PREVENTIVE SOCIALISATION OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE THROUGH THE ANALYSIS OF FAMILY INTERACTIONS AND PREVIOUS INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Esther Oliver, Guiomar Merodio and Patricia Melgar

Introduction

This chapter is based on previous research on preventive socialisation (analysis of those elements that involve learning – socialisation into – models of attraction linked to violence or, contrary, linked to equality and freedom) and on the intergenerational transmission of violence (ITV) to contribute to the understanding of IPV (Black, Sussman, & Unger, 2010; Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2014; Fang & Corso, 2007; Hou, Yu, Fang, & Epstein, 2015). When we mention the ITV concept, we use the definition of Angèle Fauchier (Renzetti & Edleson, 2008), who mentions that children learn to be perpetrators and/or victims of violence through exposure to their parents’ expression of violence. Regarding IPV, we start from the definition of Bonnie E. Carlson (Renzetti & Edleson, 2008), who establishes that IPV consists of physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological abuse or violence committed by an intimate partner or acquaintances. While Carlson highlights that IPV is also called domestic violence or wife abuse, throughout this chapter we will only use the term domestic violence (DV) when we refer to violence in the context of families.

Therefore, the main aim of this chapter is to provide qualitative evidence based on testimonies of different life trajectories to fill a gap in the academic literature, which largely considers only perpetrators’ or victims’ families of origin as an explanatory factor of IPV. Previous scientific contributions on preventive socialisation have already highlighted the relevance of a person’s first sexual and affective relationships as key elements of socialisation towards a model of attraction to violent or non-violent relationships (Valls, Puigvert, & Duque, 2008; Racionero-Plaza, Ugalde-Lujambio, Puigvert, & Aiello, 2018; Rios-González, Peña Axt, Duque Sánchez, & De Botton Fernández, 2018; Puigvert, Gelsthorpe, Soler-Gallart, & Flecha, 2019). This chapter is based on contributions that address violence that is not necessarily learnt from intimate partner
relationships but before, and not in the family during childhood but afterwards. In this chapter, three contributions are highlighted, not to establish deterministic suppositions but to add to the current debate and stress the relevance of first sexual and/or affective interactions or relationships during childhood, early adolescence and youth (from the first kiss to the first instance of sexual intercourse) for both violent and non-violent life trajectories.

**Recent research**

Over the past few decades, substantial research has been conducted on IPV with the purpose of offering useful explanations for male perpetration of violence and for understanding women’s victimisation. Definitions of DV have also evolved and the focus of study has broadened to consider how women experience violence in different types of intimate relationships (e.g., while dating, cohabiting, or married) (Renzetti & Edleson, 2008; Stanley & Devaney, 2017).

Studies have increasingly considered important variables, such as the gender of the perpetrator or of direct or indirect victims, and the direction of the violence perpetrated. The analysis of such variables reveals with greater detail those elements that can be risk factors for being a perpetrator or victim of violence. However, many questions remain opened for instance, does having witnessed or suffered direct violence during childhood influence subsequent involvement in adulthood IPV? Is subsequent victimisation or perpetration influenced more when violence witnessed in childhood was perpetrated by a parent of the same gender? Do other relationships beyond the family of origin influence the socialisation of violence in relationships?

**Influence of the family**

The intergenerational transmission of violence builds on social learning theory, which assumes that children who witness violence learn to engage in interpersonal violence via observation, imitation, and modelling (Bandura, 1977). Following this view, witnessing DV might increase children’s likelihood of either becoming a victim of IPV or of committing DV crimes during adulthood. From this perspective, children who witness violence in the family or who are direct victims of family violence may grow up believing that violence serves as an acceptable means of resolving conflicts and that violent adults can positively reinforce their violent attitudes (Black et al., 2010). In this regard, some studies have found significant associations between children who witness interparental violence and IPV victimisation in early adulthood (Black et al., 2010). Another study on the relationship quality of parent victims of IPV, abusive behaviours and youths’ histories of abuse indicates that children are more likely to reproduce abusive patterns in their partnerships (Liu, Mumford, & Taylor, 2017). A study of 1099 adult males arrested for battering in the US also found that men witnessing DV as children commit IPV more frequently while those abused as children are more likely to later abuse other children (Murrell, Christoff, & Henning, 2007). A more complex approach to the victimisation experiences of children points out that children are more than witnesses, they are victims of DV (Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith, & Fellin, 2018).

Other studies adopting an ecological approach to the study of DV consider both environmental and individual factors. These studies point to the coexistence of risk factors, especially to forms of maltreatment that additionally contribute to DV perpetration or victimisation. Following this approach, Bevan and Higgins (2002) found, for a sample of abuser men with a history of DV, that childhood neglect predicts physical partner abuse, whereas witnessing family violence influences psychological spouse abuse. Similarly, most of the focus has been placed
on family dysfunction itself in seeking DV predictors linked to adverse childhood experiences, such as physical, psychological, or sexual abuse, and childhood family characteristics. Recent studies have considered coercive control as an important element for understanding how children victims of DV are affected and how it disturbs children and mothers’ relationships (Katz, 2019). Another study suggests that child maltreatment and neglect increase risks for physical IPV and particularly for neglected girls during childhood, who are more likely to eventually report being victimised by an intimate partner (Widom, Czaja, & Dutton, 2014). Another study also shows that child maltreatment influences future IPV perpetration more than victimisation affects youth violence or IPV (Fang & Corso, 2007).

However, most studies have focused on violent men’s childhood experiences of witnessing violence or being victimised. Therefore, there is limited information on child victims of DV who may later not become perpetrators of IPV. Additionally, other studies have found weak evidence for the transmission of family violence hypothesis (Renner & Slack, 2006). Indeed, a meta-analysis on the intergenerational transmission of family violence shows that despite the extended premise of a link between exposure to family violence and future IPV, the literature is actually not completely consistent with this association with various studies not finding significant links (Smith-Marek et al., 2015). At the same time, other recent findings also highlight the influence of having experienced multiple vulnerabilities at the mesosocial level in the ecological conceptual model (De Puy, Radford, Le Fort, & Romain-Glassey, 2019).

**Influence of gender**

Studies have also analysed the importance of gender for the intergenerational transmission for IPV. These studies are based on the premise that children learn violent behaviours from same-gender role models. Girls whose mothers are victims of DV might be predisposed to future victimisation through modelling. Likewise, according to social learning theory, boys who witness their fathers’ perpetrating violence tend to be more aggressive in adulthood (Milletich, Kelley, Doane, & Pearson, 2010). Another study stressed the relevance of gender role-specific modelling to the intergenerational transmission of violence, rather than experiencing child abuse, which was not found to be predictive of IPV perpetration (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2014). These studies also examine differences in associations between exposure to the gender of the perpetrator in the family and the directionality of violence. A study of 917 adolescent female and male students shows that adolescent girls might be more influenced by exposure to father-to-mother and mother-to-father violence and IPV perpetration, while for boys, only mother-to-father violence has an impact (Temple, Shorey, Tortolero, Wolfe, & Stuart, 2013). In contrast, other studies have not found gender-specific social learning models to predict the intergenerational transmission of DV (Kwong, Bartholomew, Henderson, & Trinke, 2003; Hou et al., 2015).

**Peer group**

Other studies have started to focus on elements other than the family (e.g., prosocial attitudes and beliefs among peer and friend groups and positive parenting practices) as moderators and key protective factors of the association between DV exposure and IPV involvement (Garrido & Taussig, 2013). There are also emerging questions on how peer contexts influence IPV, as having tolerant attitudes towards IPV in peer groups has been found to be associated with higher levels of psychological, physical, and sexual DV perpetration among boys exposed to wife-perpetrated spousal violence in their families (Gage, 2016). In this regard, attitudes towards the
acceptance and normalisation of violence among peers might increase risks of DV perpetration more than witnessing violence in the family of origin. Additionally, regarding the influence of contexts, experiencing community violence is an important predictor of youth IPV victimisation and of developing an acceptance of IPV perpetration among youth (Black et al., 2014).

**Intimate relationship socialisation**

Recent studies have broadened potential risk factors for violence perpetration in intimate partner relationships among adolescents and young adults beyond factors traditionally associated with family violence. A longitudinal study conducted in the US to identify the strongest risk factors for vulnerability to IPV perpetration with a sample of 1031 high school students found that having a violent dating history and acceptance of IPV are the strongest predictors of IPV perpetration above family violence (Cohen, Shorey, Menon, & Temple, 2018).

Previous studies have largely focused on the family environment itself and on its influence on later involvement in adulthood IPV without considering other social relationships and experience. Relationship contexts are sources of socialisation. It is important to consider the socialisation experiences of children and teens, not only from their families of origin and later when they create their own families but also from other affective and sexual socialising experiences that occur between these periods and that may influence DV victimisation or perpetration. Research adopting theoretical approaches to the preventive socialisation of gender violence helps address this gap by providing explanatory elements for IPV (Valls et al., 2008; Gómez, 2015; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2018; Puigvert et al., 2019).

**Social promotion of violent attractiveness models**

Research on the preventive socialisation of gender violence has stressed the existence of a link between aggressiveness and attractiveness that promotes models of attractiveness linked to violence, shaping adolescents’ sexual-affective relationship preferences, choices, and desires (Valls et al., 2008; Díez-Palomar, Capllonch, & Aiello, 2014; Puigvert, 2016; Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020). Importantly, these studies have also identified the existence of a coercive dominant discourse that portrays violent attitudes and behaviours as attractive and exciting as the main agents of socialisation: visual and popular media, teen magazines, social networks, and peer interactions with others (Puigvert, 2014; Gómez, 2015; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2018; Racionero-Plaza et al. 2020; Torras-Gómez, Puigvert, Aiello, & Khalfaoui, 2020). Adolescents’ and young adults’ sexual-affective socialisation patterns are influenced by this coercive dominant discourse. Evidence also suggests that adolescents’ first affective-sexual relationships (particularly hook-up relationships) have a strong impact on their future intimate partner relationships, as they serve as key aspects in the socialisation of both girls and boys towards a model of attraction to violent or non-violent relationships. First affective-sexual experiences can even render girls socialised into this coercive dominant discourse, which associates attractiveness and desire with masculine models that are dominant and violent, more vulnerable to IPV (Bukowski, Sippola, & Newcomb, 2000; Valls et al., 2008; Puigvert, 2016; Torras-Gómez et al., 2020). Coercive socialisation attraction patterns are based on unequal gender power relations that reproduce a double standard whereby boys who exhibit violent behaviours are socially perceived as exciting and sexually desired, particularly for sporadic relationships, while boys with non-violent attitudes are considered less exciting but “convenient” and preferred for stable relationships (Puigvert et al., 2019). Social interactions among peers and everyday interactions and dialogues within families
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are also important among socialisation patterns that either prevent or perpetuate the coercive model of socialisation (Rios-González et al., 2018). The approach to the preventive socialisation of gender violence also contributes to the understanding of the transformative elements that socialise in egalitarian romantic relationships free of violence (Torras-Gómez et al., 2020).

Research study

We adopted a qualitative research approach to develop a nuanced understanding of complex phenomena of IPV from individual life trajectories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Our use of qualitative methods provided us with insight into the family and previous intimate relationships of our study participants. This chapter is based on empirical data obtained from two qualitative sources. We employed purposive sampling to select participants with different life trajectories, having experienced the phenomenon studied in this chapter and willing to share their experiences in a reflective manner (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The purposive sample is consistent with the aims of the study, as the participants’ experiences are considered relevant to our focus. To identify diverse participants’ profiles to respond to the studied aims we used snowball sampling. We first collected the oral testimonies of six women of different socio-economic backgrounds who have suffered any form of gender violence. We then conducted seven additional in-depth interviews. In these interviews, informants were encouraged to reflect on the impact of different interactions they had experienced. With quotes of the interviewees, this chapter provides elements for reflection on significant interactions that can lead to life moments and lives with and without violence. Characteristics of the respondents were established before entering the field to meet the following criteria: (1) a man who had experienced violence in his family of origin and who does not experience violence in his affective and sexual relationships (Gerard); (2) a woman who has had violent affective and sexual relationships without having experienced violence in her family of origin (Yolanda); (3) men who did not experience violence in their families of origin and who have been perpetrators of violence in their affective and sexual relationships (data on these life trajectories were collected indirectly from interviews held by a professional working with 35–45 perpetrators every year) (Alicia); (4) a woman who experienced violence in her family of origin and does not have violent affective and sexual relationships (Clara); and (5) three women who have experienced violence or abuse in their families of origin and who have had violent affective and sexual relationships in their first relationships but not in their later relationships (Paula, Carolina, and Raquel).

Participants were informed of the study’s purpose and of the sensitive focus of the research. The confidentiality of information given was ensured, and all participants have been kept anonymous. The interviewers posed broad, open-ended questions about the participants’ life trajectories with a focus on family and intimate relationship experiences. Interviews were conducted in locations that guaranteed confidentiality and that fostered trust between the researchers and participants. Informed consent was obtained prior to the interviews. The interviews were transcribed and coded for analysis.

Discussion and analysis

The approach to the preventive socialisation of gender violence, on which this study is framed, broadens the scope of elements and social interactions that influence affective-sexual socialisation patterns to both peers and family interactions. Following this perspective, we analyse and discuss the life trajectories of adults who were victims of violence in their families of origin and later did not become victims or perpetrators of DV, and of adults who were not victims of DV.
in childhood but ended up experiencing IPV in adulthood. The findings suggest the relevance of violent and non-violent first sexual-affective experiences and relationships in later intimate relationships, either violent or non-violent. Their different life paths can help us better understand complex risks and protective and preventive elements/relationships related to DV.

1 First sexual and affective interactions studied have a deep impact on later intimate relationships

From the evidence collected we observe different impacts on the feelings and life trajectories of both men and women depending on their experiences with first affective and sexual relationships. The studied life trajectories demonstrate the influence of being involved in stable or sporadic first affective and sexual relationships based on positive feelings, such as passionate love, respect, and esteem, or in contrast, based on feeling despised, deceived, or any form of maltreatment.

The women participating in our study, whether they have experienced violence in their families or not, agreed that for them the most decisive element has been socialisation in their first relationships. In the cases studied, being involved in violent relationships and suffering physical, emotional, or sexual abuse in initial sexual and affective interactions or intimate relationships has a tremendous impact and is linked to patterns of attraction to violence in adolescence and young adulthood. The life trajectory of Carolina, who experienced violence in her family of origin and grew up in a violent and deprived neighbourhood, shows that more than these previous negative experiences in childhood, interactions with her peer group and her first sexual-affective relationships have been critical in shaping her sexual-affective preferences. Carolina’s closest female friend pressured her to become involved with a boy who exhibited a pattern of a dominant traditional masculinity, resulting in her first intimate relationship. The boy violently forced Carolina to kiss him without her consent:

The first boy I dated... he treated girls very badly... he was the womaniser of town and I liked him because of that, because everybody was saying he was cool. A friend of mine talked to him and he asked me on a date... and I said yes. Just a few minutes later, we were having drinks with friends and suddenly he kissed me in front of everybody, which was very rude. I remember it being forceful. I found it disgusting.

Carolina reflects on the circumstances of her first kiss, on the role of the coercive dominant discourse on it and on the impact it had in her later violent relationships. From this first violent episode others followed over the following four years, which Carolina identifies as rooted in an attraction to violent attitudes and behaviours. Her first sexual-affective experience and peer pressure rendered Carolina more vulnerable to eventually being involved in sporadic or stable relationships with men with violent and despising attitudes. She also held negative views of men who treated her well.

Yolanda, another participant who did not experience a violent family context, reflects on her own sexual and affective trajectory after leaving a violent relationship in early adulthood. Similar to Carolina, Yolanda points to adolescence and first sexual-affective relationships as key experiences. When her group of female friends started flirting with boys who followed a dominant traditional model of masculinity, she decided not to do the same despite being subjected to peer pressure. As a result, Yolanda was left alone, and she soon became very sad without other role models of friendship for support in a vital period of her life, resulting in a profound crisis of meaning. For Yolanda, this initial period of loneliness and lack of connections was crucial to later starting to
flirt with the ex-partner (who had toxic attitudes) of a close friend who experienced psychological problems after ending her relationship with him due to his despising attitudes. Yolanda’s female friend suffered considerably from the experience. Yolanda recounts:

he continued flirting with me and I never stopped him. I never had a relationship with him but I never stopped it because it was not having a negative effect on me even when I knew what my friend was suffering. She of course ended our friendship. . . .

Two or three months after that I started a relationship with a boy with whom I suffered all kinds of violence.

After this first harmful relationship, Yolanda started a violent relationship with a boy who exhibited patterns of violent masculinity. As she reflects on her trajectory, she realises how in her adolescence and early youth the dominant coercive discourse influenced the relationships and the way she has been socialised (Torras-Gómez et al., 2020).

By contrast, some of our informants highlighted how important it was for them to find someone who showed them true love, respect, honesty, or friendship in their first intimate and romantic stable or sporadic relationships. These first positive interactions proved crucial in guiding what they wanted to experience from then on. Gerard’s life trajectory demonstrates the relevance of friendship and positive first affective relationships in preventing experiences of violence despite suffering DV in childhood. Gerard refused to accept violent intimidation from his father and complicity with his father’s abuse of his mother, even confronting him at the age of 13 or 14. Feelings of love and friendship he developed in his first “platonic” relationship with a girl in childhood served as a guide for what he wanted for in his life and helped him develop an alternative understanding of egalitarian masculinity with self-esteem and a strong sense of his own attractiveness. This confidence encouraged him to reject peer pressure and not give up on his search for freedom and positive feelings in his later sexual and affective relationships:

I had memories of such intense feelings from my childhood. When I was around 16 or 17, I didn’t need to be with anybody, but I was pressured by my parents, as they thought I was gay, and by my friends. I remember one who was not really a friend but a colleague. He called me a rough diamond and said that if he polished me, I would be very successful because I would attract lots of girls. . . . But I told him I didn’t need to do that because I already knew I was liked by many of them.

Gerard stressed his need to avoid reproducing attitudes similar to those of his father and to develop a sense of his masculinity based on an understanding of his attractiveness and security in seeking positive and passionate egalitarian feelings free of violence.

2 In some cases, people have violent relationships in adolescence or adulthood without having experienced a violent family context

Other informants stress the non-violent nature of their family contexts. Alicia, for example, reflects on the fact that while many male perpetrators of violence have a previous history of violence in their childhoods, others have not suffered major problems or difficulties in their childhoods. Sara, who suffered physical, psychological, and sexual violence in one of her relationships, explained: “My father hated that we shouted. We could argue but I never hit my sisters. There was always a level of respect . . . and my friends always maintained a stable environment”. Yolanda similarly described growing up in a family built on trust and positive feelings.
of love and mutual respect even with extended family members: “My family relationships were always very good and very positive, too. . . . It was never a violent family; quite the contrary. . . . I have very nice memories of my childhood”. Despite this positive family upbringing, Yolanda was trapped in a violent relationship in her youth. It is thus relevant to note that socialisation based on positive interactions with one’s family of origin can also be interrupted by the coercive discourse of the society, which can take the form of peer pressure that results in men and women becoming victims or perpetrators of IPV.

Other informants described how their family members’ or close friends’ attitudes did not accept or normalise their violent relationships. This stand against violence helped the victims reflect and promoted a change in their own models of intimate relationships. Emma, for example, who suffered a violent relationship, noted how violence fell outside of the frame of acceptable behaviours for her parents:

The last thing I wanted was for my mother or father to see that my partner was treating me like this, that he was doing such things to me . . . eventually, with time, I realised that it was not normal, that it is not normal for your partner to cause you to panic.

3 Positive social interactions (friendship and love relationships) can serve as protective factors in overcoming past DV and IPV experiences

Some of our informants described experiencing family and community contexts with many violent or abusive interactions. Raquel came from a family in which her father perpetrated psychological and sexual violence towards her mother. Raquel was not only exposed to DV but was also sexually abused by a health professional at the age of 10. This episode had a very damaging impact in her life:

I left the medical examination room hysterical and my mum asked me what had happened, but people are not prepared to confront these situations and I knew I could not say anything . . . but at that moment something broke inside of me. The trust was broken, as those who were expected to protect me didn’t, but I am proud of myself because I said I didn’t want to return to that examination room.

Some years later, Raquel was again a victim of repeated sexual abuse by a person very close to her extended family. These abusive encounters were kept secret for a long time until she decided to break the silence after receiving the support of friends who encouraged her to confront her family. After some initial moments of rejection and re-victimisation from some members of her family, she finally received the support of the whole family and the family rejected the perpetrator. Raquel identifies one specific relationship that helped her cope with these difficult life experiences. What helped her maintain hope in her most difficult moments were memories of positive feelings of love and friendship that she experienced when she was only four or five years old:

Yes, I was 4 or 5, I felt “platonic” love for a boy in my class who took care of me and who defended me from a bullying attack. . . . I remember four or five older boys insulting me, and he confronted them and said that I was his friend and asked them to stop annoying me. In the winter, he gave me his cap to protect me from the cold weather . . . if you asked me if it was my first love, I would say yes. It involved this union of friendship and feelings of affection.
Raquel explains how despite several abusive interactions she experienced in her life, she also experienced kind and meaningful interactions:

In my childhood and adolescence I also attended a Christian youth club and it became like a counterpoint to the abusive situations because we talked about profound feelings and friendship. There were people who loved me a lot and who I loved a lot, but all the other stuff was there also, and that weighed on me . . . those destructive interactions. I felt both, but without that counterpoint things would have been worse.

Raquel currently enjoys positive and healthy friendships and relationships.

Gerard, as described earlier, suffered DV in his family of origin in childhood. His father was violent toward both his mother and him. This victimisation deeply damaged his self-esteem in early childhood:

With my mother, there was emotional violence; he controlled and despised her in public spaces. With me, he looked down on me; he created embarrassing situations for me . . . I remembered one day when I was around 13 or 14, we were having dinner, and he took my plate, opened the window, threw the plate out the window and said that while I was living there, he was in charge, and if I didn’t want that, I could leave home.

Gerard describes his current romantic relationship as passionate and happy. He has neither had violent relationships nor experienced violence in his current family. We should also mention that there are no data on men like Gerard who are raised in violent family contexts but never become perpetrators of violence, as there are no official records on their links to such behaviours.

Another participant, Clara, when asked about her childhood and experiences with her family of origin, described a familial context with physical violence directed from her mother to herself and her sister throughout her childhood and early adolescence but with no physical violence between her parents, though they had an unhappy relationship. The violence she suffered was never stopped by her father, though it was not perpetrated in front of him or anyone in her extended family. Clara’s first sexual-affective interaction was with a boy with whom she was in love for a long time before the relationship started. Over a number of months, she nurtured platonic, romantic, and positive feelings towards him even though they barely knew each other. Later, Clara finally started an intimate relationship with him. Contrary to what Clara expected and had imagined for a long time, this boy cheated on her and used the relationship to get close to her best friend and flirt with her. While this deception left Clara disappointed and less hopeful about the possibility of having satisfactory and positive intimate relationships, she did not give up on her desire to find other partners who would treat her with love and respect. For Clara and Gerard it was important to not repeat the violent attitudes and behaviours they had experienced at home. For Clara, anticipating future ideal romantic relationships free of violence provided her with hope.

As described earlier, Carolina grew up in a family context with physical, verbal, and psychological violence from her father to her mother as well as towards her and her sister. She also grew up in a neighbourhood where community violence, drugs, and drug dealers were present at schools and in the streets, which was normalised. Carolina also notes that her first sexual and affective sporadic relationships in early adolescence and later stable relationships during her youth were violent. She reflects on how these violent relationships influenced her
sexual-affective socialisation in developing a pattern of attraction towards boys with violent attitudes and behaviours. However, she identifies a crucial shift in her life upon having conversations with female friends who helped her understand that she was a victim of gender-based violence such as her mother:

Once, female friends told me very clearly that I was suffering gender-based violence in that relationship . . . and I said: “What?! Why are you saying that I have suffered gender-based violence?” . . . Then, I realised. . . . Until that moment I thought I had only experienced violence in my family home.

Carolina is currently involved in a stable sexual and affective relationship with a man. She describes this intimate relationship as having two key elements that she considers very important, respect and passion:

I like it mainly because it is passionate, as I used to be bored when I was not fighting. . . . In our relationship, in addition to treating each other well, is important that we have passion and sex . . . because if I had to live with a friend instead of a romantic partner, I’d prefer to live with a female friend.

Finally, strengthening the argument about the relevance of the peers’ role in the overcoming of abusive situations, Yolanda decided to end her violent intimate relationship after finding new friends at her university who helped her critically think about her relationship and question the violence she was suffering: “There were conversations with people who did not stay at the surface of what happened. Friends told me that I was not happy and asked me to take steps to improve my situation”.

**Conclusions**

This chapter aimed to shed light on new approaches to the problem of DV based on the scientific contributions of research on the preventive socialisation of gender violence and on qualitative testimonies of different life trajectories. To scientifically comprehend DV, we should consider more explanatory and analytical elements beyond associations between victimisation in the family of origin and current intimate or family violence. In this regard, studies note the importance of being cautious of results that attempt to predict future victimisation or perpetrations of IPV based on experiences of DV in childhood since in some cases, causal interpretations are inferred when most investigations are correlational (Tolman & Bennett, 1990 in Bevan & Higgins, 2002). Additionally, violent and abusive familial and community contexts are not always related to having violent relationships in adulthood, as the attitudes and beliefs of one’s peer group and positive parenting can protect against the association between IPV exposure and IPV involvement (Garrido & Taussig, 2013).

The scientific literature on the approach of preventive socialisation shows that involvement in IPV adulthood is also influenced by processes of socialisation into different models and patterns of attraction (Valls et al., 2008; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2018; Rios-González et al., 2018; Puigvert et al., 2019). The qualitative research presented in this chapter offers greater understanding of a range of first-person accounts of individuals who suffered DV during childhood and those who were not victims as children but experienced IPV in early adulthood. Although the results are based on a small sample, they confirm that first sexual and affective interactions and/or relationships have a deep impact on both men and women. Our evidence highlights
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the relevance of relationship contexts as sources of socialisation from adolescence to early adulthood that influence ways of viewing relationships and violence in intimate relationships. This applies to both the influence it has on socialisation processes linked to an attraction to violence (when first interactions are dominated by hostile, violent, or disrespectful attitudes) or to non-violence and passionate and positive feelings (when these features are predominant in first sexual and affective interactions in childhood, adolescence, or early adulthood). This learning is not exclusive to socialisation in childhood in the bosom of the family nor to socialisation in adult intimate relationships, but it is rather mediated by first affective experiences and relationships that happen in between.

Future studies on this issue might use mixed methods by integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies to advance knowledge on IPV, including new ways to analyse the incidence of socialisation experiences in the family and in first intimate relationships as done in this work. Mixed methods in the study of gender violence can facilitate scholarly work that provides a platform for the voices of survivors to be heard and to explore in depth their experiences (Puigvert, Valls, García-Yeste, Aguilar, & Merrill, 2017; Shorten & Smith, 2017).

Critical findings

• Positive social interactions (friendship and love) serve as protective factors in overcoming DV experiences, fostering the search for egalitarian, free, and passionate intimate relationships throughout life.
• DV in childhood is not the unique possible explanation for the subsequent experience of DV. First sexual and affective interactions and relationships are sources of socialisation into future intimate relationships. In some cases, people have violent relationships in adolescence or adulthood without having experienced a violent family context. When first sexual and affective relationships have violent connotations, these relationships can contribute to socialise into violent sexual and affective relationships in adulthood. When first sexual and affective relationships have non-violent connotations, these experiences can contribute to socialise into experiences of satisfactory sexual and affective relationships in adulthood.

Implications for policy, practice, and research

• As highlighted by previous scientific research on preventive socialisation (Puigvert et al., 2019; Puigvert et al., 2019), experiences of true love and friendship are central in: (1) reinforcing the self-esteem and sense of security needed to reject peer pressure to engage in violent interactions or sexual and affective relationships and (2) empowering victims of violence to overcome violent situations and experiences.
• A refusal to accept and normalise violent relationships among family members and close friends promotes change in violent relationships. Encouraging families and communities to take a stand against violence and support victims of DV is critical to developing bystander and active interventions and strong relationships and networks.
• Friends and family interactions that encourage victims to end violent relationships are based in honesty (clear statements on not tolerating violent attitudes) and a commitment to the wellbeing of victims (encouraging deep reflection on violent situations rather than examining them on a more superficial level).
• Children who witness or suffer violence in their families of origin are victims of DV. Regarding implications for practitioners, deeming such victimisation a predictor of future DV victimisation or perpetration may stigmatise children who are already victims and may
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prevent the identification of other protective factors that can serve as a counterpoint in these difficult experiences. Narrowly using the intergenerational transmission of violence to explain future DV or IPV experiences can also limit the prevention of DV and understanding of cases in which children and youth who do not suffer or witness violence in their families of origin become victims in adolescence or adulthood due to other factors.

- DV prevention strategies should consider the relevance of first sexual-affective interactions and relationships to socialising and shaping future patterns of attraction linked to violence or to egalitarian relationships free of violence.

**Note**

1 Some of the interview transcripts presented here were collected as part of the PhD dissertation of one of the authors of this chapter.

**References**


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