An Investigation into Perceptions and Responses to Conflict in Intimate Relationships

Leanza van der Westhuizen

University of Cumbria

Abstract

Prior research has examined perceptions of intimate partner violence (IPV), and how these perceptions can influence responses and help seeking behaviour (e.g. Harris & Cook, 1994). In the current study, 91 undergraduate students (n=44 females, n=47 males) attending a university in North-West England read a hypothetical IPV scenario, experimentally manipulated by victim gender and perpetrator gender, and completed situational perceptions of responses. Overall, the results indicated gender had no effect on perceptions IPV, although it did affect participant responses. Specifically, male participants were less likely to encourage victims to seek help, and were more likely to ignore the situation. Scenarios which depicted male victims were perceived by participants as less serious, and were least likely to gain intervention. The findings of the current study are discussed in light of the importance of the development of services to raise awareness of IPV among students, and provide services on campus which can provide first-hand support.

Keywords: Intimate Partner Violence, Dating Abuse, Helping Behaviour

van der Westhuizen, L. (2015) An Investigation into Perceptions and Responses to Conflict in Intimate Relationships. *Journal of Applied Psychology and Social Science, 1* (2) 55-75

Literature Review

Intimate partner violence (IPV) can be defined as 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners, regardless of gender or sexuality' (Department of Health, 2000; Home Office, 2015). IPV is a prevalent issue, with official statistics estimating around 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men will experience IPV in their lifetimes (Office for National Statistics, 2013). The true figure of abuse increases significantly amongst "high risk" groups, such as student populations, where it is estimated that 1 in 3 students become victims of IPV (Sansone et al., 2007). However, as Browne (1993) argues, rates may be underestimated due to underreporting.

IPV can lead to various health concerns, including stress related problems, depression, substance abuse, and suicidality (Campbell et al., 2002; McLaughlin et al., 2012; Williams et al., 2008). Costing health care services, law enforcement, and the Criminal Justice System around £16 billion annually, it is clear IPV carries social costs and consequences (Banyard, 2010; Cormier & Woodworth, 2008; Walby, 2009)

Research has demonstrated dating relationships are more likely to be abusive than spousal relationships (Nabors & Jasinski, 2009). A recent survey by the National Union of Students (NUS) found university students are at particular high risk of experiencing IPV. Of student respondents, 68% reported experiencing sexual harassment, and 43% had experienced verbal harassment during their time at university. Furthermore, 25% reported experiencing sexual assault, and 16% reported unwanted kissing, touching or molesting; leading to 1 in 3 students feeling unsafe around campus (NUS, 2011; Weale, 2014).

Students have described IPV as being a 'normal' part of university life, dismissing harassing behaviour as 'banter', and blaming sexual violence on excessive alcohol consumption. The 'lad culture' which is central to the university lifestyle endorses attitudes supportive of rape and abuse, which spills over into harassment and violence (NUS, 2012). Outside agencies including night club promoters, as well as social media sites such as 'UNILAD' and 'the LAD bible', all argue sexist attitudes are meant in good humour (Bates, 2013). Such beliefs characterise masculinity around high levels of sexual activity, thereby creating an environment laden with the IPV students are victims of (NUS, 2012).

The minimisation of abusive behaviour causes difficulties surrounding challenging or reporting IPV, as students are left unsure of which behaviours constitute abuse, and whom to report the abuse to (NUS, 2012). The effects of IPV have far reaching implications on victims, as their quality of learning and mental health can be detrimentally impacted (NUS, 2011).

Despite the increased risk of IPV students face, research has largely neglected this group; opting rather to study the perceptions of and responses to abuse within spousal relationships (Worden & Carlson, 2005; Feather, 1996; Harris & Cook, 1994; Hillier & Foddy, 1993; Latta & Goodman, 2011; Lehmann & Santilli, 1996; Stewart & Maddren, 1997; Sorenson & Taylor, 2005). Research which has addressed IPV amongst student populations have mostly drawn upon American samples (Syleska & Walters, 2014; Yamawaki et al., 2012; Cormier & Woodworth, 2008; Nabors & Jasinski, 2009; Capezza & Arriaga, 2008; Harris & Cook, 1994; Hutchinson, 2012), which may have limited generalisability to British cultures and values.

Perceptions of Seriousness

Gender differences have been identified in research examining perceptions of IPV, as females have been found to perceive abuse as more serious than their male counterparts (Ahmed et al., 2013; Beyers et al., 2000; Cormier & Woodworth, 2008; Harris & Cook, 1994). Furthermore, both males and females perceive abuse as being more serious when perpetrated by a male against a female victim (Ahmed et al., 2013; Cormier & Woodworth, 2008; Feather, 1996; Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau & Seelau, 2005). Wiseman and Bowman (1997) demonstrated similar findings, as male perpetrated physical abuse against female victims was perceived as being more serious than female perpetrated abuse against male victims. However, the study focused mainly upon physical abuse, and so neglected other central characteristics of IPV, including psychological abuse and coercion. Furthermore, much of the existing research into perceptions of IPV has been drawn from the general population, which may not be applicable to the perceptions of university students (Harris & Cook, 1994; Feather, 1996)

Research has also explored the influence of participant gender on perceptions of IPV. Findings have shown participant gender to have no effect on perceptions of IPV seriousness,

as Hutchinson (2012) found IPV scenarios were treated with equal seriousness by all participants; regardless of gender. This has been supported by Sylaska and Walters (2014), who found no gender difference between male and female perceptions of IPV seriousness. The gender difference only became apparent when the genders of the victim and perpetrator were manipulated, where male perpetrated abuse against females was perceived as being the most serious. However, as these studies were carried out on American students, the findings may have limited applicability to British students' perceptions of IPV.

Cormier and Woodworth (2008) also found differences in perceptions of IPV depending on the victim and perpetrator's gender. Their findings showed IPV with male perpetrator and female victim were considered more serious by participants. Similar findings have also been replicated in other research, which indicated male perpetrated IPV against females is considered most serious, less acceptable, and more worthy of a criminal prosecution (Stewart et al., 2012; Bethke & Dejoy, 1993).

Perceptions of Victim Responsibility

Bryant and Spencer (2003) argue there is a widespread tendency for society to blame victims of IPV for their abuse, which is reflected in the judicial system. Research has also shown gender differences in perceptions of victim responsibility, as male participants have been found to endorse more victim blaming attitudes than females (Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Kanekar et al., 1985; Sylaska & Walters, 2014; Thornton & Ryckman, 1990). Although, not all research has supported such findings, as female participants have also been found to show more critical attitudes towards victims than male participants (Kristiansen & Guilietti, 2006; Stewart & Maddren, 1997).

Harris and Cook (1994) found the gender of the victim and perpetrator affected participants' attribution of victim blame. Both male and female participants held male perpetrators of IPV more accountable for the abuse than female perpetrators. However, despite reflecting the views of a student population, the study had a 2:1 ratio of female participants to males, so the results may be more reflective of female participant attitudes than males (Harris & Cook, 1994). Beyers et al. (2000) found the gender of the victim, perpetrator and participant influenced perceptions of victim responsibility, as male participants held male victims more responsible than they did female victims. In contrast, female participants held female victims more responsible than they did male victims (Beyers

et al., 2000). In contrast, Stewart et al. (2012) demonstrated male participants held victims of IPV more responsible, and perpetrators less responsible, regardless of their gender. However, other research has shown male victims of IPV are perceived more harshly and more responsible for their abuse than female victims. Male participants in particular perceived male victims to be more responsible for their abuse than female victims (Terrance et al., 2011). Such findings were also reported by Lehmann and Santilli (1996), who found male and female participants assigned more blame to male victims than female victims.

Many explanations have been utilised to explain such gender differences. Women may attribute less responsibility to victims of IPV because they are able to empathise with the situation and place blame with the perpetrator (Taylor & Sorenson, 2005; Bryant & Spencer, 2003). In contrast, male participants may hold victims of such abuse more accountable as they show greater adherence to IPV myths (Yamawaki et al., 2012). However, Rose and Campbell (2000) found male participants actually held more abuse condoning attitudes, which may suggest perceptions of IPV are less a result of gender based attribution of responsibility; and more about each individuals' acceptance of abuse (Rose & Campbell, 2008). This has been supported by Capezza and Arriaga (2008), who found participants were indifferent in their perceptions of victim responsibility regardless the gender of the victim.

Sorenson and Taylor (2005) argue the differences in participant perceptions of IPV exist because male perpetrated abuse is perceived as the norm, while female perpetrated abuse is thought to be a result of self-defence. Because of such stereotypical assumptions, female perpetrated abuse is often seen as more acceptable than male perpetrated abuse; which may explain the different attributions of victim responsibility to male and female victims (Capezza & Arriaga, 2008).

The 'defensive attribution' suggests individuals blame victims of IPV to decrease similarities between the victim and themselves, as they try to justify why they themselves would never become victims of IPV (Hillier & Foddy, 1993). The 'just world' theory argues that only the guilty suffer, and through holding victims of IPV accountable for their abuse, it assists participants in attempting to make sense of discomforting events (Kristiansen & Guilietti, 2006).

Responses to IPV

The perceptions of IPV seriousness and victim responsibility are crucial in the way in which individuals respond to IPV (Yamawaki et al., 2012). Research has found perceptions of IPV to be directly linked with subsequent responses, as individuals who perceive IPV as being less serious are less likely to encourage victims to seek help (Carlson, 1996; Hutchinson, 2012; Weisz et al., 2007). Sylaska and Walters (2014) found lower perceptions of victim responsibility were associated with a lower likelihood of ignoring the situation, and an increased likelihood of encouraging the victim to seek help.

Individual responses to IPV have also been found to vary depending on the gender of the participant, perpetrator and victim. Harris and Cook (1994) found female participants reacted more strongly to IPV, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator or victim. They also felt the situation was more violent, had a strong belief that the victim should leave and were more likely to call the police than male participants (Harris & Cook, 1994). This was also found by Seelau et al. (2003), as female participants were more likely to believe the victim of IPV and to recommend they seek professional help. Conversely, males have been found to be more likely to ignore IPV, particularly if they perceive the abuse as being less serious (Sorenson & Taylor, 2005).

Research has also shown males and females are more likely to define a situation as IPV when the perpetrator is male, and the victim is female (Worden & Carlson, 2005). They are therefore more likely to respond to the abuse perpetrated by males against females, than female perpetrated abuse (Cormier & Woodworth, 2008). Hutchinson (2012) found participants were more likely to encourage female victims of IPV to seek help, than male victims (Hutchinson, 2012). Both males and females felt the relationship should be terminated more often when the perpetrator of abuse was male, which may provide insight into the trivialisation of male victimisation (Carlson, 1996; Weisz et al., 2007).

Literature in adult dating violence has shown inadequate responses from informal sources of help can perpetuate violence, as victim blaming responses may encourage victims to remain in abusive relationships (Weisz et al., 2007). Friends and family are considered to be the most utilised support system, and are generally considered to be the most helpful and supportive (Sylaska & Walters, 2014; Yamawaki et al., 2012). However, victims often face secondary victimisation from this group, as their experiences are minimised and ignored, while they are held responsible for the abuse (Kleine, 2004; Yamawaki et al., 2012).

The initial support victims receive from the informal help systems available to them determines their potential disclosure to sources of professional help (Sylaska & Edwards, 2014; Weisz et al., 2007). Informal sources of support may unable to provide help and support because of a lack of knowledge surrounding IPV. Many observers may therefore choose to ignore the abuse based on the belief that 'what happens behind closed doors stays behind closed doors'. They may unable to provide help and support because of a lack of knowledge or practical information surrounding IPV (Latta & Goodman, 2011).

The availability of positive social support in coping with abuse is vitally important in improving the quality of the lives of all IPV victims. Both instrumental and social support provide the victim with ways of dealing with the health impacts resulting from the abuse, such as stress, anxiety and depression (Latta & Goodman, 2011; Rose & Campbell, 2000). It is therefore essential to address the myths surrounding IPV through education, to allow informal helpers to become core, valuable resources for abused victims (Yamawaki et al., 2012). Although friends and family have been identified as the most sought out resources to victims, research has ignored what may predict helping behaviours of informal social support groups (West & Wandrei, 2002).

Aims

The present study aims to explore how gender of participants, victims and perpetrators influence perceptions and responses to IPV within student dating relationships. It was firstly predicted that female participants will perceive the IPV scenario as more serious, and will perceive the victim as being less responsible than their male counterparts. Additionally, it was predicted that IPV scenarios which depict a female victim and male perpetrator will be perceived as more serious, and the victim will be perceived as less responsible, than will male victims. Regarding the responses to IPV, it was predicted that female participants' responses will demonstrate they are less likely to ignore the situation, and are more likely to encourage the victim to seek help, than will male participants. Finally, it was predicted participants will be less likely to ignore IPV involving female victims and male perpetrators, and will be more likely to encourage female victims to seek help. The four hypotheses have been formulated to extend prior research in exploring the influence of gender variables on perceptions and responses of British undergraduate students to IPV.

Method

Design and Participants

The study was a 2 (participant gender) x 2 (victim gender) x 2 (perpetrator gender) between groups design. The sample consisted of 91 undergraduate students attending a University in North West of England. Participants were recruited using an opportunity sampling method, and were approached in campus libraries and asked to participate. Participants aged from 18 to 46, with a mean age of 22.80. Table 1 provides demographic information by participant gender.

Table 1

Demographic Information by Participant Gender

	Females	**Males**
N	44	47
Age		
Age Range	18-46	18-36
Mean (S.D)	23.02 (7.00)	22.51 (4.03)

Materials

Each participant was assigned randomly to one of two vignettes each depicting a hypothetical scenario involving strong suspicion of physical violence within a university dating relationship. The two vignettes differed on the gender of the perpetrator and the gender of the victim, such that one condition depicted IPV with a female perpetrator and a male victim, and the other described IPV with a male perpetrator and a female victim. The vignettes were identical with the exceptions of the names of victim/perpetrator (John/Jane),

and the pronouns associated with the victim/perpetrator. Vignettes were written based on vignettes utilised in previous research (Sylaska & Walters, 2014; see below for an example)

> *"Jane is one of your best friends. The two of you have been friends since early secondary school and have remained close since coming to university. Jane has been in a dating relationship with John for about 10 months. You've hung out with John and Jane together and feel they make a good couple; Jane has told you she's in love with John and you have sensed Jane is very happy with her life. Since the university year started, Jane has mentioned casually some of John's behaviour that has made you suspicious of their relationship. John has been starting arguments quite frequently because he is jealous that Jane spends much of her time with other guys; John genuinely believes Jane is cheating on him. John gets very heated during these arguments and, in his anger, has been known to throw things around the room. Based on having these conversations with Jane, you have noticed that these arguments are happening more and more frequently. This morning, you saw Jane and noticed that she has some deep purple-ish bruises around her lower arm, as well as a long scratch along the side of her forehead. After you made a comment to Jane about these injuries, she said that last night she slipped on a wet stair and fell. Jane then laughed nervously and quickly changed the topic. You suspect, however, that these injuries are due to an argument between John and Jane, which you sense has turned physically violent."*

Two questions were included to assess participants' perceptions of the IPV presented in the vignette. These questions measured perceptions of the seriousness of the situation ("how serious of a situation do you think the perpetrator's behavior presents?") and victim responsibility ("how responsible do you think the victim is for the perpetrator's behavior?"). Perceptions were measured on a 6 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*definitely not serious/not responsible*) to 6 (*definitely serious/responsible*). The scores of the perception of seriousness and the perception of victim responsibility were not added together, and were treated individually.

Two further questions were included to assess participant's responses to the IPV presented in the vignette. Participants indicated how likely it would be for them to respond in different ways ("to ignore the situation?" or "to encourage the victim to seek help?").

Responses were measured on a 6 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 6 (*very likely)*. The scores from the question measuring responses through ignoring the situation, and responding through encouraging the victim to seek help were not added together, and were treated individually.

Procedure

Once students agreed to take part, they were asked to read the vignette in their own time, before completing four questions in the questionnaire by circling a number on the scale which they felt most accurately described the IPV scenario depicted in the vignette. Participants were encouraged to take their time while completing the study, which took around 15 minutes. Following completion, participants were debriefed regarding the nature of the study and provided with the contact details of help organisations, both on and off campus, to support them with any issues raised from the study.

Results

When investigating the effect of the condition (perpetrator gender x victim gender), Levene's test of equality showed variances to be equal across the measures of seriousness, victim responsibility and likelihood of ignoring the situation ($p > .05$). Variances were unequal on the measure for the likelihood of encouraging the victim to seek help ($p < .05$). When investigating the effect of the participant gender on perceptions and responses to IPV, Levene's test of equality showed variances to be equal in the measures for perceived seriousness, likelihood of ignoring situation and the likelihood of encouraging the victim to seek help ($p > .05$). Variances were unequal in the measure for perceived victim responsibility ($p < .05$). Table 2 (below) contains a summary of the descriptive statistics for the study:

Table 2

Table of means (and standard deviations) for IPV perceptions and responses

	Participant Gender			
	Female (*n*= 44)		Male (*n*=47)	
	Female Victim (*n*= 21)	Male victim (*n*=23)	Female victim (*n*= 23)	Male victim (*n*= 24)
Seriousness	6.00 (.00)	5.74 (.45)	6.00 (.00)	5.54 (.51)
Victim Responsibility	1.00 (.00)	1.78 (.60)	1.35 (.50)	1.79 (.60)
Ignore Situation	1.09 (.29)	1.20 (.40)	1.39 (.50)	1.46 (.51)
Encourage Help Seeking	5.71 (.46)	5.70 (.46)	5.35 (.65)	5.25 (.61)

Participant Gender

A 2 way MANOVA revealed the gender of the participants had a significant effect on their responses to the IPV scenario, for both the likelihood of ignoring the situation, Wilks $\Lambda = .303$, $F(1, 89) = 10.20$, $p < .01$, partial $n^2 = 0.10$, and for the likelihood of encouraging the victim to seek help, $F(1, 89) = 12.40$, $p < .01$, partial $n^2 = .12$. Both presented a medium

effect size. Furthermore, the MANOVA found the gender of the participant did not have an effect on their perceptions of the IPV, both for the perceived seriousness of the situation, $F(1, 89) = 1.42$, $p > .05$, partial $n^2 = .02$, or the perceived victim responsibility, $F(1, 89) = 1.84$, $p > .05$, partial $n^2 = .02$. Both presented a small effect size.

Perpetrator and Victim Gender

A 2 (victim gender) x 2 (perpetrator gender) MANOVA showed the condition (victim gender x perpetrator gender) had a significant effect on participants' perceptions of IPV, for both the perceived seriousness of the situation, $F(3, 87) = 9.60$, $p < .001$, partial $n^2 = 0.24$, and for the perceived victim responsibility, $F(3, 87) = 13.90$, $p < .001$, partial $n^2 = 0.30$. Both presented a large effect size. The condition also had a significant effect on participant responses to IPV, for both the likelihood of ignoring the situation, $F(3, 87)= 3.63$, $p < .01$, partial $n^2 = .01$, and the likelihood of encouraging the victim to seek help, $F(3, 87) = 4.20$, $p< .05$, partial $n^2 = 0.00$. Both presented a small effect size. Post hoc tests showed conditions where perpetrators were male and females were victims were significantly different from conditions in which perpetrators were female and victims were male. This was true for perceptions of seriousness and victim responsibility, and responses through ignoring the situation and encouraging the victim to seek help.

Discussion

The current research aimed to investigate the effect of gender on perceptions and responses to IPV within university student dating relationships. It was hypothesised that female participants would perceive the IPV scenario as being more serious, and would perceive the victim as being less responsible than would male participants. Additionally, IPV scenarios which described a female victim and male perpetrator were predicted to be taken more seriously, and the female victim would be viewed as being less responsible than male victims. The study also hypothesised female participants would be less likely to ignore situations of IPV, as they would be more likely to encourage the victim to seek help; than would male participants. Finally, it was predicted that participants would be less likely to ignore and most likely to encourage help seeking in situations in which males were perpetrators and victims were female.

Inconsistent with the first hypothesis, the findings demonstrated participant gender had no effect on perceptions of IPV seriousness, or on perceptions of victim responsibility. The findings do however lend support to the second hypothesis, victim gender was found to have a large effect size on participants' perceptions of seriousness and victim responsibility. More specifically, participants perceived IPV involving a female victim as being more serious than when the victim was male. Participants also perceived female victims to be less responsible for the IPV than male victims

In considering responses to IPV, in line with the third hypothesis, male participants were more likely to ignore the IPV, than female participants. Male participants were also less likely to encourage the victim to seek help than female participants. Further, the findings showed victim gender affected participant responses to IPV. Participants were less likely to ignore IPV when the victim was female than if the victim was male. Furthermore, participants were more likely to encourage female victims to seek help than male victims

The results showed consistency with prior research, as gender had no effect on participant perceptions of IPV seriousness. Rather, it was the gender of the victim and perpetrator which influenced participant perceptions of seriousness (Sylaska & Walters, 2014, Yamawaki et al., 2012). Contrary to Stewart (2012) and Taylor and Sorenson (2005), the findings of the current study suggest the gender of the victim and perpetrator also affect perceptions of victim responsibility, as female victims were held less responsible for the abuse than male victims.

Similar to the findings of Hutchinson (2012) and Cormier and Woodworth (2008), the results indicated the gender of the participant, victim and perpetrator all influenced participants' likelihood of responding to IPV or ignoring it. Female participants were less likely to ignore IPV, and both male and female participants were less likely to ignore the abuse when the victim was female. Consistent with the work of Weisz et al. (2007) and Seelau et al. (2003), the findings demonstrated the gender of the participant, victim and perpetrator influenced the likelihood of participants encouraging the victim to seek help. While female participants were more likely to encourage victims of IPV to seek help, both male and female participants were more likely to encourage female victims to seek help than male victims.

The pattern of findings can be further understood through considering the role of the prevalent 'lad culture' on university campuses (NUS, 2012). Attitudes have been shown to have a fundamental relationship with the acceptance and perpetration of IPV (Flood & Pease, 2009). Such attitudes may be facilitated by the culture of university, as male students are encouraged to gain social status and embracing masculinity through engaging in violent behaviour and objectifying women. The very beliefs male students are pressured to accept have been directly linked to the perpetration of IPV (NUS, 2012). The male participants within the present study may have felt the pressures to conform to the 'lad culture' would prevent them from intervening in an abusive relationship. Additionally, male and female participants could perhaps have been less likely to respond to male victims of IPV because of the underlying belief system which suggests males should be dominating and powerful in their pursuit of women; and would therefore be less likely of becoming victims of IPV. Such an ideology may also lend an explanation as to why no gender differences were found in the perception of IPV seriousness. Male and female participants clearly demonstrate an understanding surrounding the seriousness of abuse; however, the culture of university may act as a barrier for students to respond sufficiently to IPV.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The current study was specifically targeted at a student population, given the high rates of IPV this age group encounter (Nabors & Jaskinski, 2009; Hickman et al., 2004; NUS, 2012; Weale, 2014). The study extends existing literature on student perceptions and responses of IPV through examining a sample of British undergraduate students; an area which has never been studied. Although the results may not be generalizable beyond undergraduate students, the study has provided insight into the cultural norms specific to British university campuses.

The present research has also allowed for insight into the student dating relationship culture, and the norms therein. However, as a result of the study being based upon hypothetical scenarios of IPV, the responses may not portray how individuals would perceive and react to real life acts of abuse. Further, the present research focused solely on IPV within heterosexual relationship, which leaves unanswered questions surrounding the effect of victim or perpetrator gender on responses to abuse.

The results demonstrated no effect of gender on perceptions of IPV, which may indicate awareness programmes are working; as both males and females recognise the seriousness of the abuse. Rather, it is the responses to IPV which remain gendered, suggesting there may be a lack of education surrounding knowing how to respond to abusive relationships. Future research should therefore endeavour the investigation of IPV in student relationships to allow for the further development of educational awareness campaigns and on-campus services to provide both victims and perpetrators with close points on contact. Prevention efforts should address the social processes through which attitudes supportive of abuse are endorsed, such as the 'lad culture' on university campuses. Flood and Pease (2009) suggest this could be achieved through social marketing and education, as reducing the underlying violence condoning attitudes can reduce the prevalence of IPV.

The present findings also highlight the importance for the development of educational services focusing upon responses to IPV. The heightened risk for student populations of experiencing IPV or knowing someone who is a victim of perpetrator of such abuse means it is vitally important for services to be put into place to raise awareness of the associated issues (NUS, 2011; Sansone, Chu & Wiederman, 2007). The result of effective educational programmes on campus could mean student victims and perpetrators have the additional support of fellow students, as well as on-campus services.

Conclusion

The current study extends literature surrounding the effects of gender on perceptions and responses to IPV amongst British undergraduate students. The results indicated the gender of perpetrator and victim were the strongest influences on perceptions and responses to IPV. The study adds to this area of study by highlighting the increased risk students are in of experiencing IPV, and the role university culture plays in endorsing and facilitating its acceptance. Not only does the 'lad culture' maintain the prevalence of abuse on campus, but it also limits the accessibility of victim support available to students dealing with the consequences of abuse. The findings signify the importance for the development of services and educational programmes to not only raise awareness of IPV and its effects, but also the need for students and other members of the general populations to be educated in how to respond most effectively to individuals in abusive relationships.

References

Ahmed, A., Aldén, L., & Hammarstedt, M. (2013). Perceptions of gay, lesbian, and heterosexual domestic violence among undergraduates in Sweden. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence, 7*(2), 249-260.

Banyard, K. (2010). *The equality illusion: The truth about women and men today*. Faber & Faber.

Bates, L. (2013) The sexist 'laddism' emanating from our universities. *Guardian Unlimited.* Retrieved 15 April 2015 from: http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/mar/08/sexist-laddism-university-glasgow.

Bethke, T. M., & DeJoy, D. M. (1993). An experimental study of factors influencing the acceptability of dating violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 8,* 36–51. doi: 10.1177/088626093008001003

Beyers, J. M., Leonard, J. M., Mays, V. K., & Rosen, L. A. (2000). Gender differences in the perception of courtship violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 15,* 451–466. doi: 10.1177/088626000015005001

Browne, A. (1993). Violence against women by male partners: Prevalence, outcomes, and policy implications. *American psychologist*, *48*(10), 1077. doi: 10.1037//0003-066x.48.10.1077

Bryant, S. A., & Spencer, G. A. (2003). University students' attitudes about attributing blame in domestic violence. *Journal of Family Violence*, *18*(6), 369-376. doi: 10.1023//A:1026205817132

Campbell, J., Jones, A. S., Dienemann, J., Kub, J., Schollenberger, J., O'Campo, P., & Wynne, C. (2002). Intimate partner violence and physical health consequences. *Archives of internal medicine*, *162*(10), 1157-1163. doi: 10.1001/archinte.162.10.1157

Capezza, N. M. & Arriaga, X. B. (2008). Why do People Blame Victims of Abuse? The Role of Stereotypes of Women on Perceptions of Blame. *Sex Roles. 59,* 839-850. doi: 10.1007/s11199-008-9488-1

Carlson, B. E. (1996). Dating violence: Student beliefs about consequences. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 11,* 3-17. doi: 10.1177/088626096011001001

Cormier, N. S., & Woodworth, M. T. (2008). Do you see what I see? The influence of gender stereotypes on student and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) perceptions of violent same-sex and opposite-sex relationships. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, *17*(4), 478-505. doi: 10.1080/10926770802463446

Department of Health (2000). Domestic Violence: *A Resource Manual for Health Care Professionals*. London, UK: Department of Health

Feather, N. T. (1996). Domestic violence, gender, and perceptions of justice. *Sex Roles*, *35*(7-8), 507-519. doi: 10.1007/BF01544134

Flood, M., & Pease, B. (2009). Factors influencing attitudes to violence against women. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 10*(2), 125-142. doi: 10.1177/1524838009334131

Harris, R. J. & Cook, C. A. (1994). Attributions of Spouse Abuse: It Matters Who the Batterers and Victims Are. *Sex Roles. 30,* 553-565. doi: 10.1007/BF01420802

Hickman, L. J., Jaycox, L. H., & Aronoff, J. (2004). Dating violence among adolescents prevalence, gender distribution, and prevention program effectiveness. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 5*(2), 123-142. doi: 10.1177/1524838003262332

Hillier, L., & Foddy, M. (1993). The role of observer attitudes in judgments of blame in cases of wife assault. *Sex Roles*, *29*(9-10), 629-644. doi: 10.1007/bf00289209

Home Office (2015) Domestic Violence and Abuse: Guidance. London: The Stationery Office. Retrieved 15 April 2015 from: https://www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse

Hutchinson, K. M. (2012). *Predictors of College Students' Dating Violence Perceptions and Help-seeking Recommendations.* Unpublished Doctorate Thesis, University of Akron, Akron.

Kanekar, S., Pinto, N., & Mazumdar, D. (1985). Causal and moral responsibility of victims of rape and robbery. *J. Appl. Soc. Psychol.* 113: 662–637. DOI: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.1985.tb00905.x

Kelly, L. & Westmarland, N. (2015). Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes: Steps to Change (Executive Summary). Durham University; London Metropolitan University. Retrieved 15 April 2015 from: https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/criva/ProjectMirabalfinalreport.pdf

Klein, R. (2004). Sickening relationships: Gender-based violence, women's health, and the role of informal third parties. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 21, 149–165. doi: 10.1177/0265407504039842

Kristiansen, C., & Guilietti, R. (1990). Perceptions of wife abuse: Effects of gender, attitudes toward women, and just-world beliefs among college students. *Psychology of Women quarterly,* 14(2): 177– 189. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.1990.tb00013.x

Latta, R. E., & Goodman, L. A. (2011). Intervening in Partner Violence Against Women: Grounded Theory Exploration of Informal Network Members' Experiences. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 0011000011398504. doi: 10.1177/0011000011398504

Lehmann, M., & Santilli, N. R. (1996). Sex differences in perceptions of spousal abuse. *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality, 11,* 229–238.

McLaughlin, J., O'Carroll, R. E., & O'Connor, R. C. (2012). Intimate partner abuse and suicidality: A systematic review. *Clinical psychology review*, *32*(8), 677-689. doi: 10.1016/j.cpr.2012.08.002

Nabors, E. L., & Jasinski, J. L. (2009). Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration Among College Students The Role of Gender Role and Gendered Violence Attitudes. *Feminist Criminology*, *4*(1), 57-82. doi: 10.1177/1557085108325235

National Union of Students (2011) Hidden Marks: A study of women students' experiences of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault. Retrieved 15 April 2015 from: http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/NUS_hidden_marks_report_2nd_edition_web.pdf

National Union of Students (2012) *That's* what she said: Women students' experiences of 'lad culture' in higher education. Retrieved 15 April 2015 from: http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/Campaigns/That's%20what%20she%20said%20full%20report%20Final%20web.pdf

Office for National Statistics (2013) Focus on: Violent Crime and Sexual Offences. Office for National Statistics: London. Retrieved 15 April 2015 from: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/focus-on-violent-crime/stb-focus-on--violent-crime-and-sexual-offences-2011-12.html

Rose, L. E., & Campbell, J. (2000). The role of social support and family relationships in women's responses to battering. *Health care for women international*, *21*(1), 27-39. doi: 10.1080/073993300245384

Sansone, R. A., Chu, J., & Wiederman, M. W. (2007). Suicide attempts and domestic violence among women psychiatric inpatients. *International journal of psychiatry in clinical practice*, *11*(2), 163-166. doi: 10.1080/13651500600874873

Seelau, E. P., Seelau, S. M., & Poorman, P. B. (2003). Gender and role-based perceptions of domestic abuse: does sexual orientation matter?. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, *21*(2), 199-214. doi: 10.1002/bsl.524

Seelau, S. M., & Seelau, E. P. (2005). Gender-role stereotypes and perceptions of heterosexual, gay and lesbian domestic violence. *Journal of Family Violence*, *20*(6), 363-371. doi: 10.1007/s10896-005-7798-4

Sorenson, S. B., & Taylor, C. A. (2005). Female aggression toward male intimate partners: An examination of social norms in a community-based sample. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 29*(1), 78-96. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.2005.00170.x

Stewart, A., & Maddren, K. (1997). Police officers' judgements of blame in family violence: The impact of gender and alcohol. *Sex Roles: J. Res.* 37(11): 921–934. doi: 10.1007/bf02936347

Stewart, C., Moore, T., Crone, T., DeFreitas, S. C., & Rhatigan, D. (2012). Who Gets Blamed for Intimate Partner Violence? The Relative Contributions of Perpetrator Sex Category, Victim Confrontation, and Observer Attitudes. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, *27*(18), 3739-3754. doi: 10.1177/0886260512447571

Sylaska, K. M., & Edwards, K. M. (2014). Disclosure of Intimate Partner Violence to Informal Social Support Network Members A Review of the Literature. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 15*(1), 3-21. doi: 10.1177/1524838013496335

Syleska, K. M. & Walters, A. S. (2014). Testing the Extent of the Gender Trap: College Student Perceptions of and Reactions to Intimate Partner Violence. *Sex Roles. 70,* 134- 145. doi: 10.1007/s11199-014-0344-1

Terrance, C. A., Plumm, K. M., & Thomas, S. A. (2011). Perceptions of domestic violence in heterosexual relationships: Impact of victim gender and history of response. *Partner Abuse*, *2*(2), 208-223. doi: 10.1891/1946-6560.2.2.208

Thornton, B., & Ryckman, R. (1990). The relationship between physical attractiveness, physical effectiveness, and self-esteem: A crosssectional analysis among adolescents. *J. Adolesc.* 14(1): 85–90. doi: 10.1016/0140-1971(91)90047-u

Tsui, V. (2014). Male Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse: Use and Helpfulness of Services. *Social work, 59*(2), 121-130. doi: 10.1093/sw/swu007

Walby, S. (2009). *The cost of domestic violence*., United Kingdom: Department of Trade and Industry.

Weale, S. (2014) Sexual harassment rife at UK universities, says NUS. *Guardian Unlimited.* Retrieved 15 April 2015 from: http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/sep/15/sexual-harassment-rife-universities-nus-survey

Weisz, A. N., Tolman, R. M., Callahan, M. R., Saunders, D. G., & Black, B. M. (2007). Informal helpers' responses when adolescents tell them about dating violence or romantic relationship problems. *Journal of Adolescence, 30*(5), 853-868. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2006.09.004

West, A., & Wandrei, M. L. (2002). Intimate Partner Violence A Model for Predicting Interventions by Informal Helpers. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *17*(9), 972-986. doi: 10.1177/0886260502017009004

Williams, J. R., Ghandour, R. M., & Kub, J. E. (2008). Female perpetration of violence in heterosexual intimate relationships Adolescence through adulthood. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *9*(4), 227-249. doi: 10.1177/1524838008324418

Wise, A. J., & Bowman, S. L. (1997). Comparison of beginning counselors' responses to lesbian vs. heterosexual partner abuse. *Violence and victims*, *12*(2), 127-135.

Worden, A. P., & Carlson, B. E. (2005). Attitudes and beliefs about domestic violence: Results of a public opinion survey II. Beliefs about causes. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, *20*(10), 1219-1243. doi: 10.1177/0886260505278531

Yamawaki, N., Ochoa-Shipp, M., Pulsipher, C., Harlos, A. & Windler, S. (2012). Perceptions of Domestic Violence: The Effects of Domestic Violence Myths, Victim's Relationship with her Abuser, and the Decision to Return to Her Abuser. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence. 27*(16), 3195-3212. doi: 10.1177/0886260512441253