

2015

The Effectiveness of the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) in Creating System-Level Change

Tara Aday
Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/spnhareview>

Recommended Citation

Aday, Tara (2015) "The Effectiveness of the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) in Creating System-Level Change," *SPNHA Review*: Vol. 11: Iss. 1, Article 3.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/spnhareview/vol11/iss1/3>

THE EFFECTIVEESS OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA) IN CREATING SYSTEM-LEVEL CHANGE

TARA ADAY

Grand Valley State University

Abstract

With the understanding that gendered violence is an issue that does not exist in silos, this article seeks to analyze the effectiveness of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in creating a system-wide response to stalking, domestic abuse, and sexual violence. Although these crimes are a prevailing social issue, until the passage of VAWA in 1994, little concerted effort existed between sectors or across agencies to respond to and meet the needs of those affected by these types of violence. In addition to providing an analysis of the partnership and funding between the public and nonprofit sectors, this article also examines changes in legislation and rates of victimization as indicators of system-level change. This article concludes that although VAWA has achieved great success in the immediacy, there are potential barriers related to the sustainability of the legislation's desired long-term change.

INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence, often referred to as domestic violence or domestic abuse, is a national issue, affecting 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men (Breiding, Smith, Basile, Walters, Chen, & Merrick, 2011). Nearly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 59 men in the United States have been raped in their lifetime (Breiding et al., 2011). One in 6 women have been stalked during their lifetime, comparable to 1 in 19 men (Breiding et al., 2011). While research is limited, in part due to the lack of statistically significant data, studies suggest rates are even higher among marginalized communities, including women of color, the LGBTQ community, individuals with disabilities, and Native communities (Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013). Yet, until 1994, there was little concerted effort to respond and combat these realities (Biden, 19994). Moreover, lack of consistency in state and federal law regarding domestic and sexual violence made it hard for law enforcement to prosecute and prevent repeat offenders from committing future crimes. For example, when the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) passed in 1994, almost one quarter of convicted rapists were never sent to prison, and nearly one-third of all American women homicide victims were murdered by a current or former intimate partner (Biden,

1994). Organizations attempting to respond to gender-based violence (GBV) through crisis centers, nurse examiner programs, counseling, technical assistance, and preventative educational outreach—among other services—received minimal federal dollars; little collaboration existed between the public, nonprofit, and private sector (Biden, 1994).

In 1994, Congress passed VAWA in an attempt to create community-coordinated responses to the way in which crimes against women and men were investigated and prosecuted, as well as how they were prevented. The 1994 legislation signified the first time federal legislation acknowledged domestic and sexual violence as crimes. VAWA allows for formula-based and discretionary grant funding to state, local, and tribal governments, nonprofits, and private organizations addressing issues related to gender-based violence—intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking. While additional private support still accounts for funding of GBV initiatives, VAWA remains a primary funding stream for agencies intervening and responding to issues of GBV (Sacco, 2013). Since 1994, the legislation has been reauthorized three additional times in 2000, 2005, and 2013. During each of these reauthorizations, additional measures were added to more holistically address GBV crimes.

The long-term goal of VAWA is to “effect institutionalized system change, such that victims encounter a positive and effective response from the criminal and civil justice systems, and from community agencies offering services and supports” (Zweig & Burt, 2002). This paper sets out to examine the effectiveness of the Violence Against Women Act in its ability to serve victims/survivors of GBV, but more importantly, its ability to prevent future acts of violence, which in effect would be a representation of institutionalized system change. This includes a meta-analysis of the collaborative efforts between the public and nonprofit sector on issues related to GBV, and whether current approaches to GBV response and prevention are efficient and effective. On a broader level, this paper will look at the ability of public policy to create system-level change.

Historical Background of Advocacy Efforts and Their Effects on Government Policy

Before Congress enacted the Violence Against Women Act, social movements, such as Second Wave and Third Wave Feminism emerged, developing theory and urging government to change how they addressed problems once perceived solely as private issues. Weldon (2002) suggests Second Wave Feminism became a driving force behind the increased discussion of the political public sphere versus the private sphere, as it related to gender justice and equality. As a result, she argues the

mobilization of the Battered Women's Movement—a reflection of second and third wave feminism—served as a key catalyst to policy change in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. By bringing private issues into the public, the Battered Women's Movement challenged many of the social norms and attitudes that affected women, and as a result demanded greater representation and protection of traditionally and historically marginalized populations.

Weldon (2011) suggests much of the ideology behind the Battered Women's Movement, and its ability to permeate the public sector, brought attention to the need for systemic change within the larger community. As a social movement, these stakeholders advocated for increased institutionalization of the response and intervention of violence against women. While not the only driving force behind VAWA, the Battered Women's Movement played a critical role in the creation of this legislation. It also reflects a push for greater accountability on behalf of the government and increased partnership between sectors, an effort that will be addressed later in this paper.

An additional point to be made about the response and advocacy efforts around violence against women prior to the authorization of VAWA is the relative organizational independence from the government these social movements maintained. In many ways, this created issues regarding the prosecution of these crimes and revealed a needed collaboration between law enforcement and the nonprofit sector, but as Weldon (2002) suggests, it is not to say that these social movements were ineffective in creating system-level change prior to the enactment of VAWA. Instead, VAWA's enactment represented a shift in government responsiveness, recognizing violence against women as a category of national government action (Weldon, 2002).

This shift can best be illustrated by the change from status quo and policy stagnation in the 1960s and 1970s to legislative action in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1984, the Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence released a report, asserting violence between intimate partners is no longer a "family matters" issue, and therefore could no longer be an issue addressed solely within the household (Department of Justice, 1984, p. iii). The task force made nearly 50 recommendations across the public and nonprofit sectors, advocating for greater cooperation between the criminal justice system and providers of social services (Department of Justice, 1984).

Shortly following the Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence's report, Congress enacted the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA). Narrow in scope, the legislation addressed components of the task force's recommendations, but failed to comprehensively address domestic violence. In response to these gaps of

Adaptation/Response Against Women Act

service and reluctance between sectors to increase partnership, Congress passed VAWA in 1994. Originally passed as Title IV of the Violence Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, VAWA became the first and only piece of legislation to take a comprehensive approach, primarily through funding, to serving victims/survivors and preventing further instances of GBV crimes.

Overview of the Violence Against Women Act

VAWA, which has been reauthorized by Congress three times since its inception, is still premised on two goals:

1. Enhance investigations and prosecutions of offenders
2. Provide for a number of grant programs to address the issue of violence against women from a variety of angles including law enforcement, public and private entities and service providers, and victims of crime (Congressional Research Service, 2012, p.2).

While the desired short-term and long-term outcomes within these larger goals have evolved and changed over the years, the focus remains the same.

Investigation and Prosecution. In large part, early success of VAWA came in the form of policy reform and implementation. In addition to recognizing domestic violence, stalking, and sexual violence as a federal crime, the enacted law began to provide a basis for the investigation and prosecution of these crimes. As a result of the legislation, new offenses and penalties were established for the violation of a protection order as well as issues related to the prosecution of offenders crossing state lines or entering into territories or tribal communities (Congressional Research Service, 2012). VAWA also established pretrial detention mandates for crimes of sexual offense and increased penalties for an array of sex offenses, among other things.

During the 2000 reauthorization of VAWA, Congress enhanced penalties for domestic violence and stalking and added protections for abused foreign nationals (Sacco, 2013). Again during the 2005 reauthorization, Congress increased penalties for crimes against women, namely repeat offenders (Sacco, 2013).

Grant Programs. In addition to changing laws on the state and federal level, the major output of VAWA was the creation of a funding stream for agencies in all sectors responding to GBV crimes or providing services to the victims/survivors of these crimes. Since FY2012, VAWA has authorized and/or enacted funding to 33 discretionary and formula grant programs, which are administered primarily by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), but are also administered by the Office of Justice

Programs, Department of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health and Human Services. These grants cover three areas of focus: violence prevention, investigations and prosecutions, and victim services (Sacco, 2013).

Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors Grant Program.

There are many different funding components of VAWA, but one of the primary ways the federal government provides funding across the sectors is through Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors (STOP) grants. Of current grant programs, the STOP Grant Program is the highest spending program, and funding for this program continued to grow through fiscal year 2010. Between the fiscal years 2007-2012, the federal government authorized \$1.4 billion solely for STOP grant funding, compared to \$800 million dollars between fiscal years 1995-2000 (Aron & Newmark, 1999; Congressional Research Service, 2010).

The purpose of this formula grant program is to support state and territorial governments, localities(including law enforcement), and human service providers by developing and strengthening law enforcement and prosecution strategies to “combat violence crimes against women, and to develop and strengthen victim services in cases involving violence crimes against women” (Aron & Newmark, 1999). As a condition of STOP funding, agencies must use the funding in one of seven areas: training for law enforcement or prosecution; special law enforcement or prosecution units; policy development for law enforcement or prosecution; development of data and communication systems; direct victim services; programs addressing stalking; or grants to Native American tribes (Aron & Newmark, 1999). A majority of this article will focus on the STOP grants, given the size of its budget and its relatively large focus as it relates to program inputs (cross-sector partnership) and program outcomes.

Funding. The reauthorization of VAWA in 2000 and 2005 brought a general increase in funding authorization and appropriation for grant programs (CRS, 2010). However, since FY2011, there has been a significant decrease in overall funding across programs. Even with the 2013 VAWA reauthorization, funding is still significantly below that of the second reauthorization. Table 1 provides an overview of total appropriated funds for VAWA since 1994 (CRS, 2008; CRS, 2010; CRS, 2015). Table 2 provides an overview of the five highest funded grant programs under VAWA between FY2012-FY2015 (CRS, 2008; CRS, 2010; CRS, 2015). While the STOP Grant Program receives the most funding, this grant also provides funding, through set-aside funding, for other VAWA authorized programs such as the Tribal Government Program, The State Coalitions Program, and the Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions

Program. However, the STOP Grant Program is still the highest funded program even when these funds are removed from its annual budget.

Table 1: Enacted VAWA Funding by Fiscal Year

FISCAL YEAR	TOTAL ENACTED FUNDS ACROSS ALL GRANT PROGRAMS (in millions)
1995	\$27.00
1996	\$227.10
1997	\$258.50
1998	\$420.75
1999	\$438.75
2000	\$453.25
2001	\$407.11
2002	\$517.22
2003	\$519.98
2004	\$517.11
2005	\$517.18
2006	\$559.22
2007	\$558.92
2008	\$525.47
2009	\$595.31
2010	\$625.91
2011	\$475.76
2012	\$456.39
2013	\$432.63
2014	\$461.00
2015	\$474.53

It is important to examine this funding because it provides an overview of funding priorities, which have remained relatively consistent, in terms of distribution across programs, since 1995 (CRS, 2008; CRS, 2010; CRS, 2015). Table 2 also provides a snapshot of how funding is distributed across service delivery (i.e. Rural grant) versus primary prevention (i.e. Rape Prevention and Education Grant). It is also important to note that most programs fund different sectors at comparable rates (CRS, 2015). In other words, government agencies receive comparable funding to the amount of funding nonprofits receive across programs that are available to both sectors (CRS, 2015; CRS, 2010).

Office on Violence Against Women

Finally, VAWA also allowed for the creation of the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), a branch of the Department of Justice (DOJ). The primary role of this department is to administer funding to grantees, but it is also responsible for the facilitation of technical assistance across sectors.

Currently, OVW administers 24 grant programs authorized by VAWA. Since OVW's inception, it has awarded over \$6 billion in grants (CRS, 2015; CRS, 2010; CRS, 2008). In many ways, OVW represents a multi-faceted approach to violence prevention and intervention that motivated the original authorization of VAWA. Through its funding, OVW is able to convene and forge partnerships between state, local, and tribal partnerships among law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and direct-service providers. A further analysis of the development of OVW can be found in the discussion of the effectiveness of government contracting.

Impacts and Shortcomings of VAWA

For the most part, successes of VAWA are measured using a quantifiable approach. As federal agencies such as the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) assess rates of victimization, Congress and the White House are able to utilize these reports in Congressional hearings surrounding the reauthorization of the legislation (CRS, 2015). While grantees are responsible for reporting data, this data is often output based. For example, reporting data is usually limited to short-term data and process evaluation, such as number of individuals served or types of services provided, but does not include longitudinal evaluation or an assessment of the outcomes. This creates barriers in comprehensively measuring the successes and impact of the act, and currently, there is no national evaluation of VAWA (Zweig & Burt, 2002).

Lastly, when assessing the impacts of VAWA, it is important to note that much of the literature is limited to the social impact of VAWA and ignores potential achievements or shortcomings within the realm of public administration. Moreover, data that is often cited by Congress and the White House when discussing successes of VAWA lacks consistency. For example, in 2012 the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) reported that from 1994 to 2010, the overall rate of intimate partner violence in the United States declined by 64 percent, from 9.8 victimizations per 1,000 persons in 1994 to 3.6 per 1,000 in 2010.

Table 2: Highest Funded VAWA Grant Programs (FY2011-FY2015)

Grant Program	Purpose/Goal	Grant Administrator	Organizations Eligible to Apply	FY2012-FY2015 Enacted Funding (in millions)
Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors (STOP) Grant Program	Enhance advocacy and improve criminal justice system's response to violence crimes against women	Office on Violence Against Women (DOJ)	States and territories (including tribal governments, units of local governments, and nonprofit, nongovernmental victim service programs as sub-grantees)	\$962.63
Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program	Increase involvement of entire criminal justice system; encourage state, local, and tribal governments to treat GBV as a serious crime	Office on Violence Against Women (DOJ)	States and territories; units of local government; tribal governments; and state, local, tribal, and territorial courts	\$256.44
Civil Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program	Strengthen civil and criminal legal assistance programs for adults and youth victims/survivors of GBV who are seeking legal action in matters arising as a consequence of that abuse or violence	Office on Violence Against Women (DOJ)	Nonprofit entities; territorial organizations; tribal governments and organizations; publically funded organizations not acting in a government capacity (i.e. law schools)	\$199.60
Rape Prevention and Education Grants	Strengthen sexual violence prevention efforts in the states and territories; increase awareness of GBV through education and hotline operations	Center for Disease Control and Prevention (HHS)	States and territories; nonprofit organizations	\$193.03
Rural Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, and Child Abuse Enforcement	Enhance services available to children, youth and adult victims/survivors of GBV in rural communities	Office on Violence Against Women (DOJ)	States and territories; Tribal governments; local governments; nonprofits (including tribal). Must be proposing to serve rural areas or rural communities	\$177.31

This data was captured by the National Crime Victimization Survey, which collects information on nonfatal crimes reported and not reported to the police from a nationally representative sample of U.S. households. In 2014, the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control—a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention entity—reported 24.3 percent of women and 13.8 percent of men experienced intimate partner violence at some point in their lifetime (Walters et al.). This data was collected through the 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), a self-reporting survey that is representative of the national landscape. In short, these sets of data, though using the same understanding of intimate partner violence and relatively similar time period, show an inconsistent rate of victimization. While the National Institute of Justice recognizes the differences in rates of victimization between these two surveys, citing the context in which the two surveys are administered—the BJS’s survey measures IPV within the context of general crime victimization, while NISVS asks more behaviorally-oriented questions solely addressing GBV—it is important to note that government-funded agencies tend to cite the more favorable statistics when addressing impacts of VAWA (NIJ, 2010).

Despite these challenges, the literature around the impact of VAWA does highlight some areas of goal attainment, especially as it relates to focus areas of the legislation: improve the criminal justice response; ensure that victims and their families have access to the services; and create positive change (Zweig & Burt, 2002). The sections below outline these achievements.

Increased Collaboration

One of the continued successes of the act is increased partnerships between the sectors. As illustrated above the STOP Grant Program puts particular emphasis on the collaboration of community agencies including law enforcement, prosecution, the courts, health care, and social service agencies. In addition to the broader program goals listed above, Zweig and Burt (2004) assert a more narrowly-defined, long-term goal of the STOP program:

Promote institutionalized system change throughout communities that results in supportive and effective responses from the criminal and civil justice systems, and other community agencies such as domestic violence and sexual assault programs (p.613).

However, as Zweig and Burt (2004) illustrate, there has been little research conducted on the long-term outcome of these partnerships and their ability to create this system change. Despite the lack of comprehensive assessment,

the authors suggest the institutionalization of these efforts has led to a decrease in total victimization, and more specifically, a decrease in repeat offenders (Zweig & Burt, 2004). They argue this is not only because law enforcement agencies are effectively prosecuting the offender, but social service agencies, such as domestic violence shelters, are able to remove the victim and engage this person in continued support through psycho-educational groups. This empowers the victim to create change in her life, and decreases the chances that she will return to the offender (Zweig & Burt, 2004). In short, funding through STOP grants contributed to improved and increased services for victims, and the coordinated response between agencies also increased the quality of service (Zweig & Burt, 2004).

Similarly, the Greenbook National Evaluation Team assessed the effectiveness of DOJ and HHS grants awarded across sectors aimed at increasing cross-sector collaboration in an effort to improve practices, services, and outcomes for children and families experiencing the co-occurrence of IPV and child abuse (2008). These VAWA-funded grants were awarded to child welfare agencies, domestic violence service providers, and the dependency courts. The Greenbook concluded that major collaboration developed and even expanded over time, but this was not without challenges. In particular, grantees reported difficulties in engaging across systems due to philosophical difference among partners and differences in organizational structures, power, and authority. While the courts and child welfare agencies represented formal systems, domestic violence agencies were more grassroots oriented and held less power in larger systems. This at times proved to be a barrier to collaboration (Greenbook, 2008).

Reduction of Victimization

As noted above, the literature generally suggests a decrease in criminal victimization as a result of VAWA. The NIJ reports on victimization, conducted since the initial authorization of VAWA, suggest fatal assault, nonfatal rape and sexual assault, and nonfatal assault, including physical and verbal/mental abuse, all consistently decreased since 1997 (Clark, Biddle, & Martin, 2002; BJS, DOJ, 2012). In addition to statistics reported above, the Bureau of Justice also reports that between 1993 and 2007, the rate of intimate partner homicides of females decreased 35 percent, and the rate of intimate partner homicides of males decreased 46 percent (2012).

Although these federal reports suggest a decrease of victimization, Zweig and Burt (2004) are a bit more critical of the idea that there is a causal relationship between VAWA and overall reduction in crime. As they

suggest, all violent crime decreased during this time period, not just forms of GBV (Zweig & Burt, 2004).

Cost-Benefit Analysis

In addition to measuring the reduced rate of victimization, another means of evaluating the success of VAWA is through a cost-benefit analysis. As Clark et al. (2002) and Conyers (2007) illustrate, there are inherent issues in conducting this type of analysis, primarily because of the difficulty in assigning a cost to the nontangible losses of human life, and other long-term effects of violence, including emotional pain and overall reduced quality of life. Despite these difficulties, Clark et al. (2002) are still able to conclude that the benefits far exceed the cost of VAWA (2002). At the time of the author's report, Clark et al. (2002) makes a conservative estimate that the cost to serve one victim is \$15.50, but results in \$47 in averted costs. Clark et al. (2002) conclude many of these cost savings come from a reduction in health care service needs and lessened law enforcement costs for continued charges against repeat offenders (Clark et al., 2002).

Specialization of Bureaucrats

As Van Slyke (2007) argues, one of the strongest arguments in the expansion of the scope of the nonprofit sector is its ability to provide expertise, especially as it relates to the human services. Through VAWA funding, many nonprofit organizations are able to increase capacity and infrastructure. However, this does not eliminate the role of the public sector, and although this sector is highly professionalized, gaps of service often arise because bureaucrats do not have the expertise to efficiently and effectively deliver a given service as it relates to GBV. VAWA addressed this issue through its emphasis on continued learning and education, namely its funding for the continued training of the public sector. As a result, an additional impact of VAWA is the increased specialization of bureaucrats.

As noted above, the STOP Grant Program remains one of the top funding priorities of VAWA, with a significant portion going towards improving the response and intervention of law enforcement, prosecutors, and the courts (CRS, 2015). As Meyer-Emerick argues, inaccurate issue literacy not only affects how policy is created, but it can also hinder the implementation of these policies, and subsequently the response of bureaucrats, namely law enforcement (2002). For example, if a police officer does not understand the warning signs of domestic violence, victims face an additional barrier in reporting the crime and seeking justice; a police officer might not recognize an instance of GBV, and as a result neglect to

identify it as such in a police report, which subsequently can make it harder for a victim/survivor to receive a method of protection, such as a Personal Protection Order. This in turn increases the danger to the victim/survivor.

Although Meyer-Emerick is somewhat critical of the VAWA and its funding of the law enforcement, largely because of the inherent power imbalance of profession and its tendency to disproportionately attract perpetrators of violent crimes, her analysis points to positive outcomes of increased specialization. She argues that one way to get at the core issues of violence against women is to get at the root cause of the violence. By challenging bureaucrats to change how they perceive violence against women, especially in their recognition of violence against women as a crime, the way the government responds to this crime might also change.

This analysis is supported by Burt, Zweig, Schlichter, and Andrews (2000) evaluation of the STOP Grant Program. Relevant to the discussion of increased specialization of bureaucrats, the authors note two key findings: STOP funding resulted in increased training of law enforcement and prosecution; and STOP funding resulted in over half of victim services programs providing policy and protocol development (2000). As government continues to privatize and cut specialization within different agencies, VAWA puts more pressure on bureaucrats to uphold this degree of specialization, which as Burt et al. (2000) indicate, increases the quality of service victims/survivors receive when accessing services in the public sector.

Public Management Challenges

One of the key issues that arises as a result of VAWA is the potential inability of the federal government to efficiently and effectively manage the grants and contracts that are awarded to the private and nonprofit sector. As a blurring of the sectors continues, it also becomes increasingly difficult to identify means for holding organizations accountable for the fulfillment of the program's desired outcomes. Additionally, as privatization of social services increases, which at times VAWA represents, the likelihood of the mismanagement of funding increases (Van Slyke, 2002). The sections below examine some of the barriers to system-level change that are created as a result of mismanagement of federal grants as it relates to VAWA. As expanded on below, many of the management challenges are rooted in capacity and the difficulties relatively small departments face in administering large grants to multiple program sites.

Evaluation

Potentially one of the largest shortcomings of VAWA is the lack of any comprehensive evaluation of the legislation. While grant programs such as the STOP grant emphasize some degree of reporting to the OVW, most of the current grant programs do not have any comprehensive assessment requirements (Boba & Lilley, 2009). In other words, while grantees might be required to report the number of clients served or law enforcement might be required to report the number of individuals convicted of crimes related to GBV, there is no evaluation model that requires these programs to look at their services at all levels. Boba and Lilley (2009) suggest this is a result of the diversity of focus and breadth of VAWA-funded programs. Somewhat similarly, Klein, Brown, Small, Tucker, Fischer, and Walsh(2009) indicate in the evaluation of a rural grant program that although Congress mandated that the program include an evaluation under the auspices of NIJ, the program itself was not equipped to accommodate a rigorous outcome or impact evaluation.

Additionally, despite benefits of conducting continual program evaluation, few organizations engage or invest in this practice without it being a funding requirement. Those that do engage in evaluation often see it as nothing more than a requirement of a grant, and therefore invest little into the process of continual learning and application that is the foundation of Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB). While the literature specific to the importance of ECB within GBV organizations is limited, Mark, Gary Henry, and Julnes (2000) provide an overview of the importance of this practice, especially when trying to evaluate change in behavior—a key desired outcome of VAWA. Reasons to engage in ECB include: evaluation is a means of assessing the merit and worth of a program; evaluation is a process for uncovering opportunity for program improvement; evaluation can be an accountability tool to ensure compliance and maintain oversight; and evaluation leads to knowledge development—both external and internal.

ECB is a method of evaluation that promotes the continual process of evaluation (Mark et al., 2000). Instead of being output-focused, like much of the reporting requirements of VAWA, ECB would increase the likelihood that organizations, especially those providing direct service, look beyond the immediate needs of the clients—shelter, medical needs—and instead look at the root causes of the issues, which would better address system-level change.

While current Congressional Research Service reports do not indicate plans to increase capacity around evaluation—internally or externally—the CDC has taken steps to increase organizational learning among its grantees

so that they can engage in evaluation (CRS, 2015; CRS, 2010, CRS 2008). As DeGue, Simon, Basile, Lin Yee, Lang, and Spivak (2012) suggest, the CDC continues to advocate for an increase of funding for Rape Prevention and Education Grant Program so technical assistance can be provided around evaluation and assessment. More importantly, this request for additional funds and the overall lack of system-level evaluation points to the overall shortcomings in the management of these grants. As DeGue et al. (2012) suggest, without funding to conduct evaluation through VAWA, organizations do not have the resources to engage in this practice. The authors also suggest that without funding to assess the strategies of the grantees, the organizations are less likely to engage in innovative approaches to problem solving for fear of losing funding if the new approach does not meet previously-set output goals (DeGue et al. 2012). As it relates to the original research question, it appears as though a lack of adequate ECB-related funding from the federal grant administrators is preventing organizations from moving beyond output-focused programming.

New Street Level Bureaucrats

Van Slyke (2007) provides an overview of why governments often look to increase partnerships with the nonprofit sector. Of these reasons, there are a few that are especially applicable to VAWA: their expertise in providing certain types of services; their proximity to clients and communities in need; and their perceived mission and goal alignment with government's mission (Van Slyke, 2007). As a result of this partnership and the overall devolution of government services, Van Slyke (2007) asserts a new street level bureaucrat is created, in which the public no longer views the government as the sole provider of social services. While this does not immediately create a challenge, as supported by Burt et al.'s evaluation, it does pose challenges if VAWA funding that supported these services cannot be sustained. In noting the overall decreased funding Congress has authorized for VAWA since FY 2011, this challenge might have an increased likelihood of growing (Table 1).

As it relates to public administration and management of VAWA, there are several issues with this potential redefining of the public sector and nonprofit sector. First, Van Slyke (2007) suggests nonprofits are significantly limited in their ability to achieve the overarching funding requirements of the government. In the case of VAWA, the overall goals would be to create system-level change, including the way institutions engage in their larger system. Underlining this issue of the limitations of

nonprofits is the fact that government agencies do not have the capacity to evaluate the performance of these partners, which holds especially true for OVW given the thousands of grants its relatively small staff oversees (Van Slyke, 2007).

An additional issue created by the blurring of lines is the issue of accountability. While nonprofits are sharing the responsibility to administer GBV services, the government is usually the one held accountable by the people when service is not delivered or when it is delivered ineffectively. This issue is further exacerbated by the lack of evaluation, as discussed in the previous section, because the government is not even able to detect the ineffective service (Van Slyke, 2007). As Van Slyke (2007) asserts, the increased reliance on nonprofit organizations creates issues in how accountability is preserved and maintained, how public responsibilities are identified, and how constituents file grievances.

Suppressed Advocacy

Another potential barrier to system-level change is the potential for VAWA to suppress further advocacy efforts among grassroots and nonprofit organizations because the nation's response to GBV has become so institutionalized (Kramer, 1981). As Salamon (2002) illustrates, government funding accounted for 37 percent of nonprofits' revenue in 1995, up 6 percent from 1977. While the degree of federal funding a nonprofit organization receives varies, there are few that do not receive any federal funding (Salamon, 2002). The percentage of federal funding nonprofit organizations receive increases even more for organizations providing services related to GBV (Zweig & Burt, 2002). For many organizations, especially nonprofits with an annual budget over \$1 million, VAWA-funded grants are often one of the primary sources for program funding (Sweig & Burt, 2002). Chaves, Stephens, and Galaskiewicz (2004) suggest this degree of dependence on federal funding has a significant influence on the political activity of nonprofit organizations, especially those that do not view advocacy as a primary component of their mission. Additionally, those that recognize the need to create system-level reform often refrain from challenging components of VAWA because they fear a reduction in funding as a result of their advocacy efforts. This don't-bite-the-hand-that-feeds-you mentality is among the most cited reasons by human-service nonprofits for not engaging in any degree of advocacy (Chaves et al., 2004).

As Hatch (2013) illustrates, power and funding dependency are also closely related. If an organization has multiple sources of funding, it has more relative power. As dependency of one funding source goes up,

power goes down (Hatch, 2013). This holds true across all sectors, but again is especially applicable to the nonprofit sector. Weldon (2002) suggests grassroots organizations addressing violence against women in the early 1990s had more relative power than those today because they were not dependent on any singular funding stream. As illustrated, VAWA has led many organizations to weaken the diversity of their funding sources because, for the most part, it has remained a consistent funding stream.

As mentioned in the background section, the Battered Women's Movement effectively improved government responsiveness to violence against women (Weldon, 2002). This is a representation of its power. The social movement created institutionalized change through the creation of VAWA, institutions such as OVW, and reformed federal policy such as stricter convictions. Yet, as Weldon (2002) suggests, political activism significantly decreased following the passage of the VAWA because many of the community organizers saw an achievement in their goals. For the most part, continued reauthorizations of VAWA represent the government's agenda around issues of violence—an agenda that consistently gave way to increased funding.

Ultimately, suppressed political activity or decreased advocacy results in less system-level change (Kramer, 1981). As the federal government continues to increase funding to a larger number of agencies across the sectors, but fails to increase assessment components, the ability to detect ineffective approaches or gaps in service delivery decreases. This makes it more likely that programs will neglect to reach long-term outcomes because long-term accountability is not created nor sustained. As it relates to advocacy and system-wide change, VAWA seems to give way to complacency as opposed to continued reform (Weldon, 2002).

CONCLUSION

While it still remains difficult to evaluate the overall success of VAWA in effectively creating system-level change, there are measurable outcomes that seem to support this idea. VAWA led to policy reform that allowed law enforcement to prosecute individuals for crimes related to GBV. The act also provides funding for the much-needed services of victims/survivors in addition to allocating significant funding for increased technical assistance across sectors. As the literature suggests, this has helped to increase understanding of the crimes as well as service delivery across systems.

However, there are still significant issues regarding VAWA that are primarily rooted in the public sector management of the increasing number and focus of its grant programs. Although VAWA created OVW,

an approach that was intended to create better avenues for management of the grant programs, the literature suggests there are still significant capacity issues. In particular, long-term outcome evaluation is not consistently taking place, which makes it hard to assess the overall success of the act. Additionally, the public's increased dependence on the nonprofit sector creates a myriad of issues related to public management and sustainability.

Ultimately, VAWA is representative of many of the challenges that arise as a result of the increased blurring of the roles and responsibilities of the public and nonprofit sector. While this article highlights some of the benefits of increased collaboration, it also shows how resource dependency can lead to a decrease in power and influence. While there is a role for both sectors in the prevention, intervention, and response of GBV, it becomes difficult to assess the degree to which the sectors are achieving system change without a culture of continued evaluation. Moreover, as the government continues to increase the scope of its funding under VAWA, it becomes more important to assess the capacity needed to efficiently manage these funds. While it is important to address problems of GBV, it is also important only to take on programs within the capacity of the managing agency.

REFERENCES

- Aron, L. Y., & Newmark, L. C. (1999). The STOP violence against women grants: Program implementation and initial funding strategies. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 9(2), 233-259. doi: 10.1177/088740349800900205
- Biden, J.R. (1994). Turning the act into action: The violence against women law. Washington, D.C.: Senate Judiciary Committee.
- Boba, R., & Lilley, D. (2009). Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) funding: A nationwide assessment of effects on rape and assault. *Violence Against Women*, 15, 168-185. doi:10.1177/1077801208329146
- Breiding, M. J., Smith, S.G. Basile, K.C., Walters, M.L., Chen, J., & Merrick, M.T. (2011). Prevalence and characteristics of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence victimization—National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 63(SS-8), 1-18.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics, Department of Justice. (2012). Intimate partner violence, 1993-2010 (Report No. NCJ 239203). Retrieved from <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4536>
- Burt, M.R., Zweig, J.M., Schlichter, K., & Andrews, C. (2000).

Aday/Violence Against Women Act

- Victim service programs in the STOP formula grants program: Services offered and interactions with other community agencies (NCJ No. 196990). Retrieved from National Criminal Justice Reference Service database.
- Campbell, R., & Bybee, D. (1997). Emergency medical services for rape victims: Detecting the cracks in service delivery. *Women's Health: Research on Gender, Behavior, and Policy*, 3(2), 75–101.
- Chaves, M., Stephens, L., & Galaskiewicz, J. (2004). Does government funding suppress nonprofits' political activity? *American Sociological Review*, 69(2), 292-316. doi:10.1177/000312240406900207
- Clark, K. A., Biddle, A. K., & Martin, S. L. (2002). A cost-benefit analysis of the violence against women act of 1994. *Violence Against Women*, 8(4), 417-428. doi: 10.1177/10778 010222183143
- Congressional Research Service, (2015). *The violence against women act: Overview, legislation, and federal funding* (Report No. 7-5700, R42499). Retrieved from Congressional Research Service. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42499.pdf>
- Congressional Research Service, (2010). *Violence Against Women Act: History and federal funding* (Report No. 7-5700, RL30871). Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1716&context=key_workplace
- Congressional Research Service, (2008). *Violence against women act: History and federal funding* (Report No. 7-5700, RL30871) Retrieved from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42499.pdf>
- DeGue, S., Simon, T.R., Basile, K.C., Yee, S.L., Lang, K., & Spivak, H. (2012). Moving forward by looking back: Reflecting on a decade of CDC's work in sexual violence prevention, 2000-2010. *Journal of Women's Health*, 21(12), 1211-1218 doi:10.1089/jwh/2012.3973
- Department of Justice. (1984). *Attorney general's task force on family violence* (Report No. CB 017891). Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED251762.pdf>
- The Greenbook National Evaluation Team. (2008). The Greenbook initiative final evaluation report (NCJ No. 233290). Retrieved from National Criminal Justice Reference Service database.
- Hatch, M. J. (2012). *Organization theory*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Klein, A., Brown, M., Small, M., Tucker, D., Fischer, R., & Walsh, C. (2009). Evaluation of the rural domestic violence and child victimization grant program special initiative: Faith-based and community organization pilot program (NCJ No. 228192). Retrieved from National Criminal Justice Reference Service

- database.Kramer, R. (1981). *Voluntary agencies in the welfare state*.
University of California Press: Berkeley, California.
- Mark, M. M., Henry, G. T., & Julnes, G. (2000). Defining evaluation purposes. *Evaluation: An Integrated Framework for Understanding, Guiding, and Improving Public and Nonprofit Policies and Programs* (pp. 49-74). San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass
- Meyer-Emerick, N. (2002). Policy makers, practitioners, citizens: Perceptions of the violence against women act of 1994. *Administration & Society, 33*(6), 629-663. doi: 10.1177/0095399702033006003
- National Institute of Justice, (2010). Measuring intimate partner (domestic) violence. Retrieved from <http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/intimate-partner-violence/pages/measuring.aspx>
- Office of Research and Evaluation, National Institute of Justice. (2013). Crime, violence & victimization research division's compendium of research on violence against women, 1993-2013. (Report No. NCJ# 223572). Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/AbstractDB/AbstractDBSearch.aspx>
- Office on Violence Against Women. (2012). *2012 biennial report to congress on the effectiveness of grant programs under the Violence Against Women Act*. Retrieved from <http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/docs/2012-biennial-report-to-congress.pdf>
- Salamon, L. M., (2002). *The State of Nonprofit America*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.
- Tiefenthaler, J., Farmer, A., & Sambira, A. (2005). Services and intimate partner violence in the United States: A country-level analysis. *The Journal of Marriage & Family, 67*, 565-578.
- Van Slyke, D.M. (2002). The public management challenges of contracting with nonprofits for social services. *International Journal of Public Administration, 25*(4), 489-517. doi:10.1081/PAD-120013253
- Van Slyke, D.M. (2007). Agents or stewards: Using theory to understand the government-nonprofit social service contacting relationship. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 17*(2), 157-187. doi:10.1093/jopart/mul012
- Walters, M.L., Chen, J., & Breiding, M.J. (2013). The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey (NISV): 2010 findings on victimization by sexual orientation. *National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.
- Weldon, S. L. (2002). Protest, policy, and the problem of violence against women: A cross-national comparison. Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburg Press.

Aday/Violence Against Women Act

- Weldon, S. L. (2011). Perspectives against interests: A sketch of a political theory of women. *Politics & Gender*, 7 (3), 441-446.
- Weldon, S. L., & Htun, M. (2013). Feminist mobilisation and progressive policy change: Why governments take action to combat violence against women. *Gender & Development*, 21, 231-247. doi:10.1080/13552074.2013.802158
- Zweig, J. M., & Burt, M. R. (2002). *The complexities of victim research: Implementation lessons from the victim impact evaluation of nonprofit victim services in the STOP program*. Washington, D.C. Urban Institute.
- Zweig, J. M., & Burt, M. R. (2004). Impacts of agency coordination on nonprofit domestic violence and sexual assault programs in communities with STOP formula grant funding. *Violence and Victims*, 19, 613-624



Tara Aday is the Program Director at Safe Haven Ministries, a comprehensive domestic violence agency in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Graduating from Grand Valley State University (GVSU) with a degree in Journalism and Political Science, Tara went on to earn her Master of Public Administration from GVSU. Tara is passionate about community engagement and issues of gender justice, and has experience working in these arenas at the local and national level. When not at work, Tara enjoys volunteering for an array of animal welfare agencies or simply enjoying all that the great outdoors of West Michigan has to offer.