



Commentary: Preliminary evaluation of an analog procedure to assess acceptability of intimate partner violence against women: the Partner Violence Acceptability Movie Task

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A commentary on

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The acceptability of intimate violence as it regards women is a problem which researchers and institutions studying global health have questioned for some time now. Research has focused on this aspect as a determining factor in the perpetration of violent actions. The process involves both the abusers (Bryant and Spencer, 2003; Taylor and Sorenson, 2005; Waltermaurer, 2012), the entire community (Gracia and Herrero, 2006; Frye, 2007), and the victims directly (Flood and Pease, 2009; Kogut, 2011; Rizo and Macy, 2011; Eckhardt et al., 2012).

It has been observed that the latter can come to think that intimate violence is normal, that it is accepted if one is in certain conditions, such as having a very low income (Smith, 2008), being unemployed (Mittra and Mouradian, 2014) or having a disability (Iudici, 2015; Iudici and Renzi, 2015). Detecting the acceptability of violence, however, is a rather difficult task. Yet this is exactly why it deserves even more attention, with the aim of reducing the wide range of health implications which IPV brings, such as the risk of homicide (Stöckl et al., 2013), gastrointestinal disorders, hypertension, a weakened immune system, symptoms of depression, self-destructive thoughts, anxiety, insomnia, feelings of guilt and isolation (Campbell, 2002; Fanslow and Robinson, 2004; Ellsberg et al., 2008; Garcia-Moreno and Watts, 2011; European Union Agency for Fundamental European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014; Hasan et al., 2014).

The authors of the work “Preliminary evaluation of an analog procedure to assess acceptability of intimate partner violence against women: the Partner Violence Acceptability Movie Task” (Gracia et al., 2015) deserve credit for investigating the acceptability of the violence through PVAM, a work programme to recognize partner violence. This analogic procedure is based on responses to video clips which represent physical aggression against women. The time delay in reacting to the video clip indicates the justification level of the violence, thus a greater degree of acceptability. Regardless of how much this method could be improved, its value lies in being the first tool-based attempt to intercept the acceptability of violence, which is one of the factors that leads its actualisation.

In addition, the specific benefit of the tool is that of detecting the implicit aspects (Wilson et al., 2000; Fazio and Olson, 2003; Eckhardt et al., 2012) of acceptability, that is, aspects which are hard to gather through interviews and other tools. Also, considering that reaction times are less dependent on language, PVAM can make it possible to go beyond other limits found in other tools, such as the IAT (Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994; Messner and Vosgerau, 2010). This could allow clinics and proposed services to integrate the data which they collect through other tools, such as interviews.

The results obtained from the use of the tool by Gracia et al. (2015) offer an additional, important, key piece of data: they have detected the justifying processes used by the abusers who carry out the violence, as was even noted by the scientific research (European Commission, 2010; Entilli and Cipolletta, 2017). This tool is also important as it can be a first step in scientific research to go beyond a few limits and distortions deriving from the current methods of data collection, which are almost always self-compiled (Eckhardt et al., 2012).

The analogic component of the tool can thus become a new channel in the interception of a problem which we know to be mostly hidden (Curry et al., 2011; Iudici et al., 2017). If such a requirement is necessary for women, it is even more necessary for women with disabilities, who are twice as vulnerable to intimate partner violence (Gammino et al., 2016).

Scientific evidence shows that disabled women are more likely to come up against different types of domestic violence, in a greater number compared to other women (Nosek et al., 2006; Barrett et al., 2009; Healey et al., 2013), for longer periods of time, duration and severity (Saxton et al., 2001; Brownridge, 2006; Breiding and Armour, 2015). The situation is particularly

grave in that the abusers often use ways to justify their behavior (Saxton et al., 2001), stereotypes about disabled women (Ballan and Freyer, 2012; Faccio et al., 2014), psychological blackmail to bring about the acceptance of the harassment and violence (Plummer and Findley, 2012) and in implicit form (Eckhardt and Crane, 2014). In parallel, many disabled women believe it's normal to be treated violently, and for this reason they justify the behavior of their partner (Marra, 2009). Indeed, the risk of social exclusion which many disabled women face also brings with it a difficulty in recognizing if that which they are subjected to is considered violence (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2010). The risk of losing a few basic personal assistance services (sanitation/hygiene services, getting dressed and other intimate activities) can bring about a greater level of acceptance of abuse (Smith, 2008; Castelnuovo, 2010).

As a result, tools such as PVAM and their potential developments can be a determining factor in early detection of those who may be exposed to IPV. And it is only through the development of similar and new tools which we can encourage the effective promotion of the health of disabled women and an increase in their protection (Castelnuovo et al., 2003), especially considering the vulnerability a category which, precisely due to the need for stable family support, is increasingly exposed to intimate violence.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

AI has dealt with the Conception or design of the work. Data collection, analysis and interpretation, Drafting the article and the final Critical revision of the article have been elaborated by AI, EF, and GC.

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