

Is Methodological Pluralism Improving Our Ability to Uncover the Causal Mechanisms Behind Men's Violence Against Women?

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This explorative article aims to take a step in the direction of a realist-oriented scientific design that extends our knowledge of the requirements of a methodology that improves our ability to uncover the causal mechanisms behind men's violence against women. Despite the great advances that have been made in individual research disciplines, our understanding of the complex causes is still insufficient and suffers from our inability to grasp the larger whole of the collaborative processes. As a first step towards the objective, an integration attempt is implemented that aims to highlight methodological issues that we have to overcome to explain men's violence against women. The integration of psychological, social-psychological, and sociological theories aims to exemplify how contributing, and counteracting factors interact with each other and form a complex mechanism that influences whether violence against women will take place or not. To leave room for the methodological dimension, the depth of each perspective has been reduced. The results of the integration attempt show both opportunities and difficulties in investigating the mechanisms behind men's violence against women. However, there is still untapped knowledge potential in the explorative integration of theories and the use of realist-oriented pluralistic research methodologies.

KEYWORDS: methodological pluralism; probabilism; critical realism; intimate partner violence; violence against women

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of intimate partner violence, IPV, and violence against women (VAW) describe two of the world's most serious social problems and are associated with both psychological and physiological long-term health effects. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) and the United Nations (UN, 2021), IPV and VAW

are common in countries with both high and low levels of development. Men's VAW usually conceptually refers to unidirectional physical, psychological, sexual violence, emotional abuse, and controlling behavior that occurs in a close relationship. IPV usually often includes VAW and bidirectional forms of partner violence, but usually not community violence and child abuse (CA), and violence directed at household members such as the elderly and siblings. Both IPV and VAW leave out self-directed violence as self-abuse and suicide (Ali & Naylor, 2013).

IPV should not be simplified as a male-to-female phenomenon since bidirectional IPV is common (Dutton et al., 2006; Johnson, 2010; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2009; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012). There are currently several ongoing controversies involving gender and how to classify, measure, and explain VAW. In addition, the research on bidirectional IPV has led to many of the conclusions drawn in VAW research becoming questioned. Thus, the commonly used research concept of VAW has been considered problematic since it constructs domestic violence as a gendered crime with structural and political implications. Many victims of IPV are male, and their victimization within their relationships must be considered (Swan & Snow, 2002; Swahn et al., 2008). It is, therefore, questionable whether it makes sense to try to distinguish between IPV and VAW with the concept of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence is defined as violence directed against a person because of his or her gender or violence that disproportionately affects persons of a particular gender, e.g., gang rape, trafficking, and honor killings, which are types of violence that men are rarely subjected to. Research shows a more complex picture, with non-gendered factors such as attachment insecurity having a large explanatory value for whether violence will occur in a relationship (e.g., Gottman et al., 1995; Sonkin et al., 2019). Also, these gender-independent dynamics have been shown to be of great importance when designing violence treatment (Hamel, 2012).

The most noted empirical data on IPV (Johnson, 2008, 2017; Kelly & Johnson, 2008) supports differentiation among about five distinct types. Through recognition of the actual data, it is possible to tailor parenting plans, treatment programs, legal sanctions, and preventions to be effective (Haselschwerdt et al., 2019; Johnson, 2010; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2009; Mennicke, 2019).

Johnson (2008, 2010, 2017); (Kelly & Johnson, 2008) recognize several distinct types of IPV: Coercive Controlling Violence (CCV), Situational Couple Violence (SCV), Violent Resistance (from an abused partner), Separation Instigated Violence (from the partner who has been abandoned), and Mutual Violent Control (between two equally controlling violent partners). The most relevant types to this article are CCV and SCV. CCV is identified by the pattern of power and control in which it is embedded. Abusers, primarily male-perpetrated, use emotional abuse; intimidation; isolation; minimizing and blaming; use of children; economic abuse and coercion, and threats. CCV does not manifest itself in prominent levels of violence but in severity. However, according to Johnson, coercive controlling violence is predominantly perpetrated by men, but based on his own definition of CCV, as a combination of emotional abuse, control, and physical abuse, and considering other research from Graham-Kevan and Archer (2003) and Felson and Cares (2005), the figures between

the sexes seem to be more comparable and more complex than Johnson suggests. SCV is the most common type of physical aggression in the general population of married spouses and cohabiting partners and is perpetrated by both sexes. The violence and emotional abuse are not accompanied by a pattern of intimidating, controlling, or stalking behaviors but are initiated at similar rates by women and men and are less likely to escalate over time. It results from situations, arguments, and emotions between partners that escalate on occasion into physical violence. It more frequently involves minor forms of violence, such as grabbing and shoving, when compared to CCV. Given that these conditions would motivate the use of integrated frameworks, it is still rare to find the use of different research perspectives within a single research methodology. However, reductionism can be remedied by an orientation toward critical realism and methodological pluralism. The integration of psychological, social-psychological, and sociological theories can help us understand how contributing, and counteracting factors interact with each other and form a mechanism that influences whether violence will take place or not. (Bhaskar, 1989; Sayer, 1992). This article attempt to develop knowledge on how to proceed in this direction. As the purpose of this article is to highlight the methodological challenges that arise when we intend to integrate different theories of violence, it is inevitable that this ambition may conflict with different research perspectives.

AIM AND DELINEATION

This explorative article aims to take a step in the direction of a realist-oriented scientific design that extends our knowledge of the requirements of a methodology that improves our ability to uncover the causal mechanisms behind violence against women. Various major descriptive studies show that there are different types of bidirectional IPV, and as a result of the empirical research, theoretical knowledge about the causes has been developed.

From an emotion-sociological perspective, Scheff and Retzinger (2001) have investigated the role of shame and unstable social bonds between partners in the development of partner violence and, from a more psychologically experimental perspective, (Gottman et al., 1995; Gottman & Krokov, 1989; Friend et al., 2011) have developed screening instruments to distinguish between character-related violent, situationally violent and stressed non-violent couples. This research reveals a more complex picture of the causes of violence than the IPV or VAW paradigms can do justice to. Despite the progress made in competing perspectives, there is still a need to develop theory-neutral methodologies that can combine different knowledge with each other. In this attempt, the main interest is not to pit different theories against each other but to discuss the potential advantages of a realist methodology that attempts to make visible the contributing and counteracting factors behind partner violence. This explorative integration attempt is limited to a discussion about the requirements of a methodology that can uncover the causal mechanisms behind men's VAW. The depth of each theoretical perspective is reduced to leave room for the methodological dimension.

WHY INTEGRATE KNOWLEDGE ON MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WITH A REALIST APPROACH?

The perspectives of biology, psychology, social psychology, and sociology have made important contributions to our understanding of VAW but have disadvantages as singular perspectives. The international discourse on VAW still suffers from controversies between the major disciplines, and the prospects of seeing cooperation between them are farfetched since those in the field may define themselves as combatants regarding the truth. Although several research attempts on VAW overlap research disciplines, most studies could still be categorized ontologically based on a particular perspective. Therefore, to uncover the mechanisms behind VAW we need to access knowledge from a multitude of scientific perspectives. Descriptive research brings useful knowledge of factors that are statistically related to VAW. Statistics from ecological models (Heise, 2012) predict the highest risk for men to use VAW as equivalent to when several risk factors at distinct levels, coincide in the same male individual. Inferential statistics help us to verify relationships between factors behind VAW and controls for known confounding factors. However, multi-regression analyzes of measurable variables, which use probabilistic verification as validation, have limitations since they lack the methodological tools to uncover the mechanisms that caused these factors to be related in the first place. Since infer is to conclude from evidence and not to prove, inferential statistics usually suggest but cannot prove an explanation or a causal relationship. The point of departure for critical realism is that perspectives that solely rely on verified probability cannot explain empirical events.

The realist perspective presents a solid argumentation as to why it is necessary to combine theories and methods to explain a social event (Bhaskar, 1989; Sayer, 1992) and considered a necessity to explain the interaction between factors that precede the empirical outcome of events, regardless of what perspective, theory, or level such factors are categorized as belonging to. Instead of being regarded as obstacles, the hidden interplay between the contributing and counteracting factors behind VAW should be understood as necessary starting points. The concept of *mechanisms*, from critical realism, refers to the complex interplay between contributing and counteracting factors that empirically precede and cause observable events in the social environment. The use of knowledge on relevant factors from different research perspectives increases our chances of accessing these arcane mechanisms that must precede an empirically observable event in time and space. Explanations of social events—such as VAW in this case—must consider previous interactions between enabling and counteracting factors at various levels. The occurrence of VAW depends on whether and how factors at distinct levels interact with each other in a specific situation. Factors that are known by science to contribute to or counteract VAW, are of assistance in the process of refining our explanations about the active mechanisms. Although no single case of VAW is so simplistic that it can be reduced to what we know within a few research perspectives, combination trials have a pedagogical advantage, in that they remind us of the necessary level of integration. Still, one major challenge for realism

is how to combine incommensurable ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions under a single ontology (Bhaskar, 1989; Sayer, 1992).

Trials with interdisciplinary ambitions enable researchers to reason in terms of heuristics, understandings, and explanations related to violence mechanisms and move beyond traditional terms of validation, probability, and verification. Well-performed qualitative case studies have the potential to explain the mechanisms that produce measurable events on the empirical level, but only for singular or few cases. Case studies can integrate detailed knowledge about influences from within time and space that precede factors from the societal level—such as class, ethnicity, and gender—and make substantial explanations of how these factors interact with each other (Johnson, 2010). Researchers with new theoretical trials to explain VAW must venture to integrate research from disciplines that are incommensurable with the researchers' research affiliation.

Previous Integration Attempts on VAW

Although the autonomy of scientific perspectives has historically been perceived as a necessity for producing scientific knowledge, it is an outdated methodology that prevents serious attempts at explaining the causal mechanisms behind VAW. The lack of perspective integration has been noticed by scholars such as Dutton (2006), who considers this failure to be a consequence of feminist discourse being focused on power and macro structures. Among others, Brownridge (2009) considered it problematic that the currently extensive violence research doctrine has not achieved any theory explaining VAW. According to Jordan (2009), what initially were commendable attempts to consolidate findings into an individual theory, tended to separate traditions from each other once the empirical research had been conducted. Although perspective integration has become more common within the social sciences, its use is still rare in studies of VAW, albeit with few exceptions.

All integrational attempts to date have been designed to explain unidirectional IPV in the shape of VAW. As early as 1996, Crowell & Burgess pointed out the need to integrate factors from different perspectives to explain men's VAW. O'Neil and Harway (1999) later developed a multifactorial design that integrated biological factors with the outcome of gender socialization at the macro level of society, among other achievements. This methodologically advanced model provided examples of how the interaction between factors on various levels contributed to or counteracted VAW. Among the integrational attempts made by violence researchers, Craig and Sprang (2007) practiced a level-exceeding method that made the complex mechanisms behind the intergenerational transmission of domestic violence (IGTV) visible. The experiences of being a victim of CA increased the risk for males to become violent perpetrators and for females to become victims. Personal exposure to and—to some extent—the witnessing of violence during childhood establishes an increased shame proneness, which in adulthood expresses itself as a greater sensitivity to abandonment, disrespect, and humiliation from partners. By making the violence mechanisms

visible, this theory moved from describing covariation between factors to a theoretical explanation of the causal mechanism enabling a connection between the past experiences of violence and violence by the next generation. Recent meta-analyses find these IGTV theories challenging to examine due to methodological variability within different studies (Haselschwerdt et al., 2019). In addition, Bell and Naugle (2008) presented a model that integrated a variety of factors that allows for a better understanding of the relationship between individual variables and contextual units and how proximal variables could be related to discrete VAW episodes. Also, their model had limitations since structural, learning, and emotional research of VAW show mixed support. Starting from Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective, Heise (2012), working with the WHO, designed a large-scale integrated attempt to clarify the etiology of men's VAW. The application does not intend to reveal the causal mechanisms behind VAW but searches for verifications of covariations between risk factors at the societal level, the society, the community, relationships, and the individual to direct efforts to where they are most needed.

AN EXPLORATIVE INTEGRATIONAL ATTEMPT

This integration attempt is dedicated to learning the methodological advantages and shortcomings that are made visible when theories that explain VAW are combined in search of contributing and counteracting factors. It combines a sample of theories that aims to explain VAW from psychological, social-psychological, and sociological perspectives. The sample of theories that are used within the different perspectives is not intended to be comprehensive. Accordingly, the sociobiological perspective will not be used in this integration attempt. Although these perspectives and theories partially overlap, they are still based on different ontological assumptions about which methodological level that explains VAW.

The Psychological Perspective. The Relationship Between VAW, CA, and Shame Proneness

Negative emotional consequences of CA, such as increased shame proneness, have been related to both self-directed violence and extrovert violence against other men, women, and children. Shame proneness is primarily activated when individuals fear being abandoned by their partner and relive the painful and overwhelming experiences of having been abandoned, humiliated, abused and unloved in childhood. Men subjected to CA suffer from low self-respect, forcing them to act aggressively to "save face" in conflicts with partners (Brown, 2004; Gilligan, 2003; Maltingly & Straus, 2008; Scheff, 2006; Tangney et al., 2014; Voorthuis et al., 2014; Wei & Brackley, 2010). Accordingly, research in this area often distinguishes between men who have been subjected to CA and men who have had a non-violent childhood (Boullier & Blair, 2018). In addition, studies of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) have established an association between a high score on ACEs and poor general outcomes in adulthood

and high involvement in VAW (Child Trends, 2013; Felitti et al., 1998; Mersky et al., 2013; WHO, 2020). In early research studies, Dutton (1999) related men's experiences of being a victim of CA and/or witnessing violence against their mother or siblings to their use of VAW and to the starting point of the IGTV. Research by (Renner & Slack, 2006; Wareham et al., 2009) verified support for a relationship between being a victim of CA and becoming a perpetrator or victim of VAW in adulthood. Walker and Bright (2009) found strong empirical support for a relationship between being a victim of CA and/or witnessing violence against relatives and demonstrating positive attitudes toward VAW and personal use of VAW. The research behind the theory of IGTV is rather well documented (Flood & Pease, 2009); nevertheless, one of the most well-supported findings is that most parents who were maltreated will not abuse or neglect their children (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016). Recent reviews of the IGTV perspective also find too much methodological variability and too little methodological complexity to inform a solid review and discussion of the results (Haselschwerdt et al., 2019).

The Social Psychological Perspective. Factors Related to the Learning of VAW

Early studies by Gondolf (1992), Markowitz (2001), and Delsol et al. (2003) report that children of both sexes who have witnessed family violence—even without being directly exposed to it—internalize and normalize the violent behaviors through imitation learning at younger ages and through role-model learning when older. Childhood and early adolescence are central to feminist researchers, as they constitute a central period in life in which the patriarchal ideology and acts such as unidirectional- and bidirectional IPV are socialized and transmitted between generations. The learning perspective often distinguishes between men who have witnessed VAW in a patriarchal family context and men who grew up in egalitarian families without VAW (Powers et al., 2020). In addition, family violence is often experienced during a period in the child's life in which the psyche is at its most plastic, long before children's moral ability to dismiss violence as illegitimate has emerged. Flood and Pease (2009) found it established that men's assertion of distinct gender roles predicts VAW since, in a patriarchal ideology, children of both sexes internalize the values that men have more rights than women. Empirical studies show that the combination of patriarchal socialization and self-perceived experiences of their father's violence against their mother teach boys that VAW is a legitimate problem- and conflict-resolution method, while girls tend to normalize the role of being abused (Kazemi et al., 2019; Kelmendi and Baumgartner, 2020; Kitzman et al., 2003; Pease, 2001). However, these gendered stereotypes are partly contested, Testa et al. (2011) found that witnessing mother-to-father aggression increased the risk that females perpetrate violence against a male partner as adults.

The Sociological Perspective. Factors Related to Masculinity and VAW

Men's differing access to resources may direct them to act differently in relationships with both women and men. Smith's (1990a,b) groundbreaking research indicated that marginalized men with low-status jobs, a low income, and a low level of education, more often were carriers of a patriarchal ideology and used VAW more frequently. Gelles (1999)—in addition to later empirical research—verified that unemployed men with low incomes used VAW more often than men with an occupation and a higher income. According to Goldberg (1999), this is explained by the fact that marginalized men more often live according to traditional gender roles where positive attitudes toward VAW are functional. Without the normal advantage over women as a breadwinner, some men become patriarchal and stereotypic in their attitudes and use VAW to maintain women's subordination. DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009) related men's VAW to the economic transformation in the United States and to the stress experienced by unemployed men over being unable to live up to the traditional and normal role of the family breadwinner. Crime, violence, and VAW thus become a way for these men to construct their masculinity to other men and to distinguish their male identity from that of women. Hence, in a hierarchy of men within a capitalist organized society, men's VAW must also be understood as an act that establishes marginalized men as men and in control of something. Thus, VAW cannot only be understood as a way of keeping women subordinated.

In current masculinity theory (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2012), four masculinity types delineate according to the premise that men possess different forms of economic, cultural, and social power. *Hegemonic masculinity* illustrates the normative ideal of all forms of masculinity within the patriarchy. The male heroes of today's culture—including astronauts, sports stars, movie stars, politicians, and business leaders—form the hegemonic masculinity at the top of the male hierarchy. The *complicit* masculinity possesses patriarchal privileges such as economic, social, and cultural resources, and men enacting this masculinity can maintain their position without explicit use of VAW. Men with *subordinate* masculinities comprise gay, bisexual, trans, and queer men who have found themselves of be a negation to the hetero-patriarchal ideal type of hegemonic masculinity. Finally, the *marginalized* masculinity with poor socioeconomic and cultural resources, such as unemployed or low-income men, ethnic minorities, addicts, and the sick, cannot live up to the conventional expectations of the hegemonic masculinity and are often met with structural barriers that hinder their potential to become equal and democratic. Masculinity-oriented studies by (Altonen et al., 2012; Dutton, 1994; Gondolf, 1992; Krienert, 2003) found that men with a low socioeconomic position and unable to attain normative masculinity are not only more often involved in VAW but also involved in violence against other men, street crime, drug-related crimes, and suffering more often from mental disorders.

Messerschmidt (2000, 2018) stresses that men's violence in our culture has become glorified and internalized as a normal part of hegemonic masculinity. Marginalized, resource-poor men experience the frustration and anger of becoming excluded from

the socioeconomic status that legitimizes them as normal. Their position leaves them no choice but to use alternative masculinity-validating resources, including extremes such as violence, VAW, and rape, to meet the requirements of hegemonic masculinity. In addition, Seidler (1994) argues that men who live their lives in patriarchal western cultures are socialized to repress emotions such as painful shame about being vulnerable. To remain self-controlled, this state of mind is transformed into less painful and culturally accepted emotions such as anger and aggression (Scheff & Retzinger, 2001). Jakupcak et al. (2005) regard this relationship between masculinity, emotional fear, shame, anger, and violence as well documented within our historical and cultural context. These structuralist-oriented masculinity theories stand in contrast to theories that postulate men's ability to make conscious rational choices.

In addition, Hearn (1998a, b), as one of the advocates of a masculinity theory—that is based on a rationalistic-constructivist ontology—claims that men's use of VAW is a rational choice since it protects the male power within patriarchy. Men can, with the help of their reasoning, choose to construct their masculine identity with or without the use of VAW. Psychological explanations that use excuses and justifications of men's VAW allow men to escape from their responsibilities and protect the patriarchy from critique. Since VAW is rational, Hearn (1998b, 1999) suggests that the organization of men in a movement against VAW could teach men to make informed decisions when paired with cognitive education strategies. According to (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), the presence or absence of VAW could also indicate men's access to or exclusion from economic, social, and cultural resources. Men's lack of resources limits their abilities to opt-out of having elements of domination, aggression, and VAW in their lives. Moreover, the rationalist position is criticized for neglecting those characteristics and attributes that are socialized at an early age, which reduced the options of resource-poor men to consciously do gender in a non-hegemonic way. Also, it delineates itself from the irrational and emotional aspects of being a man. The postulation of men as rational defenders of the patriarchy is likely to ignore the growing body of knowledge about men's emotional suffering and losses in the patriarchy (Seidler, 1994). Also, irrational emotions—rather than rational decisions—play a significant role in explaining male VAW (Brown, 2004; Gilligan, 2003; Mathews et al., 2011; Scheff & Retzinger, 2001; Walker & Bright, 2009). The proposed cognitive educations are not designed to treat the irrational and emotional aspects and carries the risk that these men will remain untreated after a completed education.

INTEGRATING THEORIES AND FACTORS

The following integration attempt uses three different theories with the intention of visualizing the interplay between enabling and counteracting factors behind VAW. First, the hegemonic masculinity and the later development of non-hegemonic masculinities are related to the risk of using VAW (Table 1). Next, these findings are integrated with the psychological theories of emotion and social-psychological learning theories (Table 2).

TABLE 1. Masculinity Positions and the Hypothetical Risk of Men’s VAW

	Transformative non-hegemonic masculinities					Conservative hegemonic masculinities				
	Inclusive	Healthy	Caring	Positive	Pro-feminist	Marginalized	Subordinated	Complicit	Dominating	Toxic
Proximity to VAW	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	N/A	Low	High	High

TABLE 2. Overview of Enabling and Counteracting Factors Behind Men’s VAW Through the Combination of Theories of CA, Learning Theory and Masculinity Theory

		Emotions and learning theory								
		Scale: C3 Lowest, C1,5 Lower, C1 Low, C0/E0,5 Medium risk – E1, High, E2,5 Higher, E3 Highest - risk of VAW								
		Counter-acting factors <i>Never been a victim of CA. Never witnessed VAW</i>	Counter-acting factor: <i>Never been a victim of CA</i>	Counter-acting factor: <i>Never been a victim of CA</i>	Weakly enabling factor: <i>Victim of minor only CA</i>	Weakly enabling factor: <i>Victim of minor only CA</i>	Weakly enabling factor: <i>Victim of minor only CA</i>	Enabling factor: <i>Victim of severe CA</i>	Enabling factor: <i>Victim of severe CA</i>	Enabling factor: <i>Victim of severe CA. Witnessed severe VAW</i>
			Weakly enabling factor: <i>Witnessed minor only VAW</i>	Enabling factor: <i>Witnessed severe VAW</i>	Counter-acting factor: <i>Never witnessed VAW</i>		Enabling factor: <i>Witnessed severe VAW</i>	Counter-acting factor: <i>Never witnessed VAW</i>	Weakly enabling factor: <i>Witnessed minor only VAW</i>	
Masculinity	Enabling factor <i>Hegemonic masculinity with proximity to VAW</i>	Enabling 1 Weakly enabling 0 Counter-acting 2 <i>C1 Low risk</i>	Enabling 1 Weakly enabling 0,5 Counter-acting 1 <i>E0,5 Medium risk</i>	Enabling 2 Weakly enabling 0 Counter-acting 1 <i>E1 High risk</i>	Enabling 1 Weakly enabling 0,5 Counter-acting 1 <i>E0,5 Medium risk</i>	Enabling 1 Weakly enabling 0,5+0,5=1 Counter-acting 0 <i>E2 Higher risk</i>	Enabling 2 Weakly enabling 0,5 Counter-acting 0 <i>E2,5 Higher risk</i>	Enabling 2 Weakly enabling 0 Counter-acting 1 <i>E1 High risk</i>	Enabling 2 Weakly enabling 0,5 Counter-acting 0 <i>E2,5 Higher risk</i>	Enabling 3 Weakly enabling 0 Counter-acting 0 <i>E3 Highest risk</i>
	Counter-acting factor <i>Non-hegemonic masculinity opposed to VAW</i>	Enabling 0 Weakly enabling 0 Counter-acting 3 <i>C3 Lowest risk</i>	Enabling 0 Weakly enabling 0,5 Counter-acting 2 <i>C1,5 Lower risk</i>	Enabling 1 Weakly enabling 0 Counter-acting 2 <i>C1 Low risk</i>	Enabling 0 Weakly enabling 0,5 Counter-acting 2 <i>C1,5 Lower risk</i>	Enabling 0 Weakly enabling 0,5+0,5=1 Counter-acting 1 <i>C0 Medium risk</i>	Enabling 1 Weakly enabling 0,5 Counter-acting 1 <i>E0,5 Medium risk</i>	Enabling 1 Weakly enabling 0 Counter-acting 2 <i>C1 Low risk</i>	Enabling 1 Weakly enabling 0,5 Counter-acting 1 <i>E0,5 Medium risk</i>	Enabling 2 Weakly enabling 0 Counter-acting 1 <i>E1 High risk</i>

Masculinity Positions and the Risk of VAW

Connell (1995), Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have developed the original theory of hegemonic masculinity, defining three masculinity types that, to a different extent, are related to VAW. *Subordinated* masculinity may use IPV in the form of both SCV and CCV but mainly against same-sex partners. *Complicit* masculinity generally has access to conventional masculinity-validating resources that should make the use of explicit VAW unnecessary. However, *Marginalized* masculinity may use VAW in the form of CCV as an alternative masculinity-validating resource. In the current research, several concepts have been related to the marginalized position. *Dominating* masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2018) denotes the very exercise of power and control of women in everyday life, which increases the risk of VAW. *Toxic* masculinity (de Boise, 2019; Waling, 2019) puts into words the problematic

aspects associated with unconditional physical toughness, hyper-independence, fear of emotions, sexual aggression, controlling behaviors, discrimination against HBQTs, anti-feminist behavior, and VAW. If hegemonic masculinity dominates society, it is difficult for men to act differently and, therefore, constitutes a contributing factor to VAW.

On the other hand, the pro-feministic non-hegemonic masculinities polemicize against the exploitation of women in working life, against VAW, rape, and pornography, and constitute a counteracting factor to VAW. (Table 1). Andersons and McCormacks (2018), *Inclusive* masculinity works for equality and against sexism and homophobia. It puts into words the societal changes that have evolved and the declining homophobia among straight men. However, Bridges and Pascoe (2014); (de Boise, 2019) argue that reduced homophobia should not only be understood as a progressive shift in gender relations. It forms a resource for privileged men so that they can present themselves as better and more aware than other men, contributing to the reproduction of a new hegemony. *Healthy* masculinity (de Boise, 2019; Waling, 2019) refers to men who are openly experiencing a wide range of emotions and attitudes that were previously associated with women and male weakness. In addition, *Caring* masculinity (Elliot, 2016) stands in opposition to dominant masculinity and represents men who, in practice and openly take care of their loved ones. *Positive* masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2018) refers to masculinity that legitimizes equal relationships between men and women and between separate groups of men. *Pro-feminist* masculinity (Burell & Flood, 2019) refers to men who regard men and women as equally valuable and question men's privileged position. Where non-hegemonic masculinities are normalized, it increases the numbers of men with low proximity to VAW.

An Integrational Attempt at Sociological, Social-Psychological, and Psychological Theories Explaining VAW

On its own, a single theoretical perspective lacks sufficient knowledge and methodologies to explain the complex interaction between enabling, and counteracting factors at various levels, that produce the empirical event of VAW. Single perspectives also tend to extrapolate the significance of a few level-bound factors and often result in a dilemma of trying to explain more than these premises allow. Previous research mainly focuses on what makes men violent and has thus ignored the mechanisms that produce non-violent men. A realist-oriented model aims to conceptualize the mechanisms and describe the causal interplay between distinct factors that are active when VAW occurs and when it is absent. VAW can only take place when there are contributing factors present and when counteracting factors are absent. In addition, it is important to highlight the often-excluded intermediate positions. Models based on a dichotomized epistemology are the easiest to verify and logically understand using conventional research methods but sort out common experiences in favor of extreme forms. They remind us that reality does not correspond to the reductions

we make to facilitate measurability; instead, those are constructed in that way by researchers.

To realize this integration attempt, it was necessary to select dimensions. For instance, the witnessing of VAW and the exposure to CA could both vary in severity and frequency and generate an infinite number of combinations. Still, by becoming aware of this variety of combinations, we can more critically understand what knowledge is at risk of being sorted out in an integrational attempt. To resolve the issue, this example mainly follows the revised Conflict Tactics Scale's (CTS2; Straus & Douglas, 2004) categories and measures of severity. The CTS2 distinguishes between *negotiation*, *psychological aggression*, *physical assault*, and *sexual coercion and injury*. The violence within those categories can, with the exception of negotiation, vary from *none* to *minor only* to *severe*. Accordingly, being *exposed to violence in childhood* can vary from non to minor only to severe and is equivalent to exposure to psychological aggression, physical assault, sexual coercion, and injury. *Witnessing VAW* follows the same principle. The integration attempt (Table 2) is based on a selection of theories from the *psychological*, *social-psychological*, and *sociological* perspectives and illustrates a theoretical overview of the enabling and counteracting factors of VAW.

The *psychological perspective* is represented by the *theories of CA* and a trichotomization between the three concepts. The first concept comprises men who, during their childhood *Never been a victim of CA*, contributing to stable emotion management without trauma. The second concept comprises men who, during their childhood, were a *Victim of only minor CA*, which is likely to result in an unstable social bond with the parents and in ambivalence in trusting others as an adult. The third concept comprises men who, during their childhood, were a *Victim of severe CA*, experiences that are likely to contribute to high shame-proneness and aggression against others or themselves as adults.

The *social-psychological perspective* is represented by the *learning theory* mentioned above and the following trichotomization between three main concepts. As discussed above, VAW that is witnessed during socialization can vary in severity. The first concept comprises men who, during their socialization, *Never witnessed VAW* and, therefore, have not learned to use VAW, at least not whether by imitation- or role-model learning in the family. The second concept comprises men who, during their socialization, *Witnessed only minor VAW* and only learned to use these specific forms of minor VAW as ways of acting towards females. The third and last concept comprises men who, during their socialization, *Witnessed severe VAW* and learned to use those severe forms of VAW within the family.

The *sociological perspective* is represented by the *masculinity theories* and a dichotomization between two main theoretical concepts. The first concept is *Hegemonic masculinity*, which comprises various forms of male oppression and VAW as part of their doing gender. The concept includes the *marginalized*, the *dominant*, and the *toxic* masculinity mentioned above. These masculinities are, according to theory, associated with higher proximity to the use of VAW. The *complicit* masculinity and the *subordinated* masculinity still reproduce patriarchy but are not in need of using VAW. The second concept is the *Non-hegemonic masculinity*, which comprises

various forms of opposition to patriarchy and men's VAW. It includes the *pro-feminist*, the *healthy*, the *caring*, the *positive*, and the *inclusive* masculinity mentioned above. These masculinities are associated with opting out of aggressions and VAW.

DISCUSSION

The overview above does not consider the influence of factors outside the model but represents a straightforward trial of how to develop theories of violence further through references to critical realism's use of combinations of levels and theories. The logic of the model assumes that in the presence of contributing factors and in the absence of known counteracting factors, conditions exist for VAW to take place. However, the model cannot explain how counteracting factors influence contributing factors so that they no longer contribute to VAW or vice versa. The model assumes that theoretical models are necessary starting points for a discussion about causality but not sufficient to explain what happens in a particular case of VAW. It prompts violence researchers to begin discussing methodology and causality and to consider if quantitative methods must be supplemented by both interviews and participant observation to gain substantial knowledge about if and how these factors manifest themselves and what the interaction between these factors looks like, and whether and why it leads to VAW or not. Thus, theoretical abstractions are necessary tools to make an abstract and inaccessible reality more comprehensible but should not be considered sufficient in themselves to explain the mechanisms behind VAW. When VAW takes place, even though the frame of reference has made predictions in the opposite direction, we can conclude that there are unidentified enabling factors or that unknown counteracting factors are absent. Since the most extreme forms of VAW are easiest to explain theoretically, research tends to construct hypotheses and theories based on these extremes. When theories are combined unconventionally, other positions are made visible that are difficult to understand. A pluralistic research approach must include what previous integration attempts failed to integrate, and these attempts have to be transparent to maximize the possibility of criticism. A research endeavor that aims at finding the mechanisms of enabling and counteracting factors behind VAW must not discriminate against any research concept or level that could contribute to better knowledge.

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