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Analysis of Norway's approach towards violence in close relationships

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) and intimate partner homicide (IPH) persist worldwide at an alarming rate. Norway is no exception, despite its high levels of gender equality. Partner murders constitute 25% of the total murders in the country (NOU 2020:17, 52). This proportion increased to almost 30% between the fall of 2021 and the fall of 2022 (Kripos 2023, 26).

This thesis analyzes the main developments in the understanding and focus on violence in close relationships in Norway, and the authorities' work to reduce the number of partner murders based on information provided by actors in the field.

Keywords: intimate partner violence, intimate partner homicide, gender-based violence, Norway

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List of acronyms

ATV: Alternativ til Vold (Alternative to Violence)

CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

DA: Danger Assessment

DAIP: Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs

DVSI-R: Domestic Violence Screening Instrument-Revised

GBV: gender-based violence

IPH: intimate partner homicide

IPV: intimate partner violence

NKVTS: Nasjonal kunnskapsenter om vold og traumatisk stress (Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies)

NOU: Norges offentlige utredninger (Norway's public investigations or statements)

ODARA: Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment

SARA SV: Spousal Assault Risk Assessment, short version

SPJ: structured professional judgment

UDI: Utlendingsdirektoratet (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration)

UNODC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

WHO: World Health Organization

List of terms in Norwegian

Drapsbølge: killing spree

Familievernkontoret: family welfare offices

Handlingsplaner mot vold i nære relasjoner: plans against violence in close relationships

Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet: Ministry of Justice and Public Security

Kripos: National Criminal Investigation Office

Krisesentergruppa: the crisis center group

Kvinnemishandling: mistreatment of women

Likestillings- og diskrimineringsloven: Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act

Nasjonal drapsoversikt: National Homicide Overview

Partnerdrapskommisjon: Partner Homicide Commission

Sivilrettsforvaltning: Civil Affairs Authority

Stortingsmelding: message to the Parliament (from the government)

Straffeloven: Norwegian Penal Code

Velferdsforskningsinstituttet: Welfare Research Institute, OsloMet University

Vold i nære relasjoner: violence in close relationships

From early childhood to old age, violence is the most obdurate, intractable behavioral gender difference.

- Michael S. Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*

If men stop being violent, then the world will be a much better place for both men and women.

- Susanne Strand, University of Örebro, Sweden

Introduction

Research problem

On November 25, 2018, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) issued a press release with the title: “Home, the most dangerous place for women”. Most female homicide victims worldwide are killed by their partners or family members, the UNODC study found. Indeed, men commit most of the battering against women and almost all of the raping; less than 1% of rape is committed by women (Katz, 1). Men constitute 83% of persons arrested for family violence (Kimmel, 265).

In the United States, fifty women are shot and killed every month by intimate partners (Snyder, 272), and twelve hundred abused women are killed every year (Snyder, 59). In 2023, the government of Canada declared intimate partner violence (IPV) and gender-based violence (GBV) to be an epidemic (Tusikov, 2024).

Also in 2023, 18 partner murders took place in Norway (VG 2024); the average had been eight partner murders per year for the last decade (NOU 2020:17, 52) . Despite its gender equality achievements, the Nordic country paradoxically faces persistent levels of gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence (Kelly, xxiii).

The country holds one of the highest levels of gender equality worldwide in terms of equal pay, paid employment, and political representation; traditional gender roles are challenged by changing perceptions of paternity with measures such as the parental leave for fathers. Still, levels of GBV persist. Not even Norway has been able to decrease the incidence of this kind of violence that endangers half of the population worldwide, most often inside their own homes.

Research questions

Norway is implementing new measures to address intimate partner homicide (IPH) specifically, with the implementation of the newly created commission on partner murders (*partnerdrapskommisjon*) and the planned expansion of RISK, a police unit specialized in attention to victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence. The Norwegian strategy gives room to the research questions that will guide the present work:

1. What are the main developments in the understanding and focus on violence in close relationships in Norway?

2. How do Norwegian authorities work to reduce the number of partner murders?

For the last decades, the developments in the understanding of gender-based violence (GBV), intimate partner violence (IPV), and ultimately, intimate partner homicide (IPH), have changed drastically worldwide. Norway has been no exception, as I will present in depth. This description will answer my first research question.

Norway's focus is on preventing not only partner violence but partner homicide, particularly with the establishment of the *partnerdrapskommisjon* in 2024. In Norway, women are more likely to be killed by their current or former male partner than by anyone else (NOU 2020:17, 52). This trend supports the findings of the UNODC report. Interestingly, however, partner murder constitutes a higher proportion of total murders than in other countries. I will elaborate on the Norwegian efforts to address IPV in general and IPH in particular, to answer my second research question.

Both research questions relate to the research problem in the sense that they address Norway's particular case of low numbers of IPH in comparison to most countries, but with these representing an unusually high proportion of the total murders. The country has faced an increasing number of cases in the past months, right before the *partnerdrapskommisjon* starts work.

Research trends and position of the research

Academic approaches to gender and intimate partner violence have evolved greatly in the last decades, as I will describe in depth later on. However, I will now address the position of my research in reference to some key concepts related to my research topic.

Gender is continuously addressed in my work. The definition of gender is difficult to grasp, and its meaning partially depends on the context. For instance, when talking about gender-based violence (GBV), the main image that comes to mind is that of violence exerted by a man against a woman. This is the kind of violence I address in my work, in

the context of close relationships. Strictly speaking, GBV also encompasses violence against members of the LGBTQ+ community, but I am not referring to this when I speak of GBV in this work. My research is only based on heterosexual couples.

I address feminist perspectives in the Conceptual Framework chapter. Although I provide a fuller description later on, I want readers to keep in mind that intimate partner violence is closely related to power and control. I avoid using the term *patriarchy* because it might have too broad a meaning, yet it is connected to my research.

Relevance and importance

The relevance of the present study cannot be overstated. Besides the increase in partner murder that Norway experienced in 2023, the country faced a killing spree (*drapsbølge*) in early 2024. Although not all of the murder cases were partner murders, previous trends continued to be noticeable: a significant amount of cases involved a female victim and a male partner or ex partner as perpetrator. These cases constitute cases of intimate violence and, ultimately, intimate partner homicide (IPH).

These common elements are reasons to be hopeful: IPH can, and should be, prevented when we have the right information at hand. Hopefully, it will be prevented more effectively in the years to come. To better deal with GBV, IPV, and IPH, a critical question arises: should we address victims or perpetrators? A victim-centered approach has been the rule for most decades. Given the persistence of the problem, though, there is room for new approaches: what if we address perpetrators too?

Although working with violent men is not novel, it remains a contested strategy, given that it is seen as a deviation of resources that should be addressed to the victims instead of the perpetrators. More and more often, however, strategies for preventing intimate partner violence and homicide aim to consider both the victims *and* the perpetrators. This is no exception in Norway, as I will explore in depth in the present work.

Motivation

I aimed to gain a better understanding of gender-based violence after reading a book by Mexican human rights activist Lydia Cacho. Back in 2018, she published *#Ellos hablan: Testimonios de hombres, la relación con sus padres, el machismo y la violencia*

(*#TheySpeak* [masculine they]. *Testimonies of men, the relationship with their parents, sexism and violence*). The book's red cover, as well as the title, caught my eye. I bought it with my first wages and after reading it, I felt inspired and wanted to learn more about the relation between gender and peace. Eventually, that curiosity led me to apply for this master's program.

The coronavirus pandemic was another key element of my learning journey on GBV. Intimate violence escalated worldwide during the lockdowns, which made me realize the problem was more widespread than I had previously known. Norway was no exception, which I found surprising and confusing. This finding was also critical for me to define my research interests and pour them in my current studies.

Structure of the thesis

Following the introduction chapter, in **Chapter 2: Methodological framework,** I describe how I conducted my data collection, and my data analysis. I also go through the limitations of my study, the research positionality, and the ethical considerations I had to make.

In **Chapter 3: Conceptual framework** I define the key terms and explain the concepts that are useful for understanding the relation between gender norms and violence. I define key terms such as violence, gender, gender-based violence (GBV), intimate partner violence (IPV), and intimate partner homicide (IPH). I move on to the gender symmetry debate, the social learning theory, and the social role theory. I then present feminist perspectives, a brief account of masculinity studies, and the social-ecological framework, as well as the connection between IPV and other forms of violence.

Chapter 4: Developments in understanding and focus on violence in close relationships, provides a historical account of how the conceptualization of IPV has changed since the 1970s, and how the terms used to describe it have also been modified through time. This is relevant to describe how the matter was first addressed focusing exclusively on the victims, and then moved on to offender accountability and the rise of a new terminology to address the issue. I then describe the role of men in prevention efforts, and how these trends were experienced in Norway. I continue to describe the relation between gender equality and gender violence, the role of gender neutrality, and

the role of minorities. The purpose of this account is to answer my research question on Norway's main developments in the matter of violence in close relationships.

In **Chapter 5: Strategies and interventions to reduce partner murders in Norway,** I answer my second research question on how Norwegian authorities are working to reduce the number of partner murders. I describe the relevance of adopting a perpetrator-based approach, the identification and assessment of the risk factors, the existing programs to work with perpetrators of IPV, and the role of agency cooperation. The information sources for this chapter are the four people I interviewed, who deal with perpetrators of intimate partner violence from their diverse professional capacities.

In **Chapter 6: Establishment of the *partnerdrapskommisjon*,** I describe this newly created agency and its relevance to reduce the number of partner murders in Norway.

Finally, in **Chapter 7: Conclusions** I summarize the thesis' key findings and point to future research pathways that could be taken related to this topic in the Norwegian context.

Methodological framework

The present thesis will be guided by the research questions presented above, and by the hypothesis that a perpetrator-based approach is effective for addressing and preventing intimate partner violence.

To answer my research questions, I will describe in depth the developments in the understanding and focus on violence in close relationships in Norway. I will also describe the actions taken by the Norwegian authorities to reduce the number of partner murders. Based on the information provided by my interviewees, I will prove my hypothesis.

This is relevant in the context of Norway being an international frontrunner in gender equality, yet dealing with an increasing amount of partner murders and the persistence of IPV. Although Norway holds low numbers of intimate partner homicides (IPH) in comparison to most countries, these represent an unusually high proportion of the country's total murders.

In an international context, gender-based violence (GBV), intimate partner violence (IPV) and intimate partner murder (IPH) are a persistent concern for women's health and safety across countries and cultures. The approach to this issue has changed significantly in the last decades, and continuous research is needed to better identify the root causes for men's violent behavior towards the women they supposedly love.

The research aims to explore the Norwegian approach to IPV and IPH, using qualitative data about the research developments on the matter, and describing Norway's approach to partner murder with the data gathered from my interviews. Most of the data used is qualitative, whereas the only quantitative data is the one serving to illustrate the incidence of IPV and IPH in Norway. Given that GBV in general and IPV in particular are so complex, it seems only plausible to rely on qualitative data, since it can provide a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon.

The existing body of knowledge on IPV has revealed a lack of assessment of the interventions that focus on perpetrators of partner violence. Additionally, the research for partner violence is more extensive than the research on partner homicide (NOU 2020:17, 63). These two points represent research gaps that are relevant to my research questions.

Data collection

My research is based mainly on qualitative data retrieved from diverse primary sources of information. I revised the Norwegian Penal Code (*Straffeloven*) and the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (*likestillings- og diskrimineringsloven*), as well as the National Homicide Overview 2010-2019 (*Nasjonal drapsoversikt*) by the National Criminal Investigation Office (Kripos).

I went through the plans to address violence in close relationships (*handlingsplaner mot vold i nære relasjoner*) issued by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security from 2008 to 2020. Although the action plans were relevant to understand the evolution of IPV prevention efforts in Norway, I found the NOU 2020: 17 *Varslede drap?* report to be critical for my research, since it led to the establishment of the newly created *partnerdrapskommisjon* and presented key findings that contribute to understanding the need for a new strategy for tackling IPH. *Varslede drap* translates as "foreshadowed

murder", which points to the possibility of effectively preventing intimate partner homicides if authorities properly use the information available.

I have also revised research reports and publications by scholars from the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS), among them Margunn Bjørnholt, Astrid Sandmoe, Roxana Camilla Nymoen, and Kristin Skjørten. I relied on automatic translations of all documents and reports originally written in Norwegian. I used the online translator DeepL to translate such documents, and asked my professors when I was unsure that the translation was accurate. All of the documents mentioned above were available online with open access.

From the international perspective, I used reports issued by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for Norway, and the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (better known as the Istanbul Convention).

Besides official documents and reports, I conducted four interviews for this research. These constitute the main source of data for answering my second research question. My interviewees were representatives from different institutions who somehow work with perpetrators of IPV. The interviews were conducted in English in all cases. My interviewees were Hans Petter-Kielland, head of the Oslo Police unit for the prevention of IPH; a psychologist at Alternativ til Vold in Tromsø; Johan Flem Kalheim and Samantha McInerney, who lead the implementation of the national partner murder commission (*partnerdrapskommisjon*) within the Sivilrettsforvaltning[1] in Norway, and researcher Susanne Strand from Örebro University, Sweden. Interview requests were made to researchers at NKVTS, the family welfare offices (*familievernkontorer*) in Tromsø and Oslo, and Alternativ til Vold in Oslo, without success.

The interviewees were chosen based on their professional capacity, their relevance to the present research, and their availability to be interviewed. For purposes of gathering enough data, researcher Susanne Strand from Sweden was also included in the interviews. Her academic record on IPV and the social similarities between Sweden and Norway are

[1] *Sivilrettsforvaltning* translates as Civil Affairs Authority. Among other tasks, it serves as a secretary to different types of specialist organs (Kalheim, Sivilrettsforvaltning office in Oslo, November 23,2023).

deemed appropriate for her input to be valuable to this research. The four interviews constitute a robust and diverse source of information, given that all four participants work with perpetrators of IPV from different perspectives.

The interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner. The questions were made based on the interviewees' position, answers, and drawing from the content of previous interviews, in order to contrast indirectly the interviewees' points of view when possible. The interviews were conducted from June to December 2023. Three of them were conducted in person, in the offices of the interviewees, both in Tromsø and in Oslo. The interview with Professor Susanne Strand was conducted online via Zoom given that she is not in Norway.

The audio was recorded using an external device and in all cases participants gave their verbal consent to being recorded. The duration of the interviews ranged from 34 to 61 minutes and the audios were transcribed for their analysis. The full transcripts are included by the end of this work. All participants were interviewed in their professional capacity and the information they provided was not sensitive. Their participation was voluntary.

In addition to the official sources and the interviews, some media reports on IPV and IPH in Norway were used. The information was gathered online from recent press articles with open access from different newspapers. The articles were translated from Norwegian to English to be cited.

Validity and reliability

The interviews have been conducted with experts on the topic, whose jobs are directly concerned with preventing intimate partner violence from different stances. In this sense, the sources are reliable because they speak from their own professional, hands-on experience with this matter. As of the documents analyzed, they all come from official sources such as the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Kripos, NKVTS, and the UN. Regarding the media sources, I only used articles from well-known Norwegian newspapers, and the news reported can be corroborated in several different sources.

Limitations

As aforementioned, I was not able to conduct an interview with any researchers at NKVTS. This is relevant because this institution has led two national studies of the prevalence of violence and abuse in Norway with a gender perspective. I established communication via email with Alternativ til Vold (ATV) in Oslo requesting an interview. I was interested in contrasting the information I got from my interview with ATV in Tromsø with another ATV office. I got an answer but unfortunately it was not possible to confirm a date for having an interview.

I also communicated via email with four *familievernkontorer* in Oslo: Christiania, Enerhaugen, Homansbyen and Oslo Nord. I asked if they conducted group therapy sessions with men who had been violent against their partners, and if they carried out other activities or interventions directed towards men who had been violent towards their partners or families. I got answers from all four offices, none of which holds therapy groups for men who have been violent against their partners. One of them clarified the groups they had were for men and women with anger issues. Two of them suggested I reach out to ATV.

As for Tromsø, my interviewee from ATV suggested I talk to the *familievernkontoret* and even shared the name of the person responsible for therapy groups for people with aggression issues. I heard back from them, however they specified that when people develop violent behavior towards members of the family, they do not participate in the group.

Given the difficulties in reaching out to men who have been violent towards their partners and getting first-hand information from their therapy groups or the people in charge of conducting these group sessions, I used media articles to gain an insight of some cases. These articles serve as a proxy to personal stories or testimonies. I did not consider talking to victims because my hypothesis is based on perpetrators.

A key limitation I encountered was related to language. The interviews were conducted in English. Given that neither I as the interviewer nor the interviewees are native English speakers, there might have been some terms or ideas that were not communicated as clearly as they would have, had both parties spoken in their native languages. This

limitation also applied to the analysis of written documents. The analysis of all documents written in Norwegian was conducted using machine translations to English, which might have led to mistakes or misinterpretations that I might have missed.

Ethical considerations

While conducting the interviews, ethical considerations regarding the subject matter were made. It was taken into account that the issue addressed is sensitive and the information provided does not regard particular cases of violence but the phenomenon as a whole. I also made sure that the information provided by the interviewees did not pose a risk to anyone or endanger anybody's privacy. All interviewees but one provided their written consent for their names to be included in the thesis.

Research positionality

Mexico is a highly sexist country where women are very often subject to all kinds of gender violence, including intimate partner homicide. Ten women are killed in Mexico everyday (Rea et al., 2024), whereas in Norway less than ten women have been killed on average per year during the last decade. Another stark contrast between my home country and Norway are the actions taken to address this issue. Whereas Mexico has failed for years to implement a strategy to reduce the increasing number of IPH, Norway is planning ahead and aiming for a goal that no country has reached so far, while devoting increasing public resources to implement a pilot strategy. Although there might be room for improvement in the Norwegian strategy, as I will further analyze later on, it is undeniable that much progress has been made in this matter; a progress that Mexico is far from achieving.

Conceptual framework

In the present section I will define the key terms that are most often used throughout this research, and move on to explain the concepts and theories relevant for the analysis section.

Violence, gender-based violence, and intimate partner violence

Johan Galtung offers the following definition of violence:

> Violence is any avoidable insult to basic human needs, and, more generally, to sentient *life* of any kind, defined as that which is capable of suffering pain and enjoy [sic] well-being. Violence lowers the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible. Violence to human beings hurt and harm body [sic], mind and spirit. [...]
>
> The object of violence is any carrier of life, particularly a human being, an actor, individual or collective (group, country). The subject of violence can be any actor, as in intended actor or *direct violence*. Or, a structure at work, churning out harm, causing basic human needs deficits, as in un-intended, indirect, or *structural violence* (Galtung and Fischer, 35).

From the above definition it is clear that, for violence to happen, there must be an object and a subject. The nature of each may vary greatly, but for the kind of violence this research is concerned with, the violence occurs in the context of a personal, intimate relationship between a man and a woman. The object of violence are women and the subject of violence are men in these relationships. I will onwards refer to the objects of this violence as victims, and to the subject as perpetrators, to use the most common terminology and in order to facilitate the readers' understanding.

The term used to address the violence that women experience from men for the sake of being women is most commonly referred to as gender-based violence (GBV). Gender is a term that has evolved greatly in the last decade and still continuously updated, contested, and redefined. Gender is no longer binary, but a continuum, and as such, talking about GBV does no longer refer solely to violence exerted by cisgender men over cisgender women. Rather, it also encompasses violence exerted towards homosexual and transgender individuals for the sake of their sexual orientation. This broadening of the term is still being dealt with by scholars and policy makers.

In most contemporary societies, gender is a status characteristic, meaning it is "an attribute on which individuals vary that is associated in a society with widely held beliefs according greater esteem and worthiness to some states of the attribute (e.g., being male) than others (being female)" (Ridgeway, 179). According to psychologist Sandra Bem, "What is responsible for the construction of conventionally gendered women and men is not childhood socialization, then, but the assignment of women and men to different and unequal positions in the social structure" (Bem, 135).

The Council of Europe defines gender-based violence against women as violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately (Council of Europe 2011). Instead of adhering to the most commonly used term, gender-based violence, the Council emphasizes that they refer to violence exerted against women.

On the other hand, the European Commission defines GBV as violence directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately. The Commission seems to try to avoid referring to women specifically, perhaps seeking a more comprehensive term that covers all genders. However, the website devoted to this matter continues by providing a definition of violence against women:

> Violence against women is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in physical harm, sexual harm, psychological, economic harm, or suffering to women (European Commission).

This is an accurate portrait of the currently existing debate between ascribing to gender-neutral terminology and the more appropriate decision to highlight that most GBV is committed against women for the sake of our gender. Although violence exerted against transgender and homosexual people is a matter of great concern, it is outside the scope of the present research.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is one of many forms of gender-based violence and is defined as

> violence that occurs between people in current or previous intimate relationships including romantic relationships, sexual relationships, or formal partnerships such as marital relationships. There is a wide range of different types of abuse —physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, verbal, and economic abuse, to name a few— included under the heading of this form of violence. However, the critical component is that one intimate partner is attempting to exert power and control over the other intimate partner through the use of violence, force, coercion, or threats (Kim and Bergen, 62).

There is a clear effort for inclusivity in the above definition, as well as in the Norwegian Penal Code (*Straffeloven*), whose gender-neutral language has been repeatedly criticized

by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Sections 282 and 283 of the *Straffeloven* deal with abuse and aggravated abuse in close relationships. The terms used are gender-neutral, as they refer to measures applied to "any person who [...] repeatedly abuses a present or former spouse [...]", for example.

The gender symmetry debate

These gender-neutral definitions open the way to the gender symmetry debate, which "asserts that women are just as likely as men to use violence in an intimate relationship" and assumes that "there is an overall equal use of violence that is not determined by gender" (Lawson, 581). Detractors of this theory argue that the research data used to develop this perspective is flawed because it does not match the experiences of people who work directly with IPV victims and the methodology does not allow to differentiate violent acts performed in self-defense (Lawson, 582).

Another possible explanation for the data to show a gender symmetry of violence in close relationships can be found in the kind of violence exerted. In Norway, the study *Violence and rape in Norway* (*Vold og voldtekt i Norge*) of 2013 distinguished between mild and serious violence. While the numbers for the numbers for exposure to mild and severe violence combined are similar between men and women, the gender asymmetry is stark when only looking at serious violence (Thoresen and Hjemdal 2014).

Out of the 2,435 women that participated in the study, 7% had experienced two or more serious forms of violence, such as physical violence and rape, in opposition to 0.8% of the 2,092 male participants (Bjørnholt, 43). This information is supported by other research, according to which more women are injured and killed by their male partners than the opposite (Kim and Bergen, 61).

Using the term 'intimate partner violence' is inaccurate because it hides the gender asymmetry in the use of violence. I have decided to use it nonetheless because it is the most widely used in the literature. I have chosen it over 'domestic violence' because it might also refer to other forms of violence within the domestic realm, whether it be against parents, against children, or among siblings, to name some. To name it IPV is more comprehensive and allows it to include, for instance, couples involved in dating violence and courtship aggression. Furthermore, the term 'intimate partner homicide'

(IPH), although gender-neutral in nature, refers incontestably to a homicide committed by a man against his female partner.

Social learning theory

Social learning theory was first developed in the 1970s and relates to IPV by providing two explanations to abusers' behavior. According to social learning theory, behavior is learned in two ways: through modeling and through reinforcement. Battering, then, might be learned behavior through modeling (Adams and Cayouette, 3). Witnessing or experiencing abuse as a child may be associated with future partner abuse, both for victims and perpetrators (Bell and Naugle, 1098). Heise finds that witnessing domestic violence and experiencing physical or sexual abuse as a child are predictive of future abuse for husbands who are violent (Heise, 267).

Regarding gender, social learning theory posits that gender roles are learned by children through the positive and negative reinforcements they receive for engaging in gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate behavior. According to renowned psychologist Sandra Bem's gender schema theory, gender traits are produced and reproduced constantly through lifetime, yet they relate to self-construction (Wharton 2012, 38-41) and thus belong to the individual level of analysis.

Limitations of individual theories

Several models and theories have been developed while trying to explain why men are aggressive towards their partners. Many of these draw on previous life experiences of witnessing or experiencing abuse to explain perpetrators' behavior, such as the social learning theory previously described.

Given that intimate partner violence is exerted directly by one person over another, it is tempting to favor individual experiences as an explanation for the perpetrators' behavior. However, using the individual level of analysis alone has proved insufficient because, as Heise puts it: "Although theories based on stress, social learning, personality disorders, or alcohol abuse may suggest why individual men become violent, they do not explain why women are so persistently the target" (Heise, 263).

They also fail to explain why some men display violent conduct against their partners and some do not, given they have the same personality disorder, for example. The obvious limitation of the explanatory power of these theories for IPV has made it necessary to resort to socio-cultural theories. I will present the most relevant ones for the present work.

Social role theory

Social role theory was developed by Alice Eagly in the late 1980s. The concept of role in the social sciences acts as a bridge between the individual and the social environment. As put by Eagly herself: "Role expectations thus exist in the minds of individuals and also are shared with other people, producing the social consensus from which social structure and culture emerge" (Eagly and Wood, 2011).

Applied to gender, social role theory posits that expectations for male and female behavior change depending on the particular cultural context in which these roles are embedded. Stereotypes, understood as general beliefs about men and women, also build into gender roles (Eagly and Wood, 2011). Stereotypes alone are not necessarily an issue; problems arise when these roles are given a different value.

Feminist perspectives

Feminist perspectives conceive intimate partner violence as fundamentally a gender issue that cannot be adequately understood through any lens that does not include gender as the central component of analysis (Lawson, 579). Furthermore, feminists engaged in gender-based violence are reluctant to endorse any theory "that is not grounded in a thorough understanding of the way that male privilege operates to perpetuate gender-based abuse" and consider all factors for abuse to be related to patriarchy (Heise, 263). However, male dominance and gender hierarchy cannot be the single factor explanation, because some men beat women and others do not, even when all men are exposed to cultural messages of male superiority (Heise, 263).

Masculinity

Another perspective worth developing for this research is masculinity. The concept of hegemonic masculinity was coined in the mid-1980s by research groups in Australia, most prominently by R.W. Connell. It refers to a "pattern of practice" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 832) that is normative and embodies the currently most honored way of

being a man. It is the adherence to a 'real man' prototype within a given society (Parkhill and Ray, 188-189) that ideologically legitimates the subordination of women to men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 832).

Although the concept has been contested and highly criticized, it remains a useful term to refer to a set of beliefs and behaviors that some men display and that reinforce the existence of a gender hierarchy in patriarchal societies. It also contributes to Connell's social theory of gender relations, according to which "gender is a large-scale and dynamic social structure, not just a matter of personal identity" (Connell 2024).

To talk about hegemonic masculinity "presumes the subordination of non hegemonic masculinities" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 846), one of which is hybrid masculinity. Although Connell and Messerschmidt do not define it, it can be inferred from their work that this concept derives from changes in gender relations and the redefinition of "socially admired masculinity" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 846). For instance, the shared parenting responsibilities that are often seen in the Nordic countries constitute an example of new gender relations in the household, and imply a broader, novel understanding of how the role of a man in parenting can look like.

The social-ecological framework

As shown, international research on the causes of partner violence and partner homicide has traditionally been based on socio-cultural theories *or* individual theories (NOU 2020:17, 63). I am stressing the use of *or* because making these mutually exclusive makes it difficult to produce theories with strong explanatory power. Several scholars agree that using a single approach has proved to be insufficient to properly explain the complexity of IPV (Bell and Naugle, 1100; Dutton, 18; Heise, 262).

This limitation was also captured by the authors of the NOU 2020:17 in Norway:

> Both the socio-cultural theories and the individual theories have been criticized for not capturing the complexity and diversity of partner violence causes. Given that violence in close relations as a field has become increasingly extensive and complex, researchers have called for a more comprehensive and nuanced approach in the form of an interactional perspective (NOU 2020:17, 65).

This has led to the development of integrative or interactional theories and models, given that no theory alone has a satisfactory explanatory power for the occurrence of intimate partner violence and homicide (NOU 2020:17, 66).

The ecological model was originally developed by Bronfenbrenner in *The Ecology of Human Development* in 1979. It rests upon the assumption that human development takes place in an environment that is conceived "as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 3). He outlines three levels of this ecological environment.

The innermost is the person's immediate setting, for instance, the home or the classroom (the microsystem or relationship level). The second level refers to the interconnections between these single settings (the exosystem or community level). Finally, the third level (or macrosystem) deals with society. Bronfenbrenner posits that development is "profoundly affected by events occurring in settings in which the person is not even present" (Bronfenbrenner, 3). To these three, Belsky added a fourth, ontogenic level, referring to individual development (Dutton, 21).[2]

According to Heise, the nested ecological approach appropriately reflects "the complexity of real life" (Heise, 285) because it helps to understand, for instance, "why a potentially abusive man might become violent in one moment in time and not another" (Heise, 285). The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have adopted the social-ecological model to address sexual violence. The model helps identify risk factors by taking into account how factors in one level might influence factors in another, and increases prevention's effectiveness (Rollero, 2019).

A model that considers risk factors in different levels of analysis is critical to avoid fallacious conclusions. For instance, Kim and Bergen present the argument that "ethnic minorities such as Blacks and Latinos are more likely to experience intimate partner violence". This assumption does not stand when other variables are included: "The relationship between race / ethnicity and IPV occurrence tends to disappear when

[2] See Figure 3.

controlling for other risk factors such as socioeconomic status, and alcohol and substance abuse" (Kim and Bergen, 65).

Willie and Kershaw argue that the individual and community levels have been thoroughly researched for IPV prevention, but more research is needed on the societal-level factors that "can create an environment that legitimizes and encourages IPV" (Willie and Kershaw, 257).

The theoretical concepts presented above have been used to interpret and analyze my findings, as I will present in the analysis chapter. There is a significant number of theories that aim to explain the behavior of IPV perpetrators, whether from an individual or a social level of analysis. The social-ecological model is a useful tool that brings together different levels of analysis to produce arguments with a stronger explanatory power.

The arguments presented by the social learning theory and the social role theory were addressed by my interviewees when referring to their working experience with intimate partner violence perpetrators and the root causes they have identified for these men's violent behavior. Both individual and social factors ought to be considered to analyze perpetrators' behavior. By doing so, it will be possible to gain a better understanding of their rationale and be able to design more accurate intervention programs that make a life difference for both men and women involved in IPV.

Developments in understanding and focus on violence in close relationships

The present chapter answers the research question: What are the main developments in the understanding and focus on violence in close relationships in Norway? I aim to illustrate how conceptualizations of intimate partner violence have changed through time. I will illustrate how it has changed from the private to the public realm and how the efforts have shifted from concealing the violence to preventing it. I will then connect the international trends with the case of Norway.

Historical background

During the first half of the 20th century, domestic violence was not a matter of public concern, but rather an issue that was dealt with privately. According to researcher and journalist Rachel Louise Snyder, most research from the 1960s and '70s described

violence in the home as "the product of a manipulative woman who incited her husband" (Snyder, 155) and mitigated men's responsibility for it (Adams and Cayouette, 1).

Dobash and Dobash provide an precise account of the matter in the early 1970s:

> In 1971, almost no one had heard of battered women, except, of course, the legions of women who were being battered and the relatives, friends, ministers, social workers, doctors, and lawyers in whom some of them confided. Many people did not believe that such behavior actually existed, and even most of those who were aware of it did not think that it actually affected sufficient numbers of women or was of sufficient severity to warrant wide scale concern. There was very little press or television coverage, and it was almost by word of mouth that women all over Britain began to hear about battered women and began to try to organize their own groups and set up shelters for women and children in their own areas (Dobash and Dobash, 2).

During the 1970s this state of affairs changed significantly and put the issue in the public lens due to the surge of the battered women's movement. What first started with a few local groups later expanded into a social movement (Wharton 1983, 568). Wife beating was finally "created" as a social problem, and mainly addressed by establishing shelters and hotlines.

In England, Chiswick's Women's Aid was a "community meeting place for local women" that, almost by chance, led to the creation of a movement that would "grow to international proportions in the next few years" (Dobash and Dobash, 1). It enabled the exposure of the systematic and severe abuse that several women endured from their husbands. As explained by Dobash and Dobash:

> It was quite by accident that the problem of battered women was discovered as a few victims began to reveal their private problems to others. Once discovered, however, this became the sole focus of Chiswick's Women's Aid and of the numerous other independent Women's Aid groups that formed during the following months and years (Dobash and Dobash, 2).

Along with the establishment of shelters by independent, grassroots groups, a law giving protection to battered women was passed in 1976 in England thanks to the efforts of activists. In the United States, a hotline was established in 1972 in Minnesota, while the first shelter for battered women opened in Arizona in 1973 (Tierney, 207).

Dobash and Dobash's *Violence Against Wives* (1979) contributed to the understanding that violence was used by batterers as a means to gain control over their partners and described it as "one of the most brutal and explicit expressions of patriarchal domination" (Dobash and Dobash, ix). They rejected the use of gender-equal terms such as 'marital violence' and 'spouse assault' that conceal the fact that in marital violence, "it is the husband who is most likely to be the perpetrator and his wife the victim" (Dobash and Dobash, 12). Their work is considered seminal and groundbreaking and it is "cited in nearly all sociological writings on intimate partner violence theory, feminist or otherwise" (Lawson, 579).

Shelters for abused women and their children remained more or less the only solution offered to victims for the upcoming decades (Snyder, 222). This was problematic because the burden was (and still is) carried mostly by the victim, who is forced to flee her home and disappear from her own life in order to be safe. Although shelters around the globe have saved thousands of lives, the assumption that they constitute an ideal solution is increasingly contested.

The rise of offender accountability

In the late 1970s,

> The notion that men should be held legally liable for their abusive behavior —behavior understood to be criminal, and not relegated to the private realm of individual or couples counseling— represented a major conceptual breakthrough (Katz, 103).

This decade saw the surge of the first therapy groups for batterers. The appearance of these courses implied a paradigm shift, in which men took responsibility for their violence for the first time. Emerge was founded in 1977 as the first batterer intervention program in the United States. Based in Boston, it is at the core of its philosophy that the abuse is not only physical but also sexual, psychological, verbal, and economic (Adams and Cayouette, 2). Indeed, around 20% of abusive relationships do not deal with physical abuse, but rather with coercive control that includes the partner's control of their looks, their food, their communication, and ultimately "stealing someone's freedom entirely" (Snyder, 36-37). Abuse can be then understood as an exercise of power from one part over the other.

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP) began in Duluth, Minnesota in 1980, and would come to be known simply as the Duluth model. Ellen Pence's Power and Control Wheel was (and still is) used to pinpoint eight ways a batterer maintains power and control: fear, emotional abuse, isolation, denial and blame, using children, bullying, financial control, and brute force and verbal threats (Snyder, 155).[3]

The language used in the image of the Power and Control Wheel is gendered; for instance, examples of emotional abuse include "putting *her* down", and "making *her* feel bad about herself". I use italics to highlight the assumption that the victim is female, which implies that the perpetrator is a man. As explained by Ellen Pence, "We use gender-specific terms not only because the curriculum is for men who batter, but because battering is not a gender-neutral issue" (Pence and Paymar, 5). According to Katz, gender-neutral language helps conceal the basic reality that most violence in relationships is committed by men against women (Katz, 102).

Emerge and Duluth are the most widely emulated intervention programs in the United States (Snyder, 150). Along with the hundreds of intervention groups created since, they aim not only to stop physical abuse, but some also help abusers "recognize destructive patterns, understand the harm they cause, develop empathy for their partners, and offer them an education in emotional intelligence" in a number of ways (Snyder, 151). They have become "the primary means of intervention into domestic violence cases" in the United States (Gondolf, 347). However, more than 40% of criminal domestic violence courts in the United States still do not regularly order offenders to attend batterer intervention courses (Snyder, 274).

On the other hand, the effectiveness of such courses has been debated since their creation (Gondolf, 347). The Duluth model has been criticized for building on "inappropriate assumptions" (Herman et al., 4) such as all abusers being male, and that patriarchal attitudes adequately explain partner abuse.

One problem is that batterer intervention is often conflated with anger management (Snyder, 152), which builds up on an erroneous notion of the prototypical perpetrator

[3] See Figure 1.

being, above all, angry. St. Olav's Hospital in Trondheim developed the Brøset model for adults "who feel that their anger is about to, or is already, destroying their relationship with their family" (St. Olavs Hospital 2024). It is gender neutral, aimed for anyone who has anger management issues. The service is now national and consists of the teaching of techniques to control aggressive behavior and change attitudes. Although the program is not directed towards perpetrators of IPV specifically, some of the content in its website addresses perpetrators of IPV and domestic violence. This way, it could contribute to conflating anger with violence, and therefore reinforcing the image of perpetrators as full of rage.

Other concerns have been raised: Should the courses be tailored to the batterers' personality type? Should they acknowledge race and ethnicity and be culturally sensitive? It has also been noted that treatment with partner-violent men has not kept up with changes in feminist theory and does not incorporate an understanding of masculinity, but is quite one-dimensional (Gottzén et al., 2).

Although these matters are relevant and should not be left aside, research has confirmed that, regardless of the counseling approach, "more problematic men are more likely to drop out and reoffend" (Gondolf, 349). Internal motivation is seen as the key element that determines whether batterers continue to display abusive behavior or not (Adams and Cayouette, 4).

The debate on terminology

The shift of domestic violence from the private to the public sphere did not imply that this violence was immediately conceived and categorized as a crime everywhere. For instance, domestic violence did not become a crime in Washington, D.C. until 1991 (Snyder, 226). This might also have to do with the fact that the terminology normally used did not (and still does not) reflect the seriousness of the felony it is. In the words of researcher Rachel Louise Snyder:

> Domestic disputes, domestic violence, private conflicts, volatile relationships, mistreatment, domestic abuse. All of these are passive constructions, eradicating responsibility not only on behalf of the abuser, but on behalf of law enforcement as well. [...] A far more accurate term, and one that captures the particular psychological, emotional, and physical dynamics, is "intimate partner terrorism" (Snyder, 181).

Gender studies expert Jeff Hearn argues that the term ‘intimate partner violence’ (IPV) is ungendered and requires that we define both ‘intimacy’ and ‘partners’ (Hearn, 16). He proposes the use of the term ‘men’s violence to known women’ (Hearn, 17) to highlight the lack of symmetry in the relationship and the fact that a vast majority of the violence women endure is committed by the men they are closest to.

The deepened debate of the nuances behind IPV was accompanied by the rise of men’s studies as a new field. R. W. Connell’s *Gender and Power* (1987) sparked an academic conversation around her ‘social theory of gender’ and ‘hegemonic masculinity’. The terms ‘men’s studies’, ‘masculinity studies’, and ‘critical studies of men’ are used interchangeably (Connell and Messerschmidt, 830) and have gained traction as a subfield within gender studies (Hearn, 16). This trend has been accompanied by a growing understanding of gender violence “not as aberrational behavior perpetrated by a few bad men but as an expression of much more deeply seated structures of gender dominance and gender inequality” (Katz, 370).

Connell’s Australia-based research further confirms the trends previously described in the United Kingdom and the United States: domestic violence as part of a larger pattern of violence against women that requires innovative theorizing of gender (Connell 1987, 11).

The role of men in IPV prevention

On the state level, significant progress has been made regarding both victims and perpetrators. The Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul Convention) was adopted by the Council of Europe in 2011. It openly addresses the need to involve men in the conversation around the prevention of gender violence.

For instance, in its article 12.4, it states that “Parties shall take the necessary measures to encourage all members of society, *especially men and boys*, to contribute actively to preventing all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention”, while article 16 mentions “programmes aimed at *teaching perpetrators of domestic violence* to adopt non-violent behaviour in interpersonal relationships with a view to preventing further

violence and changing violent behavioural patterns" and "treatment programmes aimed at *preventing perpetrators***,** in particular sex offenders, from re-offending".[4]

This phrasing entails the understanding of the gender asymmetry behind gender-based violence in general and domestic violence in particular. It also acknowledges that gender violence contributes to a wide range of social problems, among them youth violence, gang violence, mass shootings, homelessness, divorce, alcoholism, and the transmission of HIV/AIDS (Katz, 363). It might cause lasting health problems to the battered women, such as chronic pain and stress, and mental-health disorders like depression, all of which can last longer than the violent relationship (Campbell 2002, 1332). In sum, the consequences of partner violence are not limited to the direct victim, but also affect the perpetrator, society in general and can even have effects on the younger generations of the family, as I will illustrate further on.

Above all, significant consensus has been reached that this form of violence is a public matter and victims are not to blame. There is an ongoing debate around how to deal with the perpetrators, and a lingering resistance to openly acknowledge that men commit most violence in the world. On the bright side, although men do in fact are responsible for most forms of violence, some are also contributing to efforts to reduce it.

In fact, there have been men supporting the women-led movements against domestic and sexual violence since the 1970s (Katz, 349). In the 1990s, antisexist men's initiatives in the United States and around the world increased dramatically (Katz, 350). There is an increasing focus in working with boys and young people in prevention efforts. Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP), for instance, was created by Jackson Katz in 1993 in Northeastern University, Boston, and is addressed not only to male perpetrators of violence but to all men.

As presented above, the approach to domestic violence has changed dramatically since the 1970s. It has shifted from victim blaming to offender accountability. Slowly, it is moving towards prevention by approaching young men and boys, and even adult men

[4] Italics are my own.

who have not exerted violence themselves but have no doubt witnessed it as ‘bystanders’, to use the terminology of Jackson Katz.

The case of Norway

As it has been explained, the 1970s marked a turning point in the approach to IPV. During this decade, abuse of women in Norway was a private problem. This, however, changed in a matter of a few years. In 1976, the crisis center group (*krisesentergruppa*) was established in Oslo. Its members were inspired by the newly created tribunal on crimes against women organized in Brussels that same year. The group received financial support from the authorities after documenting that mistreatment of women was a problem in Norway as well.

In 1978, Camilla, Norway’s first crisis center for abused and raped women, opened its doors. Around 50 other crisis centers and hotlines soon followed. In 1983, the first national action plan on violence against women was issued (Skjørten et al., 15).

The shelter movement was closely tied to the grassroots women’s movement with feminist ideals against patriarchal dominance. The term *kvinnemishandling*, that translates as mistreatment of women, was used to refer to violence against women in the home. Gradually, also in line with the international trend, the term has been replaced by violence in close relationships (*vold i nære relasjoner*) (Skjørten et al., 16). This shift from a term that includes the word ‘woman’ (*kvinne*) to another that translates as ‘violence in close relationships’ implies moving towards gender neutrality and thus obscuring the gendered dimension of this violence.

The 1980s brought the notion that resources should also be devoted to perpetrators in order to reduce gender-based violence. In 1987, Alternativ til Vold (Alternative to Violence) started operations in Oslo as the first treatment center for abusive men (Skjørten et al., 22). ATV still operates across the country, with 15 offices that offer treatment to both victims and perpetrators of violence, whether they be adults or children (ATV, 2024). It also offers services for violent women.

The prevalence of violence in Norway has changed little since the end of the 1980s (NKVTS). Partner murder specifically is concerning, since it accounts for a quarter of all

murders in Norway,[5] and on average there are eight partner murders each year (NOU 2020:17, 52). Kripos, Norway's national unit for combating organized and other serious crime, defines partner homicide as the murder of a current or former partner. A partner can be a spouse, cohabitant or registered partner, or divorced or separated former partner (NOU 2020:17, 16).

This definition is narrower than in other countries, since it leaves aside couples who do not cohabitate or are somehow registered as partners. Still, partner murder constitutes a far greater proportion of the total number of murders in Norway than anywhere else in the world (NOU 2020:17, 57).

In line with data from other countries, 72% of IPH victims from 1990 to 2012 had been in contact with the public help apparatus before the murder, most often with a GP, hospital staff or the police (NOU 2020:17, 61). Again in line with international research, the lack of communication among agencies resulted in deaths that could have been prevented given the forewarnings. In only 9% of the cases documented it was explicitly stated that previous partner violence was not registered (NOU 2020:17, 59).

The Committee on Violence Against Women was appointed by the Norwegian government in August 2001. The committee submitted the NOU:2003 31 under the name *The right to a life without violence — Men's violence against women in close relationships*.[6,7] The appointment of the committee was an expression of the political will to strengthen women's protection against violence in close relationships. The committee's report became an important provider of premises for further work on the topic (Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet 2013), as well as the reports that followed in the upcoming decade.

In the last twenty years, action plans against violence in intimate relationships have steadily been issued by the Norwegian government under different titles, such as *Turning*

[5] See Figure 2.
[6] Norway's public investigations or statements (*Norges offentlige utredninger, NOU*) are government reports that present and discuss the knowledge base and possible choices of action or strategies for the development and implementation of public measures to solve societal problems and challenges (SNL 2024).
[7] In Norwegian, *Retten til et liv uten vold — Menns vold mot kvinner i nære relasjoner.*

point (2008-2011), *A life without violence* (2014-2017), *The right to decide one's own life* (2017-2020), and *Freedom from violence* (2021-2024).[8]

Turning point and the *Stortingsmelding*[9] *15* of 2013 called for municipalities to voluntarily introduce local action plans for intimate relationships to help victims get a tailored and comprehensive offer of services. A 2019 report showed that 40% of the country's municipalities have these action plans, especially the most populated ones (Sandmoe and Nymoen, 12).

The 2014-2017 plan against violence in close relationships, *A life without violence*, called for the establishment of a pilot project based on the Karin program of Malmö, Sweden. The Karin program brought the police and other service providers for victims of violence together in the same location. Norway's Project November emulated this model for providing services to victims. It was based in the Stovner police station in Oslo and ran from 2015 to 2018. The objective was to provide a comprehensive and coordinated attention to victims, as well as perpetrators and relatives.

The project proved successful and the Oslo police district decided to continue its working model in a new, special unit called RISK (NOU 2020: 17, 83). RISK is also based in the Stovner police station and covers 11 out of 15 districts in Oslo. Just as Project November did, RISK has analysts in the police work in teams together with health and social work personnel.

A report by the Welfare Research Institute (*Velferdsforskningsinstituttet*, NOVA) at OsloMet University stated that the RISK unit in Oslo is a good measure that prevents violence in close relationships. According to the Minister of Justice Emilie Enger Mehl, the government wants to make RISK a nationwide offer by 2028 (Amble and Zaman 2024).

[8] In Norwegian, *Vendepunkt* (2008-2011), *Et liv uten vold* (2014-2017), *Retten til å bestemme over eget liv* (2017-2020), and *Frihet fra vold* (2021-2024).
[9] The *Stortingsmelding* is a document that the government sends to the Parliament (Storting) when it wants to present matters and have them discussed there without proposing a decision (SNL 2024).

Despite the success of its working model, the unit is currently overflown. Norway faced a significant increase in murders at the beginning of 2024. Only a few weeks into the year, 14 murders were committed. On the other hand, due to the hiring freeze, RISK has five unfilled positions. According to section leader at RISK Elli Graf, 15 more people should be hired in order to properly cover the entire Oslo police district (Amble and Zamman, 2024).

The NOU:2020 17 *Foreshadowed murder? The partner homicide committee's investigation*[10] specifically addressed the persistence of partner murder in Norway and called for the creation of a permanent national commission for partner homicide (*partnerdrapskommisjon*). The *partnerdrapskommisjon* is expected to start work by the end of 2024, and will be supported in its administrative tasks by the Civil Affairs Authority, Sivilrettsforvaltningen. I will elaborate on the commission in upcoming chapters.

There are some institutes and researchers on partner violence that have done a remarkable job. For instance, the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) was created in 2003 and is primarily funded by the Ministries of Health and Care Services, of Justice and Public Security, and of Children and Families. Some of its projects are financed by the Norwegian Research Council and the EU, among others. One of its three fields of expertise specifically addresses violence and abuse in close relationships (NKVTS, 2024), in which they have an extensive body of publications that are available on their website.

NKVTS works with the most influential researchers on gender-based violence in Norway. Margunn Bjørnholt's work is worth noting. Her research interests include sexual and gender-based violence, gender equality, men and masculinities, and intimate partner violence (Gottzén et al. 2021). On the other hand, the work by researcher Kristin Skjørten shows how violence against women gained visibility in Norway "as a result of a successful alliance between the women's movement and the state" (Bjørnholt, 38).

[10] In Norwegian, *Varslede drap? Partnerdrapsutvalgets utredning.*

NKVTS created the website Dinutvei.no in 2016 on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and Emergency Preparedness. It provides easy access information for victims, perpetrators, and bystanders on IPV and sexual violence, as well as on the existing help services. It is also possible to ask questions through the website. There is a duty of confidentiality and it does not share information unless there is an acute danger to life and health (Dinutvei 2024).

Solveig Karin Bø Vatnar is the most influential Norwegian researcher on intimate partner homicide. Her results show that though homicide incidence rates in Norway declined steadily and significantly after 1990, IPH rates did not begin to decline until 2015. This and other of her findings have been influential in the government's approach to partner violence.

The definition of family violence has broadened in Norway to include violence against the elderly or against children. Given the diverse cultural backgrounds of the population, issues such as forced marriage and genital mutilation have also become part of the discussion on gender-based violence. Adopting an intersectional perspective has become relevant for research and for the design of policies and services (Skjørten et al., 19).

Language neutrality remains a contested issue. Concluding observations on the ninth and tenth periodic reports of Norway (from 2017 and 2023, respectively) by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women have called for the country to include a gender-sensitive rather than a gender-neutral approach in its legislation. The Committee argues that gender neutrality distracts from women's disproportionate exposure to direct and indirect discrimination, thus failing to address it adequately.

Relation between gender equality and gender violence

Norway is an interesting case for examining the relation between gender equality and gender violence. The country is part of the Nordic region, the most gender equal region in the world and where equality between women and men is a fundamental value (Gracia and Merlo, 27).

Jeff Hearn posits that "the most gender unequal and homophobic countries are also those with the highest level of societal violence and most at risk of armed conflict in their own territory" (Hearn, 27). Consequently, it could be argued that the more gender equality there is, the lower the levels of societal violence. Indeed, a country like Norway seems at first glance as a confirmation of this hypothesis. Yet the so-called Nordic paradox challenges this assumption.

The Nordic countries are among the most gender equal in the world, yet they have disproportionally high prevalence rates of partner violence against women (Gracia and Merlo, 27). For Norway, partner murders account for 25% of all murders in Norway. There were eight partner homicides each year on average for the last decade (NOU 2020:17, 52). For murder cases between the fall of 2021 and the fall of 2022, almost 30% of victims were killed by a partner or ex partner. The trend in domestic violence varies between police districts, but the overall extent is stable (Kripos, 2023). However, there was a significant increase in murders during the first weeks of 2024, known as *drapsbølge*, which should also be taken into account.

The Nordic paradox consists of high indicators of gender equality, as well as high indicators of IPV. A characteristic of these countries, among them Norway, is that they have implemented quite unique measures that challenge traditional gender roles, such as the father's quota.

The long paid parental leave for fathers, known as the father's quota, was introduced in Norway in 1993, making it the first Nordic country to adopt it. The aim of the system "is to support the notion that both parents can be primary carers in infancy and beyond" (Farstad and Stefansen, 57). This understanding of "the father as a primary carer" (Farstad and Stefansen, 58) constitutes a massive shift in gender roles that challenge traditional masculinity ideals and offer an alternative understanding of what is not only acceptable but expected from men (Farstad and Stefansen, 66).

According to Michael Kimmel,

> The less gender differentiation between women and men, the less likely there will be gendered violence. This means the more "like women" men can be seen —nurturing, caring, frightened—

and the more "like men" women can be seen —capable, rational, competent in the public sphere— the more likely that aggression will take other routes besides gendered violence (Kimmel, 267).

The father's quota and what it entails in terms of gender differentiation should, according to Kimmel's argument, contribute positively to the reduction of GBV. Reality, however, defies this assumption and raises big questions on how to prevent and de-escalate IPV.

Some explanations to the Nordic paradox are different interpretations of survey questions across countries, the acceptability to talk to others about IPV victimization, or higher levels of disclosure in countries with higher gender equality (Gracia and Merlo, 29). There is room for further research on this topic and a pressing need to apply an ecological approach to incorporate variables in the individual level of analysis that might shed light into this paradox.

The role of gender neutrality

Gender neutrality is held in high regard in Norway as a key element for gender equality. The Norwegian government has implemented policies such as parental leave that encourage equality between men and women, as described above. The suitability of the gender-neutral approach can be contested when it comes to dealing with prevention of intimate partner violence. When interviewing Dr. Strand from Örebro University in Sweden, I brought up this matter and asked for her insight about it. She summarized it in a clear way: "It is gender-based violence, so that is not gender neutral, and we should not underestimate that this is men's violence towards women" (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023). She also noted that patriarchal norms are still part of the society, even in countries with high equality such as Norway and Sweden, where her research is based.

The use of gender-neutral language in relation to intimate partner violence results in the concealment of the gendered nature of IPV, as explained by Dr. Strand and other experts. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women 2023 has noted the gender neutrality of Norway's legislative framework and definition of discrimination against women as a flaw, not as a strength. Reports from 2017 and 2023 reiterated the Committee's concern that "gender-neutral legislation, policies and programmes might result in an inadequate protection of women against direct and indirect discrimination and hinder the achievement of substantive equality between women and men" and called for

the inclusion of "a gender-sensitive rather than gender-neutral approach in its legislation". Nothing seems to point to Norway conducting any changes in this regard.

Regarding her own research, Dr. Strand made it clear in our interview that it is gender neutral in the sense that she and her team "look into perpetrators who could be men and women, victims that could be men and women. We look into heterosexual relationships, LGBTQI relationships. In that sense, everyone" (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

I brought up the matter of gender neutrality in all the four interviews I conducted and got similar answers from all but Dr. Strand's. When I asked Hans-Petter Kielland if IPV prevention efforts conducted by the Oslo Police are oriented towards women only, or to both women and men, he answered that they are oriented to both women and men, since the risk assessment tools used, the SARA SV and the SARA V3, are both gender neutral (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023). When I asked the team from Sivilrettsforvaltningen if Norway's *partnerdrapskommisjon* will handle cases under a gender-neutral approach, Johan Flem Kalheim answered positively (Kalheim and McInerney, Sivilrettsforvaltningen, 23 November 2023).

This trend is worrisome because gender-based violence cannot be addressed under a light of gender neutrality. Misogyny and patriarchy are not gender-neutral, and neither should be the actions taken to address their dire consequences. Gender neutrality seems to be misunderstood as a solution *per se* instead of a tool that can be useful to promote equality under certain, specific circumstances. For instance, its use can be understood in the context of economic inclusion or challenging gender roles. It should not be used as a "one size fits all" solution that alone contributes to gender equality, and even less so when dealing with gender violence of any kind.

The role of minorities

When it comes to minorities, Hans-Petter Kielland from the Oslo Police highlighted in our interview that many of the cases his unit deals with involve foreign women and men who are not familiar with the public system and would not seek help themselves, if they were not oriented by the police. In our interview, he also mentioned that cultural differences might dissuade people from approaching the authorities, for example if they

come from a country where the police cannot be trusted (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023).

Forced marriage is a specific form of gender-based violence that takes place in certain countries. Cases of partner violence involving foreign women that have come to Norway against their will imply the participation of specific agencies such as the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). Spouses who are in Norway under a family immigration permit and are subject to abuse can apply for a specific residence permit (UDI 2024). This measure complies with Article 59.1 of the Istanbul Convention:

> Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims whose residence status depends on that of the spouse or partner as recognised by internal law, in the event of the dissolution of the marriage or the relationship, are granted in the event of particularly difficult circumstances, upon application, an autonomous residence permit irrespective of the duration of the marriage or the relationship.

When comparing the percentage of Norwegian and foreign perpetrators, 53% of a total of 216 perpetrators in the period 2000-2024 are Norwegian-born (VG 2024). The remaining 47% are immigrants. This is a high percentage taking into account that immigrants make up 15% of the population in Norway. Immigrants and foreign nationals are thus overrepresented (Vatnar and Friestad 2024).

During my interview with the psychologist from Alternativ til Vold Tromsø, I asked about the profile of the people who attend the therapy sessions. My interviewee was unsure that it was allowed to register the clients' ethnicity. In her experience, however, most of the clients are Norwegian (ATV, Tromsø, 21 September 2023).

Vatnar and Friestad have found more similarities than differences between partner homicide committed by perpetrators who were immigrants and partner homicide committed by Norwegians. According to them, immigrants and foreign nationals are attributed other motives and are given longer sentences than Norwegian perpetrators (Vatnar and Friestad 2024). This matter could be further addressed and studied in the country, given the diversity of its population and the importance of avoiding stigmatization of minorities.

Strategies and interventions to reduce partner murders in Norway

As described above, it is often the case that authorities have prior information about IPV cases that, if used properly, could prevent partner murders. Additionally, there is an increasing trend to focus not only on victims but on perpetrators in order to prevent recidivism of partner violence and, ultimately, partner homicide.

The present chapter illustrates how Norwegian authorities work to reduce partner violence. The main source of information are the four interviews I conducted for the present work, as described in the methodology section. The information here presented will also contribute to my hypothesis that a perpetrator-based approach is effective for addressing and preventing intimate partner violence.

Relevance of adopting a perpetrator-based approach

As it has been discussed, applying a victim-based approach alone has proved insufficient to effectively prevent and eradicate partner violence and homicide. As explained by Dr. Susanne Strand from Örebro University, there are many reasons that women might not be responsive to the risk management measures suggested for them (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

Johan Flem Kalheim from the Civil Affairs Authority provided examples on how the traditional measures for stopping intimate partner violence place a heavy burden on victims. For instance, going to a shelter implies that the woman "needs to move, needs to stay at the secret address, she cannot have contact with her family" (Kalheim and McInerney, Sivilrettsforvaltningen, 23 November 2023).

Partner violence might also result in homelessness for the victims. According to the EVICT research project on housing and eviction conducted by the University of Groningen, approximately between 50 and 60% of all homeless women in European countries report that they are homeless because they are fleeing domestic violence (Gurara, 2021). In the United States, partner violence is a direct cause of homelessness for more than half of homeless women (Snyder, 7).

When talking about criminal cases, Mr. Kielland from the Oslo Police was clear that victims set the pace for moving forward with the investigation, instead of being "dragged

along" as it used to be the case (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023). There is even a police section responsible for the victims' safeguarding, which is positive and a strength of the Oslo Police model. This example shows how the victim-based approach is not entirely flawed. Still, it falls short, as the previous examples show.

Dr. Strand highlighted in our interview that partner violence is the only case where the stress is on the victim instead of on the perpetrator. According to her, the reason is that, when it comes to other crimes,

> We have access to the perpetrator. So, for instance, a lot of that research is done in correctional wards or in psychiatric hospitals, and that the perpetrators are actually there and cannot leave. We have to work with them because they are there (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

This is not the case for IPV. She provides a concise description of this matter:

> For intimate partner violence, a lot of perpetrators do not get sentenced for the violence due to a lot of things: difficulties to prove the actual crime, it could be that the victim does not want to collaborate with the police investigation anymore. We know that leaving an abusive relationship is a process, which means that she can go back to the perpetrator, leave him, go back again, leave him. We have to have in mind that is how it is. That is why we need to help the victims. We have a structure where we have focused a lot on victims because we have access to them, so we can actually help them. But in that, we kind of forgot that we still can do a lot of things towards the perpetrator (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

As she puts it, working with perpetrators does not imply neglecting the victims. In fact, Dr. Strand and Mr. Kielland agree that the needs of both victims and perpetrators should be addressed simultaneously to reduce the risk of partner murder. As Mr. Kielland puts it, "The success factor is if both parties are willing to receive the help" (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023). Thus, a perpetrator-based approach implies providing help to both victims *and* perpetrators, in opposition to a victim-based approach which provides help to the victims only.

The Istanbul Convention of 2011 addresses the need to involve perpetrators as part of the necessary measures to prevent further violence in at least two of its articles.

> Parties shall take the necessary measures to encourage all members of society, especially **men and boys,** to contribute actively to preventing all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention (art 12.4)

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or support programmes aimed at **teaching perpetrators of domestic violence** to adopt non-violent behaviour in interpersonal relationships with a view to preventing further violence and changing violent behavioural patterns (art. 16.1)

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or support treatment programmes aimed at **preventing perpetrators,** in particular sex offenders, from re-offending (art 16.2).[11]

There is wide consensus among the existing regional conventions and the Norwegian government's plans that working with perpetrators is necessary to prevent partner violence and homicide. Norway's approach to IPV aligns with the guidelines provided by the Istanbul Convention to shift the focus from the victims alone towards doing preventative work with boys and men.

Government plans to address violence in close relationships have been issued for decades now in Norway. The plans stress different priorities depending on the trends and new research findings. For instance, as early as 2008, the government acknowledged the need to strengthen services for perpetrators of violence as a means to "break the spiral of violence" in the *Turning point* report (2008-2011). This report was issued before the Istanbul Convention, which shows that the shift towards a perpetrator-based approach was already under way in Norway when the Council of Europe issued the Convention in 2011.

Norway's approach continued to include measures directed to both victims and perpetrators of IPV. For instance, the RISK unit brings together services both for victims and perpetrators. The Oslo police is expected to conduct individual interviews with both parties and offer the relevant attention services depending on the risk factors of each particular case. They might be channeled to ATV, where the perpetrators will undergo an initial assessment and be offered a series of therapy sessions tailored to their particular profile. If anger management is the main issue, they might also consider participating in a Brøset model group.

[11] Bold letters are my own.

All of the above reflects an increased understanding that intimate partner violence is a matter of great concern that should involve both parties to be effectively addressed. There is no doubt that dealing with the victims alone is not enough to prevent recidivism. Norway has clearly understood that a perpetrator-focused approach is the way to go in order to better prevent and tackle IPV. The government's actions to prevent partner violence and homicide indeed reflect this understanding, by providing services to perpetrators through Alternativ til Vold, and anger management groups.

Risk factors and assessment

There are factors that are to a certain extent related to the exercise of violence of men against their female partners. The factors, then, are circumstances or "root causes" (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023) that tend to repeat themselves in cases of IPV. There are several and the weight given to each depends on the risk assessment tool being used, as I will describe later in this chapter.

There is consensus among experts that partner violence tends to escalate, and there are markers that can provide insight on a victim's level of risk that can help prevent partner murder. The risk is identified through markers or behaviors by the perpetrator that should alert on the level of risk the victim is in. The timely identification of such markers and their proper assessment are critical to enhance and improve the prevention of lethal violence.

The factors considered depend on the risk assessment tool used. Two of my interviewees talked about risk assessment methods. Hans-Petter Kielland, from the Oslo Police Department, and researcher Susanne Strand from the University of Örebro, mentioned the structured professional judgements methods or SPJ (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023; Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

Susanne Strand explained there are three generations of risk assessment methods. The first, developed in the 50s and 60s, relied solely on personal experience to answer whether an individual was dangerous or not, and was highly inaccurate. The second relied on structured lists of risk factors. By the late 80s, researchers started combining the two: there is a checklist but there is also a professional judgment, which increases the accuracy of the assessment (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

According to Dr. Strand, the SPJ tools belong to the third generation of risk assessment methods and combine the strengths of the first and second generations (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023). That is, they rely on both quantitative and qualitative data to achieve a nuanced conclusion on whether a person is dangerous or not.

Although there are more than 400 tools used to assess violence risk around the world, only a few are widely used and validated instruments for domestic violence (Hilton, 26). The most important are the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide (SARA), the Danger Assessment (DA), the Domestic Violence Screening Instrument-Revised (DVSI-R), and the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA). For the present work I will only describe the SARA, as it is the one used by the Norwegian police.

The first two versions of the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide (SARA) were developed in the early 1990s. A third version was developed 16 years later in order to incorporate the advancements in knowledge, while preserving the integrity of the second version. It includes 24 factors divided into three categories: nature of the violence, perpetrator risk factors, and victim vulnerability factors (Kropp and Gibas, 391).

A characteristic of SARA is that it is gender-neutral and is intended for use with both male and female evaluees (Kropp and Gibas, 392). It adheres strictly to the definition of IPV:

> Intimate partner violence is defined as any actual, attempted, or threatened physical harm perpetrated by a man or woman against someone with whom he or she has, or has had, an intimate, sexual relationship. This definition is inclusive: It is not limited to acts that result in physical injury or death; it is not limited to relationships where the partners are or have been legally married; and *it is not limited by the gender of the victim or perpetrator* (Kropp and Gibas, 390).

The use of SARA is widespread: it has been translated to ten languages and is being used on six continents, in at least 15 countries —including Norway.

In my interview with Mr. Kielland, he mentioned that the Oslo Police works with the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment, short version (SARA SV). He described that the SARA looks into 15 risk factors, out of which ten are on the perpetrator, and the rest on the victim. Some examples of risk factors for the perpetrator include crime history, relational

problems, employment and substance abuse (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023).

Since 2013, the Norwegian Police Directorate has required all police districts to conduct a SARA in all cases concerning partner violence. However, authorities have acknowledged that is not being done, due to challenges with capacity and competence (Quist et al., 2024).

In this case, the Norwegian authorities seem to have a clear roadmap to enhance the prevention of partner murder. Yet the institutional capacity is currently insufficient to effectively carry out a SARA in every single case of domestic violence that the authorities are aware of. Were this done, prevention would most likely be enhanced and the number of partner murder cases would be reduced.

Norwegian researcher Solveig Karin Bø Vatnar has found that a substantial proportion of partner murder perpetrators and victims were known to the authorities and service providers before the partner murder, and 70% of the fatal victims had registered incidents of violence prior to the homicide (Vatnar et al., NP21603; Vatnar and Friestad, 2024).

Some recent cases of partner murder clearly illustrate how Norway is struggling to apply the information the authorities have to successfully prevent intimate partner homicides. For instance, some victims from the killing spree of the first weeks of 2024 had filed restraining orders against the men who would eventually kill them. Rahavy Varatharajan, killed on January 2, had requested both a violence alarm and a reversed violence alarm,[12] but the authorities refused to provide them. This is a flagrant misstep, given that victims who are scared for their life are often right to be so, according to research cited by Susanne Strand (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

Additionally, Varatharajan had notified the police about the man, who broke the restraining order several times before the murder (Haram 2024; Hopperstad et al. 2024; Quist et al. 2024). Breaking a restraining order is a criminal offense in itself, and Mr.

[12] A reversed violence alarm is worn by the perpetrator for authorities to monitor the distance between them and the victim.

Kielland mentioned in our interview that recurring breaches of a restraining order represent an increased threat level (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023).

Tina Milena Solberg was killed on January 7 by her former partner and father of her children. She was given a violence alarm in June 2023 after she reported her ex-partner, but it had not been in active use after July. Solberg had also reported him three times before, but two of the reports of violence were dismissed (VG 2024).

The dismissal of reports clearly shows a lack of understanding of how risk factors work. It also constitutes an increased threat level to the victim, and her being revictimized by not being taken seriously by the authorities. It is very likely that the outcome would have been different if the victim's claims had been taken seriously. A person's misjudgement resulted in the violent death of a woman; a death that could have been prevented.

Intervention programs for intimate partner violence perpetrators

Now that the hypothesis of whether a perpetrator-based approach is effective for addressing and preventing intimate partner violence has been proven correct, I will explore diverse intervention programs addressed to perpetrators, their effectiveness, and how these connect to the risk factors.

There is not a single kind of intervention that works in all cases, but they vary greatly on their approach. I addressed some of them in this work and wanted to learn from my interviewees what they found most important about an intervention addressed to perpetrators.

The Duluth model, so widely used in the United States, has raised doubts among experts, as previously described. However, it stands out because it seeks to "increase the participant's understanding of the causes of his violence by examining the cultural and social contexts in which he uses the violence against his partner" (Pence and Paymar, 30). This objective is not stressed in other interventions, such as the ones conducted by ATV or in the Brøset model. It is also accurate in defining violence as a means to control people's behavior.

Despite the positive aspects of the Duluth model, Dr. Strand strongly opposes this kind of intervention. When addressing the matter of treatment for perpetrators in our interview, she explained:

> Duluth-based does not work. There is a lot of research in the world on that. There is enough evidence to say that those methods do not work because they are stigmatizing and saying that there is "us" and "them". It is based more on [the assumption] that men overall are violent to some extent, and that these negative attitudes are on a general level, and that is not true for all the perpetrators. So perpetrators have difficulties to identify that they are one of those horrible persons that they say that we are. Those are some reasons why it does not work well (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

From her view, it can be inferred that it is critical to redefine the image of the typical perpetrator being "a rageaholic, a monster, a person visible and uncontrollably angry. Someone easily identifiable as a 'bad guy'" (Snyder, 153) that most people have. Snyder elaborates on this common misconception:

> One of the hallmarks of domestic violence is this false idea that abusers are somehow angry generally; rather, their anger is targeted —at a partner or at the partner's immediate family. As a result, friends and acquaintances of abusers are often surprised to hear that they committed an assault (Snyder, 153).

Anger management and batterer intervention are often seen as equivalent, whereas only about 25% of batterers fit the definition of rageaholics (Snyder, 152-153). Gaining a better understanding of perpetrators is necessary to design effective interventions that actually help prevent recidivism and leave aside erroneous notions about these men that alienate them from seeking help.

Although the Brøset model is targeted to anyone with anger issues, men might feel more inclined to participate, as they might not feel stigmatized, as is the case for the Duluth model. Most of the therapy is conducted in groups, which might help participants position themselves in a societal level and gain a better understanding of their behavior in all three levels of the social-ecological model.

Some interventions, such as the ones conducted at Alternativ til Vold, deal mostly with the first two levels of analysis of the social-ecological framework, that is, the relationship and the community level. My interviewee at ATV mentioned that most of the men she

has treated have experienced trauma in their childhood and struggle to communicate their needs. In many cases, the violence they exert is less severe than the one they experienced in their upbringing, so they fail to acknowledge it as violence (ATV, Tromsø, 21 September 2023). This might be interpreted as a lack of connection to the third level of the social-ecological model, that is, the societal level. Their actions are not seen in a context wider than their own personal experience.

In the specific case of ATV Tromsø, there are no therapy groups, which would possibly allow for the men to include the third level of analysis in the understanding of their own behavior. Another interesting point brought up by my interviewee is that sometimes perpetrators themselves are traumatized by the violence they have used, so they also suffer consequences themselves (ATV, Tromsø, 21 September 2023). This is critical to understand the need for a perpetrator-based approach, since men are also victims of their own violence.

My interviewee provided examples of how men suffer consequences from having been violent. They might become isolated, they might lose contact with people, whether because people decide to keep a distance from them (ATV, Tromsø, 21 September 2023) or if they would rather not get too close to others, so that they cannot suspect them of being violent at home.

An extreme example of how intimate violence affects the perpetrators are homicides-suicides, and familicides. The first refer to cases where the man murders his partner and then commits suicide. The second includes the killing of an intimate partner and at least one child. It is rarely studied by researchers and underreported. According to researcher Rachel Louise Snyder, it is a rare crime, but appears to be on the rise in the United States (Snyder, 159-161). As for Norway, a case of familicide was part of 2024's *drapsbølge* or killing spree. On March 23, 2024, a man shot his wife and two children in their family home in the Norwegian town of Torpo. He took his own life before the police were alerted and came to the house (VG 2024).

It is safe to say that the consequences of such a crime are not limited to the fatal victims, but will have a lasting effect on other relatives, their acquaintances and friends, and will leave a mark in Torpo for generations to come. It is difficult if not impossible to quantify

such consequences, but the existing research confirms that violence is indeed passed on from generation to generation.

Prior experiences of abuse were also highlighted by the interviewees as factors for violent behavior. For instance, as part of the initial questionnaire in Alternativ til Vold, people are asked about sexualized violence, in terms of if they have abused someone sexually, or if they themselves have been abused. This information is deemed relevant to better understand the behavior of partner violence perpetrators.

The intergenerational transmission of other types of violence was also described by my interviewee from ATV.

> I have had clients that have experienced severe violence when they were children and young, so if they use violence it is often less severe. Sometimes they can see it as if they do not use violence, because it is not the same kind of violence that they themselves experienced. [...] It is really violence that keeps going on from generation to generation [...]
>
> For example, I can ask, "Have you ever hit anyone?" and they can say no. And then later in the therapy I hear that they hit someone. Then we talk about it and then they say "But I did not hit with a fist, I hit with an open palm", so they perceive the violence differently (ATV, Tromsø, 21 September 2023).

By "differently", my interviewee meant that the perpetrators (consciously or subconsciously) rank the seriousness of the violent actions they experienced *vis-à-vis* the violence they exerted towards their partners and come to the conclusion that they are not being violent because they are not behaving like the people who was violent against them did. Overcoming this is key for achieving the main goal of the ATV therapy: getting people to acknowledge that what they did was indeed violence, call it by its name, understand the consequences, and avoid using it again (ATV, Tromsø, 21 September 2023).

This understanding is necessary to approach perpetrators in a productive manner. It is also relevant to the gender asymmetry debate, as described in the conceptual framework. As stated before, women are injured and killed by their male partners more than the opposite (Kim and Bergen, 61). The testimony of my interviewee builds on this piece of data. She compared the fear of a male victim of partner violence to the fear of a female victim: "Often when we talk to the partner [of] the woman, the partner claims that he is

not afraid of the woman, but when we talk with the partner [of] the man, sometimes they talk about being afraid" (ATV, Tromsø, 21 September 2023).

This fear is critical to understand the asymmetry of violence. As has been stated, victims who are scared of lethal violence are most often correct (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023). The victims' fear is not irrational but a trustworthy marker of the level of danger they are in, and it should be taken seriously and into consideration when conducting risk assessments.

Sometimes the violent men have a bad conception of women in general. The psychologist from ATV told me that she sometimes sensed her clients had a negative attitude towards women, maybe assuming that all women are like their own mothers who used to victimize them (ATV, Tromsø, 21 September 2023). It was not clear from our interview if women that have been abused by men often adopt this same attitude of rejection towards all men as a result of their experiences.

In summary, the intervention provided by Alternativ til Vold does rely on a list of risk factors to explain the violent behavior of perpetrators. However, the therapy provided is exclusively individual, so that the men's actions are not framed in a wider level of analysis that considers external factors such as the media to explain their behavior. My interviewee agreed that TV and social media might play a role in the use of violence, especially referring to the role of pornography for promoting sexual violence (ATV, Tromsø, 21 September 2023), but framing the perpetrators' actions in a societal level is not the focus of their therapy model.

When it comes to the individual level of analysis, my interviewees agreed that the perpetrators' willingness to acknowledge their violent behavior is critical for almost any kind of intervention to work.

Alternativ til Vold: [If] it is clear that they do not want to change anything about themselves, then we cannot work with them. They have to be motivated in some sense to change something about themselves (ATV, Tromsø, 21 September 2023).

Susanne Strand: If the perpetrator does not think that they have a problem, treatment will not work [...] Without motivation, without any insight into your own problems, then no treatment will

work, but it will be much more difficult to reach that person (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

Dr. Strand elaborated on the role of individual and societal factors in intimate violence. She underlined that patriarchal norms are present somehow in all societies. However, the norms vary from country to country. For instance, they might translate into honor-based violence. In some cultures, women are killed in the name of honor. In other cases, women living in villages or small cities are subject to rural patriarchy. Patriarchal norms tend to be stronger in rural areas, where it is unlikely that women can leave their perpetrators and are taken care of by other women when subjected to physical violence. Women living in highly militarized countries also experience high levels of violence (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

She explained that in low-income countries, women gaining economic freedom are subject to increased levels of violence. This has not been researched in high income countries (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023), which could be interesting to better understand the Norwegian case. Despite being so widespread, gender-based violence should be broken down depending on the society that is being researched to achieve precise conclusions. Furthermore, there is not a single intervention that works for perpetrators of intimate violence. The socio-ecological model is helpful for understanding the weight that should be given to different risk factors in each case. In the words of Dr. Strand:

> For some perpetrators, the structure, the environment and where you live, all of those things could be much more important. While for other perpetrators, there are individual risk factors that are more important, such as substance abuse, it could be one of those things. If they get treatment for substance abuse, they stop being violent.
>
> But that is not for all, because for some perpetrators, for instance, those who are antisocial [...] will go through substance abuse treatment and stop using illegal substances, [and] they still might be violent. So [...] it is a combination of the individual, the relationship, the society, the structure. And it is different for perpetrators, that is why we need different treatments [and to] figure out the risk factors (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

Cooperation across agencies

The documentation of the violence prior to the partner murder is carried out most often by the police or the healthcare services, who might be the first or only individuals to

interact with a potential homicide victim (Snyder, 61). In the United States, half of the women killed by their partners had sought help from the police or the criminal justice system at least once (Snyder, 218) and more than half of all homicide victims were seen by healthcare professionals at some point (Snyder, 61). The lack of communication among agencies is literally resulting in deaths. This issue was simply summarized by partner homicide expert Kelly Dunne: "It's in the cracks that murders happen" (Snyder, 221). This is also the case for Norway, as I will address further.

Cooperation among government agencies and information sharing is then critical for improving the preventative measures and de-escalating the level of risk. The use of risk assessment tools is futile if the information is not shared among the authorities that have been in contact with the victims, and oftentimes, the perpetrators as well. To reduce this gap, Norway's RISK unit brings together psychologists, social workers, child welfare and police to handle all aspects of every case brought to them, and tailor the measures to be taken. In 2017, the project was portrayed as successful in the media, having helped around 200 families (Christiansen et al. 2017). However, the unit is now trapped between plans for expanding to the whole country (Christiansen et al. 2017) and a lack of personnel to deal with the existing cases (Quist et al. 2024).

The police work with a number of public agencies to deal with intimate violence cases. They bring in the relevant partners, depending on the case. For instance, if substance abuse is one of the risk factors, the person is channeled to Health services to receive treatment. These "cooperation routines" (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023) take place smoothly and informally across agencies. This lack of bureaucratic procedures seems to facilitate communication and work across the government. It is hard to imagine such a way of working in Mexico, for instance, where red tape and even corruption make it highly improbable that authorities cooperate smoothly.

It is not bureaucracy, but confidentiality that sometimes hinders collaboration among agencies in Norway. Hans-Petter Kielland pointed out in our interview that health agencies are the most concerned with confidentiality matters, which makes it difficult for the police to learn about cases that could potentially escalate to murder. He explained that health laws are more concerned with individuals than with society, while the police are more concerned with the society than with individuals (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland,

Oslo, 5 July 2023). When I asked about the role of confidentiality in information sharing, Johan Kalheim from the Civil Affairs Authority mentioned that misunderstanding of what confidentiality means might be what is actually hampering cooperation between agencies (Kalheim and McInerney, Sivilrettsforvaltningen, 23 November 2023).

Establishment of the *partnerdrapskommisjon*

Following the publication of the NOU 2020:17 in Norway, a permanent partner homicide commission (*partnerdrapskommisjon*) will be implemented in the course of the present year, in a six-year trial scheme (NOU 2020:17, 224). Its main purpose is to learn from past mistakes in the public apparatus to reach a goal of zero partner homicides.

Norway is certainly not the first country to implement a commission or government body devoted to revising closed cases of IPH and critically assess them to identify the flaws and improve preventative measures. Still, it is remarkable that plans for the creation of the *partnerdrapskommisjon* were in place before the *drapsbølge* of 2024, meaning the government decided to act based despite the steady low number of IPH cases in the country.

It is also worth noting that the commission will be working for a minimum of six years. This is quite a long period of time for a trial scheme and reflects the seriousness the authorities place in this matter. In this sense, Norway's government intervention against intimate partner violence and homicide, specifically the creation of the *partnerdrapskommisjon,* might effectively contribute to reducing partner murders.

The commission aims to incorporate the safety investigations methods developed by the nuclear power business in the 1970s. The methodology is already used by the Norwegian Safety Investigation Authority, and it will now be applied to the social sciences realm to reach the goal of zero partner homicides.

Norway's commission is not the first to apply such a methodology to partner homicide cases. In her paramount book, *No Visible Bruises,* researcher Rachel Louise Snyder presents how the first domestic violence fatality review team of the United States was formed. Criminologist Neil Websdale came up with the idea of applying the methodologies used by the nuclear fuel industry and the medical industry to reduce the

chance of making mistakes to a minimum. He received funding from the government of Florida to set up a commission that used the model of the National Transportation Safety Board and applied it to domestic violence homicide cases (Snyder, 84-86).

Websdale's rationale behind the commission is quite similar to what my interviewees explained for the *partnerdrapskommisjon*. The purpose is not to "blame and shame" (Snyder, 86) but to improve standards and "make learning outcomes" (Kalheim and McInerney, Sivilrettsforvaltningen, 23 November 2023). Both Websdale's and Norway's models of a commission have been set with the understanding that murders happen as a consequence of a "series of small mistakes, missed opportunities, failed communications" (Snyder, 86).

A strong point of the commission is how its members will be selected. As explained by my interviewees, the *partnerdrapskommisjon* will look into finished criminal cases to answer why the homicide was not prevented, and what could have been done differently. To find these "learning points" (Kalheim and McInerney, Sivilrettsforvaltningen, 23 November 2023), the commission will be formed by experts of diverse areas, for instance, social services, the school system, or the police, to name some. The experts relevant to the criminal case in question will be summoned to analyze the flaws in the handling of the case and prevent those mistakes from happening again.

Mr. Kalheim made it clear in our interview how important it is that the members of the commission do not leave their jobs for too long. He explained that keeping them away from their positions for years could result in them losing their expertise or missing out on new research trends. He highlighted that it is important that the experts are kept in the loop of their working environments, so that when the commission sends recommendations to certain agencies, they probably will acknowledge them since they are coming "from one of their own" (Kalheim and McInerney, Sivilrettsforvaltningen, 23 November 2023).

It is not clear if the commission will be in charge of looking after the implementation of the general recommendations of the NOU 2020:17 report. (The first recommendation of the report is the creation of the commission itself). Some of them do not require big changes or reforms, but could make a big difference if implemented. For instance, the

report suggests introducing a ban against allowing family members or other close relatives to work as interpreters for the victim (NOU 2020:17, 22). This is of highest importance to make sure the communication between the victim and the authorities is efficient, and not affected by the intervention of a third party that might be interested in concealing information from the authorities, for instance.

It could also be interesting for the commission to address how confidentiality issues might be hindering collaboration among agencies and thus preventing the competent authorities from identifying high-risk cases in a timely manner. It should also address the other recommendations of the NOU 2020:17, given that they were made by the experts that might also end up taking part in the commission at a given time.

Another element to take into account is that the conclusions the commission comes to are not binding but mere recommendations. In my view, this could result in a lack of action. There is no use in having the right information at hand if it is not applied. Hopefully, this will not be the case, and the authorities will implement the changes recommended by the commission for the sake of violence victims.

Conclusions

Intimate partner violence (IPV) and homicide (IPH) are forms of gender-based violence that pose a threat to women's safety inside their own homes. Formerly known as "domestic violence", it is deadly for women in all countries. In Norway, partner homicides represent 25% of the total of murders, a proportion higher than in other countries.

Since the 1970s, partner violence has shifted from being a private matter to becoming a public health issue. Offender accountability has risen and there are now efforts to prevent the intergenerational transmission of violence by working with boys and young men from an early age. This shift has also implied changing the focus from the victims only to both victims and perpetrators. In practice, this means that advocates and authorities not only provide the victim with a way out of the violent relationship, but the need to address the perpetrator is now often acknowledged through individual or group therapy.

The interventions addressed to perpetrators are seldom assessed (NOU 2020:17, 63). There is an ongoing debate on how adequate some interventions are, such as the Duluth model in the United States (Herman et al., 4; Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023). There is also debate on whether the interventions should be tailored to the batterers' personality type or culturally sensitive (Gottzén et al., 2). Despite this apparent lack of consensus, there is a point in which experts seem to agree: the perpetrators' willingness to acknowledge their violent behavior is critical for almost any kind of intervention to work (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023; ATV, Tromsø, 21 September 2023; Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

Intimate partner homicides (IPH) are the most extreme form of intimate partner violence. A prior incident of IPV serves as the most important predictor for IPH (Campbell 2007; NOU 2020:17; Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023). In most violence cases that result in the death of the victim, the authorities had had prior contact with the victim and even the perpetrator, but obviously failed to acknowledge the increased level of risk to take timely action to prevent the murder.

The number of partner murders in Norway remained steady for around a decade, with an average of eight partner murders per year (NOU 2020:17, 52). In 2023, there was a considerable increase in the number of cases, with 18 partner murders (VG 2024). During the first weeks of 2024, Norway faced a killing spree (*drapsbølge*) that seems to confirm that the number of partner homicides might be on the rise. It is interesting to frame this trend in the so-called Nordic paradox. This is the name given to the disproportionally high prevalence rates of partner violence against women in the Nordic countries, which are otherwise among the most gender-equal in the world (Gracia and Merlo, 27; Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

There are a number of tools used to assess the victims' level of risk. The Oslo Police relies on the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment, short version (SARA SV) to assess all cases of domestic violence. The assessment is applied to both victims and perpetrators and helps identify the risk factors in each specific case. This allows the authorities to call in the relevant agencies that can implement the necessary measures that will help reduce the level of risk.

Recidivism is a risk factor that is often overseen. The lack of attention to this risk factor in particular has resulted in the violent deaths of women in Norway in the first months of 2024. This is worrisome given that research shows that the violation of restraining orders means an increased risk level for the victims (Kielland, Politihuset Grønland, Oslo, 5 July 2023).

In one particular case, the woman had let the authorities know of such violations, but her reports were dismissed (Haram 2024; Hopperstad et al. 2024; Quist et al. 2024). It is of highest importance that the authorities dealing with such violence cases apply the SARA SV in all cases, and understand the need to listen to the victims, especially those who claim to fear for their lives, given that victims who are scared for their life are often right to be so (Strand, Zoom interview, 7 December 2023).

Most times, the police and health authorities are the first (and sometimes the only) to interact with potential homicide victims, and the ones to document the violence prior to the murder (Snyder, 61). For this reason, cooperation among agencies is critical to effectively prevent the escalation of violence to a fatal level of risk for the victims. The RISK unit of the Oslo Police brings together police analysts, health and social work personnel to facilitate information sharing and a successful intervention. The results of such a working model have proven positive and the government wants to make RISK a nationwide offer by 2028 (Amble and Zaman 2024).

Norway's permanent national commission for partner homicide (*partnerdrapskommisjon*) will start work in late 2024. The establishment of this commission represents the country's most recent effort to reduce the number of partner murders. This is remarkable given that the number of cases is considerably lower than in most countries. For instance, Mexico, my home country, faces a femicide crisis with ten to eleven women killed everyday.

The commission will bring together experts in relevant fields to examine closed criminal cases provided by the National Criminal Investigation Office (Kripos) and review what could have been done differently to prevent the partner murder. The commission will make non-binding recommendations to the agencies that intervened and suggest what

could be changed in the future in order to avoid making the same mistakes again. Hopefully, these adjustments will result in less murders.

The *partnerdrapskommisjon* is a pilot project that will be in place for a minimum of six years. Such a long time for a pilot project is unthinkable in countries like my own, however it speaks highly of Norway's commitment to reducing partner murder to the least possible.

The establishment of a permanent commission to deal with partner murder, although far from unique, is an unequivocal sign of the Norwegian commitment to reaching zero cases of partner homicide in a country that is far from being conceived as violent towards women, but rather positioned as one of the most gender-equal countries in the world. This action could set a precedent for spreading the understanding that every life is valuable and actions should be taken everywhere to prevent the murdering of women by the people they are closest to.

The use of gender-neutral language is held in high regard in Norway, perhaps as a means to achieve gender equality. However, the use of ungendered language (Hearn, 16) when dealing with partner violence is counterproductive, since it conceals that the man is most likely the perpetrator and the woman the victim (Dobash and Dobash, 12). This is the case at least for violence that causes fear in the victims, as described in the gender asymmetry debate.

In summary, Norway's approach towards violence in close relationships is perpetrator-based because it gives room to the needs of both victims and perpetrators and acknowledges the importance of dealing with both parties to effectively reduce the level of risk in a violent relationship. The country's efforts to deal with intimate violence are in line with the international trends and in some cases have even proven to be better. For instance, Norway's plans against violence in close relationships addressed the need to bring in perpetrators to enhance the prevention efforts before the Istanbul Convention was issued by the Council of Europe.

Although perfectible, Norway's strategy against violence in close relationships is comprehensive and encompasses diverse tools that can be used by both victims and

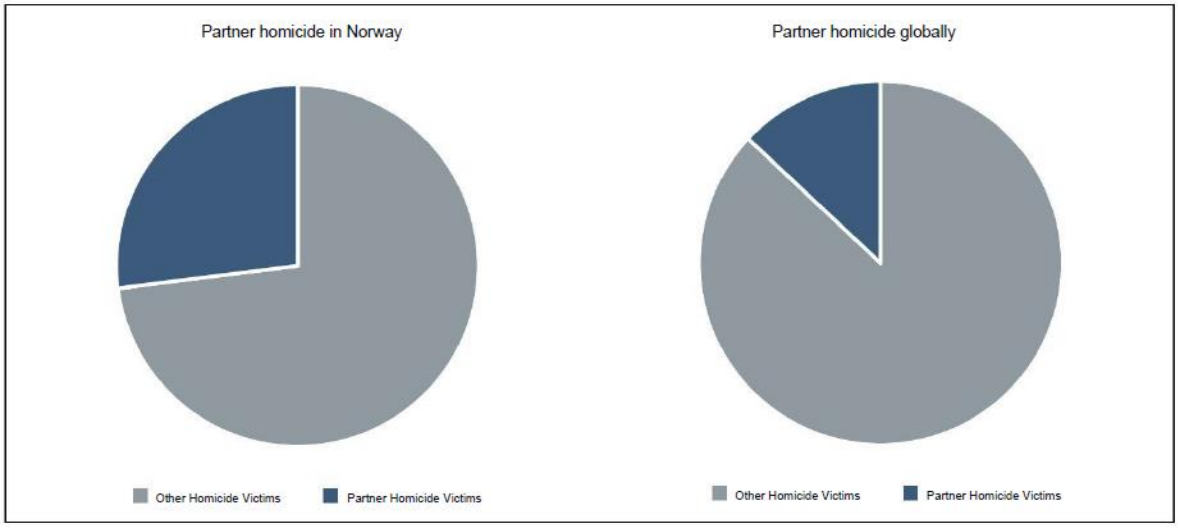
perpetrators. There is an ongoing effort to improve the cooperation across agencies and effectively use the risk assessment tools, so that all cases the authorities are aware of are addressed in a manner that prevents the escalation of violence, and ultimately, the loss of a woman's life and the social consequences that derive from such a fatal outcome.

Figures

Figure 1. Power and Control Wheel

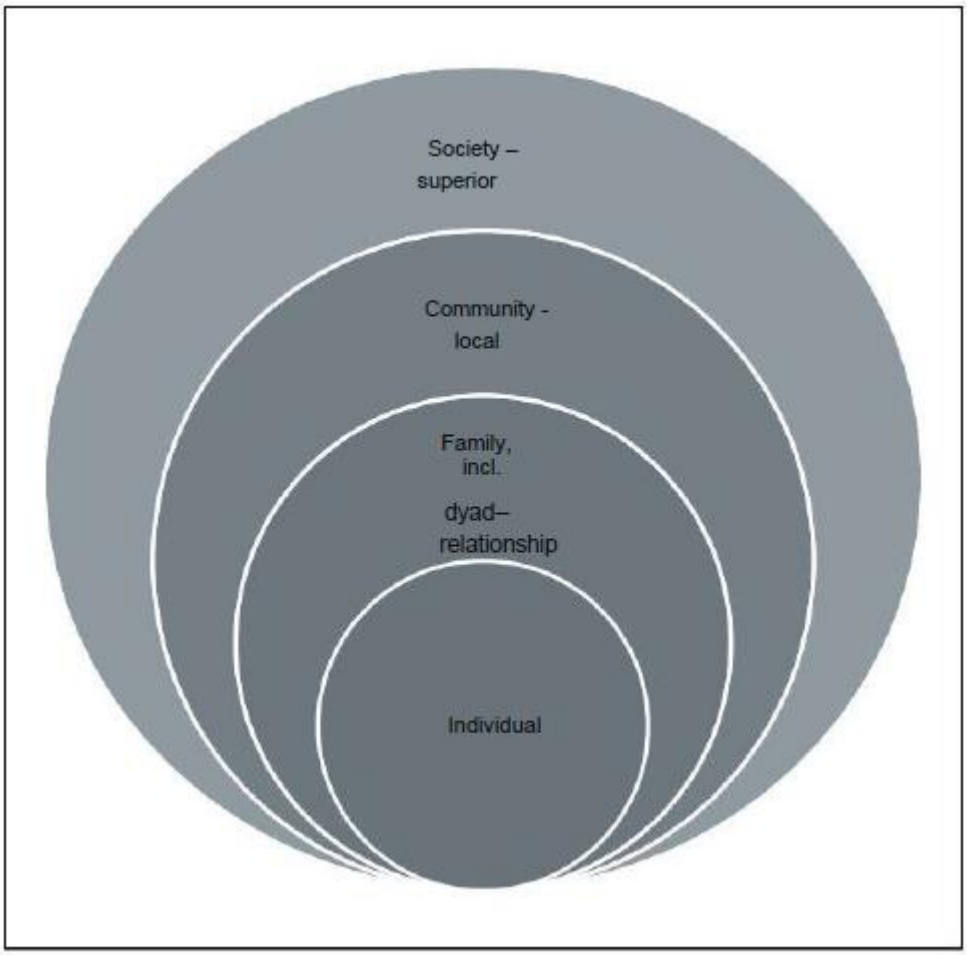
Retrieved from thehotline.org

Figure 2. Comparison of IPH incidence in Norway vs. globally



Retrieved from the NOU 2020:17, p. 58.

Figure 3. The social-ecological model



Retrieved from the NOU 2020:17, p. 66.

Interview transcripts

Hans-Petter Kielland
Politihuset Grønland, Oslo
July 5, 2023

Hans-Petter Kielland: This is the presentation I've had for a delegation from Pakistan. What I tried to do is to get them focused on the implication that apart from the parties involved, which are usually the wife, or a woman and a man, I try to look at it in a family perspective, and also the implications on society. This is just some research I've put in there. What we're saying is that this has implications on children, children witnessing or living with violence. The chances of them developing PTSD contra children not experiencing violence is much, much higher. And this is based on research. I don't remember which research it is because it's 2016, but there's a 25% chance that they will either become a victim of domestic violence in the future, or become a perpetrator, because this is basically how they deal with conflicts. And then 90% of persons in North America experience domestic violence as kids; 50% of the men using violence against their spouse also exert violence towards their children.

I'm not sure whether you're familiar with the IP [intimate partner] homicide research from Solveig Karin Bø Vatnar. She's basically the researcher that has been researching this through the last 12, 15 years here in Norway. And she's had an impact on how the police have structured and systematized their work towards dealing with domestic violence cases from a prevention perspective. She looks at the investigations part of it as well as the prosecution. But it's mainly focused on how to prevent repeating or recurring domestic violence or intimate partner homicide. So that's her name. And if you can manage to contact her, or if you can manage to get her reports in English, I think you'll benefit from it. But basically, this was from 1990 to 2012 and the number of intimate partner homicides... (can I just say IPH?) has reduced significantly, by 25%. Prior to 2012 one out of four homicides in Norway were IPH. Now it's 1/3. No. Sorry. Other way around. It was 1/3. Now it's 1/4. She specifically researched the utilization of SPJ tools, Structured Professional Judgement risk assessment tools. Are you familiar with those?

Regina Garduño Niño: Is one of them SARA?

Hans-Petter Kielland: SARA, the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment, short version. That was her main focus in that research. They've now focused on something called B-SAFER. It's basically the same as the SARA, but you also have the child's perspective in there as well when creating risk scenarios and mitigation measures. She also found out that 70% of the IPH victims had registered IPVs prior to the homicide. What she's basically trying to say is that the clearest indicator of a future IPH is a prior IPV.

Regina Garduño Niño: Maybe you will touch upon this later, but are prevention efforts oriented towards women, or both women and men?

Hans-Petter Kielland: Both women and men, it is gender neutral. Both the SARA SV and the SARA V3, which is the big version, are both gender neutral.

Regina Garduño Niño: And so is it framed for both victims and perpetrators?

Hans-Petter Kielland: Yes. I'm going to show you the tools later on. I'm going to just tell you about the risk and vulnerability factors. We had a pilot in Norway in 2010 to 2012. I'm not sure about the dates, but at least until 2012 when we implemented the utilization of the SARA SV throughout the whole of Norway. It's mandatory now, when you do get an intimate partner violence case, regardless of the Penal Code. Because we have our own penal codes.

Regina Garduño Niño: Does the penal code change from *kommune* to *kommune*?

Hans-Petter Kielland: No, it's the same for all of Norway. But the thing is, we have two penal codes, 282 and 283[13], that are specifically for domestic violence, where there's a regime of violence. But then you have all the other cases which are IPVs, but there's no regime. There's like, one incident of violence towards a spouse, or a girlfriend or a boyfriend, it will not be integrated in that particular penal code. It will be integrated in others, so there are a lot of cases that fall out between all the chairs, if they're not coded correctly. But anyways, it's mandatory to utilize the SARA SV, in each and every case.

What it consists of is 15 risk factors, which is spousal assault, psychosocial situation and vulnerability. The 10 first risk factors are on the perpetrator, and the vulnerability factors are of course on the victim. What the SARA SV does is it identifies the owner of the problem or the root cause. So the root cause is, for example, substance abuse or alcohol abuse, or if it's labor related or... I'm going to get to them later, if it's health related and so on. Thus far we will most probably identify it. If it's labor related, police can do that much about it unless we utilize our... we arrest the perpetrator and so on. But what we do is that we have coordination routines and also cooperation routines with all the other agencies, so they are aware of the case and they deal with it, that risk factor. If we identify a case with one with substance abuse, the other with labor, in the same case, NAV will take the labor part of it and then Healthcare will take the health care or substance abuse part of it.

Regina Garduño Niño: Does this coordination need an additional, say, like memorandum?

Hans-Petter Kielland: It should, but it isn't. It's very informal.

[13] In the Straffeloven (Penal Code), s. 282 is about abuse in close relationships and s. 283 is on aggravated abuse in close relationships.

Regina Garduño Niño: Everybody cooperates.

Hans-Petter Kielland: Everybody. There are laws that say that we are supposed to cooperate. I mean, the laws regulating our information sharing in the police says that we are to share information with our partners when it benefits the cause. If I sit on information and there's privacy and could have had the confidentiality thing, that hits a bit. But because I have to tell Health that they have to do their part, it doesn't regulate me, so I can go. I'll go past that.

But the problem is, and this is the big problem in Norway right now, it's the other way around, because when Health or Psychic healthcare and so on... Possibly this is not specifically domestic violence, but in general, when they identify a violent perpetrator that could exercise violence, they are very limited in sharing the information with the police. And that's because the health laws are more individually focused rather than the society, while the police are more focused on the society rather than the individual. The confidentiality thing is the problem the other way around. There's been a couple of reports that have been disseminated now from Kripos, this is the NCIS National Crime Investigation Services. They've just released a report regarding homicides committed by people with psychiatric problems and how we or Health does not share information with the police or others that can actually do something about it, but it's on the agenda right now, there's a focus on it.

Basically, this is how a case comes in. I'm going to guide you through how the daily routines are. The case comes in through the first responders, could be just a patrol car reacting to a call, could be child services telling us that, OK, we're suspecting domestic violence in this case, could you take a look at it, or the victim itself comes and presses charges or seeks help. Important to say that we do not require anyone to file a formal complaint in order to start the proactive part of it, so if a husband or wife comes in and says he's been subject to domestic violence, I do not want to press charges against my wife or my husband, but I need help, we can, I mean, we're obliged to do that. Because that's human rights, basically.

But what happens is morning meetings, because we have three main areas. We have Investigations, we have Prosecution, we have Prevention. Every morning they sit down. Case comes in, they discuss it: Investigations does this, Prosecutions does this, Prevention does this, and this is the pace we will set. This is the chronology we will put in place. We do this in this verse. And mainly it is always the victim that decides the pace of this, because if you look back, the victim was dragged along through the investigations, there was no prevention part of it or victim care part of it at all. It was just an investigation. So now we have another function that only deals with the victim's safeguarding and prevention. The Investigations and Prosecutions part, it just lives its own life, but it coordinates with the risk assessment and handling part of it. And information is shared consecutively throughout the whole process, of course. And then we can have a court trial or long term follow-up of the victim. It's a very simple routine that functions in Oslo now.

A police report comes in, they have the morning meeting, they get all the information, a risk assessment is done. We identified the risk and vulnerability factors. We talked to the victim and we also talked to the perpetrators. We motivate them to seek help or receive help because many times they don't want to receive help, especially the perpetrators. And then it's the entry of the Agency Risk Management that I was talking about earlier.

Regina Garduño Niño: Does it make a difference? I mean this motivation. If the perpetrator is absolutely reluctant to receive any kind of help…

Hans-Petter Kielland: It's not mandatory. If they do not want to talk to the police, then we don't force them to do so. But I mean, it's a motivation in terms of showing cooperation with the police. In most of the cases they are willing to talk to us and also receive help. Those are also the cases that we experience are successful, right? The cases where the perpetrator is like, no, those tend to repeat themselves again and again and again.

Regina Garduño Niño: You do see a high rate of success from the intervention programs.

Hans-Petter Kielland: Yes, it's basically the success factor if both parties are willing to receive the help.

Regina Garduño Niño: I'm guessing you also rely on these partners for that, it's not something that the police itself provides. Or is it like this... I don't know if to call it treatment or intervention with...?

Hans-Petter Kielland: It's intervention, but it's not treatment. It's motivation.

Regina Garduño Niño: How does that look like?

Hans-Petter Kielland: Basically, what we do is that we do not take them in at the same time, there are separate meetings with them and then we say, these are the risk factors that we have identified. This is what we could offer you in terms of help. We can refer you to these agencies, so you don't have to go out and do it yourself. You have to remember that a large number of these cases are minority women and men that are not familiar with how the society works here in Norway. If they have to find out about this themselves, they probably wouldn't seek help. What we do is that we do it for them, we have social workers working in the police, we have psychologists working for the police that can refer them to healthcare very fast. This is very specific for Oslo, though. We're the only district that has this now, but we are looking to expand this throughout the whole of Norway as we speak.

This is what we do with both the victim and the perpetrator. This is just some numbers through an evaluation period of 11 months, we performed 150 checklists. Whereas 20 or

170, 40 new revictimization cases... Seven of these were new violence cases. New acts of violence towards their partner. Five of them were violations of restraining orders, whereas four were in the same case and there were two new threats. Then seven new cases of assault and abuse, they were non serious. So that's a very small percentage compared to what research says, which is between 30 and 70% in a two-year period after mitigation measures have been put in place. So we're down nearly 5%.

Regina Garduño Niño: Just to make sure I got it right, like from 170 cases registered only seven, so to speak…

Hans-Petter Kielland: Fourteen new revictimization cases. Five of them were violations of restraining orders, four in the same case, in one case, so basically it's two. Then we have two new cases of recurring threats, and then seven new cases of assault abuse. Or it's actually six, because two of them were in the same case, and they were assessed to medium. Some of them were too low and then some weren't too high. This is basically the recidivism rate. Research says it's between 30 and 70% if nothing has been put in place.

So you have the risk assessment, which is the SARA SV here. Police coordinates women's shelter, child protection counsel or legal aid, general practitioner, mental health, Red Cross. This is based on what we identify as a risk or vulnerability factor.

This is basically the SARA SV. The format is like this, the first five are risk factors towards the perpetrator. So this is violence. Threat of violence: was there in that situation or has there been previously? Escalation, restraining order, any violations against restraining orders? Or do you have attitudes that justify the violence.

This is the threat level. If there's been reoccurring breaches of the restraining order, we see that threat level is higher than if there were none. Or if their attitude towards committing violence is justified in their head in some way, it tells us that they have to repeat that violence so the threshold there is very low. The second is the psychosocial situation with the perpetrator, other than the crime; their crime history, their crime records, relational problems, economy, employment, labor, substance abuse and psychiatry, which I told you about.

Regina Garduño Niño: Is there a scenario where none of these apply? Like you have a highly functional perpetrator that does not…? What happens in that case?

Hans-Petter Kielland: That's a good question, actually. Those are usually the low, low cases, low possibility or risk for repeated violence, low risk for serious violence because we have... risk values or something. But if you look at the homicides that have been coming from with none of these risk factors, that they occur as well, and these are the homicides that we have no possibility to predict with the police. There's another research done on that. Her name is Vibeke Ottesen. She's been researching cases where parents

kill their children and also their spouse. And these are the cases where all these risk factors, but they're closely related to the sudden loss of being a provider, being the typical guy that loses his job, not being able to provide or going through a divorce or something. But it's very interesting research as well, so take a look at it.

But anyways, let's see. The vulnerability factors are inconsistency. Why do they press charges and then they retract them, press charges, retract, press charges, retract them. Basically, that's the victim's risk assessment of her own situation, or the extreme fright. If we give you a distress alarm or a mobile alarm, why don't you push it when the perpetrator comes? It's again because she knows how to deal with it in her way, but not with that. But it's rationality, the fear of… being uncertain that nobody else can actually protect you, access to social and professional help, we see this all the time with the minorities here. Where for example, very commonly in Pakistan, Syria, Afghanistan, they fetch a bride, and then they're subject to domestic violence upon arrival here, and they're not familiar with the society and how to seek help, that's a vulnerability factor. So we help them a lot. We have established routines with other professional services like, for example Immigrations, UDI, in terms of physical security, personal problems. These are the mitigation measures. These mitigation measures, TU is *trusselutsatt,* which is the victim and TØ is the *trusselutøver,* which is the perpetrator.

One could be legal counsel, because they're entitled to have legal counsel when you're a victim of it, or separate meetings with the Police or other Healthcare, which I was talking to you about, the separate conversations, motivational, restraining order alarms, women shelters and also Healthcare. For him, custody, the same speech, Alternativ til Vold, Family Services offices, which also provides healthcare psychology or substance abuse treatment. These, and we have several others. We have, like, for example, which is pretty recent, we have the ankle braces, which we also use now. But this is 2016, so it wasn't that common then. The motivational meetings, this is what we do. We do situational awareness. Both were the perpetrator, and this is why you impose vitals or your spouse based on the SARA SV and the same for the victim. We do planning. If they have children together, we plan on when they're going to meet and so on. We do signposting to other healthcare and social services, so we deescalate the conflict and this is very… We usually operate with restraining orders in these cases. But what happens when you have a restraining order is that you can't communicate, so the frustration builds up on both the perpetrator's side and also the victim's side, by not getting information. What these meetings and that contact person [from] the police could do is like being the middleman in communicating with them. It builds down frustration, but also when we do that we also monitor them. Like I said, control both aggressors and we give them a tightened perspective because when you're a perpetrator, you get a restraining order you have…

Regina Garduño Niño: But all these cases then presuppose that the damage was not that much. I mean, these perpetrators are not going straight to court. What happens in the cases

that they are? Is there any scenario where the violence exerted against someone is worth going to prison or like going through...?

Hans-Petter Kielland: Well, it depends from case to case, I mean the violence doesn't have to be very serious and it's been causing a lot of damage individually. But like I was talking about, when you're talking about the [articles in the] penal code 282 and 283, small acts of violence all the time, or control or psychological violence, or material violence in some can be very serious. So we have to look at it from case to case. But the thing is, up till now, because I mean, I'm pretty sure you're familiar with the budget situation of the police now, but up till now every case has been risk assessed and every perpetrator. We make an effort for every perpetrator or victim to be able to get into that one meeting with the police. Or they're signposted, motivated. I don't know how it's going to be now with the budget situation, but I mean, if you're talking about prevention of recurrent violence, you have to start with the cases that you have identified as low. That's when you can actually do the best prevention, not when they're escalated up to medium or high, because then you're just extinguishing fire. But if you start out with low signposting and so on, that's where you can prevent serious cases.

Regina Garduño Niño: I don't know if this concerns your area specifically, but in these cases that went unnoticed, so to speak, and that just resulted in homicide, the perpetrators also receive this motivation, even when they are already in prison?

Hans-Petter Kielland: When there's a homicide case, there's nothing more to prevent. So basically it's incarceration.

Regina Garduño Niño: Alone? I mean, of course, there's incarceration, but is there like an additional...?

Hans-Petter Kielland: You're thinking about healthcare and so on.

Regina Garduño Niño: Like psychological.

Hans-Petter Kielland: That is our prison services responsibility. When they're incarcerated, that responsibility is not no longer the police.

Regina Garduño Niño: Thank you very much for this, I really appreciate it. If you can, just for purposes of my data collection, say your name and that you consented to this being recorded.

Hans-Petter Kielland: My name is Hans-Petter Kielland, and I consent to this meeting. If there is anything different, just let me know, I would be happy to answer you.

Regina Garduño Niño: Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

Alternativ til Vold office, Tromsø
September 21, 2023

Regina Garduño Niño: First of all, thank you for having me. I'm really grateful to have the opportunity to talk to you. As I said, I am a master student in the Peace and Conflict studies program and my interest is to write my thesis about the persistence of intimate partner violence in a country like Norway, which is known worldwide for being the closest to gender-equal that you can find. So I'm very interested in this paradox. I first learned about Alternativ til Vold from a police officer that I spoke with from Oslo. He is in charge of the unit for prevention of domestic homicide. And he mentioned that one of the partners that they have is Alternativ til Vold, and that it is present in all of Norway.

So first, I would like to learn more about how the organization works, who you work with, and later I would like to ask you specifically about a couple of things that he mentioned that made me think. He said the model they use for the motivation, as they call it, is gender neutral, like all approaches to domestic violence tends to be gender neutral. He also mentioned that they work, or most of the perpetrators, that's what I understood, are not from Norway but are from ethnic minorities that are not so familiar with the way things are in Norway.

ATV: Okay…!
Regina Garduño Niño: I am a little suspicious about both things (laughter). So I wanted to also learn your point of view. I have these guide questions, but I'm very willing to learn and to hear whatever you want to share with me.

ATV: Okay! That sounds good. So, there were a lot of questions… (laughter).

Regina Garduño Niño: If you can just state your name and if you agree…

ATV: My name is … and I agree to the interview (laughter).

Regina Garduño Niño: Thank you. How long have you been working here?

ATV: I've been working here for one year and then… I was away for some time. Before that I worked four years in Alternative to Violence, one year in Bodø and then three years here in Tromsø. Then I had a little break and then I came back. I'm a psychologist and my specialization is family psychology.

Alternative to Violence is a private organization, but it's funded by the state and the *kommune.* Here in Tromsø we have only the mandate to give treatment to the ones who use violence. If they are in treatment we can ask the rest of the family to come here as well. So the partner is invited to come here and get information about Alternative to Violence and also about the different types of violence, and they are free to share how they perceive the situation at home. They don't have to come, it's if they want to, they

can come and also they can receive treatment themselves here. And then we offer that the children can come for information about violence, but for their age group, and then we talk about the treatment here and that it *can* help, and it's also the case that it *won't* help. We inform the children and the grown ups about that too.

The people who come here to Alternative to Violence are both women and men who use violence in close relationships. We actually have a lot of female clients here. We start the treatment by *kartlegging*, it's a long questionnaire that goes around the situation now, like who are they in family with, where do they live, all these things, but also where do they come from and what kind of a relationship do they have with their family, parents and siblings and so on.

And then we talk about the violence that they have used in terms of physical violence, psychological violence, materialistic violence, so if you throw things on the floor…

Regina Garduño Niño: Ah, not against the person but…

ATV: Yes. And we ask about sexualized violence, in terms of if they have abused someone sexually, or if they themselves have been abused. Then we go to psychological symptoms like depression, anxiety, all these things, [we] screen for that. And if they have any physical disease or anything.

What else…? We ask about if they have any traumas, so we have questions, what kinds of traumas they have been experiencing from anyone close, or people they don't know, or if they have been witnessing. So all these questions are to screen what's important to remember with this client, also to see if this client is actually going to benefit from our treatment or not, and we also ask about motivation.

Regina Garduño Niño: Is that what you would call the risk factors?

ATV: Yes.

Regina Garduño Niño: Elements that can to some extent explain their behavior.

ATV: Yes, in some sense. Because sometimes they are referred here from *Barneverntjenesten*, if someone is worried about the children's situation then they refer. Sometimes they are forced in a sense to come here and they don't really own their problem. A lot of clients are insecure that "Do I have aggression problems?" and they are curious about it and want to find out, then it's motivation enough. But if the client is saying "No, but this is my wife's fault", [if] it's clear that they don't want to change anything about themselves, then we cannot work with them. So they have to be motivated in some sense to change something about themselves.

Regina Garduño Niño: To own their behavior.

ATV: Yes.

Regina Garduño Niño: What percentage is men and what percentage is women that you are working with?

ATV: We actually have those numbers, I can find them for you.

Regina Garduño Niño: Yes, thank you. The women are interesting, but I need to focus (laughter), my thesis is on the men.

I'm also curious about the profile… Is there a pattern, an age where you have like most of them? Are most of them Norwegian or are most of them coming from another country?
ATV: I think most of the clients we have here are Norwegians. We have some clients from other countries but also that I can… I think we have some… I don't know if… I don't think we are allowed to register ethnicity.

Regina Garduño Niño: Oh! That's interesting.

ATV: So we don't have those numbers.

Regina Garduño Niño: But in your experience, from what you see, most of them are Norwegian.

ATV: Yes, definitely.

Regina Garduño Niño: This a very big question, and I know that there is not a clear answer…How do you understand, how do you make sense of being such a frontrunner in gender equality in a number of ways and men exerting violence? Men that have grown in this country, exerting violence against women. Do you find it to be something about how men are brought up worldwide, or do you think it's more of an individual issue?

ATV: It's a huge question… From my experience here, when I think about all the therapies here, all the men, almost all the men I've given treatment to here have traumas in their upbringing, and also they struggle with communicating their needs in a good way, so if they feel…how do you call this in English…

Regina Garduño Niño: Threatened, or not understood…?

ATV: Yes, then they don't really know what to do, and they use violence.
Often my therapies here are about understanding "Why do I use violence?" So they see their connection to their childhood, and then they also see that "How can I learn to express my needs?" and it's a balance, because for me as a therapist I need to be sure that when they start to express their needs the violence has to be gone, in a sense, because if they

start to express their needs it can be violent to the family so it's a balance, I don't know if you understand. So talking about how to express your needs comes a bit later in the treatment, because they need to understand that. Sometimes if I have a client I can see immediately, okay, this one has to work with that, but they have to experience it in the therapy to know that that's what they have to work with.

Regina Garduño Niño: Is the therapy individual?

ATV: Yes. Here in Tromsø we have individual. Now we have the opportunity to work with groups as well, but we haven't done it yet here.
Regina Garduño Niño: You were saying that this comes a little further in the therapy, so I'm guessing that of course it cannot be fixed, because it depends on every person, but is there a general outline of how the therapy looks like and how long it lasts?

ATV: It's very individual how long it lasts. We have a lot of dropouts from therapy. Sometimes we have clients coming for a period of time, maybe one year, and then we say ok, you have reached your goals, and then they go out into the world and then they come back after a while, because something new has happened and they feel it's difficult again. And then they want to come back for some sessions to remember what it really was…

Regina Garduño Niño: That's good, no?

ATV: It's really good, yes.

Regina Garduño Niño: What about the dropouts? They just stop coming, disappear?

ATV: Yes, sometimes it's during the *kartlegging*, the questionnaire thing before they even start therapy, and sometimes it's during the therapy. When they have this questionnaire thing, they have to sign that it's okay that we notify the partner if they stop the therapy, because some partners stay in the relationship because of the treatment. So they need to know if the partner stops the treatment. There are a lot of reasons, I guess, with the dropouts. Also the circumstances around the times they are here, there are also often very… a lot of things are happening in their life, so sometimes it's too much to be in therapy as well.

Regina Garduño Niño: The people that are coming here have not… I struggle to understand, even with the first interview, that if they have already been aggressive…I guess the partner did not press charges? Or how is it that they are able to decide if they come or not?

ATV: [In] a lot of cases we see that the partner doesn't press charges. And sometimes, I have had clients that have experienced severe violence when they were children and young, so if they use violence it's often less severe. Sometimes they can see it as if they don't use violence, because it's not the same kind of violence that they themselves

experienced. So for example, I can ask, “Have you ever hit anyone?” and they can say no, and then later in the therapy I hear that they hit someone. Then we talk about it and then they say “But I didn’t hit with a fist, I hit with [an open palm]”, so they perceive the violence differently.

Regina Garduño Niño: Since what they did is not as severe as what they experienced, they fail to recognize it as violence.

ATV: Yes, in some cases.

Regina Garduño Niño: This is kind of a pattern that you’ve seen, and also the struggle to communicate. Where do you think this comes from? I don't want to say more because I don’t want to lead your answer with what I am thinking (laughter), but what do you think about these reasons?

ATV: Because I’ve met these people, I see some patterns, but it’s so individual from one person to another, so it’s very uncomfortable for me to say “This is the reason that you can …” You could point that the upbringing, that maybe in parenting boys, they don’t learn how to express feelings or express needs, but then at the same time these clients that I have here, it’s not only that they don't learn how to express their needs or express their feelings, but they lack a lot of things in their childhood. It’s really violence that keeps going on from generation to generation.

Regina Garduño Niño: When you talk to a woman instead of a man, do you notice big differences in their motivations? I’m thinking about this gender neutrality, would you say the model here at ATV is gender-neutral or is it more of a case to case…?

ATV: Yes, it’s more of a case to case, I think. We are all women here, and we are trying to hire a man as well (laughter). There should be a man here as well. When ATV started 33 years ago, I think, it was only males that gave treatment to male clients, so it’s been evolving since then.

Sometimes, when I have therapy with clients, I can feel that they have a negative attitude towards women, but sometimes I’m not included in that. Somehow, I’m different, or not a part of these other women. Often, it’s about the mother in their life and then they see, they think it’s a pattern for every woman to be like that. So they have been maybe molested, or they have experienced violence from their mother, and then they have this thought about how women are. And with women, the women I’ve been having in therapy, the violence is different because it’s not as life threatening, so it’s more psychological violence. They can also be using physical violence towards their children for example, in [their] upbringing, but it’s not as severe or as life threatening as male violence.

Often when we talk to the partner to the woman, the partner claims that he's not afraid of the woman, but when we talk with the partner to the man, sometimes they talk about being afraid.

Regina Garduño Niño: The way the treatment is conducted, do you find it suitable? Do you think it works?

ATV: Yes, I think it works. We also have some people at ATV who have been studying the effects of therapy. I can send you articles. We see from these that the treatment works. We also have psychologists that have been looking at what it is about the therapy that works. She's been studying the relationship between the client and the psychologist, when is it that it actually works and when doesn't it work. I can send you this.

Regina Garduño Niño: Thank you. Have you worked somewhere else or some time with the groups? You said you have not done it here, but have you ever done that somewhere else?

ATV: Not treatment for violence in groups, I haven't.

Regina Garduño Niño: I'm asking because at least for me personally, I find it very reassuring sometimes when I share an experience with other women and they say "Ah, yes, I have also been through that". And you can name it and you find out that many people around the world have experienced this, it's not just you. I am curious about, when you talk to these men and they say… Of course, they cannot say it, that's why they are here, but they find out that they feel like throwing things because they cannot name that they are feeling frustrated or angry or sad. Is there an acknowledgement, or is it part of your intervention with them to say, "This is not only you", it's not that *you* don't know how to name things, but this is an issue that goes around men. Do you think that helps?

ATV: Yes, but I think it has more of an effect if it is in a group. We have *familievernkontoret*, they have these groups for people with aggression issues, so if you want to talk to some of them, I can give you the name, they have good experience with that. They often refer clients here, because they have an interview before the groups and then they hear about the severity of the violence. If they see that this is not a person who can be in the group, then they can refer that person here.

Regina Garduño Niño: So if people are very violent…?

ATV: Yes, and also if they have been using violence in other settings as well, not just in the family, they have a bigger issue, in a way.

Regina Garduño Niño: There are men who just exert violence in the private sphere of their lives. How would you explain that? What can you tell me about men who are violent in all aspects of their life, so to speak? Like at work, with their acquaintances, and men

who are just violent in a private setting? If you talk to their co-workers they would say "But he is super nice, what is wrong with his wife? He's just very nice, why is she saying that?" How does that work?

ATV: It's just my opinion, but I think that what they tell me here in therapy it's often that they can control themselves better out there and in some sense they allow themselves to be aggressive in the environment at home. Often, it's a good thing for us here in therapy because some of them say that "Oh, I can't control myself at all", but then we can ask "What about when you are out in the world? How do you handle your aggression there?" And then they can see that "Oh, I actually do control myself out there". They are not aware that it's the same thing in a way, but it's a close relationship. And that's also where many other feelings are more intense, so love is very intense in a close relationship and so is anger.

Regina Garduño Niño: I recently read about a concept called hybrid masculinity and it's kind of this paradox that I mentioned at the beginning, that masculinity is not linear, or just like a set of things that are fixed, but that you can actually have a man be a good dad to a certain extent, like… I love these daddy quotas in Scandinavian countries. I find them fascinating, to see all these daddies with the strollers. But you can actually have a man do that, care for their babies, and at the same time be aggressive towards their partner.

That's what I think it's a little different in Norway and Sweden and so on from the rest of the world, that men take more part in the family life than in other countries, but at the same time that doesn't mean that they are not violent towards their partners. What do you think about this?

ATV: What do I think about that… I think that something is being triggered in that man or woman for them to use violence, and that can be… So there's these power positions as well. I often talk to the clients about "Where do you think that the scale is tipping, so who's in power here?" And often if they lose power, the men (and this is the same for women, but in a different way), then they can feel maybe insecure, or they can feel frightened or scared about the power scale tipping, and so they can use violence to be on top again.

Power is also a very big theme for us to talk about here, and there I think there are some gender things because before… Not long ago, men were in power here in Norway as well, so now they are… Somebody even said that women are taking over in a sense, they are getting more and more power and how do they respond to that, it's an interesting thing to think about.

I'm not Norwegian, I'm from Greenland, and there it's not as balanced as here with the genders. I don't know the Norwegian culture from the inside, so maybe my answers would be different from my colleagues. We have one Norwegian person here (laughter).

Regina Garduño Niño: This change that you mentioned, that when ATV started it was only men treating men, and that has changed… has that changed on purpose or has just been like a matter of who is working with these topics?

ATV: I think it's on purpose. They realized that women were also using violence, and that we were able to treat men as well, even though we were women.

Regina Garduño Niño: It was not the case to have men treat women?

ATV: I actually don't know. If you want to know more about the history, then I also can ask some people on ATV if they can talk to you about it.

Regina Garduño Niño: That would be great, I can use all the information. I'm curious about this power thing that you mentioned, that is changing everywhere. I'm not an expert at all, but I feel like men do feel threatened by this change of roles to a certain extent and they are lacking these tools to figure out their new position. Like, "If now the woman also works, also provides and can do without me, then where do I stand? Why am I here?" Do you find this to be one of the…?

ATV: In some sense, I think so. And I think that we women as mothers do have a job as well, because the boys are not just learning this from their fathers, we also have a part in it, to try to raise children in a different way. But it's difficult because this is how maybe *we* were raised and how we know what to do if we haven't experienced it ourselves.

Regina Garduño Niño: Do you think that TV and now social media also play a role?

ATV: In using violence?

Regina Garduño Niño: Yes.

ATV: Maybe. In sexualized violence the pornography and things like that available are much more aggressive, and that can play a role in the violence.

Regina Garduño Niño: Especially for sexualized violence.

ATV: Yes.

Regina Garduño Niño: This is very interesting, because you're talking about many things that I have read about a little. Now I just want to keep talking about so many things, but I must not lose focus (laughter). I'm so grateful to have this opportunity to talk to you that I want to ask as much as I can.

It would be interesting to see, if you ever work with these groups, this experience sharing. I think it lacks a lot among men. Women, we do this naturally, we talk, and we share, and

we find out a lot just from talking to each other, but men don't do that. You have this model of friendship, that women have a face-to-face friendship and men have a side-to-side [friendship], so they watch sports and go to the gym.

I have always been very curious about male friendships, because I don't really understand how they work (laughter). How do they call it a friendship if they don't talk about *anything*? When you talk to these men, do they have friends? Are they isolated?

ATV: A lot of them can say that they have friends, but that they don't talk to them about important things. They do stuff or they can talk about just superficial stuff, and never… They don't trust. They have trust issues as well, a lot of them. "If I tell this about myself… no one should hear this about me".

A lot of them are in a sense isolated; not that they don't have contact with anyone, but that they have to deal with their own feelings and experiences alone. Some of them can talk to their partners about it, but some of them don't do that either.

Regina Garduño Niño: If they had a healthy relationship… I think partners often play this role of being the person men trust the most, but if they are engaging in violence, then that trust is broken.

ATV: Yes, exactly.

Regina Garduño Niño: It might make it worse for them, if you lose the only person you were able to talk to… it's like a vicious cycle.

ATV: Yes, it is.

Regina Garduño Niño: During the treatment, is this addressed somehow, the trust? What kind of tools are they given to go back to the world and not behave the same?

ATV: We have… I think I can find this in English if you would like…The group that they have in *familievernkontoret*, they use this as a tool for getting through the group sessions. It's a four-step way to stop being aggressive. It's some concrete tools, but we experience here that if you only learn about the tools, you don't address the real problem. If you learn how to breathe, or count to ten or whatever, then you will still get triggered by things happening in your life. And if you don't find the reason or understand the reason why you are being triggered, then all the tools won't help you in any way. Does that make sense?

Regina Garduño Niño: The main objective of the treatment here is to help them find the root causes for their behavior.

ATV: Yes. We are all different therapists with different specializations and interests and so on, but we have a model that we use, so that's about calling violence, violence. You need to talk about your behavior as being violent, in a way, so some people would say "No, but I just pushed this person", and they don't want to use the word violence. And if they start doing it, something happens to us. We don't want to be violent, in a way, so it's very important to call it violence, address the issue as violence. That's one of the things.

And then it's to see... like we talked about before, connections between what has happened earlier in your life. It might be your childhood, it might be whatever, and see "Okay, so that's why I'm using violence". It's not as an excuse, it should not be, "Because my mother did this then I'm allowed to do this" it's not like that, but to understand "What was it that made me *use* violence?", in a sense.

A lot of the men I have therapy with have at some point used violence, and this moment empowered them, in some sense. It made them feel strong, it made them feel "I am competent, I can have the power, I can get the power back". This was often a stepdad or someone who has been violent to them and some day they took revenge, in a way. And then this will kind of feed them throughout their life, because "This is what I do when I feel small and scared" or whatever. We often also talk about the first experience you had using violence, and then also the last experience. We talk about that, and then we talk about the consequences of using violence. What are the consequences for the people around you. Like you talked about, the trust is gone, or some other.

The consequences, but also the consequences on the one using violence. Some of the people I've had here have been traumatized themselves by the violence they have used, so they also suffer from consequences themselves.

Regina Garduño Niño: What are these consequences?

ATV: It could be that they have a trauma, so they keep experiencing the thing that happened, or they get stressed when something is almost the same as what happened, and also that they lose contact with people. If they use violence, often people won't be near them and violence is not just physical violence so that maybe if they are always shouting at people, or they accusing them for something or whatever, threatening with taking their own life it's also violence, then people will keep distance to them so that's a consequence of them being violent, for example.

And then we talk about…what is the word in English… taking responsibility. So a lot of the clients say "If she didn't say this or did that then I didn't have to use violence". By saying that you're giving responsibility to the other person, but if you start saying "Okay, no matter what she did or what she said I take responsibility for my own actions, so I have a choice here. I can either use violence or I can maybe walk away or I can say something, so I can respond in a different way, so it's *my* responsibility to be safe". When they use violence against their children, it's the same thing, "It's my own responsibility".

Regina Garduño Niño: In family violence, do they make a distinction somehow between their partner and the children? Might they violent *only* towards their partner but not the children? Of course, if you are a child and you have a violent household, that's also violence, but if it's not exerted directly towards them… that they say okay, not the children, only the wife or the partner.

ATV: A lot of them say that. Because then the consequences of using violence towards your partner when you have children, then the consequences will also be about the children, so the relationship to the children or what they learn. Many of them say "But the children were not there when it happened", they might be at the other parent if they are divorced, or they were at their room or something like that, but then because when you get so angry and use violence, then your focus is only on that. But then when we start to talk about it, then "Okay, I was so loud my children heard it", they kind of isolate the incident, in a way, that they understand that this was only happening to my wife, for example. But then they start to include, "Okay, my children may have heard that something was happening".

Regina Garduño Niño: They only realize this after talking to you. Their intention was only to address the wife.

ATV: Yes.

Regina Garduño Niño: You mentioned earlier that there's this dislike for women or this like… I keep asking very big questions without answers, but could this be… is this related also to this power shift or is it like regardless of this gender equality thing in Norway?

ATV: I haven't really given it so much thought, so it's really interesting for me also that you have these questions, because then I start thinking more broadly. Our focus here in everyday life at the office is individual, but it's very interesting to think about this more in a society perspective. But I really don't have…(laughter)

Regina Garduño Niño: I was just curious because often I think that's the case. In very general terms, from what I talk to other people…I'm from Mexico, and it's a very violent country towards women, so these issues have been in my head for many years now.

An argument that keeps popping up is that men who kill their partners, for instance, there was something wrong with them specifically. There is always an explanation on their childhood trauma, or a very specific issue that triggered them, which is true, but I don't think it's isolated from other things. For me, at least, my belief or what I'm trying to prove to a certain extent is that it's not isolated incidents or very bad men, or "He was crazy or a psychopath", I hate those arguments because I think they fail to understand where this comes from really. I mean, of course not all men are violent, but there are things in the

way I think that men are brought up that facilitate that they do this. That's what I'm curious about.

ATV: (Nodding). All the things we talked about, that men, in general terms, they don't really learn how to talk about their feelings, sharing their experiences and all these things. And still men are in a sense, even though we live in Norway, and all this is equal, I think that still men think that they have to provide, and if they don't have a job that give that much money or whatever, then they can feel like they are not doing what they are expected to do. So they are either letting themselves down or other people's expectations, and then what do you do and how do you maybe use violence then, because you're so frustrated.

Regina Garduño Niño: Just a final question. I could spend all day like this but I don't want to take so much of your time (laughter). During COVID, there was an increase worldwide of domestic violence during the lockdowns. Did you notice that as well in the organization?

ATV: Yes. The violence happened more often, and of course all the family members were trapped at home, so things got out of hand in a way. That was what we experienced. But we didn't get that many referred because of all the lockdowns, of course. We were trying to give treatment through sessions online, and talking with them from our own homes, so it was difficult. But we were allowed to go back to work quite early, so that was good.

Regina Garduño Niño: You resumed the sessions in presence.

ATV: Yes. In the first period we could come to the office and then have it online, but then maybe a month or so after that, we started receiving clients here with some restrictions.

Regina Garduño Niño: It's good that it wasn't that long.

ATV: Yes, it was.

Regina Garduño Niño: Thank you very, very much for your time. It really was a pleasure meeting you and having this conversation.

ATV: You're welcome. Thank you so much for coming.

Johan Kalheim: This is an ongoing process every year to get as close to zero as possible, and the number seems to be constant. There's about five to eight, mostly women killed every year by their partner, so this is a way to try to learn more about this, because like I will show a little bit later, it seems to be the same problem repeating every year. Social services know something, kindergarten knows something, schools know something, maybe health service. And then in the end, police. But they don't seem to be working together with this couple or this family in a way that can prevent the homicide. In recent years, it was named as domestic violence or house violence, something like that, and the police would leave without further actions. It was something between the couple, it was the way that they thought about this as a private matter.

Regina Garduño Niño: When did that change?

Johan Kalheim: Not sure, but it's quite recent. Within the last ten years or something, I would say.

Regina Garduño Niño: I spoke with the head of the prevention for intimate partner homicide in the Oslo police and he shared that they hold these everyday meetings with the three units there are to prevent this disconnection between sources, let's say, to a certain extent, but I guess you found out that that's not enough. He also mentioned that Health Services often doesn't share because of confidentiality issues.

Johan Kalheim: Or misunderstood confidentiality issues.

Regina Garduño Niño: But you found out that it's not a single agency that's not sharing, but in general there wasn't a mechanism for all agencies to share, and that's what the Commission will be about.

Johan Kalheim: Right. Or at least one of the recommendations, for instance, from the Commission, could be that we need to do something about this legislation because it's creating problems for the sharing between the social services and the health services, for instance. So I can have my presentation, just shortly about who we are. In Norwegian we are called Sivilrettsforvaltningen. It's a difficult name, even in Norwegian. Translated to English, it's Civil Affairs Authority, in short.

It's not a suiting name for the company. We don't only do civil affairs. We have a variety of tasks. Among many others, we serve as a secretary to different types of specialist organs. For instance, within the Forensic Medicine, Child Welfare Service, control of the Immigration Detention Center, etcetera. So the plan is for the Civil Affairs Authority to be the secretary to the Intimate Partner Commission, and it kind of matches our portfolio

in a way. And the purpose, like we have been discussing, it's coming from the NOU from 2020. They reviewed cases of intimate partner homicide and they discovered that there was a possibility to learn from mistakes done earlier, they wanted to further develop the work of preventing severe intimate partner violence and partner homicides.

Creating an independent Commission, therefore, it could be of great importance. It's important, it's independent both in organizational structure and in working methods. And I will try to just shortly show you in this timeline how it's thought to be. So you have the timeline and you have the homicide.

First of all, there needs to be a finished criminal case. And then an authority called Kripos, they will gather the case and send it to the Intimate Partner Commission. They will start their investigation by looking at the start of the case, what has happened before. For instance, you will find that there has been contact with Social Services. There has been contact between the parents and the school kindergarten. Maybe Health Services has been involved, Police, etcetera. And like we were discussing, the aim for the Intimate Partner Commission is to see what can be learned from this contact. Why couldn't we prevent the homicide? What were the big red alerts in this contact that we need to address? And then there is the question, how to find the learning points?

So we have been looking into safety investigation methods. It's something developed in the 60s and 70s by actually the nuclear plant business. And you have different types of organizations or businesses or areas which you can define as nearly error free. They don't have the luxury of making mistakes, so they need to build systems as error free as possible. So there was a lot of research done on this area and how to make the systems as bulletproof as possible, and especially where you have machines working with humans, how can the machines make the humans less in a situation where they can make errors. So then the machines can help, but also the machines need to learn from our mistakes. So that was the start. And then it was adopted by the flight industry in the 70s-80s, the boating industry, health services. And also the way of thinking is for instance, used by the Norwegian Safety Investigation Authority. So they are looking into aircraft in the investigations, railways, boating accidents, etcetera. So the method is known from a variety of areas.
So we want to use, at least that's what we are planning on, this type of method in how to serve the Commission. So what the plan is, like I said, is for the Civil Affairs Authority to serve as the Secretary, where we can be [the] competence center. For instance, for the investigation methods, we will write the report, we will collect the data and then the Commission itself will be specialists within different types of areas. For instance, a specialist in social services, the school system. the kindergarten system, police, etcetera. And then you can create the Members from the Commission. To what seems to be the subject in the case. So if there seems to be a lot of contact with Health Services and kindergarten, for instance, you pick the members from the group that has this as their specialty.

Regina Garduño Niño: So not all members intervene in all cases.

Johan Kalheim: We will see how this will turn out. That's at least one suggestion that we know from other commissions we have here and that's how you do it.

Regina Garduño Niño: You just mentioned that this structure is based on the structure of other commissions that are already in place here in Norway, but have you drawn from other international experiences?

Johan Kalheim: Yes. A year ago I was attending a seminar where the Portuguese Intimate Partner Commission was present and they were telling us that the way they work was inspired by the way they work in Australia, New Zealand, England as well. But to think of this safety investigation method as a way to make the learning outcomes is quite new. So for instance, we were talking to a lady who was working with intimate partner violence in England some three months ago or something like that, and she was really interested in this, and how to make this work for the Commission.

So what is known for us in Norway is the way to group the Commission, to set it up and what's new is that we will try to use this knowledge on how they work. And probably you won't find that combination in one of the other countries, because what the Portuguese were very clear on is that you need to find the setup for your Commission within the system you have. So, for instance, in Portugal we have this system, OK, then this Commission fits in this way. In Norway, we have this system. OK, then we need to make it this way to make it work.

Regina Garduño Niño: Yes, of course, you cannot use the same model everywhere. Just to make sure I got it right, the Civil Affairs Authority serves as a secretary for a number of agencies in Norway, but I am not very familiar with the government structure in Norway. So is it a kind of an independent body?
Johan Kalheim: Yes, we are administered by the Justice Department. So we're like a directory. But the Commission will also be independent from us. So the secretary is employed at the Civil Affairs Authority, but in serving the Commission, they act independently or on behalf of the Commission.

Regina Garduño Niño: I see. You said that numbers for this kind of homicide have been stable through time.

Johan Kalheim: At least for the last 30 years or something like that, it's been about five to eight.

Regina Garduño Niño: You didn't notice an extreme peak then during the pandemic, for instance.

Johan Kalheim: I'm not sure, I haven't heard that. But maybe you have that in your data.

Regina Garduño Niño: There was an increase everywhere and Norway was not the exception. But if it's not on your radar, maybe it wasn't that incredibly extreme.

Something that I'm interested in is the gender-neutral approach. When I spoke with the police officer he was very keen on making a point that the motivation and all the resources they have at hand, they use in a gender neutral manner. I want to learn more about the rationale behind it because there is a clear difference between the amount of male and female perpetrators. So I'm curious about learning more of how you see this. Also if you're addressing it somehow. Of course, all cases need to be addressed, but is there an intention... Are all cases going to be handled under the same light or is there going to be a distinction between male perpetrators and female perpetrators?

Johan Kalheim: Yes, probably it will.

Regina Garduño Niño: I'm asking because one of the things that I am curious about is how not only in Norway, but generally speaking about this topic, relating gender norms to violence. So if we know for a fact that most perpetrators of intimate partner violence are men, we should of course look into the root causes or look back and question ourselves why this is happening. And this is not something I came up with. Of course, there's a lot of people working on this.

I also spoke with a psychologist from Alternativ til Vold in Tromsø. I asked her if there's a way that they are somehow approaching this or if they are treating the cases as silos. I asked her if there were any therapy groups for men, or a space where they could share and acknowledge that it's not just them, but there's a whole system that reinforces this kind of behavior. It doesn't seem to be that widespread like I thought. She said they could do them, but they don't. And then she sent me to *familievernkontoret*. And they said, oh, no, it's ATV. And I was like, no, but in ATV they say it's you. And then I also reached out to *familievernkontoret* here in Oslo. And none of them hold these kinds of groups for men only. So I was curious, why isn't it being done? Or maybe it's not proved to be such an important way to go. Regardless of the Commission itself, I would love to learn more about your view.

Johan Kalheim: We're not experts on this in any way, so it's only from the sort of data I have been collecting for the last year when trying to, at least on our hand, establish this Commission. For instance, I'm not sure if you heard about a project, it was called Project November earlier. It's at the Stovner police station, here in Oslo. Now it's called Risk. And they were actually talking about this as a possibility to work more. It's quite common that you try to protect the victim more than you try to work with the offender. So they were discussing this. Now we work more on the offender because if we can make him change, it's most often him, then we also have the solution for the victim. For the victim, it's quite a ...She needs to move, she needs to stay at the secret address, she can't have contact with her family, etcetera. It's quite something different if she can stay at home

and feel safe. You can in some way work with the offender instead, so I think it's on the radar more than before, but I'm not sure if you have seen this... It was on NRK a month, six weeks ago, something like that. It's a Norwegian documentarist, Deeyah Khan. She's in the States and looking into this type of groups. It's where male offenders can meet and talk. Why did I kill my wife? Why did I....?

Samantha McInerney: It was quite fascinating listening to their stories because often they were subject to abuse themselves as children and grew up in this volatile environment. So like you were saying, getting to the roots of the problem instead of just stopping the symptoms, which is violence, may be a better way to solve this.

Johan Kalheim: It's called Behind the Rage, America's domestic violence, in English. I'm not sure how much Norwegian you understand, but it's called *Raseri bak lukkede dører*.

Regina Garduño Niño: I will find it.

Johan Kalheim: It's on NRK.

Regina Garduño Niño: Thank you.

Johan Kalheim: So I think that's an ongoing process, and also one of the aims probably for this Commission, to try to learn more about the mechanisms and like for instance, what they can see at risk is that some of the perpetrators, they are coming from the family they were working on 10 years ago. So now it's the children growing up and then they adapt [sic] the way they have been brought up. It's the same as in the documentary.

Regina Garduño Niño: That's what they call risk factors, which are also part of the SARA. I know about SARA from the police officer, but I also see that it's going to be used for this Commission.

Johan Kalheim: Yes, probably. Or at least it's one of the tools they can use. So the tools or... I was showing you that the method to at least making the space for learning outcomes will be through the safety investigation methods, so it's important that this is a Commission for making learning outcomes. It's not somewhere where someone needs to be responsible for what happened or they will not make orders to someone. They will only make recommendations or similar.

Regina Garduño Niño: Yes, because they will be dealing with, as you said, criminal cases that have been completed. They will be able to issue these recommendations to any of the agencies involved. So, say, if they find out that Health is not sharing or there's not a common understanding of what confidentiality means, they can address that and it will be binding for these agencies to do... No, because it's recommendations...

Johan Kalheim: Yes. And like the system we have with, that's why...I was thinking this may be a question, whether Norwegian Safety Investigation Authority, they can, if I remember correctly, they can give orders if there is something that needs to be done because it's critical if you don't. But mostly they give recommendations, for instance to the railway. They say that we recommend you do this and this and this. And then also we go to the government with this recommendation, they send their recommendations. We have recommended that the railway do so and so. And then the government, in their contact with the railway services, will make sure that they follow the recommendations, or if not, they have a good explanation, we didn't follow the recommendation because so and so so. So it's a square.

Regina Garduño Niño: There is a follow-up process then. It's not like they are left there sitting at a desk forever.

Johan Kalheim: It can happen. But at least there seems to be a system. It's a three-way system where you have, for instance, this one. And then the Norwegian Safety Investigation, they give their recommendation to the railway, and also to the government. Then the government, they will ask the railway, and then also the government will ask the Norwegian Safety Investigation, are you still sure about the recommendations? So there will always be some sort of cooperation about recommendations to make sure it's followed.

Regina Garduño Niño: I read in the NOU that the plan is to have a six-year trial. Why is it six years? Is it considered to be long enough to see...? If you don't mind me asking, you said that you've been doing research about this for the last year, so I guess that's when they first came up with the idea and they let you know, we're going to have a permanent Commission now...

Johan Kalheim: Yes, at least for a six-year trial, I'm sure.

Regina Garduño Niño: What's going to be your role in the Commission?

Johan Kalheim: For instance, I have led other secretaries, so I'm sort of the project manager here at the Civil Affairs Authority in establishing at least the Secretary and also helping the Justice Department in their establishing of the Commission itself. For instance, now we're waiting for the law proposal. Hopefully it will be ready within the 1st of June 2024. And then the Commission can start their work around Autumn 2024.
So, and as a secretary, we can serve in different ways. For instance, we have a lot of...

Samantha McInerney: People with a law degree.

Johan Kalheim: Yes. So we have a lot of people with a law degree, me and Samantha as well. So we can help on that part. We have a system for documentation, we have then the possibility to have researchers employed, and also we can help spread the word. We can make seminars, the arrangements, the reports, etcetera, for the Commission. So we're

sort of the office to the Commission. And then they will come with their expertise and we can use the expertise in the best way possible, so they don't have to necessarily collect the data, the papers, make the appointments, etcetera, but they will only be using their expertise on the things that is important to the case in the area they are supposed to be experts on.

So it's an efficient way to make a lot of commissions work, like I was telling you. We have, for instance, the Forensic Medicine Commission, we have the Child Welfare Commission, we have different types of commissions that we are serving. So we're trying to be like a hub for these types of commissions.

Regina Garduño Niño: Will the Commission address the other recommendations from the NOU as well? I'm thinking, there was this recommendation to make it mandatory that there was a qualified interpreter when people went to the health services, for instance, and that they would ban having a close relative be the interpreter, that kind of thing.

Johan Kalheim: Possibly it could be one of the recommendations in one of the cases. Like you were saying, there was this lady at the hospital. She didn't speak Norwegian, she didn't understand English. So the health services or the employees, they didn't understand her problem correctly. Something like that could be a case, for instance. And then they can recommend that in cases like this, it's important that we understand. For instance, in Norway we have been for some years talking about understanding different cultures. It's not sure where you come from, or when you come to Norway, maybe you find the system quite different from what you're used to. At first you don't understand how to make yourself understood or how to approach the health services, for instance. Maybe you come from a place where you can't trust the police, so you don't go to the police until...stuff like that.

Probably as you will find, it's quite known to many people, to the system, to the government what kind of the main issues are within this, but it's kind of not easy to find the solutions to all the problems. Like you say, it's been going on for years and years. And many of the other recommendations the NOU was making, Justice Department is now making a plan on how the next, I think it's the next six years. We have a plan from 2019 to 2025. And now they are suggesting the new plan from 2025 until probably in 2031 on how, for instance, to work with this subject. So probably many of the recommendations in the NOU will be in this new plan.

Regina Garduño Niño: Will the Commission relate somehow to NKVTS?

Johan Kalheim: They are more on the research side, they have seminars, and they deliver a lot of knowledge about the victims, so maybe, for instance, one of the members to the Commission is employed at NKVTS. And then she or he will come to work for the Commission, for the period they are working on a specific case. Possibly why this type of model is suitable for Norway is because we are only 6 million people. We have the

experts we have. So if we are to take them out from their job for, for instance, three or five or six years or something like that, then first of all, their work will lose their expertise and maybe the world will change within the six years. Maybe it's something different, maybe new research, etcetera. So if you can have the people where the research is done, where they meet the victims on a daily basis, and they will also know what is trending, what are we discussing in this area of the problem. So then also when the reports are made from the Commission, the services will probably acknowledge the recommendations, because it's coming from one of their own, one of the people who know what is talked about, what is the problem. So I think it's a good model to make sure that they have the feeling on what's trending, what's moving, what are the discussions in this environment within, for instance, the health services, what are we discussing? Within the Police Department, what are the issues?

Regina Garduño Niño: OK. Thank you very much for this. Would it be possible to have the presentation?

Johan Kalheim: Of course.

Regina Garduño Niño: Is there some other organization that you think I could reach out to?

Johan Kalheim: I can give you some names when I'm sending you the presentation.

Regina Garduño Niño: That would be very helpful. Thank you.

Susanne Strand
University of Örebro, Sweden (online interview)
December 7, 2023

Regina Garduño Niño: As I shared with you, I am currently working on my master thesis, and I'm looking into intimate partner violence in Norway. When I sent the email to you, I was focusing more on intimate partner violence in general, but now I am looking more into intimate partner homicide. There seems to be some efforts going on in Norway for improving the prevention of IPH. I've been talking with people in the Oslo police and also the people who are putting together the upcoming national permanent commission for intimate partner homicide prevention in Norway. I ran into your information and I very much wanted to ask if you could share a bit about the work you are doing on risk assessment and perpetrator assessment, because that's something that I would like to highlight in my research. I am also trying to learn a bit more about perpetrators and how the risk factors play when it comes to prevention measures. If you could share a bit about that, however you feel to start, we can get it from there.

Susanne Strand: OK, so if I understand you, you're looking into risk assessment, risk factors, and a specific one for intimate partner homicide, is that correct?

Regina Garduño Niño: That's right, yes.

Susanne Strand: The research that we have done is on risk assessment and risk management, when it comes to intimate partner violence, stalking and honor-based violence. The overall results that we have is that first of all, risk assessment methods and instruments work better if they are the structured professional judgement, if that's the type of risk assessment method used, while it's more difficult and the validity of risk assessment instruments that are more structured or actuarial method, they don't work as well. There are difficulties for those instruments and methods to actually help when it comes to risk management. So the risk assessment with actuarial instruments, methods, they are more to locate risk as low, medium, high or usually they have a number, so it doesn't help you much in what are the risks for, what are we afraid that is going to happen, and what we can do about it.

So the structured professional judgement instruments, like the B-SAFER, […] those risk assessment methods, they seem to help in a better way when it comes to doing the risk management. So that's one of the overall results we have had for the last maybe 15 to 20 years in our research. But then, there are also difficulties in what risk management methods actually work. What's an effective risk management strategy, for instance? And then we have seen that even though the structured professional judgement, the SPJ instruments, they do work to a certain extent, but the police doesn't use them in the way that they should in order to get a better result for the risk management, so they don't identify the specific risk factors that they need to work with.

Regina Garduño Niño: Could you further describe this methodology? In opposition to the actuarial, the one that you say that works better. I get that the actuarial is more numerical to a certain extent, like in a scale, and this other one, how is it?

Susanne Strand: So we talk about generation of risk assessment methods. I can start there. The first generation of risk assessment is pretty much using your own experience. Is this person dangerous or not? That was the first generation of research. And then the results were internationally that it was really bad. It was actually better to flip a coin because you couldn't find those who recidivate versus those who didn't, just based on your own experience, on a broader level. That was in the fifties and sixties.

Then researchers started to do the second generation of risk assessment methods, which then is the more structured lists. All risk factors in this list have some kind of correlation to violence. And then it got better, but before it was, they found one out of three. Now they found one out of two. And then researchers said in the late 80s, early 1990s, how about combining the first and second generation of research methods for risk assessment? So they did. So they have the structured method, like a checklist, but then they add the professional judgements: what is actually important in this list? It's not only the miracle as it was in the second generation, because you add the professional judgements into it, which by itself wouldn't work because you missed stuff. That's why the checklist. And then you say, "Hmm, yeah, this is high risk, and specifically due to those risk factors". So that's the third generation.

The fourth generation that is coming, that we are in now, is how do we use this risk assessment into risk management. So that's the combined risk. If you have protective factors, for instance, which we have added, that decreases the risk, even though you have risk factors, but you also have protective factors. So the overall risk will be something else. And how do you connect that into risk management. And that's where we have the risk-need-responsivity theory.

So you identify the risk and the risk factors, you identify the needs for this person. What do they need to decrease the risk factors and is this person responsive? So for instance, one risk factor is alcohol and drug abuse. If this is relevant for the person, that is why they commit the violent crimes, then there's a need for drug and alcohol treatment. But are these persons responsive to that? Do they have the motivation to go through a treatment? Do they understand that they have a drug and alcohol problem? So that's where we are in the risk assessment generation or theory, so to say.

We are doing research now on the fourth generation. So that's where we are looking into risk assessment and risk management when it comes to partner violence and then we add the victim into this category. That's what we do differently from what has been done before. So we look at risk and vulnerability. What's the risk factor for the perpetrator? And what are vulnerability factors for the victim? And then we will look at them combined. What will be the overall risk? Then we'll look at needs for both the perpetrator

and the victim. The perpetrator might, as I said, need drug abuse treatment, but the victim might need a shelter.

We have to protect the victim from the perpetrator. Even though we give him treatment and maybe a restraining order, we still have to see what the victim needs. And that could be support trauma treatment. It could be shelter, it could be all kinds of things. And then we also look at the responsivity for both. So for instance, if we say "We think that you need to go to a shelter", and she says "I can't do that because my kids can't come with me", or "I need to do this at work", or "I'm not able to follow", "I don't want to", there could be any reason that she's not responsive to that risk management that are suggested for her, for any reason, that's why we need to work with the victim. What can we do to help in your situation to make you safe? And we also have to look at the perpetrator. So that's what we are doing in our research at the moment.

Regina Garduño Niño: This simultaneous approach to both the victim and the perpetrator is still innovative, as you say? Am I getting it right? I'm no expert whatsoever, but from what I've read, the approach towards intimate partner violence used to be more victim centered. Isn't that right?

Susanne Strand: It has been.

Regina Garduño Niño: It is challenging to shift the focus towards the perpetrator in terms of resources and that sort of thing. What you're doing now, if I get it right, is that you're conducting both in parallel.
Susanne Strand: Yes. And when it comes to other violent crimes, the focus has always been on the perpetrator. Always. So the risk assessment instrument comes from psychiatric hospitals, the psychiatric care for people who have mental illness and have committed a crime. And how do we prevent them from recidivism and further violence. Then we look into the perpetrator. What treatment does this perpetrator need? What can we do to make the risk decrease?

But in partner violence, we have more focus on the victim instead of helping the perpetrator to not be violent. And that's a shift, and in our research we say we need both, it's not "either/or". In Sweden we have a law saying that the municipalities, I think it's like two years old or one year, it's a very new law, saying that municipalities need to have treatment for intimate partner violence perpetrators if they need treatment. So that's a shift in how we work with intimate partner violence in Sweden. But of course, if the perpetrator doesn't think that they have a problem, treatment won't work. There's some very good work done in Trondheim about treatment of perpetrators that actually shows that if the perpetrator is motivated, then almost any kind of treatment would work rather well. There is other research showing that not all treatment would work even if you're motivated. But the key is without motivation, without any insight into your own problems, then no treatment will work, but it will be much more difficult to reach that person.

Regina Garduño Niño: Absolutely. And in your view, why is it that there's this difference between other forms of violence being perpetrator-centered and that not being the case for IPV?

Susanne Strand: I think there are several reasons. One reason is we don't do enough for victims of other types of violence. We don't identify those victims and help them as we should, that's one thing. The other thing is that we have access to the perpetrator. So, for instance, a lot of that research is done in correctional wards or in psychiatric hospitals, and that the perpetrators are actually there and can't leave. We have to work with them because they are there.

For intimate partner violence, a lot of perpetrators don't get sentenced for the violence due to a lot of things: difficulties to prove the actual crime, it could be that the victim doesn't want to collaborate with the police investigation anymore. We know that leaving an abusive relationship is a process, which means that she can go back to the perpetrator, leave him, go back again, leave him. We have to have in mind that that's how it is. That's why we need to help the victims.

We have a structure where we have focused a lot on victims because we have access to them, so we can actually help them. But in that, we kind of forgot that we still can do a lot of things towards the perpetrator, even though we don't have access to perpetrators as we do in psychiatric hospitals or correctional wards, we can still have restraining orders. We can offer treatment. I think it's a combination of several things.

Regina Garduño Niño: This is very, very interesting. I'm Mexican, so this is a topic that's very close to my heart because Mexico is very violent towards women. I'm very used to victim blaming and that kind of thing, so this is why I'm very interested in this and what you're saying it's really getting me thinking. About the treatment that you were saying, I know that there's this individual treatment, so to speak, but also group therapy. What is the trend there or what is now being done more often? Or what's the criterion to have one or the other?

Susanne Strand: That's a good question. I can answer a little bit of it. It's not my specific area, but some in my research group do some research on it and I would say it's the method. There are some methods that include both individual and group treatment. We do know that certain group treatment that is Duluth based doesn't work. There's a lot of research in the world on that, and we put that together in a review, that there is enough evidence to say that those methods don't work because they are stigmatizing and saying that there's 'us' and 'them' and it's based more on that men overall don't really understand, and that they are violent to some extent, and that these negative attitudes are on a general level, and that isn't true for all the perpetrators. So perpetrators have difficulties to identify that they are one of those horrible persons that they say that we are. Those are some reasons why it doesn't work well.

When you have individual based treatment, that also could be group based, but more based on other things, like when you use violence as a method to talk to someone, that's a bad thing. Can you choose something else? Instead of being violent, what can you do instead? So that's another type of treatment, where you say violence is wrong. This is not a way. You can't use that, that is wrong. You need to handle your anger in a different way because this is not allowed. This is illegal. This is bad. But then you say, you can do it this way. Instead of saying "you're a bad person", you're saying "your anger management skills are bad", and that's something completely different, because you can change your skills, what you do, your actions. You can't really change who you are. Of course, we have to work with attitudes and norms, and all of those things, but if you have a perpetrator that needs treatment on how to stop being violent, you can't only talk about norms and values. You have to give them something to hold on to. But that's not my expertise area, that's just broadly, there is a lot of research on it, but that's what we have found.

Regina Garduño Niño: This is helpful because I am interested in this gender norm related violence, but I will look more into that, as how it is or can be approached in a group. I've got the impression that it is often left out, like the treatment might be more focused on the individual risk factors, so to speak, and not taking so much into account the environment that has led men to behave a certain way, but I understand that's not your area of expertise, this is just me thinking aloud.

Susanne Strand: It's a combination of things, and I think, that's what research shows. Quick fix or one-model-fits-all, that is not true. That's pretty much what research shows, that you have to do different things for different perpetrators, and we use the socio-ecological model. For some perpetrators, the structure, the environment and where you live, all of those things could be much more important. While for other perpetrators, there are individual risk factors that are more important, such as substance abuse, it could be one of those things. If they get treatment for substance abuse, they stop being violent.

But that's not for all, because for some perpetrators, for instance, those who are antisocial, who use violence towards a lot of people. Then if they are not, if some of them will go through substance abuse treatment and stop using illegal substances, they still might be violent. So there might be something else on top of that. It's a combination of the individual, the relationship, the society, the structure. And it's different for perpetrators, that's why we need different treatments. That's why we need to figure out the risk factors. For instance, for intimate partner homicide, we know that if the perpetrator has tried to strangle the victim at some time before the homicide, we know that's a very, very strong risk factor for lethal violence, and that has to do with the individual in this relationship. There are certain risk factors on certain levels and how they interact, but that's one of the risk factors that if ever happens, it is a super high risk.

Another risk factor is actually a vulnerability factor, when looking to research. If the victim is scared for her life, if she's scared that he's going to kill me and she says that,

then that's probably true. Research shows that's a very, very strong indicator to lethality. That's why we need to listen to victims more. Of course, a lot of victims are afraid and scared. But not everyone is scared for lethal violence. And those who are, they are most often correct. The risk is much higher.

Regina Garduño Niño: Yes, absolutely. The risk assessment research that you conduct, is it gender neutral?

Susanne Strand: Yes and no. Gender neutral in the sense that we look into perpetrators who could be men and women, victims that could be men and women. We look into heterosexual relationships, LGBTQI relationships. In that sense, everyone. We don't say that we only look at men's violence towards women, so that's gender neutral, but this is gender-based violence. We can't be gender neutral, because it's gender-based violence. Still the big problem is the patriarchal theories, that men take advantage of women, they do it in different ways. Women who are committing intimate partner violence, what we can see is that also has to do with power and control. The power and control is not in every relationship because it could be situational as well, but the overall norms have a lot to do with power and control. So that's why I say yes and no, because we're looking into a relationship, but it is gender-based violence, so that's not gender neutral, and we should not underestimate that this is men's violence towards women. If men stop being violent, then the world will be a much better place for both men and women.

Regina Garduño Niño: I couldn't agree more. I love the way you put it, because sometimes I get the feeling that there's a very big emphasis on the gender neutral, which might obscure what you just said. You mentioned just now patriarchal theories. Could you elaborate?

Susanne Strand: In the socio-ecological model there are the patriarchal norms on one side and the individual aspect on the other side, and the idea and the researcher could sometimes be on one side or the other. While I think it's something there, as I said, that the relationship between this, because the individual is always responsible for their actions.

However, if we have a society where we have patriarchal norms, then for some individuals they will take advantage of that and say, "I have the right to do this because this is the norm". I have done research on morality and there's a term called rural patriarchy. So we can see that when it comes to intimate partner violence, the patriarchal norms are even stronger in the rural areas. And that could be saying that "boys will be boys" and then try to excuse the violence, because we all know boys will be boys, which is not true. We also see that women who are victims in rural areas, will be well taken care of by other women in villages or small cities. But then, they are also encouraged, or they will go back to the perpetrator and everyone will know that because you don't have much of a choice. So they will help out, but they don't help you to leave.

So that's two different things, and that's some of the things we have seen in the morality. Which could be part of the patriarchal norms. Then we'll look at those theories. There are some countries in the world where the patriarchal structure is very, very strong. So for instance I do research on honor-based violence, and that's a very strong patriarchal culture when it comes to honor-based violence. And then some young women are being killed in the name of honor and that's due to this system, and trying to maintain that, so it's very different because due to war in the world, women live. So, for instance, in the Nordic countries we have one of the highest equality indexes in the world, but still we have a lot of violence. That's what they call the Nordic paradox. We have higher equality, but we still have lots of intimate partner violence. And I would say that due to the patriarchal norms, they are still part of our society, even though we have high equality. We could have even higher if we work with these norms, and since we have a lot of rural areas, it's more difficult, the patriarchal structure is more maintained in those areas.

Regina Garduño Niño: I'm very glad you bring this up because this was maybe one of the first questions while I was trying to put together my research question. I ran into the Nordic paradox of course, and how to explain if the Nordics are these front runners and the societal norms are so very different from, say, Latin America, there's still this persistence of IPV and IPH. I'm guessing that could also have to do with what you mentioned earlier about the motivations or the risk factors for perpetrators now that they might also be more individual based in these countries.

Susanne Strand: Yes, yes, to some extent they are, absolutely. But also we can see that there's a relationship with violence in society and violence towards women. There is a relationship with war and violence towards women. For instance, sexual violence is used in war as a way of demoralizing the enemy, so we have to look about the gender-based violence in many ways. In some countries where you have a lot of military weapons, you put a lot of money that we can see there is a relationship with the amount of violence towards women as well. So, that there's it's not easy to explain why all these things are. In the Nordic paradox, some also say that since we have a higher quality, more women will also report violence and that could be true to some extent. But still there is a lot of violence as they report, so the whole idea is that it should decrease even more.

Then really such shows that in low-income countries, if women get economically stronger, then violence is increasing. So if women in low income countries get more independent, then there will be more violence towards them, so that's a risk factor for violence in low income countries that hasn't been researched in the same way in high income countries. But it challenges the norms for women where the patriarchal structure is much stronger when they get independent. So that's why they challenge men. They think that they have the right to do this because then they take the patriarchal norms as a truth that they say, well, I have the right to do this. You should. And then they don't think they do something wrong in that sense.

Regina Garduño Niño: Definitely something that I'm taking with me from our conversation is that despite gender-based violence being so widespread, it really is

different when you break it down depending on where you are, where you're looking at. You can't really put everything in the same basket and say, well, this is gender-based violence in the world, no. It really responds to different factors and conditions depending on the country.

I don't want to take that much more of your time. I really much appreciate this conversation and it's been very helpful. I just have one final question just to get me going in my research. Is there a term in opposition to rural patriarchy? Or are there any other key terms that you could share with me in terms of patriarchal theories?

Susanne Strand: That's what I have been studying most. Someone who has done a lot of work on this, I can recommend you. That's a researcher, a professor in the US who has written a lot about rural patriarchy. So maybe that could be something for you if you want to read a little bit more about it. That part that can help you. He has also done some papers, books and papers. You can find them on Google Scholar.

Regina Garduño Niño: Since I'm focusing on Norway and thinking more in terms of high income countries, maybe that's another profile of a society despite still being rural areas, of course, but I'm thinking more like urban based or industrialized societies.

Susanne Strand: Yes, I think that there's still a lot of patriarchal norms in society, and I know that Norway has worked really well with some of those norms. For instance, women incorporate businesses. The corporate boards, that they need to be more women. They have another law in Norway saying there has to be more women on the boards in corporate, different companies and so on. So I think that Norway has worked with that in a different way than Sweden. There's some papers on the Nordic paradox. And I think that they mentioned some of these things. Those papers might also help you to go further on the issues, because I think they are talking about the patriarchal norms in those papers. Also a colleague of mine, Sofia Strid, has done a lot of research in this area. If you look into any of her papers, I think you can get some help also. Those theories and ideas about why it is like this in high income countries.

Regina Garduño Niño: Absolutely. I will do that. Thank you very much for your time.

Susanne Strand: Oh, you're so welcome. And if you have any more questions, please contact me again.

Regina Garduño Niño: Thank you very much. Have a nice day. Bye.

Susanne Strand: Thank you. Bye now.

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