The Power Threat Meaning Framework: Implications for Practice in Preventing Extremist Violence

Christopher Dean[a1]

[a]Director, Identify Psychological Services Ltd and Senior Fellow, Global Center on Cooperative Security.

Abstract

The contribution and influence of psychological distress to interest and involvement in extremist violence has received considerable attention in recent years. At the same time, dominant medical models for understanding such distress - typically framed as mental illness or disorder - have been challenged by emerging alternative paradigms in parts of the Western world. Understanding the contribution of psychological distress to extremist violence and how to prevent it requires consideration through these emerging paradigms and interpretative lenses. The Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) is one such paradigm, increasingly used by practitioners to understand and prevent psychological distress, unusual experiences, or troubled or troubling behaviour. This paper outlines its central theory and principles, investigates how these are relevant to informing our understanding of the troubling behaviour of involvement in extremist violence, and its implications for preventative practice, illustrated through an example case study. The case is made for the potential of this paradigm to support effective and ethical practice in the context of extremist violence.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been significant interest in understanding the relationship between mental disorder and extremist violence (EV henceforth). This includes research examining the prevalence and influence of specific mental disorders in contributing to involvement in EV, and implications for its prevention (Al-Attar, 2020; Corner et al., 2018; Gill et al., 2021; Gotzsche-Astrup & Lindekilde, 2019; Sarma et al., 2022; Weenink, 2015). This includes the influence of trauma in engagement with groups, causes or ideologies associated with EV and involvement in EV and practices and interventions to effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate

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[1] Corresponding Author Contact: Dr Christopher Dean, Warrington Business Centre, C/O Townley & Co Ltd, 67 Bewsey St, Warrington, Cheshire, WA27JQ, United Kingdom. Email: Christopherdean@identifypsychologicalservices.com; LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/dr-christopher-dean-07301b100; Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6846-2621

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individuals (Koehler, 2020; Lewis & Marsden, 2021; RAN, 2019a, 2019b; Windisch et al., 2022). Its importance is reflected in current service-wide approaches that are orientated around mental health and trauma-informed paradigms such as those to support the reintegration into society of those convicted of terrorism-related offences in the USA (Counter Extremism Project, 2022). Such developments are a significant step-change from recent perceptions of characterising those involved in EV by their 'normality' and lack of mental disorder (Bakker, 2006; Sageman, 2004; Silke; 2008).

Whilst some recent studies indicate the potential relevance of mental illness and disorder (Belton et al., 2023; Schuurman & Carthy, 2023), the significance and nature of their contribution (or functional link to EV) remains elusive, as demonstrated in empirical reviews and meta-analyses (Corner et al., 2022; Gill et al., 2021; Sarma, et al., 2022; Wolfowicz et al., 2021). A call for further examination of this nuanced and complex relationship has been made, including how specific mental disorders may interact with other susceptibilities at various times to account for extremist related behaviours (Gill et al., 2021).

For practitioners in the field, this academic insight is of no surprise and is readily apparent from individual face-to-face work. The importance of alleviating psychological distress, both to protect individuals from becoming involved in EV and to support their general mental health is reflected in practice initiatives that facilitate this (e.g., German Council on Foreign Relations, 2019; Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2019a, 2019b). Such developments are occurring alongside a paradigm shift in psychology and psychiatry, away from medical models towards psychological explanations for understanding and alleviating psychological distress and troubling behaviour, at individual, group, and societal levels.

This paradigm shift is based on the premise that a psychiatric diagnosis based on a medical model has significant conceptual, empirical, and practical limitations and is not fit for purpose (Division of Clinical Psychology, 2013). These include its failure to identify specific biomarkers of specific 'mental disorders'; its pathologisation of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are simply outside of a norm (including stigmatising identities and removing hope of life improvements); its inability to place people in separate meaningful groups; its failure to identify the causes of distress; its tendency to overlook contextual circumstances which cause distress; and its inability to reliably indicate how people can be helped (Boyle &

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Johnstone, 2020, p.26). It is opined that underlying these limitations is the flawed belief that 'the methods and assumptions used by medical researchers in identifying patterns in bodily problems can be applied to finding similar patterns – of symptoms and signs – in our 'abnormal' thoughts, feelings, and behaviour' (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.27). Such a model overlooks the influence of language, culture, relationships, memories, goals, stories, and emotions that people use to try to make sense of their experiences (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.28).

Consequently, in recent years, focus has moved from simply critiquing the medical paradigm to constructing alternatives, whose emergence has resulted in a radical and significant rethinking of how we perceive and approach psychological distress and troubling behaviour. The Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF henceforth) is one such emerging paradigm (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). It places emphasis and importance on many areas that have been historically overlooked, including the impact of social, political, and cultural contexts and power on human experience (de-pathologising behaviour); personal, social, and cultural meaning-making; the role of agency in how human's respond to their contexts, and the importance of narratives and stories in self-understanding (Boyle, & Johnstone, 2020; Johnstone et al., 2018a, 2018b).

This disruption has important implications for the field of understanding and preventing EV where the same theoretical, conceptual, and empirical issues and limitations apply (Gill et al., 2021). New paradigms offer new avenues for research and practice unconstrained by traditional concepts and language. Both the author's own consideration of the merits of the PTMF and its performance in practice, together with its potential value identified by other scholars in this field (Lewis & Marsden, 2021) provide evidence that new paradigms such as the PTMF can make a significant contribution to understanding and preventing extremist violence.

Overview of the Power, Threat, Meaning Framework

It is not feasible in the scope of this paper to outline the PTMF in detail, such as its historical development, philosophical underpinnings, or empirical basis. However, as many readers will

be less familiar with this framework, pertinent details are outlined to further contextualise it and aid understanding of its potential implications for EV in practice.

The PTMF was developed in 2018 by a group of psychologists and service-users (experts by experience) in the United Kingdom in response to professional and personal dissatisfaction with and the perceived inadequacies of the medical/psychiatric diagnostic paradigm as reflected in formal systems of classification, notably the DSM and ICD[2] to diagnose 'mental illness' (Johnstone and Boyle, 2018).[3] In contrast, the PTMF is a broad lens, structure or 'conceptual resource' based on specific principles, to guide how we think about (or identify patterns in) troubling feelings and behaviours that can be applied across research, practice, training, service design, and policy (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.2). Its core principles are based on a comprehensive and integrated review of the theoretical and empirical literature from multiple sources and academic disciplines which are transparent and well documented. It can be applied at individual, group, community, and societal levels in different contexts, including education (Bodfield & Culshaw, 2024), health (Grant & Gadsby, 2018; SHIFT Recovery Community, 2022), social care (Enlander et al., 2022) and criminal justice (Johnstone et al., 2028b, p.112; Ramsden & Beckley, 2022).

It argues that most, if not all, of us encounter emotional distress, unusual experiences and troubled or troubling behaviour at times in our lives, rendering it not abnormal but a 'universal human experience' (Johnstone et al., 2018a, p.18). Therefore, rather than framing these experiences as illness, they should be seen as common and familiar aspects of everyday life. Emotional distress typically occurs because we have core needs that are unfulfilled that are experienced as *threats* to our sense of security and safety. The causes of unfulfilled core needs are due to the negative operation of *power* in people's lives (e.g., ideological, coercive, or interpersonal power). As meaning-makers, we make sense and derive *meaning* out of experiences in our own individual ways (such as through our emotions, physical sensations, and language), which influences how we respond to adversity and perceived threats and express our distress. The PTMF proposes that the three central elements of power, threat and

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[2] Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) and International Classification of Diseases (ICD)
[3] In 2013, an official statement by the Division of Clinical Psychology representing 10,000 clinical psychologists publicly called for a paradigm shift to a model that is no longer based on a 'disease model' given the conceptual and empirical limitations with such models (Division of Clinical Psychology, 2013).

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meaning (outlined in more detail later) interact to create a set of common patterns in how we respond to threats to help us survive, cope, or manage (Johnstone et al., 2018a, 2018b).

The PTMF assumes that we develop responses to threat that best enable us to survive the negative operation of power and enable us to meet our core needs. Such responses are adaptive, functional, purposeful, and necessary for our protection and survival. However, they can also at times, in certain contexts and with certain people, be counterproductive. Whilst some responses can aid survival and fulfil core needs, those same responses may also initiate new threats to our survival or prevent other core needs from being fulfilled, resulting in further distress or troubling behaviour. For example, self-injurious behaviour may provide someone with a sense of control but may also threaten their status or position within a social group. So, whilst such responses can be adaptive and purposeful (to a point, at times, in different contexts), they may create other harms, outlive their value and usefulness, or not be as adaptive as alternative responses (i.e., those that create less distress or troubling behaviour but still aid survival and fulfil core needs). Thus, the 'overall message' of the PTMF is: 'You are experiencing a normal reaction to abnormal circumstances. Anyone else who had been through the same events might well have ended up reacting in the same way. However, these survival strategies may no longer be needed or useful. With the right kind of support, you may be able to leave them behind.' (Johnstone et al., 2018, p.18).

The PTMF suggests that it is from this conceptual understanding that we should seek to alleviate emotional distress and change troubling behaviour. Emphasis is placed on the power of creating new narratives and stories to empower, heal, and help, to find meaning, explain and make sense of our worlds and help us understand the origins of our distress (including the influence of ideological meanings). Narratives expressed through different mediums to let go of stigma, shame, or deficits, facilitate new opportunities to find alternative ways of alleviating distress (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.129). Even if contextual circumstances significantly constrain our lives, modifying meanings and creating personal stories is something most people are capable of and have power over, which may bring about small but meaningful changes. To date, the PTMF has been applied practically primarily through individuals, usually in groups, examining, discussing and analysing the framework using worksheets, exercises and presentations. This has helped them to reframe self-

understanding and develop and share alternative self-narratives (diagrammatically, verbally or in prose) helping them to recover from adversity (SHIFT Recovery, 2020) and survive prison life (Reis et al, 2019).

The framework uses language and terminology carefully (conscious of its limitations) that reflect its underlying philosophy, such as emotional, psychological, or mental distress; problems or difficulties and unusual experiences; and problematic, troubled, or troubling behaviour (Johnstone et al., 2018a, p.15). It makes no reference to medical language or terminology e.g., disease, illness, disorder, diagnosis, treatment, patient*s*. This linguistic sensitivity reflects the PTMF's appreciation of the power of language to frame meaning which has considerable influence over how we think and behave.

It is important to acknowledge that whilst the PTMF challenges the use of medical concepts to understand distress and troubling behaviour, this does not mean that it overlooks the influence and contribution of biology or physiology to these. Indeed, one of its key principles is that distress is experienced through our bodies (Johnstone et al., 2018a, p.33; Boyle & Johnsone, 2020, p.31). However, unlike the medical model, it sees these elements as inextricably connected to our social circumstances and relationships. It does not believe that surviving adversity can be explained solely or primarily or through biological explanations and warns against the tendency of biological research to support medical models that overlook the role of social context, power and meaning (Johnstone et al., 2018a, P.181). It draws heavily on trauma-informed research (including the impact of disrupted early attachments) and approaches which provide a helpful way of considering the role of biology (and biologically based threat systems) as a 'mediator and enabler of distress' (Johnstone et al., 2018a, p.175). Notably however, the PTMF acknowledges that not all psychological distress is caused by distinct traumatic events but also by general adversity, which can include more 'subtle pressures and expectations' operating in the backgrounds of people's lives e.g., economic inequality and racial discrimination (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.88). The Core principles of the PTMF for understanding the meaning and origins of psychological and emotional distress and troubling behaviour are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Core principles of the PTMF for understanding the meaning and origins of psychological and emotional distress and troubling behaviour

Core principle 1	Distress is experienced and expressed through our bodies.
Core principle 2	We cannot make simple links between what happens to us and what the result of this is – life outcomes are shaped by many factors including the support we receive and how we make sense of circumstances.
Core principle 3	The roots of distress are social and political – how we perceive our ability to conform to values and expectations can cause distress even in the absence of obvious trauma or adversity.
Core principle 4	Expressions and experiences of distress are shaped by culture.
Core principle 5	Distress arises within and can only be alleviated through our relationships and communities.
Core principle 6	Human beings have agency and choice even if options are limited.
Core principle 7	Our best attempts to survive difficult situations are what psychiatry calls 'symptoms'.
Core principle 8	Human being are meaning-makers, how we make sense of situations shapes how we are affected and how we respond to them.
Core principle 9	The central focus should be on meanings, narratives, and personal experiences.
Core principle 10	Stories and narratives can replace diagnosis. (Boyle and & Johnstone, 2020, p.31-32)

In summary, the PTMF directly challenges how traditional concepts of mental health, illness and disorder have been shaped, and of how psychological distress and troubling behaviour have been framed through the dominant medical psychiatric paradigm. Alternatively, it conceives psychological distress, unusual experiences and troubling behaviour occurring because of, the personal meanings attached to the negative operation of power in our lives which is perceived as a threat to our safety and survival. To alleviate distress or modify troubling behaviour, we need to understand that these are based on the

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negative operation of power, and that instead we can build on strengths and find alternative access to resources (power) to fulfil core needs. Such alternative ways to interpret and respond to threats help us to survive in ways that are productive and less distressing or harmful to ourselves or others.

The Relevance of the PTMF to Understanding and Preventing Extremist Violence

The PTMF explicitly acknowledges that individual membership of gangs and involvement in violence should be considered as threat responses and examples of troubling behaviours. Individuals who use these responses typically grow-up and live in overtly threatening environments that present significant adversity and social and relational threats. They often need to survive circumstances such as social exclusion, shame, and coercive power, and face threats such as physical danger, being emotionally overwhelmed, humiliation, and abandonment. Additional threat responses can include dominance, feeling entitled, aggression, blaming others, suspicion, and reduced empathy (Johnstone et al., 2018b, p.69). Criminal behaviour, using whatever limited power is available, is considered more likely for those with limited access to conventional or approved forms of power (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.92).

It is argued in this paper that engagement with groups, causes and ideologies associated with extremist violence and individual involvement in extremist violence can be conceived in an equivalent way through the lens of PTMF framework. Many features associated with troubling and violent behaviours through this framework - such as adverse childhood experiences, toxic stress, involvement in general criminality and problematic gendered beliefs and behaviour (hypermasculinity) - have also been linked to involvement in extremist violence (Logan et al., 2022; Koehler, 2020; Rottweiler et al., 2024; Windisch et al., 2022; Wolfowicz et al., 2021). To explore the relevance of the PTMF to understanding and preventing EV specifically, key elements of this framework are outlined below in relation to EV i.e., power, threat, meaning, threat responses and strengths, and stories. To explore and illustrate the implications of the PTMF in this field, focus is primarily on its relevance at the individual level and for practitioners delivering interventions to prevent individuals from

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future involvement. It is recognised however that the PTMF has wider scope for understanding, preventing, and countering EV at group, community, and societal levels, providing fertile ground for future research, policy, and practice.

Power

Power is a 'central' element to the PTMF (Boyle & Johnsone, 2020, p.64). This is because it significantly influences (for better or worse) what people encounter and experience in life, and whether personal, group, community or societal core needs are fulfilled or not. Due to this, it can contribute to significant adversity across societies, communities, groups and in individual lives. The PTMF groups power into various categories: biological or embodied, interpersonal, coercive, legal, economic/material, social/cultural and ideological (Johnstone et al., 2018b, p.35). It is suggested here that all these forms of power may be relevant to involvement in EV, including at the individual level. To illustrate this, three distinct types of power will be considered.

Ideological power, as described by the PTMF, relates to 'control of meaning, language, discourse, and agendas'; it is about our thoughts and beliefs, how we ought to think and feel, how we see ourselves and others, and the wider world which we take to be 'natural' or 'factual' (Johnstone et al., 2018b, p.35). This includes how beliefs or stereotypes are created about other groups, often those perceived as inferior. It is argued that ideological power contributes to every other power, although it can be hidden and unacknowledged (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020). There are several ways in which this concept is relevant to understanding involvement in EV. This includes how EV is defined as a form of *ideological* violence; how those associated with EV control or impose meaning, norms and expectations through narratives and how individuals should live up to these and feel about events. This is achieved through propaganda and indoctrination that prescribes how groups should be perceived and responded to (e.g. through 'us and them beliefs,' demonisation and dehumanisation). This is presented as immutable and absolute that provides the justification for violence and for which doubt will not be tolerated (e.g., Arvisais et al., 2022; Horgan et al., 2017; Kruglanski, 2014). Collectively, these evidence just some of the ways in which the negative operation of ideological power can be related to involvement in EV.

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Interpersonal power, as described by the PTMF is the power 'to look after/not look after, support or protect someone, to abandon or leave them and give/withdraw/withhold love and care.' (Johnstone et al., 2018b, p.35). Whilst its relevance to EV may be less immediately obvious than ideological power, there are several ways in which this power may operate. For example, consider individuals living in diaspora communities who feel powerless to support or protect communities from their homeland who are under attack (Sheffer, 2006); consider those abandoned by their primary caregivers who seek attention, love and care from elsewhere and are susceptible to those posing as surrogate caregivers who are involved in EV (Bloom & Horgan, 2019; Koehler, 2020) or consider those affiliated with EV groups, who were once given significant attention and recognition by fellow group members but who now feel overlooked and neglected and want to leave (Altier et al., 2017). These provide insights into how interpersonal power may contribute to involvement in EV and why individuals may come to reduce or end their involvement.

Finally, coercive power or power by force which is described by the PTMF as 'any use of violence, aggression, threats or greater physical strength, to frighten, intimidate or ensure compliance.' (Johnstone et al., 2018b, p.35). This speaks directly to acts of EV which are by their very nature coercive. Victims of EV experience adversity and psychological distress primarily because this negative form of power often removes their sense of permanence, safety, and security (Kaitz et al., 2009). However, coercive power can operate in many other ways, including individuals being threatened or forced into involvement by others (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010; Khalil et al., 2018); those whose exposure to past violence may contribute to involvement (Even-Chen & Itzhaky, 2007; Lewis & Marsden, 2021) or those who remain involved because of threats associated with leaving groups behind (Bjørgo, 2009; Koehler, 2015). Again, these provide some insights into how coercive power may contribute to involvement in EV and why individuals may choose not to end their involvement (even if they want this).

This element raises various questions regarding how the relationship between power and involvement in EV can be approached from a practice perspective. The PTMF suggests that practitioners and individuals can explore how power has impacted on them by asking: What has happened to you? How is power operating in your life? From a practitioner

perspective in this specific field, associated questions to consider and explore include: In what ways has the negative operation of power contributed to you being involved in VE? How has power been misused or abused that has contributed to your involvement? In what ways can you be supported in accessing sources of power to meet your needs and reduce threat, which may help to prevent your future involvement in EV? How may power still operate negatively in your life and to what extent can this be changed or managed?

This final question acknowledges the possibility that for some individuals, circumstances intended to prevent involvement may still maintain the negative operation of power. Take for instance the imposition of licence conditions that restrict the liberty of those being released from prison who have been convicted for terrorism-related offences. Whilst the intention of these conditions is sound (to protect the public) they may still be experienced and interpreted by individuals negatively, in that they may prevent core needs from being fulfilled. In addition, practitioners hold multiple types of power through their roles and responsibilities which if mishandled may be experienced negatively. Therefore, practitioners need to reflect on the exercise of power in their own practice (and whether this may be operating positively or negatively), such as how they communicate; frame meanings; relate to individuals; approach personal change; draw conclusions and make recommendations; identify and support access to alternative sources of power; and advocate for changes in client's social contexts. This includes practitioners becoming more mindful and comfortable to talk explicitly about power and its impact in client's lives, which the PTMF acknowledges many professionals do not do. Given the significance of power expressed through the troubling behaviour of EV, this seems particularly pertinent.

Threat

The PTMF argues that for humans to be free from distress, various core needs must be fulfilled. These include, but are not limited to, being safe; having a sense of security and belonging in a family/friendship/social group; experiencing some sense of justice or fairness in our circumstances and having a sense of hope, meaning and purpose (Boyle and Johnstone, 2020, p.60-61). If power prevents these core needs from being met, they are likely to be interpreted and experienced as 'core threats' to emotional, physical, relational and/or social

safety and survival (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.61). Such threats are considered more common in the contexts of inequality and other forms of deprivation, discrimination, exclusion, marginalisation, and social injustice. Certain elements can influence whether these are harder or easier to survive, such as whether they are predictable, affect your sense of self/worth or if social supports are present (Boyle & Johnstone, p.63). The PTMF identifies core threats in the following areas: within relationships (including intergenerational trauma), bodily (including being attacked), emotional, economic/material, social/community, environmental, knowledge and meaning construction, identity, and value base (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.61-63). It is suggested here that all these types of threat may contribute to involvement in VE, especially at the individual level. To illustrate this, three distinct types of threat will be considered.

Social or community threats identified by the PTMF include exclusion, isolation, hostility, being unable to achieve or gain status, and injustice/unfairness (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.62). Many of these features (or similar) have been identified as prevalent or significant factors underlying involvement in EV in research studies and meta-analyses (Belton et al., 2023) and are reflected as risk factors identified in prominent risk assessment frameworks that are often used to direct interventions for individuals (e.g., Extremism Risk Guidance (ERG22+, Lloyd & Dean, 2015), Violent Extremism Risk Assessment (VERA) (Pressman & Flockton, 2012). This suggests that several factors believed to contribute to EV can, through the PTMF perspective, be conceived as social or community threats to personal core needs.

Identity threats identified by the PTMF include lack of support to develop personal identity; loss of social, cultural, or religious identity and receiving messages through the media, government policies or other external forces that our group identities are inferior or something to be ashamed of (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.63). Again, issues with identity, and identification have all been associated with involvement in EV, including personal, social, ethnic, and religious identities (Arena & Arrigo, 2005; Dean, 2017; Echelmeyer, 2023;; Schwartz et al., 2009). Whilst these types of threats have been associated with involvement in EV, they also implicitly indicate how they can be prevented or addressed. For example, if individuals are supported in their identity development and can experience pride in their

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identities (rather than shame) they may feel less threatened, which may make them less likely to be interested or involved in EV. Indeed, addressing identity related processes and facilitating and supporting identity transformation has been the primary focus of 'identity-informed' interventions, specifically designed to prevent future involvement in EV, such as the Healthy Identity Intervention in the United Kingdom & the RIVE programme in France (Dean, 2014; Dean, 2019; Herzog-Evans, 2019).

Finally, threats to knowledge and meaning construction identified by the PTMF include a lack of opportunity or social resources to find and use important and credible sources of information to make sense of experiences or knowledge; knowledge and experiences being devalued by others, and meanings being imposed on to individuals (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.62). Whilst perhaps more nuanced than the other two types of threat, this type of threat is particularly pertinent when considering how individuals may become engaged with groups, causes and ideologies and involved in EV. Many personal accounts and associated theories for understanding interest and involvement in EV recognise that part of this process often involves individuals seeking out knowledge and information to make sense (meaning) of events in their lives and wider worlds which have provoked strong emotional responses e.g., injustice, unfairness, inferiority (e.g., Moghaddam, 2005; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Weggemans et al., 2014). This often occurs when alternative credible or trusted sources of ideological knowledge are absent or not easily accessible (Powers et al., 2023) or where individuals are significantly influenced by trusted others (e.g. family members) but whose knowledge is not credible, distorted, and harmful (Vale, 2018). Similarly, recruiters or others, often proactively devalue or discredit existing knowledge and meanings possessed by individuals, including previous sources of knowledge (Arvisais et al., 2022; Lakhani, 2010; Speckhart & Ellenberg, 2020). This is typically followed by imposing their own beliefs, norms, and values on the individual, often through propaganda, which individuals come to adopt unquestioningly (Arvisais et al., 2022; Bloom & Horgan, 2019; Lakhani, 2010;).

The PTMF also helps to explain why many individuals in various parts of the world become involved in EV primarily (or partly) because of economic/material threats to their survival; involvement may be (or perceived as) the only feasible way to access basic resources for survival for themselves and their families e.g., food, clothes, and shelter (Khalil

et al., 2018; Speckhart & Ellenberg, 2020). It is also important to acknowledge that defending against threats (whether these be to groups, communities, ideologies, identities, self-image, symbolic or physical etc) is itself a distinct and significant factor which research has associated with involvement in EV and has been included in EV related risk assessments (Belton et al., 2023; Lloyd and Dean, 2014).

This element raises various questions regarding how the relationship between threats and involvement in EV can be approached from a practice perspective. The PTMF suggests that practitioners and individuals can explore how threats have impacted on them by asking: How did what happened affect you? And what kind of threats does this pose? From a practitioner perspective in this field, associated questions to consider include: Which types of threats contributed to you being (remaining) involved in EV? How did/do such threats contribute to your involvement? How can perceived threats to your core needs be prevented? What strategies can be used to help you cope or manage threats or reduce or remove these?

These types of questions demand that practitioners recognise the influence of threats in individual's lives in the past, present and in the future. This includes consideration of how current or future contexts may maintain, exacerbate, reduce, or protect against threats, such as prison conditions, social/group relationships, economic circumstances, or occupational activities. For example, feeling unsafe and vulnerable in prison; having no contact with group members who provide a sense of belonging or being given opportunities to access activities, including employment, which provide purpose and meaning. As with the element of power, these questions also require practitioners to reflect on how they themselves, their approaches, and opinions and decisions about individuals may be perceived or experienced as threats (or not) to their client's needs, safety, and survival. For example, the prospect of having to participate in intervention work which may be perceived as needing to end relationships with important others or defection, resulting in threats to life; having to talk to and relate to practitioners who are perceived as 'other' or knowing that assessed progress on such work may determine their future liberty.

Meaning

The PTMF conceives human beings as meaning-making creatures who actively try to make sense of their worlds (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.70). Meanings are believed to shape our specific experiences as well as our beliefs about ourselves, others, and the worlds around us. Similar situations and events can be interpreted and experienced differently by different individuals in different contexts (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.71). For example, an adult professional boxer will interpret being punched in a boxing ring differently to a young child being punched by a parent. Meanings can arise from various sources including our emotions, physical senses, and language (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.73). How people attach meanings to adverse experiences can impact on how they respond to them. It is argued by the PTMF that 'at the root of nearly every experience of distress is a clash between (often hidden) assumptions about how we should think, feel, behave, and live our lives and our failure (whether actual or perceived) to live up to these standards and ideals'. (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.84)

The PTMF suggests that meanings can arise from many diverse sources including our emotions, physical senses, and language. Meaning making differs across cultures and is influenced by discourses of the society around us and ideological interests that underpin these (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p74). This includes meanings attached to gender and race and associated values, norms, and expectations (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.78). Examples of meanings include feeling abandoned/rejected, isolated/lonely, failure/inferior, shamed/humiliated, injustice/unfairness, helpless/powerless (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.72).

This conceptualisation of meaning is helpful when understanding involvement in EV. It helps to contextualise the importance of ideology in this type of violence, especially if ideological beliefs are considered as pre-packaged ways of making sense of and interpreting our social and political worlds. It also helps to understand why only some individuals who experience similar circumstances become involved and most do not (the meaning they attach to these is different) – the issue of multifinality (Borum, 2011; Delisi, 2014; Gill et al., 2021). For example, an individual may experience remarks and interpret these as racist, humiliating, signifying their inferiority and threatening their safety and respond by seeking feelings of superiority and safety, which involvement in a group associated with EV may provide. Others

however may interpret these remarks as offensive and ignorant, but not threatening to their core needs, which they respond to by ignoring and criticising those who made the remarks. It also helps to understand why individuals may become involved in EV, even though they may have had encountered different life circumstances and experiences: the meanings they attach to these may be similar and ultimately influence their engagement in EV – the issue of equifinality (Borum, 2011; Delisi, 2014; Gill et al., 2021). For example, two different people with two different experiences of inferiority and lack of safety may both interpret these experiences through feelings of injustice and grievance, which may ultimately motivate them to both engage with groups, causes or ideologies and to become involved in EV.

This element raises various questions regarding how the relationship between meaning and involvement in EV can be approached from a practice perspective. The PTMF suggests that practitioners and individuals can explore personal meaning by asking: What did you make of it [the experience or threat]? What is the meaning of these situations and experiences to you? From a practitioner perspective in this specific field, associated questions to consider and explore include: What types of meanings did/do you place on experiences or threats which contributed/contributes to your involvement in EV? Which discourses/ideological interpretations did you use to make sense of the world which contributed to your involvement? What meanings did/do you place on experiences which led you to question your ongoing involvement in EV? How can changes to meanings (including ideological interpretations) be facilitated to prevent or reduce your involvement in EV?

The PTMF recognises that many therapeutic approaches are based on helping people to create new meanings and understandings about how they see themselves, others, or the world around them, such as psychologically orientated cognitive or schema therapies. Such approaches facilitate opportunities for individuals to be exposed to/access alternative forms of knowledge and understanding (positive operation of power) to support them in considering new ways of fulfilling their needs or responding to threats in more useful and less harmful ways. Such psychologically orientated approaches have been used in the field of preventing EV (Keulen-de Vos, 2019), as have theologically/ideologically orientated interventions based on reframing and changing interpretations and meanings associated with involvement in EV (Koehler, 2017; Rabasa et al., 2010). This includes opportunities to (re) examine meanings

used to justify EV, those associated with their personal involvement and what meaning individuals may continue to place on their involvement (or ending it) in relation to their current and future values, identities, and aspirations (Dean, 2014, 2019). Indeed, enabling individuals to find personal meaning and purpose has been identified as an essential component of interventions to facilitate disengagement and deradicalisation from EV (Koehler & Klosinski, 2023).

Threat Responses

The PTMF assumes that people will develop threat responses that best help them to meet their needs and survive the negative operation of power, using what resources they have available to them. These responses are adaptive, functional, purposeful, and necessary resources that all people use for protection and survival. This includes automatic responses that draw on biological and physical reactions to meet human needs to be safe and survive in the face of adversity (e.g., fight, flight, freeze, flop). Threat responses are varied and differ regarding how much control we have over these and can be distinct to individuals and cultures. Society and culture, in different historical periods can significantly influence what threat responses individuals use as well as which are considered normal and acceptable (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.93). What is important to understand is the function and purpose of threat responses for particular people in particular circumstances, rather than looking for medical or psychological causes (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020, p.94). This aspect of the PTMF draws significantly upon trauma informed ideas and practices.

Threat responses are grouped together based on their function into the following categories: regulating overwhelming feelings; protecting from physical danger; making sense of control; seeking attachments; protection against attachment loss, hurt and abandonment; preserving identity, self-image and self-esteem; preserving a place in the social group; meeting emotional needs/self-soothing; communication about distress/elicit care and finding meaning and purpose (Johnstone et al., 2018a, p.203). Some examples of threat responses include hearing voices, emotional numbing, submitting, appeasing, holding unusual beliefs, confused/unstable self-image, grieving, emotional numbing, ruminating, grandiosity, idealisation, and self-harm (Johnstone et al., 2018b, p.97).

It is hypothesised here that involvement in EV (and many of its associated activities) represent troubled or troubling behaviours which elicit various threat responses. For example, becoming obsessively interested in and involved in the online activities of a group associated with EV can be conceived as a way of finding meaning and purpose where an individual feels these needs are not fulfilled; becoming affiliated with a group supportive of EV and appeasing or creating dependency on other members may be a way of seeking meaningful attachment to others where such attachments are absent; involvement may provide a means to intellectualise and be grandiose, which may help some to regulate overwhelming feelings and it may provide a sense of protection and facilitate suspicious thoughts, conspiracy theories and aggression, which may all help to cope with and manage perceived threats.

This element raises various questions regarding how the relationship between threat responses and involvement in EV can be approached from a practice perspective. The PTMF suggests that practitioners and individuals can explore threat responses by asking: What did you have to do to survive? What kind of threat responses are you using? From a practitioner perspective in this specific field, associated questions to consider and explore include: In what ways has your involvement in EV helped you to survive? What function are these responses providing in terms of meeting your needs or helping you to survive? What alternative responses to threat could be developed or strengthened which meet the same functions? What additional resources can be provided to help you feel safe and survive?

As previously mentioned, the PTMF argues that whilst these responses can serve people well, sometimes such responses may no longer be needed or useful and create additional problems or threats. A key implication for practice is how individuals can be supported in exploring openly whether involvement in EV will continue to be useful in their lives to survive such threats, or whether alternatives may be more helpful, useful, and effective. This requires practitioners not to dismiss the value or importance of involvement to individuals, but to pro-actively and sensitively explore and understand the protective qualities it previously or still contributes to their lives. It also requires practitioners to encourage and support individuals in considering and generating meaningful alternatives and enabling them to adopt these.

Strengths & Stories

The PTMF recognises that if people can access power and associated resources, they are in a stronger position to fulfil their core needs (Johnstone et al., 2018a, p.246). For example, financial power and resources can increase material, leisure, and educational opportunities, which can help to fulfil basic physical and material needs, exercising agency and control in our lives. Relational power and resources can fulfil needs to form intimate relationships and to feel valued and effective within family and social roles. Strengths can cover skills, qualities, appearance, knowledge, beliefs, relationships, networks and aspects of identity and community (Johnstone et al., 2018b, p.98).

The PTMF also emphasises the importance of personal narratives and stories, especially those that help individuals (and others in their lives, including practitioners) make sense of their lives and the influence of power, threat and meaning to the experiences of distress or troubled or troubling behaviour. Such narratives provide an alternative to psychiatric diagnoses which can be expressed in a multitude of ways (from personal stories to case formulations) through different means (such as poetry and art). Notably, such stories should emerge from dialogue and relationships, where meanings are not imposed but owned and produced by individuals, often in collaboration with others (including practitioners). They bring together individual responses to questions relating to power, threat and meaning, including summarising the origins of distress experiences; demystifying the influence of social discourses and ideological meanings; identifying alternative ways of living with or resolving distress and increasing influence and agency even within constraints (Johnstone et al., 2018a). They have the potential to liberate, heal, restore, empower, establish purpose, reestablish justice and redefine (Boyle & Johnstone, 2020).

In the field of preventing EV, focussing on strengths and narratives has already been given attention in certain practices and approaches, especially those that are trauma focussed or informed (Counter Extremism Project, 2022; Lewis & Marsden, 2021;). This includes moving emphasis away from addressing deficits to developing strengths; facilitating identity transformation through helping individuals develop alternative self-scripts and narratives that empower them to move on and justify leaving EV behind; and supporting them to access or develop internal and external resources to support desistance from EV (Cherney & Koehler,

2023). These features are characteristic of the 'Good Lives' model (Ward & Stewart, 2003; Ward et al., 2007), desistance approaches, especially those focussed on 'redemption scripts' (Maruna, 2004; Maruna & Roy, 2007; Sampson & Laub, 1993) but are also consistent with advancements in the Risk Need Responsivity model (Bonta & Andrews, 2017) to prevent other forms of criminality and violence. Such elements have already been incorporated into interventions to prevent EV (e.g., Dean, 2014; Herzog-Evans, 2019).

These elements raise various questions regarding how focussing on strengths and stories can be approached from a practice perspective. The PTMF suggests that practitioners (or individuals themselves) can explore strengths and stories by asking: What are your strengths? What access to Power resources do you have? What is your story? From a practitioner perspective in this specific field, examples of associated questions to consider and explore include: What social supports do you already have that can prevent you from getting involved and what can you do to help them do this? What skills and personal qualities do you have that can help you remain uninvolved? What personal beliefs and values can support you in not being involved? How can you create your own story to make sense of how you became involved and how you want to be and live your life moving forward?

A Case Example

A case example is presented to illustrate more tangibly how the elements of the PTMF can be integrated and applied to prevent EV. This example is fictitious but draws on aspects of real people's lives and experience of applying the PTMF for this purpose.

Luca is a 26-year-old man. He was convicted for the offences of encouragement of terrorism and disseminating terrorist publications. He was a member of an online forum through which these offences were committed. He has served a custodial sentence and is being released into the community with licence conditions that restrict his liberty. In recent months he has spent time in prison working with a practitioner to re-examine his involvement and life and to consider and plan his future.

Luca has identified various events in his past, notably his childhood, that he experienced as challenging and threatening which seemed to have impacted on his ability to

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fulfil his core needs. These include the early death of his father, being bullied by other children at school (partly due to him only having four fingers on one hand) and being physically assaulted by a friend. In later adolescence, he also identified being cheated on by a romantic partner, his friends moving away from his hometown typically for employment elsewhere, and his position at a professional football academy being withdrawn due to a significant injury.

In brief, various forms of negative power appeared to have impacted on him prior to his involvement in VE, notably negative embodied power (e.g., discourses associated with physical perfection and imperfection), negative interpersonal power (e.g., being 'left' by his father through death, not being looked after by friends or separation from them), coercive power (e.g., being physically assaulted by a friend) and negative social/cultural capital (e.g., losing access to a valued job opportunity).

Luca interpreted these life events as personally threatening to him. The meanings he attached to these events, as interpreted through his physical sensations, feelings, images, thoughts/language were that: He felt abandoned and betrayed by his friends and partner ('trust nobody'), excluded and rejected ('I'm alone in this world'), shamed and humiliated ('I'm treated differently to everyone else'), insignificant and inferior ('I'm worthless'), controlled by others ('People just want to dictate my life') and fear and insecurity ('The world just harms me'). These became habitual over time and came to influence how he began to interpret other events in his life which shaped his behaviour and responses. The negative operation of power and the meanings he attributed to events and experiences in his life meant that his core needs for safety, survival and wellbeing were being threatened, primarily related to his relationships, body, social/community, and identity.

In response to his interpretations, Luca developed various responses to survive, cope and manage these perceived threats in his life. He became suspicious and distrustful of others, to protect himself from being abandoned or rejected. He played violent video games with a community of players, which helped him establish a sense of friendship and belonging. He periodically isolated himself in his bedroom for lengthy periods whilst playing these games and fantasied about his own special powers, to cope with overwhelming emotions (especially those of humiliation and shame). He became hypervigilant about his appearance and lied

about details about himself and his life to protect his self-image and self-worth. He developed rigid routines and rituals and fixated on rules to maintain a sense of control. He became hypervigilant about the movements and intentions of other people and developed a militaristic mindset to protect himself from harm.

These general responses to threat were reinforced by his interest and involvement in an online group associated with EV which itself appeared to be a response to threat. The group and its ideology promoted a distrustful and suspicious view of other people, a powerful sense of group loyalty and threatened punishments for disloyalty or desertion; this provided a sense of protection from being abandoned or rejected and helped him meet a core need for security and belonging in a social group. The group and its ideology helped him to make sense of his feelings and who these should be directed towards, and strengthened his belief that he was unique with special powers which helped him meet a core need to experience and cope with a range of emotions. Being surrounded by like-minded others in the group with shared beliefs and an ideology that mocked and belittled the worth of others helped him to protect his self-image and self-worth. His role and activities within the group (including posts that encourage terrorism and disseminating terrorism manuals) also provided a sense of significance, purpose, and efficacy in his life. The group's dogmatic ideology provided a clear, absolute, and certain interpretation of the world, clear rules to comply with and the online nature of his involvement allowed him to control how he was seen by other people which helped him to maintain a sense of control over his life. Finally, his group membership made him feel safe and protected and reinforced his militaristic and vigilant mindset and made him feel more safe and secure in his everyday life.

Luca's involvement with a group supportive of EV and his involvement appeared to provide multiple ways for him to respond to threats to his core needs or find other ways to fulfil these needs in his life. However, over time, he began to interpret these responses as no longer effective but as counterproductive to fulfilling his needs. For example, before his arrest, he witnessed other group members being actively ostracized and removed from the forum (making him question whether involvement would protect against rejection and abandonment); another group member took over some of his roles (making him question his identity, purpose and significance within the group); others started making accusations about

him not complying with the group's rules (making him question how much control he or others had) and he began to receive online threats from individuals both within and outside the group (making him question whether involvement was keeping him safe and secure). These circumstances were compounded during and after his arrest in which he was imprisoned when his sense of threat to his safety, survival and wellbeing escalated, resulting in him isolating himself in prison, self-injuring and threatening both staff and prisoners to keep himself safe.

In the year before his release, Luca became more amenable to speaking with staff and spent increasing amounts of time in activities initiated by a former friend on his prison wing. In the months before his release, he agreed to collaborate with a practitioner whose role it was to support him with his reintegration. The intervention focussed on the PTMF to help Luca express and understand what had happened to him (how negative power had operated in his life), how this had affected him (what kind of threats this posed), what sense he made of this (how he interpreted and attached meaning to these) and what he had done to survive (threat responses) – as summarised above. This understanding (based on PTMF principles) was translated into a collaborative and contextualised formulation for understanding and explaining how he had survived to the present day and how he wanted to move forward and protect his core needs from threat.

A central focus of this formulation (or story) is consideration of what this narrative meant for him now, including whether and which past responses to threat were still interpreted by him as being effective, helpful, and aligned with his own current values, goals, and beliefs (and if so, when and in what circumstances). He thought that some of his responses were not always effective or helpful and were indeed harmful to either himself or others, not aligned with his values or the identity and self-concept he aspired to. Notably, this included him querying the efficacy, helpfulness, and appropriateness of his involvement in EV. It also significantly focussed on his future. This included working through new meanings which he had chosen to interpret events (e.g., feeling included and supported: 'some people can be trusted'; feeling effective and empowered; 'I do have some choices over my life'; feeling safe and secure: 'I'm rarely being actually attacked'). It included recognising and finding ways to develop his strengths and resources to meet his core needs such as building

his relationships with family members and old friends, furthering his education, and training, and identifying personal qualities that could serve him in life such as being articulate, focussed, likeable and academically minded. It also included establishing alternative ways to respond to perceived threats, ranging from questioning old ways of thinking if they emerged (e.g., suspicion), using breathing techniques to manage his physiological responses to threat, reminding himself of his strengths (including his capacity to survive) and values, undertaking activities that make him feel in control (including video games) and contacting people he cares about and who genuinely care about him. Table 2 provides a tabular summary of the relationship between power, meaning and threat in Luca's case example.

Table 2: *Summary of the relationship between power, meaning and threat in the case example of Luca*

Power	Threats	Meanings	Threat Responses	Alternative Threat Responses & Meanings
Negative interpersonal power	Being 'left' by his father through death Not being looked after by friends or separated from them Cheated on by a romantic partner	'Trust nobody' Feeling abandoned and betrayed	Suspicious and distrustful of others Involved with online group associated with EV	Questioning previous ways of responding and thinking: 'Some people can be trusted' Strengthening relationships with family and friends Feeling more included and supported
Negative interpersonal power	Not being looked after by friends or separated from them Cheated on by a romantic partner	'I'm alone in this world' Feeling excluded and rejected	Playing violent video games with a group Involved with online group associated with EV	Questioning previous involvement with online group Strengthening relationships with family and friends

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| | | | | Regularly contacting those he cares for and who care about him

Feeling more included and supported |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Negative embodied power | Discourses about physical perfection and imperfection | 'I'm treated differently to everyone else'

Feeling shamed and humiliated | Isolating self from others physically

Fantasising about special powers

Involved with online group associated with EV | Reminding himself of his personal qualities, values, and strengths

Regularly contacting those he cares for and who care about him

Feeling more respected and recognised |
| Negative embodied power

Negative coercive power

Negative social/cultural capital | Discourses about physical perfection and imperfection

Being bullied at school

Losing access to a valued job opportunity | 'I'm worthless'

Feeling insignificant and inferior | Fantasising about special powers Hypervigilant about his appearance

Lies about personal details

Involved with online group associated with EV | Participating in meaningful training and education

Reminding himself of his personal qualities, values, and strengths

Feeling more significant and empowered |
| Negative coercive power | Being bullied at school | 'People just want to dictate my life'

Feeling controlled by others | Rigid routines and rituals

Fixation on rules

Involved with | Questioning previous ways of responding and thinking: 'I do have some choices over my life' |

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			online group associated with EV	Participating in activities that provide a sense of control (e.g., video games) Feeling more effective and empowered
Negative coercive power	Being bullied by children as school Being physically assaulted by a friend	'The world just harms me' Feeling afraid and insecure	Hypervigilant about the movements and intentions of others Militaristic mindset Involved with online group associated with EV	Questioning previous ways of responding and thinking: 'I'm rarely actually being attacked' Using breathing techniques Feeling safer and more secure

This case example raises various additional points that help understand the value of the PTMF in this context. It provides a basis on which practice, and intervention can address factors that seem to have contributed to his involvement in EV, as well as supporting factors that are protective or preventative, such as personal strengths. Not all past responses to threat are inherently problematic and the PTMF encourages discussion and exploration regarding those that continue to be useful and those that may not be (for Luca, playing video games and engaging in some ritualistic behaviours continued to help him manage threats in ways that he considered unproblematic). In this respect, the PTMF encourages the positive operation of power through practice: discussion, consideration, reflection, exploration and respect for personal choice and autonomy, as opposed to the negative operation of power characterised by imposition, dogmatism, absolutism, and coercion (of which EV is a primary example). In this sense the whole endeavour of practice and intervention needs to be conducted in the spirit of the PTMF, notably coming from a position of supporting the positive operation of power,

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enabling positive fulfilment of core needs, and supporting ways of responding to threat that are productive, helpful, and harmless.

Limitations & Issues in Applying the PTMF to Prevent Violent Extremism

The PTMF is a new and emerging paradigm that has been subject to philosophical, theoretical, and practical critique, including that its account of psychological distress is not dissimilar to accounts of mental illness, that it is conceptually confused in places, reductive in nature, and potentially politicises the therapeutic space (Morgan, 2023). It is not in the scope of this paper to outline these in detail, but it is important to recognise potential limitations and weaknesses in this paradigm when considering its specific value and significance to understanding EV and how to prevent it.

The authors of the PTMF do not suggest that it can be applied in its entirety to understanding neurodivergence and neurodevelopmental conditions (Johnstone et al., 2018a). Given interest in the field and supporting research regarding the relationship between neurodivergence and involvement in EV (Al-Attar, 2020) its application to help understand and intervene with neurodivergent individuals might be more limited. This also potentially applies to psychopathy that is considered by some to be a neurodevelopmental condition (Gao, 2018; McDonough-Caplan & Beauchaine, 2018). It is interesting to note however that such individuals often present as seeking power, threaten others and have an absence of concern for the psychological distress of others, all significant themes within the PTMF. Given that individuals with neurodevelopmental conditions experience psychological distress, unusual experiences and enact troubled or troubling behaviour, the value of this paradigm and approach should not be dismissed. Indeed, further understanding the relationship between such conditions, involvement in EV, psychological distress and this paradigm would be a valuable research endeavour.

Whilst the PTMF was designed to be accessible and understandable it is in places quite complex and conceptually may not always be easily understood by individuals without careful articulation and use of language. Whilst the PTMF divides elements into power, threat and meaning, there are inevitably some conceptual overlaps between these elements which

can sometimes feel convoluted and repetitive. Again, care must therefore be taken in formulation and practice to ensure this remains clear, otherwise it has the potential to confuse and disengage individuals from intervention work.

The PTMF emphasises the accounts of individuals and their own sense making, which may result in focus being on power imbalances, threats and interpretations that may be related to psychological distress, unusual experiences, or troubling behaviour, but do not contribute or protect against involvement in EV. For practitioners who are tasked primarily to prevent the latter, they need to be knowledgeable and skilled in navigating personal accounts alongside research knowledge to guide interventions so that these are focussed on responses that are most likely to prevent future involvement but also that are personally meaningful and impactful in reducing or managing distress.

Another criticism of the PTMF is that it potentially deflects attention from understanding and addressing factors and circumstances that are more significant in contributing to involvement in EV but are not evidently related to psychological distress. Examples may include group influencers, beliefs supportive of ideological violence, or instrumental motives for involvement such as to achieve material wealth. This point also recognises that this framework is unlikely to explain why all individuals are involved in EV, notably those who appear not to have had significant experiences of power operating negatively in their lives or associated psychological distress.

Such criticisms can be levelled at any approaches to prevention that over-focus on psychological distress. However, given the comprehensive paradigm of the PTMF, there is an argument that most factors can be accommodated within it or could be seen even indirectly as a response to adversity and threat (including those cited as examples above).

Finally, there are significant political issues that may arise with this approach. Framing EV as primarily the product of the misuse or abuse of power, could be seen to divert responsibility from perpetrators to others, notably decision-makers: those in positions of power (e.g., politicians, leaders, parents, practitioners etc). The PTMF explicitly emphasises psychological distress and troubling behaviour occurring because of political and social influence rather than being the product of individual minds and bodies in isolation. This may be ideologically threatening to many, which may be responded to in many ways to (re)

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impose power, including silencing, discrediting, or discriminating against this type of paradigm. This reflects the dynamic nature of the PTMF in capturing a constant interplay of power, threat and meaning between individuals, groups, communities, and societies. The boundaries between human minds and human worlds are intertwined. In this sense, those involved in EV are imposing power and suggests that they are responsible, as is anyone and everyone, who wield power.

Conclusion

Given increasing focus on addressing psychological issues and distress (including trauma) to prevent EV, it is important that such efforts develop in-light of advances in related fields such as psychology and psychiatry. The PTMF provides an interesting paradigm for understanding and addressing psychological distress and troubling behaviour (notably involvement in EV). This paper has specifically focussed on how this framework can be translated into effective practice with individuals. However, the holistic nature of this framework allows even wider consideration of its utility in preventing EV. This would include all those working in this field from practitioners to policymakers and politicians. It describes how individuals in all these contexts make sense of their role, make decisions, and use their power, and in so doing, threaten or support others in meeting their core needs that result in either harmful or prosocial outcomes. It expands attention beyond a sole focus on the individual to the wider context of individuals, groups, communities, and societies that also embody power that can be used or misused at all levels. It implies that to prevent violence as a society, we need to understand how we use power to fulfil the needs of individuals across all levels of power, to prevent threat and facilitate constructive meaning making that encourages healthy coping, builds strengths, and tells empowering stories.

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