadly, however, is a particular issue area of crossover between WPS and CaAC in which scholars have criticised normative assumptions and mainstreaming attempts. It is also an area in which some other mechanisms could be considered to be sites of norm input, in particular other Special Representatives of the Secretary-General engaging across workstreams with the agenda.

6.5.3 The impact of sexual violence workstreams on the intersection of WPS and CaAC

Hultman & Sellström make the argument that WPS had an orientation towards sexual violence as the pre-eminent issue area since its inception: “Since its beginning, the primary feature of protection in the WPS framework (as opposed to the POC’s original scope) has been its orientation toward SGBV [Sexual and Gender-Based Violence]” (2019 p.5). As discussed above, the ‘protection’ pillar of WPS has seen considerably more implementation success than more participatory aspects of the agenda. The same authors focus on the connections between WPS and the Protection of Civilians (PoC) agenda, highlighting that the focus on SGBV is the primary area of framework overlap.

Here, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is given as an example, whereby the mission statement requires Child Protection Advisors and Women Protection Advisors to work together on a joint SGBV workstream. The 1998 OSRSG-CaAC report highlights the congruence between the PoC agenda and CaAC on this front also: “...ECOMOG also agreed to receive assistance from United Nations agencies in providing training

materials on human rights standards concerning the protection of civilians, particularly women and children” (para. 58(d)).

The datasets confirm a focus on sexual violence. Language used in OSRSG-CaAC reports shows a clear correlation between ‘women and children’ phraseology and a sexual violence focus in the earlier reports in the set, sometimes in ways which appear to create bizarre literal meanings:

The categories of children identified as having special protection needs include ex-combatant youth, refugee and internally displaced children, *sexually abused girls* and unaccompanied street children [emphasis added] (1998 para. 51);

...one such priority area [for research] is sexual abuse and violence, *particularly against girls and young women* [emphasis added] (1998 para. 133).

In the first example, the language used appears to indicate that a focus on the visible inclusion of girls was considered important, yet the structure of the sentence gives the reader the impression that sexually abused boys are not a category with any special protection needs. Similarly, the second example is presumably intended to indicate that sexual abuse is a priority research area and that girls are more commonly subjected to it; however, the wording implies that research into sexual abuse and violence perpetrated against boys is not a priority or is unimportant.

Language used in peacekeeping manuals from the second dataset (and a document also produced by DPO along with DPPA, aimed at a wider group of child protection staff in the field) makes very clear that children’s and women’s concerns inhabit the same issue space, particularly where sexual violence is concerned. It is noted that at UN Infantry Battalion level, there is a single officer (under supervision) designated as responsible for “Gender and Child Protection” issues (DPO 2018 p.87). The role of Women Protection Advisors – not within the infantry, but in-mission – is described as advising on “sexual violence issues” (p.88). Child protection staff within DPO and other UN agencies are required to work with the “gender unit” and “sexual exploitation and abuse unit” in the development of training materials to create “common tools and handouts” (DPO & DPPA 2019 p.20). A guidance note in DPO and DPPA’s child protection staff manual further explains that the CaAC and conflict-related sexual violence workstreams are being consolidated within peacekeeping missions to avoid poor coordination; the Head of the Human Rights component is then to be considered responsible for this joint workstream (2019 p.91). Furthermore,

the OSRSG-CaAC's field guidance for mediators includes examples of language used in a negotiated agreement reached in the Central African Republic: "Recognizing that the majority of the population of the Central African Republic is made up of children and women who have been deeply affected by the armed conflict..." "[Parties] To refrain from...sexual and gender-based violence, *in particular against women and girls*" [emphasis added] (2020 p.45).

The intersection of women and children at the site of sexual violence in conflict is often conceptualised using such normative traditions as the idea of rape as a 'weapon of war', which can impede understanding of more complex factors involved in conflict-related SGBV. DPO's peacekeeper training manual contains a statement that rape is often "used as a weapon of war" (DPO 2018 p.24), for example; although scholars such as Carpenter (2016) have interrogated this norm and questioned the ubiquity of actual uses of rape in this manner. Hultman and Sellström (2019 p.1) suggest that the "underlying normative assumptions by UN actors" ensure that mainstreaming efforts translate to addressing SGBV. They also argue that contemporary peacekeeping workstreams tend to augment the traditional, more gender-neutral language on protection of civilians with added, specifically gendered inclusion of SGBV (Hultman and Sellström 2019 p.7), a suggestion supported by the examples above.

The main point of contact, then, between both agendas is a protection-focused normative conception of conflict-related sexual violence. Narratives such as the idea of rape as a weapon of war enforce two separate norms; firstly, that women and children are complete victims in conflict (there is no room for consideration of agency in prevention or responses without altering the reductive nature of the norm and associated phrase); and secondly, that the issue is a 'serious' security issue because it characterises it clearly as a threat to peace and security (Hultman & Sellström 2019 p.7). If something is described as a weapon of war in itself it is sufficiently securitised to merit the focus of wider peace and security agendas and therefore to receive more exposure across them (see, for example, Westendorf & Searle 2017). In this way, joint issue areas between agendas – whether WPS and PoC, or WPS and CaAC – may have a detrimental effect on both, by necessarily creating or supporting reductive norms that fit the purpose of wider dissemination.

Having examined sexual violence as an issue space in which the divisions of gender and age are highly relevant, it is useful to note that the language used in the UN documents maintains a binary conception of gender in a way that obscures gender diverse children – an area that should receive greater attention in research.

6.5.4 A closing note on gender diverse children and conflict-related sexual violence

As noted in Chapter 1, UN Discourse in the child protection workstream thus far barely reflects the experiences of gender diverse children in general, and in particular regarding sexual violence. The rigid adherence to a binary interpretation of gender in this context could perhaps be understood as a function of reproduced normative language; yet there are particular barriers to gender diverse people identifying themselves as such in many conflict environments (as in non-conflict environments) (Kopsa 2023).

From 2021, UNHCR has given some visibility to the challenges faced by gender diverse people in displacement situations, having convened a global roundtable on the subject in partnership with the United Nations Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (IE SOGI) (Madrigal-Borloz 2021). This roundtable involved a variety of NGO and academic contributors. As the literature on this topic builds over time, further research could seek to find connections between this workstream and the CaAC workstream and examine common norms. For the purposes of this project, since gender diverse children were not mentioned at all in either set of policy documents analysed, this issue was deemed to be out of scope for normative analysis; yet the very clear gap in research here should be acknowledged.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a deep discussion of the ‘women-and-children’ norm as it presented thematically in the analysis of data. This built on literature introduced in Chapter 2, extending the discussion with support and illustration from this project’s research. Firstly, the presence of the norm in the ‘higher level’ of policy in the CaAC infrastructure – namely, the OSRSG-CaAC reports from Research Stage 1 – was connected to its presence in the field programmes and guides examined in Research Stage 2, demonstrating common instances of normative language.

Secondly, the particular influence of the WPS agenda was examined and theorised as one of the primary locations from which norm transfer seems to occur into the CaAC infrastructure. The ways in which this normative transfer can occur were considered; in particular, through points at which the two workstreams converge, such as in projects between the respective Special Representatives of the Secretary-General as well as joint work and contributions between UN agencies like UNIFEM and UNICEF, including through the creation of new normative conceptions. The concept of mainstreaming was identified as important in this process. Finally, conflict-related sexual violence was discussed as a particular illustration of the conflation of the WPS and CaAC workstreams, and this further elucidated the potential consequences of such elision; including the erasure of certain groups of children needing special intervention (boy victim-survivors – and gender diverse children).

This discussion of the ‘women-and-children’ norm in the data examined shows that the norm is very well-established in different policy levels of the CaAC infrastructure and has notable points of norm transfer into and out of the workstream through connections with the WPS agenda; along with particular sub-areas (conflict-related sexual violence) in which the challenges of norm conflation across workstreams can be observed.

Chapter 7 ‘Agency’ across the datasets

When we...tackle culture and tradition...because deep-rooted...what people know as a child is below the age of, uh...15. Yup. Below the age of 15, below the age of 13, that's a child. But in other cultures; for example, for a girl, when a girl is 15 years, she is ready to get married. Even 13, as long as she is menstruating, she is ready to get married. You know? This becomes a challenge...to explain that, uh, a child is below 18. You know? So any child below 18 is not supposed to be engaged in hazardous work, maybe in uh, in marriage. And uh, not really engaging in other political issues, kind of thing. This becomes a challenge when we take it traditional. (Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

7.1 Introduction

As noted in previously, scholars in anthropology, critical security studies, international relations and broader studies of childhood have all discussed the normative assumption that conflict-affected children lack agency. In the literature review chapter, these discussions were examined in the context of three more specific norms which have been identified by scholars as existing in the CaAC mandate. In this chapter, some of this discussion will be recalled, but contextualised specifically with regard to the norm of agency, or more accurately the norm of the non-agentic child; a broader norm that was not tested for in the datasets except as sub-coded aspects of other norms. It is found that conflict-affected children are generally subjected to a norm of non-agency, except in certain situations, including when they are also mothers; and when they are participating in peacebuilding activities. When children are talked about in the UN literature in relation to either of these socially sanctioned activities, they appear to be afforded agency – indeed, their behaviour seems to be described in terms of productive social contribution – in clear contrast to how they are discussed when they are without children of their own, or as combatants.

Note that this chapter is structured along a discussion of how the issue of agency arose in each respective dataset. This is because the language as it pertains to agency is fundamentally different between them; the language used in the second dataset has significantly more practical and highly contextualised language around recruitment, in particular (and other aspects of the agency

discussion). For example, in analysing language pertaining to the 'women-and-children' norm (noted in the previous chapter) there were considerable similarities between phraseology across both datasets; however, in the case of the non-agentic child norm, this differs between ORSG-CaAC reports and field documents. This is a function of the second dataset as guidance for field processes that have a heavy focus on the prevention and recording of recruitment as well as demobilisation (see comparative discussion of different 'grave violations' in Chapter 6, Section 6.5.1). What this chapter offers to the discussion is evidence of 'agency' as a key but malleable norm.

Braun et al. (2018) define agency in a constructivist theoretical context as "the capacity to act [in international politics]" (p.788). Literature in the same theoretical space as this thesis – the nexus of critical feminism and constructivism – involves much analysis of the agency of non-traditional IR actors. Indeed, a key tenet of critical feminist intellectual heritage is the argument that agency is enacted by such non-traditional actors, such as women at the individual, community or international civil society level. States are not considered to be the only enactors of agency. Yet, within constructivist theory, there is a central tension between the salience of structures, and their inherent power, and the agency of actors.

Wendt's quintessential 1987 discussion of agency terms this the "agent-structure problem" (p.335). While theoretical models of the interaction between structure and agents vary, Wendt argues that both necessarily exist in relation to one another and are mutually constitutive; agents enact change upon structures, and are simultaneously acted upon by those structures. The relationship is an interplay of power and action. In this way, the agency of conflict-affected children is theorised in the critical feminist space as something both exercised and constrained; in particular, this literature critiques the limitation placed on agency by norms as a function of structural power (Holscheiter 2020).

Conflict-affected children may exercise agency in various ways; from active combat or resistance activity, as in the case of Warsaw child freedom fighters in WWII, who engaged in espionage and blockades (Rosen 2005); to advocacy and participation in norm entrepreneurship, such as those youth who engage with UN Youth, Peace and Security peacebuilding fora in peacebuilding contexts. However, the norms examined in this thesis often include prescribed ideas of whether or

not conflict-affected children have agency, and how this agency should be appropriately exercised. In particular, the child soldier norm is strongly associated in existing literature with the conception of conflict-affected children as lacking in agency. Can a child truly engage in armed conflict of their own accord? And if not, how might a child exercise agency in a conflict or post-conflict context? An interviewee, employed as a child protection worker in Sudan by a multinational NGO, spoke on the topic of agency:

And as an adult, I cannot say there's a good reason for a child to be engaged in conflict. You know. Why? Because, given the situation now in South Sudan, most of them are regretting, the ex-child soldiers, they're regretting losing their future. They even say, the others...always say, 'I wish I didn't join the army'. You know? And uh, what does that mean? Because that means to me that he or she was forced. He or she maybe joined because of outside influence, but not knowing what is the impact. (Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

This perspective speaks to normative assumptions about whether or not is truly possible for a child to exercise agency in combat, even if they themselves actively joined a military force.

7.2 Norm presence, meaning and negotiation in dataset 1

In conducting the textual analysis outlined in Chapter 4, the norm of a lack of agency in high level policy documents was clearly present. The frequency of references to a lack of agency, particularly in regard to child soldier recruitment, is high throughout the 22-year time period. Much emotive language is used to discuss the issue of recruitment and, initially at least, this only refers to abductions and violence as the means of recruitment, with agency completely denied: Children simply have no role in warfare. (United Nations 1998 para. 18)

Reports after the year 2000, however, increasingly acknowledge that some children may *perceive* that they have agency in becoming involved with armed groups:

...in many devastated impoverished, highly polarised or ideologically charged environments, children are lured into joining in hostilities for reasons other than forced recruitment. (United Nations 2001 para. 79)

It is difficult to argue that a starving child engaging with armed groups to achieve food security is truly agentic. However, the documentation suggests that, even when a child has an ideological motivation for engaging in conflict, that this is imposed on them by coercive actors. Any political or personal motivation must be purely extrinsic, a product of 'polarised' or 'ideologically charged' environments (United Nations 2011 para. 79). The logical extension of this argument is that children are expected to be purely non-political. After all, it is usually considered justified for adults to enter conflict on the basis of grave political concerns; such opposing perspectives between two warring parties would probably be described as polarised. Here we can see one dimension of Tabak's 'world child' as discussed in Chapter 2– although expected to be a site of future political cohesion and stability, the child must not engage in politics.

An 'era of application' was announced in the year 2000 (United Nations 2000, para. 29). This is described as an agenda of normative spread; an effort to disseminate norms about conflict-affected children with the aim of raising awareness with the general public, as well as mainstreaming the subject throughout the UN workstream. This office (the OSRSG-CaAC) is intended to be the authority on everything in the sphere of conflict-affected children: at once (theoretically at least) informed by field work, and also directing its priorities, in a reciprocal policy relationship. Media outreach is discussed at length in this 'era of application' report. Moving into 2006, the language of norm spread is more formalised, still with reference to the broad 'era of application', but also referring to "destinations for action" (United Nations 2006 para. 43) in the context of mainstreaming said norms in other UN workstreams (here, the Human Rights Council). Reports from here onwards refer to partnerships with various celebrities with the goal of raising awareness of the universal plight of the non-political child soldier. The era of application is therefore made synonymous with the popularisation of a certain conception of the conflict-affected child, and particularly the child soldier – a symbolic technology.

Overall, a trend in the discussion of recruitment – and agency in the process – is evident. The incidences of associated phrases are very high in the earliest reports, but steadily drop to a low point in 2005. They remain low until 2010, at which point the frequency increases quite rapidly until its highest point in the 2015 report. It then drops off almost as rapidly, reaching a mid-point in the 2020 report.

7.2.1 Changes in the norm frequency in 2005

It is possible to make an educated deduction about the reasons for this pattern. 2005 was the year of the landmark Resolution 1612, establishing the MRM for 'grave violations' against children in armed conflict. The trend therefore reflects a growing conceptualisation prior to 2005 of a six-part characterisation of the experience of the conflict-affected child, based on the six 'grave violations'.

The relative absence of the norm of agency between 2005-2010 is therefore likely to reflect its new role as part of this wider characterisation. Interestingly, even though the prominence of recruitment as the *salient* problem is reduced by this change in the OSRSG-CaAC reports, it was still apparently considered the most *significant* violation. Again, this is evidenced by the fact that, until Resolution 1882 in 2009, it was the only violation that could result in an armed group of state party being listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict.

The rapid increase in discussion around recruitment and agency after 2010 could also partially be attributed to the growing inclusion of the Syrian civil war. Aside from issues of recruitment, the use of children for terrorist activities such as suicide bombing begins to enter the report set. And in the 2012 report, some further theorising on children's agency is also apparent:

[The SRSG] argued therein [in front of the ICC] that there was in fact no distinction between voluntary enlistment and forced recruitment, pointing out that children were not always recruited through abduction or the brute use of force. (United Nations 2012 para. 9);

...children could not give "informed" consent because they possessed limited understanding of the short-term and long-term consequences of their choices and actions and did not control or fully comprehend the structures and forces with which they were faced. (United Nations 2012 para. 11)

This discourse presents a binary answer to the question of whether or not conflict-affected children have agency. In this document set, norms clearly prescribe agency to people over 18 years only. By virtue of the 'Straight 18' position, any person below 18 years of age is not capable of political agency in conflict; does not fully comprehend the political context. Yet, harking back to Lee-Koo's (2011) discussion of the Australian Defence Force's 'Gap Year Challenge' campaign noted in Chapter 2, it is clear that children of the Global North are disaggregated to a degree that children

who are the subject of OSRSG-CaAC reports are not. Children of the Global North enjoy a third category of being; there is a period somewhere in the couple of years preceding their 18th birthday in which they are judged to have at least some degree of agency. It may not be agency enough to enter combat, but it is agency enough to consent to being militarised. The analysis of this report set establishes that the norm identified by Lee Koo, among others, exists and also fluctuates in the highest level of policy representation of the CaAC mandate.

7.2.2 Changes in the norm frequency from 2015

The reason for the climax in frequency of mentions in 2015, and the later subsequent decline, can also be examined and postulations made. 2015 was the year that Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security was passed. According to the official website of this mandate, powered by UNDP and the United Nations Inter Agency Network on Youth Development, this new normative agenda seeks to upend commonly held misconceptions about young people in conflict:

In countries affected by conflict and violence, young people are commonly perceived as either perpetrators or victims...In reality, the role of young people in relation to peace and security is poorly understood and much more complex than these stereotypes suggest.

(UNDP & UNIA-NYD, n.d. para. 1)

These stereotypes appear to be very much in line with the norms discussed throughout this chapter as conceptualisations of conflict-affected children. However, Resolution 2250 is clear that it defines a 'young person' as aged between 18-29 years. This is not the same as the meaning of 'youth' used by other, non-conflict-specific UN organisations (also acknowledged in Resolution 2250), which apply the term to people aged 15-24 – thus constructing the 'third category' that, in discussions of conflict, is generally reserved for children of the Global North.

In this sense, the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda is an attempt at mainstreaming the same norm about age and agency as is present in the CaAC mandate, rather than supporting the conception of youth as simply including people under 18. However, as demonstrated in the quote above, the strong focus on the agency and participation of youth contrasts strongly with previous normative conceptualisations of youth in conflict, which were centred in victimhood. The construction of this agenda is thus a conscious attempt at reimagining the place of youth in conflict

discourse within the UN. More discussion of the intersection between the assumed capacity of youth for change, and ideas of agency, is included in Section 7.3.3, below.

While it does not apply to people under 18, awareness of this normative change may have caused a discursive adaptation in mandates related to other groups traditionally conceived of as victims in conflict – like children.

In hypothesising about the movement of this norm, it is possible that this new norm transferred into the OSRSG-CaAC report set as a result of lateral movement from another office, as well as via collaborative work between different Special Representatives. A recent report by Osthemier (2021) on the current state of Youth, Peace and Security gains is contextualised in the first few paragraphs with explicit references to the reports of the Special Representative for Children Affected by Armed Conflict. It goes on to note: “Representatives of the United Nations and its agencies, including Special Rapporteurs and Special Envoys, are urged to become much more aligned and coordinated than they have so far been on the needs of youth in armed conflict and post-conflict situations” (para. 15). This may have resulted in less willingness to characterise the agency of children, a ‘vulnerable group’ as youth once were in UN parlance, in such reductive terms.

The question of how intentional this discursive shift was in the OSRSG-CaAC reports, and whether it was an attempt to reduce scrutiny of the norm of the non-agentive child, would require further research. However, Elgström (2000) provides a useful argument for thinking about the ways in which norms can be redefined multiple times through their process of spread and diffusion, arguing that things like ‘text negotiation’ can alter their meanings and then affect the way they influence power relations. Such a perspective conceives of this evolution as an inherent aspect of the life cycle of norms and does not contextualise it necessarily in the context of postcolonialism.

Trojanowska (2019) specifically terms this process ‘norm negotiation’ (p.30) and applies it to their analysis of Australia’s National Action Plan for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, this agenda being another site of the eventual move away from discursive norms of victimhood and a lack of agency.

7.2.3 Norm negotiation

Norm negotiation between different UN sites of interaction may therefore be a useful way to conceptualise the process by which norms about conflict-affected children are being acted upon. Norm negotiation certainly makes sense in the context of colonialisms and related power relations in these mandates. As Tabak's idea of the 'world child' demonstrates, the evolution of norms about young people or children from ascribing complete victimhood to allowing for agency under certain prescribed conditions (i.e. in peacebuilding processes, as promulgators of peace and stability – as opposed to in conflict, where agency is denied) has been acted upon by colonialism. Overall, though, whether an attempt at trying to move towards categorising children as 'world children' responsible for maintaining stability in conflict areas of the Global South, or simply as an unconscious evolution of normative phrases, the language in SRSG-CaAC reports from 2015 onwards reflects a muted focus on a lack of agency, and this may reflect parallel changes in the WPS and YPS agenda.

The textual analysis of annual reports produced by the OSRSG-CaAC as discussed in Chapter 4 therefore provides important insight into the presence and frequency of the norm of the non-agentic child in armed conflict. The OSRSG-CaAC is the highest policy focal point for the CaAC mandate, receiving reporting from field actors and local, national, and regional policy offices, and presenting a normative summary of the situation of conflict-affected children to the Security Council via its report to the Secretary-General. The interaction between these two bodies can therefore act as a 'norm highway' along which large volumes of norm 'traffic' can be expected to be traveling: both upwards along the chain of command and down, and laterally out to other offices through collaboration in the child protection cluster.

The results of dataset 1 clearly demonstrated that the norm of the non-agentic child in conflict is not applied equally in popular discourse – nor perhaps in wider UN mandates – to children of the Global North, and of the Global South. Postcolonial theories may aid in explaining the presence of this norm in the annual reports of the OSRSG-CaAC, as well as other UN literature.

7.3 Norm presence and application in dataset 2

Examining the presence of the non-agentive child norm in field documents allows further insight into its prevalence throughout the CaAC agenda. The discussion of the non-agentive child norm as it pertains to this dataset can be separated into three relevant areas: general discussions of agency, including tensions around the Straight 18 position and definitions of age-related vulnerability; discussion specific to Children Affected by Armed Forces and Groups (CAAFAG); and discussions of agency in which children are related to women, primarily through the issue of sexual violence.

In addition to these three areas of investigation, there are three themes in relation to the general agency of children that were identifiable in the second dataset which contribute to a wider discussion of the non-agentive children norm in the CaAC mandate. These themes reflect those discussed previously (Chapters 4 and 5) in relation to the first dataset: discussion of the Straight 18 position and definitions of childhood; the role of children as peacebuilders, or cultural capital, post-conflict; and judgements made about the agency of children in the field when assessing Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC). The first theme illustrates some of the practical inconsistencies arising between the approaches of different UN agencies and NGOs, while the latter two themes are more prevalent and central to the second dataset than to the first.

7.3.1 Straight 18

In general, field documents state that their definition of a child is drawn from the CRC. There is usually acknowledgement that this means a child is anyone under the age of 18, except where the local age of majority is attained earlier. The MRM Field Manual produced by OSRSG-CaAC, UNICEF and DPO (UNICEF 2014 p.2) emphasises this definition, as does UNHCR's "Systems approach" document (2011 p.9), and the OSRSG-CaAC's field guidance for mediators (2020 p.9), with specific reference to the CRC. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (IAWGUASC) also uses the CRC as the justification for protection-based interventions with children in their handbook; and states that the IAWGUASC does not endorse the use of the term 'minor', arguing that 'child' should be used instead in strict accordance with the CRC (2016 p.15).

However, across the dataset there is more nuanced discussion about different age categories, and levels of agency, that can be ascribed to children within the confines of the CRC definition. Even though UNHCR's "Systems Approach" document is clear that it takes the 'Straight 18' position, it also states that "UNHCR would also respond if an assessment of the needs of the person above the age of majority according to national law but below 18 years of age revealed a need for UNHCR's intervention in order to ensure protection" (2011a p.9). This indicates a norm whereby the latter half of the CRC definition of childhood – the reference to local age of majority being under 18 – is not regarded as being as essential to the definition as the general proviso that a child is a person aged under 18. This approach implies an inherent lack of agency below the age of 18, even when this may conflict with local perceptions of adulthood.

Similarly, there is a tension present in the MRM Field Manual (UNICEF 2014). As above, the definition of childhood taken from the CRC is referenced early on; yet the word "victim" (in the context of the document) is later defined as "A child or children, i.e., persons under 18 years of age" (p.8). This tension is mirrored in DPO's peacekeeper training manual on child protection (2018). A training slide included on page 12 relies on the CRC definition of a child but goes on to state: "For all peacekeepers and other personnel, a child is any person under the age of 18 years". This shorter definition is described as the "simplified and common" meaning. It is also recommended that where the age of a person is not known, peacekeepers should "apply the highest standard of protection and assume that the person is a child" (ibid. p.13).

The IAWGUASC handbook is clear that all actors working with UASC must take the Straight 18 position and must communicate this to communities. However, it also states that "Identification interventions should build on traditional values and community practices, and be aware of potential confusion with locally used terms" (2016 p.171); the implication is that the Straight 18 position should trump local definitions of childhood if any 'confusion' arises. It is therefore clear that across these field actors, there is a preference to err towards 'protection', and a characterisation of those under 18 as vulnerable (and lacking in agency).

Some documents discuss these tensions in the context of practical measures, such as programming for children of different ages or the question of consent in interviewing children about sensitive events. Different UN agencies theorise the 'stages' of childhood as being demarcated by

age divisions and related 'needs'. For example, UNICEF's *Core Commitments for Children* document disaggregates the definition of 'Child' (anyone below the age of 18) in its glossary (p.103):

Infant: below 12 months;

Young child: 0-8 years;

Preschool children: 2-5 years;

Middle childhood: 5-9 years;

Adolescent: 10-19 years (early adolescence 10-14 years, late adolescence 15-19 years);

Youth: 15-24 years;

Young people: 10-24 years (UNICEF 2020a p.103).

UNICEF further theorises the category of 'young people' in its *Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Guide*: "The UN tends to use the term 'young people' to describe those aged 10-24, encompassing young adolescents and young adults. Nuances in operational definitions of children, adolescents, young people and youth often vary from country to country, depending on socio-cultural, political and legal factors" (UNICEF 2016 p.58).

It is noted in the following chapter that UNICEF's role as an agency with a development focus, as well as coordinator for child protection in complex emergencies, appears to impact the way norms move into, around and out of the agency. A similar probability can be observed in this context: as UNICEF itself is usually responsible for immediate concerns relating to children's health in complex emergencies, it is logical that UNICEF's demarcation of childhood 'age categories' would be primarily needs-based, rather than focused on varying levels of agency.

UNHCR's *Best Interests Guide* (2018) also grapples with where 'young people' should fit in to a generally non-agentic conception of childhood. This document states that UNHCR officially defines youths as being aged 15-24, but that the BID process shouldn't continue beyond age 21. There is a discussion of the complexities of Best Interests procedures for young people 18-21, concluding that in cases involving "complex vulnerabilities" (p.53) this may be required. It is also noted that children who are interacting with the Best Interests procedures must be informed that they are about to reach the age of majority before their 18th birthday (presumably, the same obligation would exist should the local age of majority be earlier). Beyond the age of 18, Best Interests procedures can only continue with consent.

The guide also notes that a generous interpretation of age should be used; if the child in question only knows the year of their birth, their birthday should be assumed to be 31 December. This reflects a similar protective ethos to the approach taken in DPO's peacekeeper training manual in situations where age is not apparent; err to the side of increased protection and, concurrently, reduced agency. Further discussion on the issue of defining 'youth' in the CaAC mandate is included below in Section 7.3.2.

The practicalities of applying the Straight 18 position in the field are complex. The documents analysed provide interesting insights into broader questions of the intersection of age and agency in relation to conflict-affected children, which go beyond discussion of the Straight 18 position. The blueprint for a graduated conception of agency in regard to children was the CRC itself; the OSRSG-CaAC's *Guidance for Mediators* document (2020) references Article 12, which holds that children should be afforded participation in matters affecting them according to age and maturity level. This reflects the necessity of field actors making normative judgements about children encountered in the field and how to conduct field processes in relation these children; for example, BID procedures in relation to UASC, or categorising children by vulnerability when recording incidents for the MRM. Field actors are asked to decide what interventions are best for particular children and what level of involvement those children should have in the decision-making process. The documents share insight into some main areas in which questions of agency are discussed; field actors encountering and categorising people as children, or children as vulnerable according to different categories; questions of consent; and questions of how programming should be implemented according to the needs of children.

DPO's peacekeeper training manual on child protection is illustrative of the more general protection ethos within the field environment that is influenced by normative traditions about children. The manual uses normative ideas about children to explain why children must be protected in the field. This discussion is introduced with reference to the 'New Wars' thesis (discussed in Chapter 2); conflict is said to be "changing" (DPO 2018 p.15), and contemporary conflict is characterised by the deliberate targeting of children.

Although contemporary conflict is not explicitly contrasted with older conflicts, the implication is that deliberate targeting didn't happen 'before', in a bygone era of less barbaric warfare. Rosen's

(2005) perspective on this idea, and the consequences it has for conceptions of children affected by conflict, is examined in earlier chapters. The disproportionate impact of newly urban warfare on children is also included (DPO 2018). A companion exercise asks learners to identify why children are vulnerable in conflict; the answers provided are that children are easily influenced (illustrated with an example of children being coerced into suicide bombing); children depend on family, community and government structures for care, so are left vulnerable when these break down; and children are still in the process of 'growing up' and violence risks their general development (DPO 2018 p.14).

These answers demonstrate a conception of vulnerability which is predicated both on the place of children within supportive societal structures, as well as an inherent biological/psychosocial vulnerability; a natural inability to have full agency. A section on "Gender Issues" also contains references to children; "women and girls", "men and boys" (DPO 2018 p.24). Women and girls are described as vulnerable "without men to protect them"; in this section, the protection ethos is very much centred around a lack of agency ascribed to both women and children.

The IAWGUASC handbook (2016) and OSRSG-CaAC's *Guidance for Mediators* (2020) also theorise on the characteristics of children and how staff should approach this idea. The IAWGUASC handbook seems to include an explicit focus on agency and participation, to a degree, where DPO materials tend not to; the handbook states "...it is important to recognise children's resilience and seek to support their capacity to protect themselves rather than focusing only on their vulnerability" (IAWGUASC 2016 p.60). This advice is intended to be contextual, however; the IAWGUASC handbook is to be used in post-conflict situations as opposed to the active conflict peacekeepers can encounter, and therefore participatory approaches might have room to be more prioritised (Gordon & Lee-Koo 2021). Similarly, the handbook discusses Participatory Assessments carried out by UNHCR in country situations, in which "women, girls, boys and men" are asked about their protection needs and any proposed solutions (IAWGUASC 2016 p.130). In the *Guidance for Mediators*, a process of identifying child protection priorities in a given situation is suggested; mediators should ask "Who is considered a child in this situation? Is there a difference between boys and girls in this regard?" (OSRSG-CaAC 2020 p.32).

The influence of Article 12 of the CRC can be seen in discussions relating to gaining children's consent for field procedures. Several field documents grapple with the question of how to recognise a child's capacity for consent based on age. The guidelines for BID procedures for UASC (UNHCR 2018) dictate differing applications of consent depending on the procedure. In the case of BID interviews, there is discussion of informed consent on the part of a child (this has practical utility – a child subject to BID may be entirely unaccompanied, and therefore consent could not be obtained from a guardian). However, regarding decisions relating to important legal or procedural matters after the BID process is completed, there is a demarcation between 'consent' and 'assent' (p.62). It is argued that "Children of sufficient age and maturity may be able to provide consent for decisions that are of lesser weight or consequence – for example, to attend a child friendly space" (p.62); this is referred to as obtaining 'assent', in line with the idea that children cannot provide meaningful 'consent'. However, should the child in question not be thought to be of sufficient age or maturity, consent must be obtained from a guardian where possible.

Similarly, the IAWGUASC handbook discusses issues regarding consent in the context of information sharing about affected children in the field. It is argued that if consent for information sharing with other agencies "cannot be given" (i.e. the child is not judged to be of sufficient age or 'maturity') or is refused, the recommended course of action is to share the information if it meets a 'best interests' test. However, a footnote (p.150) indicates that the ICRC, a contributing agency to the handbook itself, does not consider a best interests test to be a legal basis for information-sharing, highlighting tensions in protection approaches between parties which relate to children's agency.

Processes of UASC identification, and similar vulnerability assessments in other contexts, also demonstrate attitudes towards children's agency among field actors. Some issues relating to UASC are discussed in the same binary terms as the adult/child dichotomy encourages in 'Straight 18' approaches elsewhere in the agenda. For example, the IAWGUASC's toolkit document discusses 'voluntary' separation from family in the same way that 'voluntary' recruitment is discussed in OSRSG-CaAC annual reports; while families, including children, may choose to separate for various reasons, it is argued that this should always be considered a "negative coping mechanism" (2017 p.142). However, more complex field processes that involve triaging children in conflict or immediate post-conflict settings grapple with more difficult questions of age-related

agency and vulnerability. These processes are carefully prescribed and the practical reasons for this are explained well in the documents, clearly connecting assessment procedure to field realities, often using case studies. Note, however, that the relevance of normative judgements comes in on the part of field actors themselves who must implement these assessments.

The IAWGUASC handbook describes how a child's vulnerability to separation from family – through events such as early marriage or being trafficked – should be the first point of assessment before response. Certain factors are to be considered on a kind of matrix of vulnerability; high levels of kinship fostering in the local area, or of institutionalisation of children in places like orphanages, are relevant factors; as are attitudes of stigma towards orphaned children, and the prevalence of child marriage overall (2016 p.99). In this case, the field worker must make a normative judgement when encountering a child that is based first and foremost in vulnerability, measured by apparent markers of such. Similarly, UNHCR's *Best Interests Determination guide* explains when Best Interests procedures should be implemented by field workers who encounter children. This process involves calculating which children are at "heightened risk" of violence, abuse or neglect (UNHCR 2018 p.35), using a formula of vulnerability factors plus risk factors. Vulnerability factors relate specifically to the child in context, and risk factors to the immediate environment (for example, the risk of immediate conflict).

These factors are based on a set of Inter Agency Case Management guidelines (though it is unclear exactly which agencies these are shared between). Such a process is highly reliant on normative judgements made by field workers. The UASC toolkit produced by IAWGUASC also notes that "Registration of vulnerable women, children and families (including unaccompanied women and children and female-headed households) is crucial in order to ensure they have access to life-saving assistance (such as food, shelter and medical care)" (2017 p.30), highlighting the onus on workers to judge who exactly among this group is 'vulnerable' – as well as the centrality of ideas of a shared vulnerability between women and children.

The intersection of girls and women in field processes also reveals more about the way agencies conceptualise agency under the age of 18. The IAWGUASC discusses child-headed households – considered a vulnerable group – and the process of needs assessments for these groups to determine whether or not they should be placed under the care of an adult. Very young children as

heads of households (under 15), or children with psychosocial issues, are argued as likely to need to be placed under foster care with their siblings; yet, "...girls with babies, who need the independence to establish themselves as young mothers without feeling undermined by foster mothers, may still benefit from the support of community members or mentors" (IAWGUASC 2017 p.206).

This proviso speaks to a tension in the recognition of children's agency in the realm of motherhood as 'girls'. Girls struggle to be seen as agentic in conflict situations; but this may come more easily when performing the socially sanctioned feminine task of mothering than it does when fighting, for example. UNICEF's *Children on The Move* also illustrates the intersection of gendered ideas of agency with child protection; in the discussion of living arrangements for affected children, it is argued that independent or communal living is suitable for (older) boys, but not for girls as their vulnerability to recruitment is higher in such a situation (2020b p.97). While academic evidence is provided for this argument in the document, such a policy might reinforce gendered ideas about vulnerability and a need for male protection in the field.

7.3.2 Peacebuilding/transitional justice and comparisons to agency in conflict

In discussion of the representation of children's agency in the OSRSG-CaAC's annual reports (above), it was demonstrated that agency may be ascribed to children in the arena of peacebuilding where it is not ascribed in arenas of conflict. Indeed, the language shows there is an imperative to respect children's agency in this sphere, and provide participatory opportunities, because the child is considered to be a future stabilising force for post-conflict societies (Tabak's "World Child"). This is also the case in the second dataset analysed – field documents – in which similar language is present.

In these field documents, children are often discussed in terms of potential sites of peacebuilding action, referred to using terms such as peacebuilding "agents" (UNICEF 2016 p.15) or "resources" (p.23). Some field documents include more general theorising about this characterisation of children, including documents tailored more for higher-level programming such as UNICEF's Conflict Sensitivity guide and UNHCR's guidance on the Systems Approach to child protection. On the other hand, because of the programmatic nature of most of the field documents, this discussion is often in the context of field processes; one such relevant process is the provision of psychosocial

support and rehabilitation opportunities for affected children, in order to restore their capacity as potential peacebuilders and to promote social cohesion.

The OSRSG-CaAC's (2020) *Guidance for Mediators* document explicitly connects Article 12 of the CRC to the role of children as potential stabilisers, arguing that consulting children where appropriate is necessary: "This step is essential to ensuring that the current generation of children play a critical role in the promotion of social cohesion and peacebuilding for their future" (p.31). Similarly, UNICEF's (2016) *Conflict Sensitivity Guide* gives the example of youth in Sierra Leone, who engaged in a drama campaign to change public attitudes to corporal punishment: "UNICEF's experience thus far shows that working with young people as peacebuilding resources while engaging at the three levels of impact can be an effective full-fledged peacebuilding programme" (p.23).

In this way, children are constructed as agents of peacebuilding; peacebuilding is generally regarded as in their own best interests, and it is assumed that youth participation will be in the sphere of peacebuilding only; not conflict itself, in which children are relegated to an apolitical state. The same document also states:

Young people are potential change agents, for instance promoting a culture of peace and dialogue, while also being vulnerable to be impacted by engaging in conflict and violence, if their needs are not met and voices are ignored. (UNICEF 2016 p.15)

This excerpt demonstrates the dichotomy within the agenda whereby children are political in peacebuilding, yet apolitical in conflict. Young people may actively be "change agents" when promoting peace but are passively "vulnerable to be[ing] impacted by engaging in" conflict and violence if their needs go unmet. This guide also includes examples of effective peacebuilding programmes, whereby youth were turned away from "youth-led violence" and "the desire to seek revenge" (ibid. p.25); both terms which imply agency yet are inherently problematised.

This chapter does not intend to argue that children or youth engaging in violence should not necessarily be problematised, but rather that more nuanced understandings of agency in violence could better represent the reality of conflict-affected children. UNHCR's *Systems Approach* document states also that "It is important to acknowledge that children have the right to actively

participate in their own protection” (2011ap. 12), yet the right to actively participate in political processes as agents of conflict is denied.

The argument for children having the capacity to participate and be agentic in their own protection needs is often connected to notions of youth resilience, presented as a binary opposition to portraying children as helpless. The IAWGUASC handbook (2016) states that “...it is important to recognise children’s resilience and seek to support their capacity to protect themselves rather than focusing only on their vulnerability” (p.60). Similarly, the IAWGUASC’s (2017) UASC toolkit also includes the programmatic recommendation to “Encourage media coverage of children that highlights children’s resilience and the importance of keeping them with their family and community, instead of portraying them as helpless victims” (p.23).

In discussions of children as agents of peacebuilding, there is notably little age disaggregation. When it is included, the focus is on adolescents (generally as per the authoring agency’s definition) as the most important group of children to reach. UNICEF’s *Conflict Sensitivity Guide* notes that adolescents aged between 10-19 years, as per UNICEF’s definition, are vulnerable to being mobilised for conflict if not engaged with (2016 p.49). UNICEF’s *Core Commitments* (2020a) also note the need to “Advocate for adolescents to be agents of change and advocates for peace and social cohesion” (p.75).

This appears to demonstrate that the level of agency afforded directly to children in peacebuilding is correlated with their risk of being mobilised for violence; an illustration of the centrality of the “World Child” concept, in which children are vessels of potential that must be moved in the direction of peacebuilding via participatory approaches. This rhetoric is reminiscent of language used within the YPS agenda, although ‘youth’ are conceived of as being over 18 in that workstream.

Across the field documents analysed, the “World Child” idea is connected in a practical programming context to the provision of psychosocial support and rehabilitation services for conflict-affected children. As referenced in the IAWGUASC handbook, the Optional Protocols to the CRC on involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography specify that children recruited or used, and children subject to sale, prostitution or pornography are entitled to psychosocial support (2016 p.37).

The centrality of references to psychosocial support services in the wider agenda (especially in connection to demobilising ex-combatants, but also in the context of other violations) is likely explained by this connection; yet it also serves to connect children's role as potential stabilisers of society to programming within the agenda. Rehabilitating youth – ensuring their own stability, as insurance for the future stability of the post-conflict state – is a means to harness children's agency in an approved way. UNICEF's *Conflict Sensitivity Guide* discusses the intersection between early childhood development and peacebuilding, with reference specifically to intergenerational violence and trauma as a driver of ongoing instability (p.55). Similarly, the OSRSG-CaAC's *Practical Guidance for Mediators* is introduced with a focus on children's vulnerability to trauma, in relation to their role as future agents of peace (2020 p.16). Much discussion of psychosocial support, as a means of ensuring children will grow up to be stabilising forces, is related specifically to Children Affected by Armed Forces and Groups, or CAAFAG (now the preferred term to 'child soldiers'). Although discussion relating to the general agency of children has various aspects, as discussed above, recruitment continues to be a central issue area in which the norm of the non-agentic child presents in the wider CaAC mandate, as well as in the field documents studied. Examining language used to discuss CAAFAG in the field documents therefore reveals useful insights into the norm of children as non-agentic.

7.3.3 Child soldiers or CAAFAG

Field documents that discuss CAAFAG demonstrate the ways in which different UN actors transcribe norms about agency in recruitment and combat into practical interventions. As guidance for those working in the field with CAAFAG, these documents necessarily touch on situations of active conflict, demobilisation of children, and the beginning stages of transitional justice; a set of areas in which tensions in conceptions of children's agency (as discussed earlier in this chapter) are emphasised.

DPO's (2018) peacekeeper training manual is a useful site to examine in the second dataset, in terms of the complications of applying international law relevant to CAAFAG to field environments (and the staff who must make normative judgements about children encountered as part of their roles). There is a comprehensive discussion on page 34 of the four legal frameworks that guide child protection for peacekeepers: what is described as "international law" in general; the Security

Council framework; DPO policy; and legal obligations of peacekeepers relevant to operations.

There is a basic examination of the CRC and Optional Protocols, noting clearly that OPAC 2000 prohibits member states and non-state armed groups from recruiting anyone under 18 (DPO 2018 p.34). It is acknowledged that people aged 15-18 can voluntarily enlist, but there must be 'safeguards' (p36); and brief discussion of ICC mandate (p39) notes that the statute of the ICC makes recruitment of anyone under 15 a war crime (p.39). The abstract legal landscape as it applies to CAAFAG is therefore clearly set out for peacekeeping staff, yet the manual is also required to contextualise the legal descriptions of CAAFAG in terms of the peacekeepers' experiences and responsibilities in the field.

The same manual provides illustrative instructions to staff in training who may encounter children in the field. On page 42, learners are asked the question, "How old can you be to join your national army?" A comment box beneath contains the answer: "Many of you will have been 17! Have we been child soldiers? Understand that, under national laws, an army may be able to recruit people under the age of 18. But under international law, you are not allowed to use these soldiers in combat until they are 18" (DPO 2018 p.42). There is then a clear emphasis on the superiority of international law when in conflict with national law on the subject.

In this way, the peacekeepers' experiences of militarisation as 'children' is separated starkly from those of children in the operative scenes of conflict. UN peacekeepers are drawn from developing nations as well as developed nations, but the inclusion of the phrase "Many of you will have been 17!" implies that this manual is designed for training peacekeepers from nations which do not actively recruit until 17 – that is, from the Global North. This speaks to the dichotomy discussed earlier in this chapter between conceptions of militarised children in the Global South versus the Global North.

However, there are also instances of more complex characterisations of the conflict-affected child in operative zones. A note on page 135 states:

Peacekeepers who encounter child soldiers should be aware that he/she is **still very much a child** – someone who is vulnerable, impressionable, frequently irrational and worthy of protection. However, he/she is **still a soldier** – and to deny this fact could be detrimental to

the safety of the peacekeeper and would not be in keeping with the child's own experience.

This may cause a moral dilemma. (DPO 2018 p.135, emphasis in original)

The characterisation of the child as “vulnerable, impressionable, frequently irrational and worthy of protection” is loaded with the kind of normative judgement frequently encountered when examining the ‘women-and-children’ norm. Yet, the second half of this note is interesting for its consideration of the personal experience of the child in soldiering. The tension that logically exists in valuing equally this normative conceptualisation, and the experience of the child as a soldier, is left unaddressed here since the point of the note is to remind staff that child soldiers will at least behave as if they are agentic – and be a legitimate threat.

Similarly, the *Guidance for Mediators* document produced by OSRSG-CaAC (2020) includes some instructions for child protection field staff which consider the experiences of children as active participants in conflict but stops short of acknowledging the legitimacy of these experiences (and therefore, of having to address any question of agency in combat). The document includes reference to children as engaging in conflict due to both victimisation hardship: “Children have been used and continue to be used by parties to conflicts for the commission of atrocities. In most instances, children may be influenced by economic and political pressures of different kinds” (p.39). Yet it is stated on page 29 that:

One element to be borne in mind is whether children released by the parties to a conflict consider themselves to be children and victims; some may prefer to be dealt with through adult disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, known as DDR programmes, rather than child-focused DDR programmes. CPAs and experts should give advice on this. (OSRSG-CaAC 2020 p.29)

It is noted that Child Protection Advisors and ‘experts’ in the field should give advice on what to do in situations in which demobilised children clearly do not consider themselves to be either children or lacking agency in having engaged in conflict; the need for an explicit policy to be written down is averted.

The same document discusses the implementation of transitional justice processes immediately post-conflict, noting that “Not only is the participation of children [in transitional justice] a right, it also helps to build their capacity for active citizenship” (OSRSG-CaAC 2020 p.40). This illustrates

jarringly the contrast between children as participants in justice/peace processes, in which agency itself is viewed as an absolute right, and conflict processes, in which children are talked about as completely incapable of active and agentic participation. The same position is emphasised across documents in dataset 2; for example, in the MRM Field Manual (UNICEF 2014) a process of low-level/low profile advocacy work with commanders of non-state armed groups is recommended as the fastest way to get children released, focusing on emphasising the lack of capacity that children have to make agentic decisions in conflict (p.57). In terms of the role of the Country Task Force for Monitoring and Reporting on grave violations, there is also no ambiguity as to the role of children: “In relation to the recruitment or use of children... [the CTFMR should be] considering children as victims and ensuring their security...” (p.58).

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has utilised this research project’s results outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 to extend existing scholarly discussions about the agency of conflict-affected children in the wider CaAC mandate. In examining reporting at the highest policy level of the UN’s CaAC workstream, trends in the presence and frequency of conceptual norms about children’s agency were illuminated. Some reasons were postulated for changes in frequency over time, including contemporary conflict events as well as the establishment of parallel UN workstreams in related areas.

Examining the presence of the non-agentic child norm in field documents further illustrated tensions inherent within the workstream related to agency. Other important concepts in the mandate, such as the Straight 18 position and parallel workstreams’ characterisations of youth (YPS), were examined as sites of contrast and congruence with the field guides. As practical guidance for staff who might encounter conflict-affected children in the field, these documents necessarily touched on the incongruence between definitions of childhood – and therefore, a lack of agency – in international law, and the experiences of children who themselves engage in conflict. However, it is always maintained throughout these documents that, although children are entirely capable of agency and participation in *post*-conflict processes such as transitional justice and peacebuilding, they are not at all capable of the same in combat.

While the wider norm of agency was not tested for in the original examination of the datasets for this project, it became apparent during the research process that this norm was an overarching theme and site of tension in the CaAC workstream that impacts on the framing of the norms that *were* tested for. Therefore – while this chapter has had a specific focus on the wider norm of agency – the following chapters also discuss agency where relevant to their specific themes.

Chapter 8 NGOs and CaAC norm transfer

We need to go deep...into the society, to make sure that this message and these policies, or these instruments, child protection instruments, are being implemented to safeguard, or to protect, these children from any abuse – right from the grassroots. This requires, of course...the high-level conferences or dialogues in between the local authorities and the high-level authorities, and even with the women-led organisations[s]; you know...where they will be involved with ensuring these children's rights are being protected. Um...even with the inclusion of the community leaders. The youths. (Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

8.1 Introduction

One of the themes that arose in examining the two datasets for this thesis was the role of NGOs as sites of norm input into the CaAC mandate. Analysis of both datasets allowed for some indications as to the different 'places' within the mandate in which NGOs may succeed in transferring norms about conflict-affected children from their own organisations into the wider mandate. This chapter discusses both the normative role of NGOs (what they should do) as well as what they do, in fact, do in terms of impacting norm development. This chapter, like the preceding thematic chapters (6 & 7), returns to some of the literature introduced in Chapter 2 and brings it into conversation with the research findings, to provide a deep analysis of this thematic issue.

8.2 NGOs and norm development

Literature relating to the normative impact of NGOs grapples with the question of what NGOs *should* do within mandates, as well as what they *are* doing in terms of contributing, receiving, or altering common norms.

In the security field, Watson (2006) argues that NGOs should be contributing norms of meaningful participation to security discourse about children relevant to the Global South:

The question remains then, of how children could actually be considered as standard to the creation of security norms in Southern societies, and the answer potentially lies in the role of NGOs, and particularly of those that champion the rights of children within the international system. They, at least, can be charged with ensuring children's experiences form part of the information that is used to construct security norms. (p.233)

Nah (2016) writes that UNHCR acts as the major norm contributor to local civil society in refugee protector contexts, and that it can function as a gatekeeper of advocacy practice. Local NGOs, Nah argues, should avoid this limitation on practice by networking with each other to force engagement with UNHCR in multiple ways (p.225). Nah also cites Acharya's theory of norm localisation (2004) to argue that local NGOs should actively localise norms that are contributed by larger, international actors in order to guarantee the success of norm diffusion in the local context: "The success of norm diffusion strategies and processes depends on the extent to which they provide opportunities for localization" (p.226).

Scholars have varying positions on what NGOs in fact 'do' in terms of norm entrepreneurship in the security context. Schneiker (2017) examines the way norms might move around, be resisted or be accepted within NGOs themselves, examining NGOs as 'norm takers':

New norms might be introduced by some norm entrepreneurs from within NGOs, but norms might also originate outside NGOs. They can, for example, be formulated by IOs and then be diffused to NGOs. Furthermore, norm internalization within NGOs does not automatically follow when an organization adopts a norm through a top-down approach, in which the norm trickles down from senior management to the grassroots level. In contrast, both support for, and resistance to, a norm can exist simultaneously within an NGO (p.384).

It is therefore important to acknowledge the existing theorising about normative transfer from IOs (like UN organisations) into NGOs.

Schneiker aims to explain the way norms move around within NGOs themselves, centering their argument around internal norm resistance. They found that resistance to a particular norm studied – the 'security management' norm – within NGOs depended mainly on the organisational level at which the norm was resisted. At the HQ level, resistance to the norm came about because of program logic and branding concerns (2017 p.390). Schneiker also writes that "Within NGOs,

especially within humanitarian NGOs, tensions exist between the different offices, particularly between management at the headquarters (HQ) and the field offices” (ibid. p.384).

These conclusions provide useful insight into the way that other norms might move from IOs into NGOs, and within NGOs themselves, between different physical contexts. Nah’s (2016) argument about the role of NGOs in localising norms might also explain some movement of norms in local child protection contexts, both within and among NGOs and in relation to IOs.

Elgström (2000) is aligned with Schneiker in arguing that examining security norms through the traditional constructivist lens of norm scholars like Keck & Sikkink (1998) does not allow for enough consideration of norm resistance. Elgström found that norm resistance significantly impacted the transfer and diffusion of norms in the gender and development space in European Union policy negotiations. They describe a process whereby a necessarily consensus-based process of norm negotiation (e.g. expert groups, designed to produce policy for implementation) results in norms being watered down, and being altered in policy to the point where language is too vague to adequately represent the original concept: “in some cases where members of the group had conflicting opinions, compromises were sought that resulted in imprecise and lofty language (interviews)” (Elgström 2000 p.466).

The same general comment was made by an interviewee in this project (interview with child protection worker, 29 June 2021), regarding the negotiation of norm language in Security Council resolutions on CaAC. Some findings from this project are thereby supported by Elgström’s theorisation; such a process may also be occurring in negotiation at the high policy level of the CaAC mandate. This indicates that *norm resistance* is a valuable inclusion in the conceptualisation of norm transfer and diffusion within security mandates. This theory may also explain why certain norms appear to ‘cluster’ at sites where particular NGOs have influence on the mandate; it is possible that NGOs could be internalising norms to make them palatable and feeding those back into negotiations and communications with IOs. This theory speaks also to some of the concessions that must be made by UN bodies when cooperating with religious NGOs on sensitive issues.

These theorisations from the literature provide useful context to the findings made in analysis of both dataset 1 and 2. Each dataset’s results are discussed in relation to NGOs as norm actors in

the CaAC mandate below. From here, the chapter also offers up an analysis of a related trend that appeared in both datasets – a focus in those documents on loosely termed ‘women’s groups’ and ‘religious groups’ as essential partners in advancing the protection of conflict affected children.

8.3 Dataset 1: Sites and directions of norm flow at the high policy level

The first dataset, comprised of reports from the OSRSG, contains abundant references to sites at which NGOs and the CaAC mandate cross over and share information and advocacy. Included in this are multiple instances of language which signal norm flows at locations at various levels of the mandate between UN bodies and general NGOs, ‘women’s’ NGOs and religious NGOs. Although references to NGOs weren’t coded for in the numerical part of the analysis, as it was discovered as an issue during the analysis process itself, it was noted as a useful finding and examined as part of the wider textual analysis. The dataset also yielded important indications about the different ways in which NGOs have particular normative influence in the mandate, with language demonstrating some paths of norm flow. This section therefore discusses the ways in which norms flow at the high policy level, beginning by identifying how NGOs are discussed in the selected documents.

8.3.1 Which NGOs are relevant?

The Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children is first mentioned in the OSRSG’s 1998 report, and then several times as a consultative partner in the 2000 report, indicating its importance right from the establishment of the OSRSG. The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers is also frequently referred to throughout the dataset and was also introduced in the 1998 report. However, the naming of specific institutions is soon added to with generalisations as documents begin referring to ‘women’s organisations’ and ‘religious organisations’, in particular. In paragraphs 119 and 125 of the 1998 report, ‘women’s organisations’ are introduced as part of a list of organisations who are responsible for child protection as an issue in civil society. This is the beginning of a trend in these reports whereby the same ‘women’s organisations’ are referred to, without contextualising information, frequently when the topic of NGO liaison in local contexts is raised. In fact, one of the NGOs most frequently referred to throughout the dataset in the context of collaboration in specific country settings is the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and

Children. Decontextualised examples of local NGO action will generally be given as evidence of the importance of 'women's' NGOs in the overall success of the mandate.

The connection of this norm with the issue of the conglomeration of women and children into the same sphere in conflict situations is discussed further in Chapter 6. Women's groups and religious community groups are often also grouped together discursively in references to NGO expertise on local conditions, such as at paragraph 134 of the 2000 report, which discusses outreach to "communities of faith and women's organisations" (OSRSG 2000). This trend was replicated in the second dataset, discussed further on in this chapter.

8.3.2 Recognition of the role of NGOs

Notably, in paragraph 118 of the 2000 report, the central role of NGOs to the mandate as partners in information flows is then explicitly acknowledged: "[NGOs] have galvanized awareness and commitment, developed important activities on the ground, helped to strengthen international standards, published important reports that have increased knowledge of war-affected children..." (OSRSG 2000). Such language establishes the role of NGOs not just as norm 'localisers' (Acharya 2004), but also as norm 'inputters' into the mandate; generators of expertise in the form of "important reports".

Indeed, it is also important to note a trend in this dataset towards increasingly referencing reports generated entirely by groups of NGOs, or other UN bodies like UNICEF in collaboration with NGOs, as references for statistical points about conflict-affected children. Academic reports are rarely referenced and are usually connected to an NGO as a funding source. Paragraph 60 of the 2001 OSRSG report therefore further states that the 'research agenda' has had heavy involvement from NGOs like Save the Children and World Vision.

Further examples of information exchange between NGOs and the OSRSG at a policy level include references to the practice of 'mainstreaming' norms about conflict-affected children, something that usually receives its own summary section in reports from 2004 onwards. The 2004 report focuses on mainstreaming and the "era of application". Language used to discuss the mainstreaming efforts of the OSRSG refers to the deliberate creation and dissemination of norms: "The campaign for the 'era of applicatio' encompasses four key components: advocacy and dissemination of norms relating to children affected by armed conflict...[and] the mainstreaming of

concerns relating to children affected by armed conflict into the programmes and mechanisms of key institutions, within and outside of the United Nations” (para. 3). Paragraph 6 also states, “The five Security Council resolutions on children affected by armed conflict which have been adopted since 1999 represent important pillars in *normative protection infrastructure* for children and constitute key elements in the progression towards the ‘era of application’” (emphasis added). A discussion of the era of application in the 2006 report refers to “destinations for action”, giving the Human Rights Council as an example (para. 43). In the 2003 report (para. 74), the phrase “critical mass of awareness” is used in relation to the OSRG’s media communications strategy.

It is also striking that the language noted here is very similar to that used by Finnemore & Sikkink in their description of the ‘norms cascade’ stage in their model of norm diffusion (1998). The language employed further highlights the central role of norms about conflict affected children as envisioned by the OSRSG in directing the CaAC mandate. However, the particular norms in question are not specified or defined within the body of the reports. In paragraph 74 of the 2003 report, the institutions referred to are not identified either; though it can be assumed that some of these ‘outside’ institutions are NGO partners and possibly conglomerates of global NGOs.

From around 2009, progress in mainstreaming is also examined in the reports and specific ‘sites’ of mainstreaming are listed, though these are UN bodies such as UNHCR rather than NGOs (OSRSG 2009 para. 50). However much later, in the 2019 report, there is reference at paragraph 18 to Security Council Resolution 63/241 (2009) in the context of mainstreaming. Res 63/241 calls for the centrality of a child rights approach across all UN workstreams, in particular those related to development, but also refers to the wider international community and “United Nations entities, regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations” (res 63/241 para. 32).

Mainstreaming is a deliberate, controlled approach to norm flow and therefore will necessarily influence how the norms relevant to this project move within, into and out of UN bodies and NGOs. While this dataset reveals the centrality of the mainstreaming approach at the high policy level in the CaAC mandate, mainstreaming is also relevant in the second dataset pertaining to departmental training and guidance literatures as well as field activities. Paragraph 39 of the 2004 OSRSG report states that mainstreaming at the high policy level, as well as field level, should

prevent “tokenism”; however, as the literature review chapter indicates, scholars are not convinced that tokenism in this mandate has been avoided, nor that this has been successful with other agendas that have been subjected to the mainstreaming approach, such as WPS. Furthermore, the reports in this dataset support observations by NGO federations, including the Global Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, that the child protection mandate has been increasingly conglomerated with wider human rights infrastructure in missions/at field level in the last several years under the auspice of mainstreaming, with the result that dedicated funding and professional priority for child protection focal points is reduced. Paragraph 67 of the 2014 report refers to “enhancing cross-fertilization between action plans” in human rights context (mainstreaming). Further discussion around mainstreaming and its relationship with ‘frame distortion’ and the flow of norms was included in Chapter Six.

8.3.3 The Arria Formula and other informal mechanisms

Some mechanisms through which the mainstreaming approach may be intended to facilitate norm movement include high-level collaboration with NGOs through the ‘Arria formula’ meetings (2006 para. 50). Arria formula meetings are informal gatherings of interested UN parties and NGOs that take place before the Secretary General’s annual open debate on children in armed conflict.

Security Council Report, a UN-affiliated organisation aiming to clarify and communicate Security Council resolutions and activities, describes the Arria formula as having come about in the 1990s due to a need for immediate updates for the UN CaAC mandate bodies on changing situations in affected areas, which could not be delayed until the annual debate; and for representatives of a wide variety of interested parties to be able to be involved in reporting if their schedule or resourcing did not allow attendance at the open debate.

The format of the meetings is informal. In recent years they are also livestreamed on some official channels. Such an informal meeting of NGO and UN representatives, discussing various field situations, is fertile ground for norm transfer at a high policy level. Indeed, the 2020 OSRSG report refers to a 2019 Arria Formula meeting which focused on “bridging the humanitarian-development-peace nexus” (para. 59) emphasising the need to move towards a specific peacebuilding conceptualisation of the reintegration of children used in combat – in other words, the Arria formula meeting itself was used intentionally as a site of norm change. It is worth noting that the Women,

Peace and Security agenda had its origins in Arria formula meetings and continues to utilise these as fora today (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, n.d.).

However, the Arria formula meetings are not the only informal channel of NGO/UN feedback in the mandate. The dataset also contains scattered references to consultation with NGOs without formal context, including “a regular exchange with a group of NGOs” set up by the OSRSG, referred to in paragraph 16 of the 2008 report. This may be a challenge in identifying the parameters of norm transfer between NGOs and UN bodies in the mandate, as such informal mechanisms may simply have a ‘word-of-mouth’ nature and not be subject to any reporting. This should therefore be regarded as a limitation on the conclusions drawn in this chapter about norm transfer between these different groups.

8.3.4 Formalised means for shaping policy and practice

As well as the informal Arria formula consultation, there are much more formalised means of potential high-level norm flow between NGOs and UN bodies in the mandate. For example, the Global Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a conglomeration of high-level NGO representation that conducts research and policy recommendation specifically for the CaAC mandate, presents recommendations to the Secretary Council each year for consideration in advance of the Secretary General's annual report on children and armed conflict. The Watchlist's work is carried out in communication with the Working Group on Children and Armed conflict, which in turn receives annual reporting from the OSRSG on information gathered using the MRM mechanism. The Working Group itself includes high-level representation of NGOs such as War Child Holland and Defence for Children International.

The degree of communication between the Watchlist and the OSRSG itself is opaque. Along with the Watchlist's involvement in annual reporting to the Security Council, there is another mechanism of possible norm flow into the high policy level of the mandate from NGOs, known as the Global Horizontal Note (GHN). The GHN is submitted bimonthly in each country of interest to the OSRSG by the Country Task Force for Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR). While UNICEF and the OSRSG usually jointly manage the CTFMRs and the wider GHN process, NGOS can be involved in a reporting role on the CTFMRs. Thus, the NGO reporting itself occurs at a localised level, but whatever norms may be included in the reporting language will travel upwards through the

reporting chain to the OSRSG and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Later reports in this dataset also refer more frequently to specific events organised by the OSRSG which appear to be more focused on the OSRSG sharing insights with NGOs rather than vice versa; norm flow in the opposite direction. The 2019 report, for example, refers to a conference-type event which ECOSOC aided in convening, at which the Special Representative spoke on the theme: “Children and armed conflict – protecting children during and after war” (para. 23). The Special Representative also spoke at the ECOSOC Youth Forum in this year, emphasising the role of youth as agents of change (para. 58). Another such event was a forum organised by NGOs including the Lumos Foundation, and which the Special Representative attended (2020 para. 71).

8.4 Dataset 2: Sites and issues in norm flow in the field

The second dataset, examining reports relevant to field-level child protection literature, also yielded interesting results relating to NGOs as sites of norm transfer. Several themes arose in examining the dataset in relation to this subject. These include: the general level and character of NGO cooperation with UN bodies in the field, and the resulting indications of norm transfer; discussion of information management systems that are shared in the field by UN bodies and NGOs, and which some tensions have arisen over; and the relevance of women’s organisations and religious groups in the field.

8.4.1 General NGO cooperation in the field

There is a role in which the OSRSG has some influence in field operations generally; there is a connection between the field and the high policy level in this way. The role of Child Protection Advisors (CPAs) as technical level representatives of the OSRSG, and as primary “interlocutors” with “child protection partners” is described in the MRM field manual produced by the OSRSG, UNICEF and DPO (UNICEF 2014 p.16). The Office’s main site of influence, then, in field operations is as the overseeing policy body for MRM reporting. The CPAs themselves are also involved in advocacy and communication work in the field and may be heavily involved in the sub-cluster, reporting back to the OSRSG (though specific resourcing for CPAs is declining – an issue raised with the Security Council by the Global Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict in recent years).

All documents in dataset 2 emphasise the valuable role of NGOs as field partners for whichever UN organisation has produced the publication. The MRM field manual highlights the necessity of relationships with civil society for reporting and advocacy leverage. It illuminates the role that NGOs take in contributing to mechanisms like rapid assessment of conflict affected children for MRM recording in emergency or post-emergency contexts. Various aspects of this role indicate clearly that NGO workers are required to make normative assessments about the children they assess as part of these processes. While workers in these contexts are likely to be employed by UNHCR or UNICEF, NGO workers are likely to also be involved as they are frequently encouraged to contribute to the CTFMR, given their local knowledge. UNICEF, which in most country situations is responsible for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee subcluster for child protection in the field in conflict or post-conflict situations, is responsible for coordinating the CTFMR with the wider sub-cluster, and so has authority to appoint NGOs to the CTFMR. CTFMRs can also 'request the support' of NGOs and other offices specifically for advocacy (UNICEF 2014 p.59). Any information about violations that is reported from the field is assessed by the CTFMR at a leadership level: "The information has to ultimately be endorsed by the co-chairs of the CTFMR" (ibid. p.24). Page 17 describes the process of inviting NGOs into the CTFMR:

NGOs, both national and local, can be invited to take part in the CTFMR upon consent of the CTFMR members. NGOs may associate themselves with the work of the CTFMR either as formal members or, in situations where security or other considerations preclude this, they may be associated informally. As with all task force members, NGOs involved in MRM Task Forces either formally or informally should be actively involved in monitoring and reporting activities and be able to contribute to the work of the task force. (UNICEF 2014 p.17)

A parallel here exists with an issue raised as a limitation in Section 8.3, relating to the first dataset. As the quote above demonstrates, part of this process of interaction between UN bodies and NGOs (as members of the CTFMR) can be informal, which means reliable reporting encompassing all avenues of norm transfer between the groups will not exist or be accessible. The dual nature of interaction between UN bodies and NGOs is therefore the same, in this regard, in the field as it is at the highest policy levels; comprising two parallel streams of potential norm transfer, only one of which is comprehensively documented.

Nonetheless, the more formal mechanisms described in dataset 2 do allow inferences about norm transfer. For example, a section in the MRM field manual discusses the nuances of when forced displacement should be considered relevant for the purposes of MRM reporting (as it is not, in and of itself, considered a grave violation): “In addition, forced displacement has been covered when it has been related to fear of child recruitment, sexual violence or any of the other grave violations” (UNICEF 2014 p.10). This guidance requires field actors to make normative judgements about a situation, and children involved in that situation, that involves a subjective assessment of the vulnerability of each child to various violations.

A particular context in which this phenomenon is described in more detail is in immediate post-emergency contexts in which Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) must be identified and triaged. While these contexts do not always involve conflict – they may result from natural disasters or other complex emergencies – they do frequently have an element of instability which is described in the relevant field guidance as fertile ground for incidents of conflict to occur. Similarly, there is reference to the MRM in these documents and the overlapping mandate of those who are both triaging UASC and reporting for the MRM in complex situations. The handbook on identifying UASC in the field, produced by the InterAgency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (IAWGUSC 2016) provides such guidance. Notably, the working group includes ICRC, the International Organisation for Migration, the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, UNICEF, UNHCR and World Vision. The ICRC is the lead agency in charge of global reunification processes; this wider mandate is called Restoring Family Links (ibid. p.43).

8.4.2 Unaccompanied and Separated Children: the Handbook

The Handbook is an example of a publication by UN bodies in collaboration with NGOs, who take responsibility for various aspects of the child protection sub-cluster in different emergency situations. The document provides advice on making rapid assessments of UASC in several different situations; the overall vulnerability to separation of children in a given community, the ‘type’ of separation that has occurred when encountering large scale separation, and what the circumstances are of any given children that come to workers’ attention directly after having been separated.

Page 99 of the IAWGUSC handbook describes how vulnerability to separation can be assessed before response is implemented. High levels of kinship fostering, institutionalisation of children, et cetera signal high levels of vulnerability in a society where a complex emergency is about to unfold. Attitudes of stigma towards orphaned, separated, or other vulnerable groups of children, as well as prevalence of child marriage, also signal vulnerability.

Although the guidance is informed by best practice lessons drawn from research in the field by UN bodies and NGOs, the assessment by field workers of vulnerability and inherent categorisation required necessitates a normative judgement about children in the context. Particularly when vulnerability is the variable examined, norms relating to agency that appear elsewhere in the wider CaAC mandate may be applied.

Page 106 of the handbook identifies tools to assess the 'type' of separation that is about to occur or is occurring. Knowledge of the context is emphasised as necessary, as well as experienced staff; this may be an attempt at limiting normative assumptions on the part of field staff. It is noted that methods should involve community and child input and be sensitive to community context but should also sensitise respondents to the issue. This is an interesting requirement that may also act as a barrier to imposing conceptual norms in inappropriate contexts; children's input may counteract assumed lack of agency, for example. It is advised that UASC should be disaggregated by age and sex, but then categorised further; including "Identification of groups of children at special risk, such as those who are disabled or chronically ill, associated with armed forces or groups, or in detention (or whose parents are in detention) children who are parents and head households, adolescent girls, babies and very young children" (IAWGUSC 2016 p.106). As mentioned above, it is important to note that these 'categories' of affected children are ostensibly based on best practice evidence. However, this does not necessarily mean that field workers (or any person) could make such judgements about children they observed without being influenced by normative conceptions that might be present in the wider sub-cluster environment, or in their own UN group or NGO.

Page 107 discusses a 'rapid assessment' that should be deployed by staff if encountering UASC post-separation. The staff must judge what the causes of separation are; which children are most affected; what their living situation is, and who, if anyone, is providing care for them. Again, these

judgements inherently involve a normative bias; it seems that the IAWGUSC relies on the presence of 'experienced' staff and knowledge of local context to counteract any issues with this method.

Page 57 provides an illustration of how this process has worked in the field. Included is the 2015 testimony of an International Organisation for Migration (IOM) protection officer about the Libya crisis in 2011. IOM workers, UNICEF, UNHCR and Save the Children set up a UASC response at the Tunisian border and were able to differentiate between different 'types' of UASC to recommend different solutions. The testimony illustrates the different field staff that work together to make such rapid assessments (and the interesting question of how norms about children from their respective organisations might influence this cooperation). While the testimony implies that this was a success, it does not, apparently, always go well. Page 85 emphasises that local NGOs should be leveraged in coordination and given roles but must have knowledge of separation in the appropriate context. It then quotes a 2010 report on the response to an earthquake in Bam, Iran – due to a lack of coordination between NGO field workers, "people came to help and to do good, but they made the situation even worse and some of the children got lost" (p.85). It is not specifically explained whether this resulted because of an insufficient knowledge of procedures, for example, on the part of the various NGO workers, or whether this was due to an issue of inappropriate normative conceptions of the children concerned. However, given the emphasis before the quote about being sure that NGO workers are familiar with the local context, it can be inferred that normative conceptions were a problem.

8.4.3 Unaccompanied and Separated Children: additional documents

The IAWGUSC also produced a document in 2017 which functions as a toolkit for field workers in making assessments of the local context, and of unaccompanied children. The document notes that field workers were asking for more specific guidance on how to conduct such assessments. Assessing the immediate situation is done using a variety of matrices taken from Child Protection Working Group, Save the Children and Global Protection cluster handbooks. These include focus groups, stakeholder analysis, key informants, 'problem tree' analysis, and participatory rapid appraisal tools (IAWGUSC 2017 p.115). Sometimes the processes themselves are described using a step based list; sometimes a template is offered in the form of a checklist or flowchart. This

kind of toolkit format mirrors the IAWGUSC handbook's numbered appendices, which include similar templates for standardised child protection messages for workers to adapt and distribute in local contexts (ibid. p.74). The sources of these tools are listed as the Child Protection Area of Responsibility broadly (which makes it difficult to locate the origin of any normative language included, other than to assume that UNICEF, as the usual head of the AoR, had influence), and UNHCR.

Similar tools for rapid assessment of children are employed in peacekeeping contexts as well, which tend also to cross over with areas in which the child protection sub-cluster has been activated and there are MRM reporting obligations. It is acknowledged in DPO's child protection in peacekeeping field manual that "No single training material can offer the entire complex and vast range of POC challenges and possibilities" (DPO 2018 p.4). Nonetheless, training material templates and suggested exercises are provided. It is also asserted that troop contributing countries must design their own courses using these materials that are specific to the mission context; and that NGOs should be brought in so staff understand local coordination.

In later documents, a 'systems approach' to child protection in the field, across all actors, is outlined. UNHCR's publication *A Systems Approach to Protection of Children of Concern to UNHCR: A framework for protection programming for children* (2011a) is the seminal document in this regard and was developed over two years of field testing in Ecuador, Ethiopia, Yemen and Nepal, in which Save the Children Sweden and Norway were heavily involved. Academia and NGOs are also credited with consultative involvement as well as UNICEF. The rationale is explained: "A systems approach to child protection...create[s] common language and practice through collaboration...a systems approach helps increase protection for all children, not just children who are in need of targeted interventions to address identified categories of intervention needs." (pp.5-6).

The phrase 'common language' is reminiscent of the philosophy behind the 'era of application of norms' discussed in the first dataset, reports from the OSRSG; an attempt at creating normative cohesion across the workstream, which here is the child protection field environment. The problematisation of 'identified categories of intervention needs' also indicates that there is some reflexivity in recognising the limitations of such an approach to categorising children in the field.

Included on page 12 is the explanation that “When child protection activities target specific categories of children – such as those who are unaccompanied or living on the street – opportunities to prevent children from becoming members of such at-risk categories may be lost. Likewise, focusing on categories of children obscures the fact that many children fall into more than one of these categories at once or over time.”

UNHCR’s *Systems Approach* document (2011a) argues that emergencies have become increasingly complex over time, and that areas of responsibility within the sub-cluster are not always clear. This topic is raised in different documents in the dataset, with interesting variations between offices in perspectives. Page 64 discusses situations in which “mandate refugees” may not be so clearly identified by assessment or separated from other groups. There is argued to be an increase in “mixed caseloads” across sub-cluster environments. Where the environment is particularly complex the UN cluster approach will be initiated. This document states that UNHCR will have overall protection responsibility for UASC and refugees, but UNICEF will usually have child protection AoR. The humanitarian coordinator for a given cluster decides on the overall lead agency.

Comparing this document with those in the dataset published by UNICEF, there is some tension in terms of conflicting authority and areas of responsibility in sub-cluster situations, which is illustrated well when examining methods of Information Management (IM) in the field (discussed further below).

The *Children on the Move* document produced by UNICEF (2020b), for example, emphasises the leadership responsibilities of UNICEF when the child protection subcluster is activated, but does not refer to the leadership capacity of UNHCR where UASC are present. UNICEF’s responsibilities are listed as ensuring HR resources, coordination between members, mainstreaming of protection, and promotion of local NGOs (p.26). An infographic on page 90 of the IAWGUSC (2016) handbook speaks to challenge of managing responsibility – and, by extension, normative influence – in such complex field environments: “Organisations may feel under pressure from their head office, donors or the media to state how many reunifications they have facilitated. This can cause tension when one organisation documents a child, but tracing and reunification are carried out by another organisation.” Nonetheless, there is some positive feedback on joint programme efforts between

different UN groups and NGOs in field operations; the *Children on the Move* report evaluates various field programmes, and found that policy change for programming was generally effective when UN groups and NGOs worked together in lobbying and coordination efforts (UNICEF 2020b pp.44-45).

However, the tensions between different parties in the subcluster seem to be more explicit in discussion about IM and the provision of materials. Some of this tension appears to be related to procedural issues around cooperation which have the potential to limit agency autonomy.

8.4.4 Information Management

In the IAWGUSC handbook, which is contributed to significantly by the ICRC, it is clearly emphasised that the ICRC does not owe any coordination or materials to the cluster response to UASCs. There is a strong implication that the ICRC directs itself and works independently; for example, it is stated in bold type that ICRC does not sign Standard Operating Procedures designed by other sub-cluster parties (IAWGUSC 2016 p.94).

In terms of IM software used to record data relevant to rapid assessments of children or MRM reports, different parties have their own platforms whose use is impacted by the party's own position on the confidentiality of information about conflict-affected children. Although there is an Inter-Agency Child Protection Information Management System (IA CP IMS), UNHCR and ICRC do not use it for confidentiality reasons. Both UNHCR and the ICRC may share information when deemed appropriate with other NGOs, but the ICRC in particular has a strong ethos of never sharing information about a child without informed consent. UNICEF uses its own platform called Primero, and UNHCR uses another called ProGres. Data may be uploaded to the IA CP IMS from either of these platforms where necessary.

The IM systems are relevant in rapid assessments because their design often impacts the judgements made by field workers when encountering children. For example, UNHCR staff members at registration points are trained to use ProGres needs codes to identify vulnerabilities. They input these into the IM system and make referrals to any NGOs or other UN bodies that can help with managing response for the child concerned; for example, if demobilisation or social support is required (IAWGUSC 2016 p.163). The 'needs codes' therefore drive the categorisation of children encountered by UNHCR field staff.

Regardless of the tensions inherent in trying to figure out relative agency responsibilities in complex emergencies, it is pertinent to consider whether the 'systems approach' was deemed necessary because increasingly complex emergencies were thought to be the primary cause of norm-related issues with rapid assessments of children. The systems approach in itself is an exercise which centres entirely around the issue of norm transfer; aiming for 'common language' across the mandate, perhaps contradictorily, to solve issues arising from 'identified categories' of protection needs.

8.4.5 'Women's groups' and 'religious groups'

As reported in the first dataset (OSRSG reports), both 'women's groups' and religious groups are also frequently referred to in this dataset as being local NGOs and community partners of particular interest. Both references appear to relate to different workstreams that impact the CaAC mandate. The focus on 'women's groups', and the agency of women as community leaders, is language commonly found in aspects of the WPS workstream as well as work on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and related advocacy, both within and outside of UN bodies.

The focus on religious groups at a local level is emphasised in publications by UNICEF, including its document *Partnering with Religious Communities for Children* (2012; not included in this dataset, but nevertheless a supplementary material). Reasons given for the necessity of building relationships with religious groups in child protection contexts include the importance of religious leaders in guiding community values and behaviour: "In many contexts where child rights organizations work, religious beliefs are a significant factor in determining community attitudes and behaviour" (UNICEF 2012 p.5). Therefore, cooperation with religious groups is regarded as essential.

This same document also identifies 'women's groups' as a particular partner for local child protection programming and outreach work (ibid. p.131). Although the norms regarding the influence of women and religious communities over children's affairs may be entering this dataset from different places, there is a strong similarity in the language used to explain the importance of each, regarding both types of groups as sites of a sort of moral stewardship over the sphere of children and childhood in local communities. This demonstrates an interesting symmetry with the original rationale behind the establishment of UNICEF and related Wilsonian aid organisations in

the twentieth century that focused on a conception of woman and child as one unit, inspired by Christian values (see Chapter 2 on the origins of UNICEF). UNICEF also discusses women's and religious groups' importance together in a gender mainstreaming context. In its *Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Programming Guide*' (2016), these groups are discussed as important in the context of mainstreaming women's participation in MRM-related processes, with recommendation that religious leaders and women's groups are engaged at community level.

However, it is not just UNICEF whose publications reflect these norms regarding women's and religious groups. UNHCR's *Best Interests Determination* (BID) handbook, designed to offer guidance to field actors undertaking BID for UASC, a section on ensuring successful family tracing notes: "Capacity building and the strong involvement of national and local child welfare authorities, as well as local NGOs, CBOs (community-based organisations) and women's groups, are essential." (UNHCR 2011b p.26). In *Practical Guidance for Mediators to Protect Children in Situations of Armed Conflict* (2020), produced by the OSRSG, it is stated that community, faith-based and women's organisations can represent children's voices, although caution must be exercised in ensuring that children's own agency is truly represented (p.31). The same document asserts that religion has been used in the field as a useful tool to promote humanitarian ideals (p.22). Given this document is produced by the OSRSG, it is not surprising that these references are included (see this topic in the above analysis of the first dataset).

'Women's groups' is also used as a phrase in academic literature pertaining to peacebuilding and development, including feminist literature (Goetz & Jenkins 2016; Arostegui 2013; Olaitan & Isike 2019). However, it is not associated with the issue-space of children by default. Women's community group advocacy for children's interests is at times argued as peacebuilding, outside the traditional parameters of the term – formalised peace processes (Vaitinen, Donahoe, Kunz, Ómarsdóttir & Roohi 2019); but here the term 'women's groups' is better defined than in the UN literature, where it generally is not supported by any context in terms of what sort of 'groups' they are exactly, or what their motivations are.

While a norm regarding women as safeguarders of children in community contexts is present in this dataset, it is also of note that DPO recommends that its own women staff deal with 'children's issues' during ceasefire and mediation processes; "In ceasefire arrangements and peace

agreements, it's preferable that a female specialist on the mediation team address children's issues" (DPO 2018 p.88). No rationale for this is given in the text. Perhaps this is due to the document's purpose as utilitarian guidance for chain-of-command field processes; the document is a field guide rather than a policy summary, and as such needs to be direct and straightforward. Readers simply need to understand what they are supposed to do.

The norm casting women as integral to the sphere of children is discussed at much greater length in Chapter 6 and therefore does not need to be expanded upon here strictly in the context of NGOs; however, the normative influence of religious NGOs is examined hereon.

UNICEF's (2012) document *Partnering with Religious Communities for Children* sets out a comprehensive explanation of the benefits and challenges to UNICEF's work programmes in engaging with religious communities. Some of this discussion provides insight into the ways that norms about children can impact cooperation between the parties involved. In particular, areas of tension are raised in which there can be disagreement between UN and partner agencies and religious groups; HIV treatment and prevention, for example, can be a sensitive issue. While many religious communities have unparalleled access to people suffering from HIV, values may at times perpetuate stigma about HIV in a way that prohibits sufferers from accessing healthcare (UNICEF 2012 p.30). Similarly, gender equality can be a sticking point as there can be resistance to girls and women participating in political affairs for religious reasons; or schools run by religious administrators may not have appropriate facilities for menstrual hygiene, due to religious stigmas (ibid. p.37).

Religious NGOs can therefore be tricky to engage with on such issues. HIV and menstrual hygiene are also examples of issues which feature prominently in the CaAC space, especially in immediate post-conflict settings like IDP camps; so it is reasonable to assume that the same challenges can be faced when working with local religious NGOs in this context. However, the document avoids naming particular examples of unsuccessful engagement with local NGOs due to this issue.

Provided in the annex of the report is a list of large religious NGOs (as well as faith-based research associations and institutions) that work with UN partners in various contexts, including a group of religious NGOs that is accredited to the UN on a consultative basis, called the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations. This committee is described as having the role of educating

its constituencies about the role the UN can play in facing global challenges, as well as “serv[ing] as a forum for exchanging and promoting shared religious and ethical values in the deliberations of the UN” (UNICEF 2012 p.75). This representation at the highest level in UN deliberations could facilitate norm transfer, in the same way UNICEF’s position on shared moral values with religious groups – a basis on which to build local relationships – may in the field.

As above, documents throughout the second dataset do not generally include discussion on the contribution of religious NGOs or groups specifically, only referring at times to cooperation with religious groups in the same vague context as ‘women’s groups’. However, the IAWGUSC, which authors some documents in the dataset, does include World Vision as a member. As each organisation in the working group had consultative input into the materials, it is certainly possible that this is a site of input for norms influenced by World Vision’s religious position.

Boesenecker & Vinjamuriy (2011) have examined the role of faith-based NGOs and civil society in a field related to the CaAC mandate, transitional justice. They argue that conceptions of justice rooted in liberal-legal traditions have influenced norms in faith-based NGOs, and at times have created challenges in negotiations around ceasefires and peace agreements. They write, “For many, though by no means all, religious actors, forgiveness has been central to understandings of justice. This has set them apart from the standards of many international human rights advocates” (p.346). A focus on forgiveness has made the establishment of norms of accountability for the perpetrators of injustices a challenge; “In many cases, these differences reflect a fundamental rejection of the international accountability norm and an embrace of alternative understandings of justice, some of which originate in religious scriptures and teachings or in alternative understandings of responsibility (p.347)”. Here, too, Boesenecker and Vinjamuriy find that “Normative adaptation reflects alternative understandings or, sometimes, contestation over the assumptions that underpin liberal-legal accountability strategies (p.347)”; norm localation and ‘frame shifting’ occurs due to necessity in the process of negotiation. It is possible that religious NGOs in the CaAC mandate could be distorting some norms through negotiated processes – as emphasised by Elgström (2000) – because of inherited thought traditions. Furthermore, another variable that may impact the success of a given NGO’s attempt at norm adoption within a mandate is the relationship of the norm to bodily harm:

Some scholars recognize that particular norms have greater resonance and that organizations that highlight the violation of such norms have greater success in mobilizing public outrage and thereby strengthening the norm that has been violated. Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink argue, for example, that outrage tends to be strong when bodily harm is done and that human rights norms that stress this category of wrongdoing have been particularly robust. (Boesenecker & Vinjamuriy 2011 p.348)

If a faith-based NGO is more concerned with a violation of children in conflict that relates to bodily harm, such as killing and maiming for example, than with something that can be contentious in local religious contexts such as gender equal participation (as discussed in UNICEF's *Partnering with Religious Communities for Children*, 2012), then they may be likely to be more successful at gathering support for that norm despite sites of norm resistance within the mandate.

The significance of religious groups in the first and second dataset has been discussed, but as the CaAC mandate has multiple levels of engagement with NGOs across various levels of policy and practice, it is worth asking if there are any clues about religious NGOs as sites of norm input outside of the two arenas examined (OSRG-level reporting, and field-level documents). As discussed in relation to both datasets, this is a challenging and self-limiting enterprise as wherever there is a formal channel for NGO engagement with UN groups, there also tends to be a parallel, informal channel for which reporting is not comprehensive or available. This would be a useful area for further research. However, for this project an interviewee was asked about their opinion on the impact of religious NGO contributions on their workstream. This interviewee holds a position as the UNHQ representative of a global child focused NGO. They have worked with member states on negotiating multiple Security Council resolutions relating to children affected by armed conflict, and in that position are also required to consult with other NGOs and the OSRSG in such negotiations. The interviewee stated that they didn't believe religious NGOs had much of an impact on their own negotiations, as these NGOs were not as prominent as others in the workstream which do not have religious affiliations. However, the interviewee did explain that they have seen specific NGOs successfully push for the inclusion of certain language in resolutions and ORSG policy relating to CaAC, even when opposed by other NGOs. An example given was the NGO All Survivors Project, which the interviewee argued was singularly responsible for the increasing visibility of boys in discussions of sexual violence in OSRSG policy and reporting; although there was resistance from

other parties to the idea of equivocating male survivors with female in the context of conflict-related sexual violence and thus reducing acknowledgement of the gendered nature of the issue, the NGO was successful in having the relevant language become absorbed into policy. The language was then recycled over time in annual reporting.

Elgström (2000) argues the importance of non-representative language establishing itself in policy: “Texts may have considerable normative impact on future developments” (p.466). They also found that “The introduction of gender norms in an official document thus creates the precondition for seeing the norm as appropriate. Increasing numbers of officials tend to refer to the gender resolution in day-to-day praxis (interviews) (p.472).” The NGO representative interviewed for this project supported the theory that the importance of norm language in policy also applies in the CaAC mandate. They stated that “It is so important [for conflict affected children] we make sure the language is correct” in any resolution negotiations, as the language will impact the transfer of norms into programming (interviews). The example of the All Survivors Project gives strong credence to the idea that norms can transfer into the CaAC mandate from particular NGOs and impact language, even if those norms differ to the ones held by the majority of actors in a given forum. This can build on Elgström’s argument for the consideration of norm resistance within security related mandates. Norm resistance may therefore not always significantly alter a norm that is championed by a particular NGO. Further research into norm negotiation between the high-level policy actors and NGOs in the CaAC mandate would help to flesh out this supposition.

8.5 Conclusion

NGOs are central partners to UN organisations in the CaAC mandate. While there is some useful theorising by scholars about the role NGOs play in norm flow in security sector environments (both policy and field), there is not yet a robust theory on their role across different levels of the CaAC mandate. Viewing norm resistance and localisation as important foci has supplemented more traditional constructivist models of norm flow elsewhere in the security sector literature. The data obtained in this research supports the idea that this supplemented theory could also be applied to the role of NGOs in the CaAC mandate. Norm resistance and localisation by NGOs may explain the presence of certain ‘sites’ of norm alteration at points in the CaAC mandate; for example, language used to discuss sexual violence in high-level OSRSG policy. NGOs may also be viewed

as norm 'inputters' at points in the mandate, including in the field where certain types of NGOs – 'women's groups' and 'religious groups' – are described as safeguarders of children's integrity.

While the dataset yielded some insights into the role of NGOs in norm flows in this context, it also demonstrated that publications produced by both the OSRSG at the high policy level, and UN organisations at the field level, refer vaguely to various informal channels of norm flow in both arenas. While some of these informal channels are documented and sometimes reported on, like the Arria formula meetings, some are undoubtedly as informal as casual discussions between representatives. This means that a comprehensive theorisation of the role of NGOs in norm flow in this mandate cannot be achieved on the strength of data taken from formal documentation alone. Some interviewee responses for this project indicate that informal negotiation channels between some NGOs and the OSRSG have a significant impact on normative language used in policy and reporting, even where norm resistance is strong. Further research could examine how norms flow in informal channels of norm negotiation both between high-level policy representatives of the CaAC mandate as well as field actors, to add to this theorisation.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

Right when the child...according to the culture, when the child is born, then any man can book this child from a month, and then start taking care of this child until it grows up, you know...so after when the girl is not like, 12 or 13, then the man comes and takes the wife, according to the culture. So, how did this culture change? And how did we work on that? Because we ensure that we are protecting the rights of these children. So we started raising awareness, conducting trainings, with the community leaders, with the [indistinguishable]. And then we even conducted trainings with girls in awareness; forming women's communities. So then these girls are being talked to. We initiated a gender desk; child protection desk. Where if a child has an issue, please come and raise your concern to the child protection gender desk, so that these issues can be tackled. (Anonymous child protection field worker, pers. comm. June 29, 2021)

The UN child protection infrastructure has grown to be both large and highly complex since Graca Machel's first report on the impact of armed conflict on children 30 years ago (Machel 1996).

Although the UN child protection system has succeeded in bringing attention to conflict-affected children in policy, practice and in the public imagination, this thesis opened by noting that it has been rightfully critiqued by both academic commentators and UN actors themselves. Much of this critique has focused on the way that conflict-affected children are conceptualised using certain norms in the Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CaAC) workstream. In examining existing literature, three norms stood out as most salient: the 'women-and-children' norm, the 'children as girls only' norm, and the 'children as child soldiers' norm. The literature on these norms in the CaAC infrastructure is comprehensive but there are few close analyses of specific offices, agencies or field environments within the infrastructure. Moreover, there are no studies about the ways in which these norms move and evolve through policy streams within and between these offices.

This thesis has set out to provide a close examination, a deep dive as it were, of the presence and movement of child protection norms in the UN system. Annual reports from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CaAC) were used for the first research stage as this office is the 'highest' policy point in the CaAC

infrastructure; it has the ultimate responsibility for communicating priorities to and from the Security Council, and thus disseminates norms down the 'policy chain' to other areas of the infrastructure through communication. Field guides and programmes for local conflict situations were chosen for the second research stage, as these documents could, in contrast, demonstrate how the same norms found in the OSRSG-CaAC reports were present at the other end of the 'policy chain'; at the child protection subcluster level. These documents also have a direct effect on field programming.

In investigating this material, the thesis used an epistemological approach informed by the work of critical feminist scholars in IR and security studies, as well as- by the work of scholars of norms from varied disciplines, including IR and sociology. The methodological approach of the thesis was also informed by critical feminist work, especially Carpenter's (2005) use of the concept of 'symbolic technologies' to help assess the presence of the 'women-and-children' norm in discourse about civilians.

In summarising the contributions of the thesis, it is useful to return to the research questions for the project. These were:

- 1) What conceptual norms about conflict-affected children exist in the CaAC workstream and how did they develop?
- 2) How do these translate into operational guidance for UN and NGO field workers?
- 3) What perspectives on norms about conflict-affected children can be offered by actors involved in different areas of the workstream – policy and field work?

9.1 Answering research question 1

This question pertained to what kind of model could be used to reveal insights about the prevalence and activity of norms in the child protection context. Central to the contribution of this thesis, the research found that the refined code tree model, based upon a design used by Carpenter (2016), was useful and effective in revealing these findings. The alphabetical and numerical system used as a key for phrases allowed for the grouping of these phrases in categories and sub-categories, allowed more nuance in findings as compared to the original model, and comparison of sub-themes in the different norms. It also allowed for the researcher to clearly mark the documents during analysis, preserving the method and findings to look back on

during subsequent research stages. Both of these aspects demonstrate the replicability and use of the code tree model, as well as its potential for further expansion.

The code tree revealed that the 'women-and-children' norm was highly prevalent in both datasets. The norm reduced in frequency over time in the first dataset (the full set of OSRSG-CaAC annual reports) from the year 2005, but then returned with very high frequency in the year 2020. In the second dataset, made up of field guides and programmes from different field actors, this norm is more associated with the authoring agency of field documents than with time. Certain agencies, including UNICEF and UNHCR, demonstrated highly frequent use of this norm. Chapters 6 and 8 presented discussion of the potential origins of this norm across datasets and its connection to specific origin points, including UNICEF as an NGO with a history of advocating for both women and children in the same issue space, and the Women, Peace and Security agenda as a normative influence. The issue of conflict-related sexual violence was also examined as an area where the 'women-and-children' norm is produced and reproduced through a complex interplay of workstream conglomeration and advocacy.

The 'children as girls only' norm was also revealed by the code tree, but not found to be as prevalent as expected, particularly in the first dataset where it was the least frequent of all norms, and its presence in these reports declined over time. However, it was notably present in discussions of sexual violence in both datasets, with a focus on girl victim-survivors and specific examples of language that emphasised them in a peculiar or exclusive way; for example:

"...children, and *especially girls*, have been made the targets of sexual abuse and gender-based violence on a large scale" [emphasis added] (United Nations 1998 para. 7). The elision of women and girls across issue spaces has serious practical effects, as noted in the literature examined for this research. It is noted in Chapter 6 that the conflation of the WPS agenda with CaAC in the sexual violence issue space reproduces some phrases representative of both the 'women-and-children' and 'children as girls only' norms, which ultimately erase and harm boy victim-survivors of sexual violence. However, in later reports of the OSRSG-CaAC (in the first dataset), there is some reflexivity about this, with acknowledgement of the manner in which norm-related language has resulted in neglect of the needs of boys in this space. Furthermore, there is very little mention at all of gender diverse children in the wider infrastructure and especially as regards conflict-related sexual violence. Gender diverse children face particular challenges in accessing psychosocial

support in various contexts, and so data-gathering may present difficulties; yet, as recent research is demonstrating, gender diverse children experience violence at greater rates than cisgender children (Miller et al. 2022). The impact of the norm of 'children as girls only', as well as the conceptualisation of conflict-related sexual violence as a 'woman-and-children' issue space, contributes to the erasure of gender diverse children.

Using the code tree, the 'child soldier' norm was found to be highly prevalent across datasets. It should be noted that there were some inherent differences in the two datasets with regard to this norm; the first dataset relates to conflict-affected children in general, being reports from the OSRSG-CaAC and therefore high-level and not specifically related to field interventions. Therefore, the use of language representing the stereotype of conflict-affected children as soldiers was subject to a different sort of analysis than it was in the second dataset. This language was examined in the context of trying to establish the origin of, and reason for, its use in more generalised reports. The second dataset contained necessary differences between documents because some were produced by organisations mandated to manage child soldier interventions in the field. Therefore, some language relating to the norm – for example, in DPO's *Specialised Training Materials on Child Protection* (2018) – had a clear origin and purpose for field workers. However, the norm was still interrogated in the second dataset and uses of language relevant to the norm without clear origins and purpose were present. Chapter 7 discussed the way that the presence of the 'child soldier' norm in both datasets, but particularly in the first, is intimately tied in with the concept of agency in conflict. A sub-theme, or 'sub-norm' that was clearly present in the documents was the denial of agency of child soldiers; yet as a contrast, in discussions of peacebuilding or rehabilitation of child soldiers, political agency was assumed and even sought as a cultural contribution.

Overall, in answer to the first research question, this thesis has demonstrated that the refined code tree model was useful in identifying the three norms examined in the documents (reports of both the OSRSG-CaAC, and in field guides and programmes for child protection in armed conflict). It demonstrated that all three norms were present and have clear origin and crossover points within the workstream, where they connect with other workstreams or particular NGOs in specific issue spaces. While they are present to differing degrees and show different patterns of movement and

frequency over time, these parts of the child protection infrastructure demonstrate a clear presence of these norms and provide insights about their origins and movement.

The code tree also demonstrated further utility in throwing up related thematic phrases and allowing the researcher to chart the presence of these sub-themes within different norms. A process of iterative change allowed the researcher to go back and add further codes to the code tree after cursory readings of the texts, assigning each theme a key that could conveniently slot into a code category (because each code category had an alphabetical key, with numerical keys for sub-categories). It revealed another important broader norm; that of the non-agentic child.

This norm intersected with the others to varying degrees, highlighting important ways in which the agency of conflict-affected children is envisioned in the norm spaces of both 'women-and-children' and 'child soldiers'. Firstly, girls who are also mothers are afforded a degree of agency that other children - and arguably, other girls in particular (Berents 2019) – are not. In this way, the conflict-affected girl may remove herself from the non-agentic discursive stereotype by being a mother. Secondly, discussions of children in peacebuilding activities assume political agency – at least, enough to participate in a productive, socially sanctioned activity. Both of these phenomena operate as if to award agency to the child who carries out a socially palatable activity. The girl who mothers fulfils a dual role – a prescribed gender role, and a socially acceptable role for a conflict-affected child – through her productive maternal behaviour. Similarly, the child who participates in formalised peacebuilding processes is not engaging in combat – a role in which the UN system, and indeed much academic literature, does not allow them political agency at all – but instead behaving as a productive “world child” (Tabak 2020) should; here, with agency that is not only acknowledged but considered integral to their role as a citizen of the future, peaceful state. Moving into answering Question 2, the particular impact of these norms on the field context is notable.

9.2 Answering research question 2

Question 2 asks how these norms translate into operational priorities in the field. The second dataset was particularly important in providing material for analysis here. The three norms were found to be present in this dataset, again with clear 'cluster' points and connections to certain issue spaces (such as sexual violence); and further demonstrating the utility of the code tree model in a

differing document context. In answer to 'How do these translate into operational guidance for UN and NGO field workers?' the norms translate into different operational priorities depending primarily on agency/NGO identity, and issue space. As above, some documents in this dataset had a very clear practical reason for high frequencies of normative language relating to child soldiers. For example, there could be high frequencies of normative language because the authoring agency had the main responsibility for addressing that issue in the field. However, this did not account for all use of norm-related language that was connected to the documents' authoring agency. For example, UNHCR and DPO documents contained highly frequent mentions of 'women-and-children' norm language without a clear origin or context.

It is clear also that the translation of norms into operational priorities has a recognisable connection to NGOs. Chapter 8 discusses this finding at length, theorising the role of NGOs in the lateral transfer of norms into and out of the child protection field environment; large, global NGOs and local NGOs were both observed to be connected to norm movement.

In this dataset, the role of various Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for women-specific conflict issues was also connected to normative language. This dataset thus demonstrates that operational priorities are impacted significantly by workstream crossover with gender workstreams where normative language keeps women and children in the same issue space; the influence of various UN bodies and offices which seem to be primarily responsible for WPS-linked mandates in the CaAC infrastructure is explicit. Field programming is guided by the directives of some of these offices. Chapter 6 covers this finding in its discussion on workstream crossover with particular reference to Women, Peace and Security and the promulgation of the 'women-and-children' norm in particular.

9.3 Answering research question 3

This question was answered through interviews. Although only three interviews were able to be conducted given the serious challenges faced by Covid-19-related disruption, the interviewees were uniquely placed to provide useful insights at the two different levels of the CaAC infrastructure that were examined for this thesis.

Two of the interviewees worked in the field in Sudan as child protection officers for a large global NGO; both were Sudanese in nationality and therefore had connection to local initiatives and communities as well. These interviewees discussed the relevance of the norms to the local context and the tensions between high-level NGO directives and local suitability, covering various aspects of their work including, for example, the complexities of defining a 'child' and local practices of gender role adherence. One interviewee discussed the difficult reality of training local workers using material, designed by a large NGO in partnership with a UN agency, which they considered inappropriate for the local context, and the lack of feedback mechanisms available to them to comment on the training material.

The third interviewee was a representative at UN headquarters in New York for a large global NGO focusing on child protection in conflict and humanitarian programmes. Their perspective provided important insight into the political aspects of norm-related language in high-level policy debates, particularly in the General Assembly and Security Council, and the role of nation states and NGOs in the construction of normative agendas.

All interviewees believed that norms had a serious impact on child protection programming in ways that hindered the effectiveness of interventions, both in the field and at a higher policy level. Using thematic analysis to deconstruct interview responses also yielded information about the adherence of interviewees to particular norms, including the 'women-and-children' norm; for example, arguing for the ultimate responsibility of women as safeguarders of children's wellbeing; and as the solution to issues such as child marriage through the ability, or responsibility, to educate girls; and ascribing a lack of agency to children involved in conflict ('child soldiers').

The interviews were not sufficient to create a larger body of results from which to generalise about the experiences of child protection workers and representatives, however, they functioned as useful lived stories and case studies with which to complement the more general findings of research stages 1 and 2.

9.4 Further research

This thesis has identified two main types of further research which could contribute to the growing body of knowledge on norms in the CaAC infrastructure. Firstly, the thesis demonstrated the utility

and replicability of the code tree schematic designed for this research. This will allow the code tree model to be utilised in studies of other contexts within the child protection infrastructure more broadly, to bring a close lens across norm activity in those contexts. Applying the code tree to a variety of contexts and document types could help to build a picture of its robustness and versatility. It could further be expanded by the addition of further 'layers' of sub-category, potentially becoming quite expansive.

Secondly, the thesis identified – using this code tree – a series of normative sub-themes that connect to the norms examined. While there is already a considerable research base around the role of agency in this infrastructure, areas for further research relate broadly to the conceptual themes discussed in Chapters 6 and 8. The role of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and the WPS agenda in norm transfer, conceptualisations of 'women's groups' (an apparent representative phrase relating to the 'women-and-children' norm) as important NGOs in managing local child protection concerns, and the experiences of gender diverse children in conflict (particularly with regard to sexual violence) are key areas.

Chapter 6 examined the role of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General as sites of norm transfer as part of its discussion of the influence of WPS. The research for this thesis clearly demonstrated that Special Representatives of different workstreams work in close proximity to one another and are often called to provide expertise in the same issue spaces. The way that the Special Representative's workstreams are structured – porous and widely defined with considerable crossover – facilitates norm transfer through different initiatives, policy fora and field cooperation. In particular, the Special Representatives for Children Affected by Armed Conflict and Sexual Violence in Conflict have strongly connected mandates and involvement with the WPS agenda in ways that codify and reinforce the 'women-and-children' and 'children as girls only' norms and play a role in the erasure of boys and gender diverse children in certain issue spaces. The particular functions and interactions between Special Representatives that propagate these norms could be examined as part of a further contribution to understanding norm transfer in the CaAC infrastructure.

'Women's groups' are another topic on which research could be expanded regarding the CaAC infrastructure. This phrase was encountered in the documents examined in this research without

much context and in ways that seemed to reproduce the ‘women-and-children’ norm by relegating field interventions with conflict-affected children to ‘women’s work’. Definitions of ‘women’s groups’ were generally not provided, and it is not certain what is meant by this phrase in reports of the OSRSG-CaAC or in field programmes and guides. These groups were generally discussed in the context of advocating for the importance of grassroots solutions to issues of mobilisation and recruitment, or rehabilitation, of child soldiers or sexual exploitation. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, interviewees also replicated this norm. Language used around this phrase in the documents implied that ‘women’s groups’ were the default safeguarders of children’s concerns on a community level and were best-placed to have a positive local impact on the experiences of conflict-affected children. Further research could chart the history and construction of the phrase ‘women’s groups’ in the CaAC infrastructure and perform an analysis of its presence across the wider workstream, elucidating its role as a symbolic technology.

The experiences of gender diverse children in conflict remain a blind spot in the broader IR literature, with only very recent research beginning to shed light on this issue. Some work has been done in the UN and humanitarian sphere, led chiefly by UNHCR and the United Nations Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (see Chapter 6). However, this does not explicitly pertain to conflict-affected children. Thus far, the CaAC infrastructure is near-silent on this issue. While challenges of data collection and intervention would no doubt be significant in a conflict context⁹, the question remains as to where gender diverse children fit in a normative language-scape that persistently constructs and categorises children’s gender in a way that has real-world impacts on those affected by conflict. Further research could examine different elements of the CaAC infrastructure for inclusion of language pertaining to gender-diverse children; as this issue is becoming institutionalised by UNHCR in a displacement context, it will likely cross paths with the CaAC workstream via the mechanisms of norm transfer identified in this research; connections between workstreams at different policy and field levels through Special Representatives, NGOs and other such channels of cooperation.

⁹ The CaAC infrastructure does note the challenges *vis à vis* boy victim-survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, who often face severe barriers to receiving support; see Chapter 6.

9.5 Closing note

This thesis has provided a new contribution to the literature on the UN's Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CaAC) infrastructure primarily in the code tree model utilised. It has closely examined and demonstrated the presence and movement of important norms in particular areas of the workstream and has identified indicators of norm origin and crossover using this model. It is hoped that further research will flesh out a comprehensive analysis of the life cycles of these norms in other specific parts of the workstream, contributing to a thorough theorisation of norm influence on the CaAC infrastructure, and further illustrating the versatility and replicability of the code tree model.

As this thesis has demonstrated, these norms have an impact on the success and suitability of child protection programming by influencing priorities in similar ways, at very different levels of relevant policy and practice. It is hoped that a more thorough and nuanced understanding of the life cycle of these norms, and a fully replicable model of measuring them, could aid in improving outcomes for conflict-affected children.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Annual reports of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict

United Nations. 1998. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/53/482.*

United Nations. 1999. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/54/430.*

United Nations. 2000. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/55/442.*

United Nations. 2001. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/56/453.*

United Nations. 2002. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/57/402.*

United Nations. 2003. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/58/328*

United Nations. 2004. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/59/426.*

United Nations. 2005. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/60/335.*

United Nations. 2006. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/61/275.*

United Nations. 2007. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/62/228.*

United Nations. 2008. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/63/227.*

United Nations. 2009. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/64/254.*

- United Nations. 2010. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/65/219.*
- United Nations. 2011. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/66/256.*
- United Nations. 2012. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/67/256.*
- United Nations. 2013. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/68/267.*
- United Nations. 2014. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/69/212.*
- United Nations. 2015. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/70/162.*
- United Nations. 2016. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/71/205.*
- United Nations. 2017. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/72/276.*
- United Nations. 2018. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/73/278.*
- United Nations. 2019. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/74/249.*
- United Nations. 2020. *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A/75/203.*

Appendix 2: Interview information sheet



CHILD PROTECTION IN ARMED CONFLICT: NORM TRANSFER IN THE UN

Information Sheet

My name is Vanessa Bramwell, and I'm a PhD candidate examining conceptual norms about conflict-affected children and how these transfer between different policy areas within the United Nations child protection mandate. Research indicates that certain norms about conflict-affected children have been present in UN policy and literature through its history, and these norms have different uses and origins. For example, the norm of the association of children with women as total victims of conflict has a long history not only in UN work, but also in wider humanitarian and media accounts of conflict. However, this norm may not accurately conceptualise either women or children across varying different conflict environments.

I have theorised that field workers employed by UN bodies or certain NGOs who work in the same space, including peacekeepers, child protection officers et cetera, as well as policymakers who work on field manuals and guidance, will be best placed to speak to the challenges of managing normative conceptions of conflict-affected children in a way that maintains good practice across a mission or project. The purpose of these interviews is to understand your perspectives as a practitioner or policymaker on the following issues:

- The way child protection priorities are set in particular missions or field projects and whether this reflects your experience of working with children;
- What it is like to work alongside UN workgroups protecting children in conflict environments

- What the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict means to people working with conflict-affected children at the field level, and policymakers working on field guidance, both within the UN and in NGOs; and
- If you design policy – how you deal with the challenge of having to design broad and generalised policy for field-level work that can apply across multiple different and complex conflict environments, where children face varying circumstances.

These interviews will follow a semi-structured ethos rather than a strict schedule of questions. I am more interested in your free thoughts and opinions on the issue as a practitioner/policymaker, as you are best placed to provide insight on the topic. If you are happy to participate, please review the accompanying consent form and return it to me at vbramwel@massey.ac.nz or v.r.bramwell@gmail.com. You can also email me directly to indicate your interest, and we can arrange a time for an interview before you return the consent form (though this must be done before the interview is conducted). I will try to facilitate an interview time at your best convenience according to your time zone.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *withdraw from the study, or withdraw a particular piece of information from the study (by December 1 2021);*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded; • ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.*

Please feel free to contact the researcher if you have any questions about the project.

This project has been reviewed and approved as Low Risk.

Appendix 3: Code tables – Dataset 1

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 1998	Frequency
A	2
A.1	18
A.1.a	9
A.2	2
A.3	
A.4	
A.5	2
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	5
B.2	8
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	5
B.5	5
B.6	8
B.7	
C	
C.1	5
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	
E	
E.1	9

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 1999	Frequency
A	5
A.1	17
A.1.a	9
A.2	2
A.3	
A.4	1
A.5	1
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	7
B.2	15
B.3	1
B.3.a	
B.4	1
B.5	4
B.6	16
B.7	
C	1
C.1	5
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	9
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	17
E	
E.1	9

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2000	Frequency
A	9
A.1	14
A.1.a	4
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	
A.5	
A.6	1
A.7	
B	
B.1	1
B.2	8
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	4
B.6	11
B.7	
C	3
C.1	1
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	5
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	
E	
E.1	7

E.2	4
E.3	3

E.2	10
E.3	2

E.2	4
E.3	2

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2001	Frequency
A	4
A.1	10
A.1.a	1
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	1
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	3
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	
B.6	3
B.7	
C	
C.1	3
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	4
C.4	
C.5	

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2002	Frequency
A	4
A.1	9
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	2
A.5	
A.6	1
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	1
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	1
B.5	3
B.6	10
B.7	
C	1
C.1	
C.2	1
C.2.a	
C.3	4
C.4	1
C.5	
D	

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2003	Frequency
A	4
A.1	7
A.1.a	1
A.2	1
A.3	
A.4	1
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	1
B.3	1
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	4
B.6	5
B.7	
C	1
C.1	
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	4
C.4	
C.5	
D	

D	
D.1	20
E	
E.1	14
E.2	1
E.3	1

D.1	
E	
E.1	5
E.2	
E.3	

D.1	9
E	
E.1	5
E.2	
E.3	1

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2004	Frequency
A	2
A.1	6
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	
A.5	1
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	3
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	5
B.6	
B.7	
C	
C.1	1
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	1
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	16
E	
E.1	9
E.2	2
E.3	

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2005	Frequency
A	1
A.1	8
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	3
B.6	3
B.7	
C	2
C.1	
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	3
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	11
E	
E.1	4
E.2	
E.3	

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2006	Frequency
A	4
A.1	6
A.1.a	4
A.2	6
A.3	
A.4	
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	1
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	1
B.5	3
B.6	
B.7	
C	1
C.1	4
C.2	1
C.2.a	1
C.3	7
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	12
E	
E.1	8
E.2	3
E.3	1

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2007	Frequency
A	6
A.1	36
A.1.a	1
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	9
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	1
B.2	2
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	1
B.5	20
B.6	6
B.7	
C	4
C.1	2
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	5
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	35
E	
E.1	22
E.2	4
E.3	

Code OSRSG- Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2008	Frequency
A	2
A.1	13
A.1.a	2
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	2
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	2
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	8
B.6	1
B.7	
C	2
C.1	1
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	3
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	17
E	
E.1	7
E.2	2
E.3	

Code OSRSG- Code OSRSG- CaAC report 2009	Frequency
A	2
A.1	15
A.1.a	1
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	7
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	1
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	12
B.6	9
B.7	
C	
C.1	2
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	4
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	22
E	
E.1	5
E.2	
E.3	

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2010	Frequency
A	
A.1	8
A.1.a	1
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	5
A.5	1
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	1
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	11
B.6	7
B.7	
C	1
C.1	3
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	2
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	27
E	
E.1	4
E.2	2
E.3	1

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2011	Frequency
A	1
A.1	12
A.1.a	5
A.2	3
A.3	
A.4	7
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	1
B.2	1
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	3
B.6	2
B.7	
C	2
C.1	
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	30
E	
E.1	
E.2	
E.3	

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2012	Frequency
A	7
A.1	29
A.1.a	6
A.2	3
A.3	
A.4	
A.5	1
A.6	1
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	2
B.6	1
B.7	
C	
C.1	2
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	15
E	
E.1	2
E.2	
E.3	

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2013	Frequency
A	6
A.1	32
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	2
A.4	5
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	7
B.6	4
B.7	
C	1
C.1	
C.2	

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2014	Frequency
A	2
A.1	22
A.1.a	1
A.2	1
A.3	2
A.4	2
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	1
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	8
B.6	2
B.7	
C	1
C.1	1
C.2	

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2015	Frequency
A	12
A.1	20
A.1.a	1
A.2	
A.3	4
A.4	6
A.5	
A.6	1
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	3
B.6	3
B.7	
C	1
C.1	
C.2	

C.2.a	
C.3	
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	24
E	
E.1	2
E.2	
E.3	1

C.2.a	
C.3	1
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	21
E	
E.1	2
E.2	
E.3	

C.2.a	
C.3	4
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	27
E	
E.1	2
E.2	2
E.3	

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2016	Frequency
A	7
A.1	24
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	5
A.4	11
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	4
B.6	6
B.7	
C	1
C.1	
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	3

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2017	Frequency
A	7
A.1	13
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	1
A.4	1
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	2
B.6	4
B.7	
C	1
C.1	
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	3

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2018	Frequency
A	6
A.1	24
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	4
A.4	4
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	9
B.6	4
B.7	
C	
C.1	1
C.2	
C.2.a	

C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	22
E	
E.1	2
E.2	
E.3	1

C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	17
E	
E.1	1
E.2	
E.3	

C.3	8
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	19
E	
E.1	2
E.2	
E.3	

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2019	Frequency
A	6
A.1	11
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	2
A.4	3
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	1
B.5	9
B.6	1
B.7	
C	1

Code OSRSG-CaAC report 2020	Frequency
A	5
A.1	14
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	1
A.4	7
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	1
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	2
B.5	13
B.6	2
B.7	
C	

C.1	
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	3
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	24
E	
E.1	1
E.2	1
E.3	

C.1	
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	4
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	30
E	
E.1	4
E.2	1
E.3	

Appendix 4: code tables – Dataset 2

Code Doc 1 (MRM Field Manual)	Frequency
A	2
A.1	3
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	1
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	5
B.6	
B.7	
C	1
C.1	
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	
C.4	
C.5	
D	

Code Doc 2 (IWGUSC handbook)	Frequency
A	9
A.1	11
A.1.a	2
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	5
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	9
B.6	1
B.7	
C	3
C.1	
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	19
C.4	
C.5	
D	

Code Doc 3 (Peacekeeper training)	Frequency
A	23
A.1	19
A.1.a	3
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	9
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	18
B.6	1
B.7	
C	
C.1	7
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	8
C.4	
C.5	
D	

D.1	17
E	
E.1	2
E.2	
E.3	

D.1	
E	
E.1	10
E.2	5
E.3	

D.1	8
E	
E.1	
E.2	4
E.3	1

Code	Frequency
Doc 4	
Child Protection Staff	
A	21
A.1	19
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	4
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	1
B.5	9
B.6	
B.7	
C	1
C.1	2
C.2	

Code	Frequency
Doc 5 (A systems approach - UNHCR)	
A	1
A.1	3
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	4
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	1
B.5	21
B.6	8
B.7	
C	
C.1	
C.2	

Code	Frequency
Doc 6 (Conflict sensitivity UNICEF)	
A	1
A.1	2
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	1
B.5	3
B.6	1
B.7	
C	
C.1	
C.2	

C.2.a	
C.3	1
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	7
E	
E.1	3
E.2	
E.3	

C.2.a	
C.3	5
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	3
E	
E.1	11
E.2	
E.3	

C.2.a	
C.3	
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	3
E	
E.1	11
E.2	1
E.3	1

Code Doc 7 (Guidance for Mediators)	Frequency
A	17
A.1	22
A.1.a	1
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	5
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	2
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	6
B.6	1
B.7	
C	
C.1	1
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	1
C.4	

Code Doc 8 (BID field handbook UNHCR)	Frequency
A	3
A.1	5
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	
A.5	1
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	10
B.6	7
B.7	
C	
C.1	1
C.2	1
C.2.a	
C.3	7
C.4	

Code Doc 9 (Best Interests Guide UNHCR)	Frequency
A	5
A.1	3
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	2
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	1
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	17
B.6	8
B.7	
C	
C.1	
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	6
C.4	

C.5	
D	
D.1	20
E	
E.1	1
E.2	
E.3	2

C.5	
D	
D.1	2
E	
E.1	14
E.2	3
E.3	

C.5	
D	
D.1	27
E	
E.1	
E.2	4
E.3	

Code	Frequency
Doc 10 (Toolkit on UASC IAWG-UASC)	
A	12
A.1	11
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	2
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	2
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	30
B.6	2
B.7	
C	
C.1	

Code	Frequency
Doc 11 (Core Commitments UNICEF)	
A	4
A.1	2
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	2
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	1
B.2	28
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	36
B.6	6
B.7	
C	
C.1	

Code	Frequency
Doc 12 (Children on the Move UNICEF)	
A	9
A.1	4
A.1.a	
A.2	
A.3	
A.4	
A.5	
A.6	
A.7	
B	
B.1	
B.2	
B.3	
B.3.a	
B.4	
B.5	45
B.6	20
B.7	
C	

C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	14
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	7
E	
E.1	
E.2	
E.3	

C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	1
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	8
E	
E.1	
E.2	
E.3	1

C.1	
C.2	
C.2.a	
C.3	63
C.4	
C.5	
D	
D.1	3
E	
E.1	
E.2	1
E.3	1