# The Etiology of Intimate Partner Violence: An Attitude-Based Account from Social Learning and Feminist Perspectives

**Authors:** drawing, Zhang Chunmei, Zhang Chunmei

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## Abstract

Individuals' attitudes toward intimate partner violence can significantly predict their intimate partner violence-related behaviors, a phenomenon that manifests not only in perpetrators and victims but also in third parties' willingness to intervene and responses. By introducing attitudinal variables, researchers can transform the etiological question of intimate partner violence into the etiological question of attitudes toward intimate partner violence, thereby overcoming previous research limitations. From the perspectives of social learning theory and feminist theory, attitudes toward intimate partner violence connect two explanatory pathways: relevant social learning experiences/patriarchal ideology → attitudes toward intimate partner violence → intimate partner violence. Future research should integrate the unique perspectives of these two theories—the causal processes emphasized by social learning theory and the root origins highlighted by feminist theory—while synthesizing risk and protective factors to establish a multifaceted interactive explanatory model of attitudes toward intimate partner violence from the individual level to the group level.

## Full Text

### The Causes of Intimate Partner Violence: Attitude-Based Explanations from the Perspective of Social Learning and Feminist Theory

**TU Hua, ZHANG Chunmei**
(Department of Psychology, Academy of Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies, Wuhan University, Wuhan 430072, China)

**Abstract:** Individuals' attitudes toward intimate partner violence (IPV) significantly predict their IPV-related behaviors, a pattern evident not only among

perpetrators and victims but also in third parties' willingness to intervene. By introducing attitudinal variables, researchers can reframe the question of IPV causation as one concerning the origins of IPV attitudes, thereby overcoming previous research limitations. From the perspectives of social learning theory and feminist theory, IPV attitudes connect two explanatory pathways: IPV-related social learning experiences/patriarchal ideology → IPV attitudes → IPV. Future research should integrate these theories' unique perspectives—social learning theory's emphasis on causal processes and feminist theory's focus on root causes—while incorporating both risk and protective factors across individual and group levels to develop a multivariate, interactive explanatory model of IPV attitudes.

**Keywords:** intimate partner violence; attitudes; social learning theory; feminist theory

## 1. Introduction

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) refers to aggressive or controlling behaviors enacted by one partner against another in current or former intimate relationships [**?**], encompassing physical assault, psychological abuse, sexual violence, sexual coercion, and various controlling behaviors [**?**]. IPV is now recognized as a major social problem. According to large-scale data from 307 studies across 154 countries collected by the World Health Organization, the lifetime prevalence and annual incidence rates of IPV are 26% and 10%, respectively [**?**]. The situation in China is similarly concerning. T. Yang et al. [**?**] reviewed 26 empirical studies on IPV prevalence in China and found lifetime occurrence rates of 2.5-5.5% for physical violence, 17.4-24.5% for psychological violence, and 0.3-1.7% for sexual violence in the general population.

Since the 1970s, researchers have examined IPV causation. Explanatory theories fall into two categories: individual-level theories, which focus on unique biopsychological characteristics and family backgrounds (e.g., social learning theory), and sociocultural theories, which emphasize cultural roots, represented by feminist theory [**?**]. Despite early theoretical development, research on IPV causation has remained largely confined to studying IPV behavior itself due to subject availability and research ethics constraints, creating several limitations. First, because IPV behavior is restricted to specific populations, previous research could only adopt retrospective designs with individuals already involved in IPV perpetration or victimization, precluding prospective examination of potential future perpetrators or victims. This limited the value of retrospective designs and contributed little to IPV prevention. Second, ethical constraints prevented experimental manipulation of IPV antecedents to test causal effects on IPV behavior, resulting in predominantly cross-sectional correlational studies with limited causal inference.

Introducing attitudes into IPV research helps overcome these limitations. Con-

cepts related to intimate partner violence attitudes (IPVA) emerged in various forms during the 1970s-80s (e.g., "Beliefs about wife beating" [**?**]), but only in the early 21st century did these diverse terms converge into "intimate partner violence attitudes." Lipps [**?**] used IPVA to replace earlier concepts like "attitudes condoning marital violence," categorizing specific concepts such as condoning and approving under the umbrella of "attitudes" while restricting the object to intimate partner violence, thereby establishing IPVA research within the IPV field. Gracia et al. [**?**] reviewed 62 studies on women's IPV attitudes and identified four IPVA types: (1) legitimation of IPV, including victim-blaming and justification; (2) acceptability of IPV, encompassing acceptance, tolerance, or approval; (3) attitudes toward IPV intervention, including willingness to help victims and report to authorities; and (4) perceived severity of IPV. Overall, IPVA refers to individual or group acceptance of violence within intimate relationships [**?**].

How does introducing attitudes help researchers overcome previous subject and ethical constraints? First, attitudes logically precede IPV behavior, allowing examination of potential future perpetrators, victims, or interveners among the general public. For example, researchers can investigate how the general public's life experiences shape IPV attitudes rather than solely examining perpetrators' retrospective experiences. Second, IPVA's applicability to potential perpetrators enables longitudinal tracking to test relationships between predictors, attitudes, and behaviors. Additionally, while ethical constraints prevent experimental research on IPV behavior itself, IPVA—being attitudinal and not causing direct harm—can serve as an outcome variable in experimental designs to test causal relationships and indirectly validate causal effects on IPV behavior.

[Figure 1: see original paper] Attitude-Based Causal Model of Intimate Partner Violence

Recent empirical research has supplemented and refined IPV causation theory through IPV attitudes [**?**], yet systematic reviews of this body of work remain scarce. Building on the consistent predictive relationship between IPV attitudes and behavior, this paper examines how IPV-related social learning experiences and patriarchal ideology influence IPV attitudes and behavior from the perspectives of social learning theory and feminist theory (see Figure 1). We elaborate on these pathways below.

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## 2. The Influence of IPV Attitudes on IPV Behavior

The attitude-based causal model of IPV rests on the consistent predictive relationship between IPV attitudes and behavior, well-documented in both theoretical and empirical research. Theoretically, Waltermaurer's [**?**] Social Justification of IPV Model posits that IPV attitudes affect perpetrators, victims, and third parties. In societies where IPV is considered legitimate (high acceptability), per-

petrators feel more entitled to commit violence, increasing IPV incidence. In such contexts, victims are more likely to rationalize their abuse and less likely to report or seek intervention. Similarly, third parties in high-justification societies show lower intervention willingness [**?**]. Thus, IPV attitudes theoretically influence relevant behaviors across all groups.

Empirically, IPV attitudes predict behavior at both individual and societal levels. At the individual level, personal IPV attitudes inhibit or facilitate IPV occurrence. Among perpetrators, acceptance and legitimation attitudes significantly predict IPV behavior [**?**]. In general adolescent and adult populations, IPV acceptance correlates positively with reported IPV experiences [**?**]. Comparisons reveal that IPV perpetrators show significantly higher justification levels than non-perpetrators [**?**]. Addressing directional limitations in correlational research, longitudinal and intervention studies provide causal evidence [**?**]. For instance, Shakya et al. [**?**] collected three-wave dyadic data from couples and found that changes in men's IPV attitudes from Wave 1 to Wave 2 strongly predicted their wives' victimization at Wave 3. Specifically, a one-standard-deviation decrease in men's IPV acceptance from Wave 1 to Wave 2 predicted a 30% reduction in wives' IPV victimization reports at Wave 3.

IPV attitudes also affect victims and third parties. For victims, negative IPV attitudes increase IPV risk [**?**] and willingness to remain in abusive relationships [**?**]. Aboagye et al. [**?**] surveyed 23 sub-Saharan African countries, finding women supportive of IPV were more likely to experience it (crude OR = 1.72, 95% CI = 1.64, 1.79) compared to those who rejected it. Schuster and Tomaszewska [**?**] found that men sexually abused in childhood were more likely to develop supportive IPV attitudes, increasing their adult victimization risk.

For third parties, IPV attitudes correlate with intervention willingness [**?**]. Badenes et al. [**?**] surveyed future health professionals (medical, nursing, and psychology students) and found higher IPV acceptance associated with lower perceived severity and reduced intervention willingness.

At the societal level, IPV attitudes correlate with population prevalence rates. Higher gender inequality environments show greater IPV incidence [**?**]. Researchers found that countries or regions with high gender inequality indices or IPV justification rates also show higher IPV prevalence ($r = 0.28$, $p < .05$) [**?**]. Mulla et al. [**?**] tested this pathway using cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental evidence, finding that perceived IPV prevalence influences perceived peer acceptance, which in turn affects personal attitudes and perpetration tendencies, further amplifying IPV prevalence.

Given robust theoretical and empirical support for IPV attitudes' predictive power, increasing research examines IPV causation through IPVA. As a proximal factor, investigating IPVA's antecedents allows direct or indirect analysis of IPV influences. IPVA research primarily adopts social learning and feminist theoretical perspectives, revealing two pathways: "IPV-related social learning experiences → IPV attitudes → IPV behavior" and "patriarchal ideology →

IPV attitudes → IPV behavior."

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## 3.1 Social Learning Theory Perspective: From IPV to IPVA

Social learning theory has long dominated IPV research, positing that individuals who witness or experience violence in their families of origin internalize violent behavioral scripts as effective problem-solving strategies, later replicating them in intimate relationships [**?**]. Empirical support abounds: childhood exposure to domestic violence predicts adult aggressive behavior, including IPV perpetration [**?**]. Clare et al. [**?**] identified growing up in violent households and childhood witnessing as IPV risk factors in their review of 87 studies. Li, Zhao, and Yu's [**?**] meta-analysis found positive correlations between three types of child maltreatment (physical, psychological, and sexual) and IPV perpetration ($r = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$; $r = 0.13$, $p < 0.001$; $r = 0.13$, $p < 0.001$).

However, social learning theory focusing solely on IPV behavior faces two questions: (1) Why don't all individuals who witness or experience childhood abuse become IPV perpetrators? (2) Why don't all IPV perpetrators have family violence exposure histories [**?**]? Indeed, research shows inconsistent correlations between childhood family violence and adult IPV perpetration across studies. Stith et al.'s [**?**] meta-analysis of 39 intergenerational IPV transmission studies found correlations ranging from 0.08 to 0.35, suggesting differential impacts and additional factors beyond family of origin.

Introducing attitudes helps address these questions. First, between objective family experiences and behavioral outcomes lies subjective agency. Individuals exposed to identical family violence may develop different IPV attitudes—some supporting and tolerating IPV, subsequently replicating violent patterns, while others recognizing adverse consequences and forming opposition, thus avoiding IPV perpetration or tolerance. Second, even without family violence exposure, other social learning experiences may generate negative IPV attitudes leading to IPV behavior.

Researchers thus introduced IPVA as a mediator between IPV social learning experiences and IPV perpetration/victimization, examining antecedents of IPVA [**?**]. IPV social learning experiences include both family-of-origin violence and extrafamilial social experiences.

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## 3.2 Family-of-Origin Social Learning Experiences' Influence on IPVA

Research has examined how family-of-origin social learning experiences affect IPV behavior through IPV attitudes, encompassing direct experiences (childhood abuse, coercive parenting) and indirect experiences (witnessing

interparental violence) [?]. From a direct experience perspective, Copp et al. [?] used childhood coercive parenting as an exposure factor, comparing odds ratios between individuals with current IPV experiences (perpetration/victimization) and those without. Results showed that individuals with IPV experiences were 1.71 times more likely to have been exposed to interparental violence than those without IPV experiences, confirming family-of-origin social learning as a risk factor. Mediation analysis revealed that negative IPV attitudes predicted IPV experiences (OR = 2.26), while childhood coercive parenting significantly predicted more negative IPV attitudes [?], demonstrating IPVA's mediating role.

Similarly, witnessing interparental violence indirectly predicts individuals' negative IPV attitudes, affecting adult IPV experiences across IPV types [?]. Cano-Gonzalez et al. [?] found that individuals witnessing parental violence in childhood were more likely to justify IPV and perpetrate more cyber IPV (psychological aggression, sexual aggression, cyberstalking) in emerging adulthood. Speizer's [?] study revealed striking gender differences: men who witnessed fathers beating mothers were twice as likely to support wife-beating attitudes and showed higher IPV perpetration rates; women with the same witnessing experience also held more supportive IPV attitudes but were not more likely to become perpetrators—instead showing higher victimization risk. This aligns with prior research: women approving of wife-beating faced higher IPV victimization risk than non-approving women [?].

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### 3.3 Non-Family-of-Origin Social Learning Experiences' Influence on IPVA

Beyond family experiences, social learning theorists have examined how individuals' other intimate relationship experiences and social interactions affect IPVA [?]. Regarding intimate relationship experiences, Copp et al. [?] found that partners' non-exclusivity, verbal abuse, and controlling behaviors in past relationships correlated positively with IPV-supportive attitudes. Additionally, individuals with IPV perpetration experiences in the past year [?] or those not currently in relationships [?] more strongly justified IPV.

Perceived peer support for IPV and other social interaction experiences also influence personal IPV attitudes and behavior [?]. Berkowitz et al. [?] reviewed 25 studies on violence attitude social norms, finding that individuals overestimating peer support for violent attitudes were more likely to perpetrate violence, while bystanders underestimating peer support for intervention were less likely to intervene. Similar patterns emerge in IPV contexts. Mulla et al. [?] found that perceived peer acceptance of IPV predicted personal IPV acceptance and corresponding behavior, with longitudinal designs confirming causal direction. Beyond perceived social norms, merely knowing IPV perpetrators (without knowing victims) increases IPV acceptance [?].

While introducing IPVA addresses limitations in traditional social learning theory, blind spots remain. For example, why do identical social learning experiences and IPVA manifest as perpetration in men but victimization in women? More fundamentally, what is the source of modeled behaviors? Why do both families of origin and macro-social environments provide fertile ground for negative IPVA? Feminist theorists attempt to answer these questions.

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## 4.1 Feminist Theory Perspective: From IPV to IPVA

Feminist theory represents another mainstream IPV perspective. Feminists view IPV as fundamentally a gender equality issue, arguing that IPV cannot be fully understood without centering gender in the analysis [**?**]. Dobash and Dobash [**?**] articulated this view in *Violence against Wives: A Case against The Patriarchy*: IPV is a product of patriarchal social structures and essentially a means for men to dominate and control women.

Feminist theory grounds itself in IPV's gender asymmetry—the disproportionate representation of male-perpetrated violence against women, supported by extensive empirical evidence [**?**]. Feminists argue that patriarchal social structures and ideology constitute IPV's root cause, evidenced by higher IPV rates in gender-unequal societies [**?**]. However, previous research left unclear how macro-level patriarchal structures affect individual-level IPV. IPVA addresses this gap by linking patriarchal ideology to IPV behavior, demonstrating that IPV stems from men's oppression of women. Feminists connect men's tolerant IPV attitudes to perpetration [**?**] and link patriarchal ideology (e.g., gender bias) to IPV attitudes [**?**]. Combining these, feminists demonstrate that men holding patriarchal ideologies are more likely to tolerate IPV and subsequently perpetrate it [**?**]. Specifically, feminist theorists use "gender" and "gender bias" as key variables to establish connections between patriarchal ideology and IPVA.

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## 4.2 Gender's Influence on IPVA

Examining the patriarchal ideology-IPVA link requires understanding gender's role, though its effects appear to differ in valence across regions [**?**]. Gracia et al.'s [**?**] systematic review and meta-analysis of 62 IPV attitude studies found that women (vs. men) consistently reported lower IPV acceptance and legitimation (including less victim-blaming) and higher perceived severity and intervention willingness. Conversely, Waltermaurer's [**?**] review of 23 quantitative studies on IPV justification found that in most regions, women (vs. men) showed higher justification levels, with odds reaching two-thirds or higher. This pattern appears particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Uthman et al. [**?**] reviewed IPVA across 17 sub-Saharan African countries, finding women more likely than men to justify female-targeted IPV in nearly all countries

(women: 28%-74%; men: 8%-62%). Rani et al. [?] similarly found that in some African countries, women (36%-89%) were more likely than men (25%-75%) to justify wife-beating, attributing this to deeply entrenched male-dominated cultures that suppress women's status and romanticize traditional gender roles, including meek acceptance of husbands' "tyranny." These findings suggest that regional differences in women's (vs. men's) IPVA may stem from variations in internalized gender bias.

A study examining both national and gender differences in IPVA further illuminates why gender operates differently across countries and how this reflects patriarchal ideology. Tran et al. [?] analyzed IPVA across 39 low- and middle-income countries using UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, revealing substantial cross-national variation in IPV acceptance (from 2.0% in Argentina to 90.2% in Afghanistan). Generally, Central/Eastern European countries showed low acceptance, while Asian and African countries showed high acceptance. In less accepting Central/Eastern European countries, men were more likely than women to justify IPV (male vs. female OR: 1.08-3.5, all >1, indicating greater male risk). In more accepting Asian and African countries, the pattern reversed, with men less likely than women to justify IPV (OR: 0.47-0.79, all <1, indicating lower male risk). This reveals an interesting phenomenon: men's IPVA shows inconsistency with overall societal attitudes—men justify IPV more than women in non-accepting societies but less than women in accepting societies. Conversely, women's IPVA aligns with and "polarizes" societal attitudes: they justify IPV less in non-accepting societies and more in accepting societies. These gender differences across countries likely reflect varying exposure to patriarchal social norms. Due to social conditioning, women (vs. men) are more susceptible to group norms, showing greater conformity with social groups (potentially influenced by gender roles themselves; see [?]). Thus, in IPV-accepting countries, women experience greater influence from gender-biased norms, leading to higher IPV acceptance than men [?], while in non-accepting countries, women experience greater influence from gender-equality norms, resulting in lower IPV acceptance than men [?].

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## 4.3 Gender Prejudice's Influence on IPVA

Despite feminist theory's various schools, feminists generally agree that patriarchal social structures maintain gender inequality through patriarchal ideology, with gender prejudice against women being the most typical representation in IPV contexts [?]. Gender prejudice (sexism)—preconceived, unjust attitudes based on gender differences [?]—serves as the most common psychosocial and patriarchal ideology variable in IPVA research, playing a crucial predictive role [?]. According to Glick & Fiske [?], gender prejudice, also termed ambivalent sexism, comprises hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). The former criticizes and punishes women who violate gender roles through negative or hostile forms, while the latter guides women to conform to traditional roles through

"positive" and "benevolent" forms. These two forms exert different influences in IPVA research.

Overall, ambivalent sexism as a whole significantly predicts unfavorable IPV attitudes [?]. Gracia et al.'s [?] meta-analysis found that higher ambivalent sexism scores correlated with higher IPV legitimation and acceptability but lower perceived severity and intervention willingness. Cinquegrana et al. [?] similarly found that women holding ambivalent sexist attitudes were more likely to support IPV, legitimize IPV myths, and accept psychological aggression, consequently experiencing greater psychological abuse.

Given Glick & Fiske's [?] distinction between hostile and benevolent sexism, researchers have examined their differential effects on IPVA. Traditional, overt hostile attitudes toward women generally correlate more strongly with IPV-supportive attitudes [?]. Herzog [?] differentiated traditional from benevolent sexism, finding traditional sexists scored lower on IPV perceived severity and endorsed less severe punishment for male perpetrators than benevolent sexists. Koepke et al. [?] manipulated normative feedback for hostile (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS), finding that participants told peers accepted HS more than BS (high HS/low BS condition) more strongly approved of IPV perpetrators and blamed victims than those in the high BS/low HS condition, demonstrating hostile sexism's greater risk.

The valence of benevolent sexism's effect on IPVA remains controversial. Some studies treat benevolent sexism as a risk factor predicting IPV acceptance [?], while others show protective effects diverging from hostile sexism. For instance, Herzog [?] found participants scoring high on benevolent sexism assigned higher IPV severity ratings and advocated harsher perpetrator punishment than egalitarian participants. Is benevolent sexism protective or risky for IPV attitudes and behavior?

Benevolent sexism is subjectively protective but objectively restrictive, confining women to specific roles [?]. Subjectively, it manifests as positive, protective attitudes toward women, viewing them as "delicate" figures needing protection and care—seemingly contradictory to explicit "violence." This might negatively predict IPVA. However, benevolent sexism remains gender discrimination, using positive evaluations to guide women toward "gentle, passive" stereotypes, reinforcing gender inequality and implicitly condoning male control and oppression [?]. Thus, it may also positively predict IPVA. This contradictory valence reflects the concept's inherent attitudinal ambivalence toward women, creating predictive ambiguity that may depend on whether individuals perceive its positive or negative components—a question requiring deeper investigation.

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## 5.1 Unique Contributions and Interconnections of IPVA Causal Theories

Social learning theory and feminist theory, as primary IPV explanations, play important roles after IPVA's introduction, each offering unique perspectives. Social learning theory emphasizes behavioral acquisition processes and the modeling role of social learning experiences, while adding attitudes as a mediating cognitive variable explains why identical environments differentially affect individuals. Feminist theory emphasizes IPV's gender asymmetry, explaining IPV's essence from patriarchal ideology. IPVA helps feminists construct clearer pathways from sociocultural backgrounds to IPV, demonstrating IPV's roots in men's oppression of women. The former emphasizes IPV formation processes; the latter focuses on root causes. Incorporating attitudes adds a subjective, agentic cognitive mediator between environment and behavior, constructing two causal paths: "IPV-related social learning experiences → IPV attitudes → IPV behavior" and "patriarchal ideology → IPV attitudes → IPV behavior." This substantially enhances theoretical explanatory power, answers IPV causation questions, creates space for more comprehensive theories, and holds promise for IPV prevention and intervention.

IPVA's introduction reveals intrinsic connections between the two theoretical frameworks. First, within social learning theory, IPVA shows gender asymmetry, leaving room for feminist collaboration. While research supports social learning theory's IPVA hypothesis—that IPVA originates in early social learning experiences and translates into actual IPV experiences (perpetration/victimization)—it doesn't explain why identical experiences manifest as higher perpetration risk in men but higher victimization risk in women [**?**]. Does this mean individuals learn not only violence as an intimate interaction form but also attitudes accepting male-perpetrated violence against women? In social learning theory, gender and gender prejudice also shape IPV attitudes and behavior. Second, patriarchal ideology in feminist theory may also be acquired through social learning. B. Phillips & D. A. Phillips [**?**] found in qualitative research that children witnessing domestic violence often internalize gender stereotypes to explain their behavior. Boys frequently refused to discuss witnessing fathers beating mothers because it made them appear "weak," while they were "real men." This internalized gender prejudice may perpetuate intergenerational cycles of negative IPVA and IPV behavior. The non-contradictory theoretical frameworks and empirical interconnections provide ample space for integrated development. Future research could build a more comprehensive theoretical model incorporating both social learning processes and feminist root exploration. For example, following Benson et al.'s [**?**] developmental assets theory approach, researchers could synthesize extensive empirical evidence from interviews, surveys, and experiments to organize IPVA and IPV predictors across individual, family, and broader socioecological (community, national) dimensions, categorizing them by functional valence and origin source into protective/risk factors and internal/external factors,

examining their respective and interactive effects on IPVA and IPV to establish a unified, dynamically interactive complex system.

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## 5.2 Common Limitations of IPVA Causal Theories

While social learning and feminist theories offer unique perspectives on IPVA and IPV causation, they share common limitations. Regarding predictive factors, both theories focus exclusively on risk factors while ignoring positive protective factors at individual, family, and group levels, fundamentally failing to explain why identical social learning experiences or gender prejudice lead to divergent IPV attitudes and behaviors. Social learning theory's attitude introduction explains differential IPV heritability under identical environments through varying IPVA formation, but this remains insufficient. We must still answer: "Why do some individuals develop more positive IPVA despite IPV social learning experiences?" Feminist theory's IPVA mediation connects "patriarchal ideology" and "IPV behavior," but patriarchal ideology's predictive effect on IPVA is unstable—not all individuals holding patriarchal ideologies justify IPV, as benevolent sexism's dual valence particularly demonstrates. These unresolved issues reveal limitations in both theories' explanatory power.

Methodologically, IPVA research under these perspectives also faces constraints. While IPVA helps overcome traditional IPV research limitations regarding subject availability and ethics, enabling more diverse methods, most IPVA research remains cross-sectional, limiting causal inference about antecedent-IPVA-IPV relationships and potential moderators/mediators. Although some intervention programs targeting IPV through IPVA exist, such as Fox et al.'s [**?**] "Relationships without Fear" program, these require robust causal experiments or randomized controlled trials to clarify IPVA's mechanisms [**?**].

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## 6. Future Research Directions

Future research would benefit from a broader, integrated unified theory combining social learning and feminist perspectives, linking IPV and IPVA influences across individual, family, group, and national dimensions. Such research should examine not only individual-level IPVA predictors but also broader socioecological antecedents of IPV prevalence and IPVA patterns; investigate not only risk factors across dimensions but also protective factors promoting positive IPVA; and explore not only how these factors influence IPV and IPVA but also their interrelationships, thereby developing comprehensive IPV causation theory.

First, existing research focuses primarily on individuals' unique social learning experiences and patriarchal ideology levels, paying less attention to extra-individual IPVA and IPV influences. At the group level, limited studies have examined IPVA in special populations like police [**?**], healthcare workers [**?**], and

immigrants [**?**]. Future research should explore IPV-related groups' attitudes and the role of group norms and characteristics. At the national level, research has linked gender inequality to IPV prevalence and IPVA patterns across countries [**?**] and documented significant cross-national differences [**?**], but rarely examined underlying mechanisms—whether through national-level patriarchal ideology or IPV-related social structures and institutions. These questions await future investigation.

Second, existing research focuses on risk factors while neglecting protective factors that could reduce IPV and improve IPVA, limiting understanding of individual variation in IPV attitudes and behaviors under identical experiences. Examining protective factors would clarify how individuals with more resources resist negative influences from IPV-related social learning experiences and patriarchal ideology, forming correct IPV attitudes and breaking intergenerational violence cycles. For example, positive resistance experiences from significant others matter. Research shows many abused women can be courageous resistors and confident help-seekers [**?**], and their positive attitudes and qualities during domestic violence may positively impact children witnessing violence, buffering negative IPVA effects. Graham-Bermann et al. [**?**] found that in IPV-exposed families, mothers exhibiting greater family strength, better parenting, and no prior violent relationship histories had children who showed more resilience and better psychological adjustment when exposed to IPV. Chinese researchers have also found that adversity beliefs moderate the negative effects of parental IPV exposure [**?**]. Future IPV and IPVA causation research must simultaneously consider risk and protective factors, including positive IPV prevention and resistance experiences and individuals' positive psychological resources.

Finally, future research should employ situational methods to examine specific dimensions of gender role norms, exploring how different predictive factors influence IPV and IPVA and their interactions to build a comprehensive, multivariate interactive IPV theory. For example, investigating boundary conditions for benevolent sexism's divergent effects on IPVA. As noted, benevolent sexism sometimes appears protective and sometimes risky because it represents a "protective" patriarchal structure that uses "benevolent" rewards to guide women into specific roles. Do benevolent sexists maintain "protective" attitudes toward women violating these "specific female roles"? The degree to which IPV victims violate gender role expectations may moderate benevolent sexism's effect on IPVA. Some studies have used contextualized IPVA measures, asking about IPV acceptability/justifiability in specific scenarios (e.g., partner infidelity or sexual refusal) that reflect patriarchal stereotypes about female roles (e.g., chastity, obedience). IPVA varies across these scenarios: Waltermaurer [**?**] summarized that most people justify IPV when women neglect childcare (5%-64%) or leave home without permission (10%-83%), but less often for food preparation issues (0.2%-60%). These situational IPVA differences may reflect the degree to which scenarios violate traditional gender roles. Future research could manipulate the degree of perceived gender role violation and examine its interaction with benevolent sexism and effects on IPVA, testing whether benevolent sexism neg-

atively predicts IPV justification when victims' gender role violation is low but positively predicts justification when violation is high. By manipulating such moderators, we can better grasp the essence of benevolent sexism and other patriarchal ideologies and their connections to IPVA.

In summary, the concept of "intimate partner violence attitudes" represents an innovative expansion of traditional IPV research. As a proximal factor in IPV's causal pathway, it builds causal relationships between antecedents and IPV, moving beyond perpetrator-victim frameworks to examine IPV causation more broadly—indirectly through IPVA's origins. This paper focused on IPVA causation from social learning and feminist perspectives, summarizing mechanisms through which social learning experiences and patriarchal ideology influence IPVA, outlining two causal paths: "IPV-related social learning experiences → IPV attitudes → IPV behavior" and "patriarchal ideology → IPV attitudes → IPV behavior." Future research should integrate these explanatory frameworks to develop more universally applicable IPVA prediction models for deeper understanding of IPV attitude formation mechanisms and social roots.

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