Exploring and construing intimate partner violence: Gender differences in public perceptions of male and female perpetrated intimate partner violence

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A report submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) Honours,

Faculty of Computing, Health and Science,

Edith Cowan University.

Submitted (October, 2007)
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Acknowledgements

There are a number of individuals who I would like to thank for their guidance and/or support in the completion of this thesis. Firstly, I would like to begin by acknowledging my supervisors Professor Alfred Allan and Doctor Ricks Allan who have been there to help and support me with my project whenever I needed and who throughout this year have taught me so much. Secondly, Doctor Dianne McKillop and Carole Gamsby who have always taken the time to answer my endless amount of questions. Thirdly, my husband Dean Tilbrook, who in supporting me (as he always does) has sacrificed the most and complained the least and my children Justin and Luke who are an endless source of motivation. I would also like to acknowledge my mum, Alison Carman, who always keeps me grounded and my dad, Peter McDonagh, whose memory drives me forward. Last but by far not the least, my work colleagues (especially James M, Tiffany, Pam, Sharan, Nat and James H) who have not only understood but kept my priorities focused, and finally my friends and fellow students (Lisa, Nikki, Penny, Sophie and Mitch) who have helped to make the journey fun.
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Intimate Partner Violence and Policy Development: Moving Away from Gender Bias

Campaigns

Emily Tilbrook
Intimate Partner Violence and Policy Development: Moving Away from Gender Bias Campaigns

Abstract

Intimate partner violence, a form of domestic violence, is a social problem and as a result governments are focused on implementing policies that reduce the prevalence of intimate partner violence. The common perception, established by feminist theorising and research, is that males are more likely than females to perpetrate intimate partner violence. However, this notion has in recent years been challenged by researchers whose findings suggest that males and females are equally likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence. This contention in the literature creates problems for policy makers who are attempting to reduce, if not eradicate, the occurrence of intimate partner violence. In this review I explored the possible explanations for these contradictory findings and found that researchers are not clear about their definitions of intimate partner violence and the types of violence that they examine. Therefore, contradictions in the literature could be a result of inconsistencies in definitions and types of violence used in intimate partner violence research. It also became evident through this review that in order to increase understanding of intimate partner violence a new theoretical model is needed. Researchers need to examine the impact that factors such as perpetrator gender difference in types of intimate partner violence, context of intimate partner violence and victims fear levels have on policy development. Future research could begin by first examining the impact that public opinion has on policy development and then examining public opinions of intimate partner violence.

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27th of August 2007
Intimate Partner Violence and Policy Development: Moving Away from Gender Bias Campaigns

In recent decades domestic violence has become a policy issue, this had led to government efforts to reduce if not eradicate the occurrence of domestic violence (Hegerty, Hindmarsh, & Giles, 2000). However, these government efforts are centred on the common perception that domestic violence is a male perpetrated crime (Fraiser, Bock, & Henretta, 1983). Therefore recent government campaigns aimed at eradicating or at least reducing domestic violence are only focused on male perpetrated domestic violence and the problem of female perpetrated domestic violence is largely ignored (Fraiser et al., 1983; Hegerty et al., 2000). Past research has often supported the position that domestic violence is a male perpetrated crime (Chesney-Lind, 1989). However, research is now emerging which questions this position by producing findings which support the position that both males and females perpetrate domestic violence (Headey, Scott, & DeVaus, 1999). This contention in the literature presents problems for policy makers as uncertainty is created about where funds should be focused in an attempt to eradicate or reduce the occurrence of domestic violence. This review will explore the possible explanations for these contradictory findings (such as definitional inconsistencies, lack of theoretical models and methodological issues) and examine the impact that gender differences in types of violence, contexts of violence and victim fear levels has on domestic violence policy development.

Possible Explanations for Contradictory findings in Intimate Partner Violence Research

Definitions of Domestic Violence

There are definitional inconsistencies in the body of literature which has examined domestic violence (Bala & Bromwich, 2002; United Nations Economic
and Social Council, 1996). These definitional inconsistencies lie in the accuracy of the word domestic and in the variety of victims of domestic violence (Bala & Bromwich, 2002; Hegarty et al., 2000). In order for research to provide a good indication of the extent and nature of domestic violence these definitional inconsistencies in the literature need to be resolved.

Domestic violence in the broadest sense is violence that occurs between family members and often but not always occurs in the home environment (Hegerty, et al., 2000). One of the largest areas of definitional inconsistencies in domestic violence research is in relation to the use of the word domestic (Bala & Bromwich 2002; The United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1996). The word domestic means within the home (Bala & Bromwich, 2002). However, some violence between family members occurs outside of the geographical location of the home but is still considered to be domestic violence (Hegerty et al., 2000). As a result of the term domestic not adequately describing the occurrence of domestic violence some researchers have suggested that this type of violence should be termed family violence (Bala & Bromwich, 2002). The term family violence would better encompass the acts of violence between family members, however, use of the word family also presents its own problems (Bala & Bromwich, 2002).

Family is a very subjective term and to truly understand family violence an understanding of the meaning of the word family is needed (Bala & Bromwich, 2002). Family can be defined in its narrowest sense as individuals who are related either by blood or marriage and who live under the same roof (Bala & Bromwich, 2002). Broader definitions are also inclusive of individuals who are related by blood or marriage but do not necessarily live under the same roof (such as grandparents, aunties, uncles, step relatives and siblings who no longer live together). A definition
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of family in its broadest sense would also include individuals who are neither related by blood nor marriage and do not live in the same household (Bala & Bromwich, 2002). For example, individuals who are in a defacto or dating relationship with a family member may be considered a member of that family. In addition, individuals who are intricately involved in the family structure, but have no geographical or intimate relationship ties to the family, may also be considered family members (Bala & Bromwich, 2002). For example a close family friend who is referred to as uncle or aunty but is not an uncle or aunty by blood or marriage may be considered to be a member of that family by other family members. It is important that the broadest definition of family be considered when examining domestic violence as a complete picture of the extent, nature and impact of domestic violence can not be gained from narrow definitions (Bala & Bromwich, 2002; The United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1996).

Another area where definitional inconsistencies occur in domestic violence research is in the variety of victims of domestic violence (Hegarty et al., 2000). Often when people think of domestic violence they think of violence between two people in an intimate relationship, however, violence between intimate partners only covers one area of victimisation in domestic violence (Hegarty et al., 2000). Other areas of victimisation in domestic violence are elder abuse and child abuse (Hegarty et al., 2000). Elder abuse is violence that occurs against an elderly member of the family which is generally perpetrated by the child or carer of the victim (Hegarty et al., 2000). Child abuse is violence that is perpetrated against a child within a family, generally by a parent or sibling of the victim (Hegarty et al., 2000). Intimate partner violence, elder abuse and child abuse are specific areas of domestic violence that present their own set of unique challenges and as a result need to be examined
separately (Hegarty et al., 2000). In order for the extent and nature of domestic violence to be accurately measured and understood researchers need to be clear about which victim group they are examining.

Therefore, researchers need to be clear in their definitions of domestic violence so that an accurate picture of the extent and nature of domestic violence can be portrayed. Researchers need to be clear about whether they are examining a specific victim group or whether they are examining the broader concept of domestic violence (Bala & Bromwich, 2002; Hegarty et al., 2000). If researchers are examining the broader concept of domestic violence then perhaps using the terminology family violence would be more accurate (Bala & Bromwich, 2002). If researchers are examining a specific victim group they need to be clear about which victim group they are examining (Hegarty et al., 2000). If clearer definitions of domestic violence are presented in the literature then policy makers may have a clearer idea of the policies that are needed to reduce or eradicate the occurrence of domestic violence.

Intimate partner violence is an area of domestic/family violence that has recently received great attention by government policy makers and as a result will form the focus of the rest of this review. There are three main forms of intimate partner violence (Hegerty et al., 2000). The first is spousal violence which is violence occurring between individuals who are in or have been in a marital relationship. The second is defacto violence that is, violence occurring between individuals who are living together or have been living together in an intimate relationship but are not married. The last is dating violence which is violence between individuals who are in an intimate relationship but are neither married nor
living together (Hegerty et al., 2000). This review will focus on all three forms of intimate partner violence.

**Feminist Theory and Intimate Partner Violence**

Along with definitional inconsistencies, theoretical models are also likely to impact on findings in intimate violence research (Chesney-Lind, 1989; Headey et al., 1999). Theories are ideas put forth which can help to explain specific behaviours (Reber, 1995). The predominant theory in intimate partner violence research is feminist theory (Chesney-Lind, 1989). Feminist theory aims to explain the motivations behind the perpetration of intimate partner violence (Chesney-Lind, 1989). Researchers on the topic of intimate partner violence and society in general are indebted to feminist theorists for bringing to the public’s and policy developers’ attention the problem of intimate partner violence which in the past was considered a private matter. Feminist theory helps explain some acts of intimate partner violence, however, in recent times the effectiveness of feminist theory to explain most acts of intimate partner violence has been questioned (Headey et al., 1999).

Research on intimate partner violence has displayed differing results in relation to which gender is the primary perpetrator of intimate partner violence (Chesney-Lind, 1989; Headey et al., 1999). Past research which did acknowledge the possibility of women perpetrating intimate partner violence often suggested that female perpetrators were self-defending victims (Abel, 2001; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Foshee, 1996; Henning & Feder, 2004; Henriques & Manatu-Rupert, 2001; Katz, 2000; Ridley & Feldman, 2003; Swan & Snow, 2002). Chesney-Lind (1989) reviewed cases of female offending during the 1980s and from this review developed the feminist model of delinquency. The feminist model suggests that as a result of victimisation women commit crime to regain a sense of independence and self,
which has been taken away as a result of living in a patriarchal society (Chesney-Lind, 1989). The feminist theory suggests that female perpetrators of intimate partner violence are self-defending victims and that the context of intimate partner violence needs to be considered to get a clear picture of who is the victim and who is the perpetrator (Straton, 1994).

Feminist theory has since the 1990s been questioned by a number of authors (Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd, & Sebastian, 1991; Headey et al., 1999; Henning, Jones, & Holdford, 2003, 2004; Katz, Kuffel, & Coblentz, 2003). Headey et al. (1999) explored issues relating to intimate partner violence and gender using the Family Interaction Module during the International Social Science Survey in Australia. This Family Interaction Module was tested and found to be comparable to other large scale surveys on the topic of intimate partner violence (such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics' - Australian Women's Safety Survey, 1996). The results from the Headey et al. (1999) study indicated that women and men were equally likely to be victims of intimate partner violence and 54% of participants who reported being victims of intimate partner violence also reported being perpetrators of intimate partner violence. Furthermore, no significant difference was found between genders in the amount or severity of physical injuries sustained as a result of intimate partner violence. The researchers' interpretation of these results is that, contrary to past research, there is an equal problem with male perpetrated and female perpetrated intimate partner violence in Australia. Headey et al. (1999) suggested that their findings could be the result of men becoming more willing to report their own victimisation than they were in the past. However, in the absence of a theoretical model to explain Headey et al.'s (1999) findings their suggestions are pure speculation.
Therefore, although feminist theory may help to explain some acts of intimate partner violence it is becoming increasingly evident that feminist theory can not explain all acts of intimate partner violence (Chesney-Lind, 1989; Headey et al., 1999). This suggests that a new theoretical model is needed to explain intimate partner violence. Until such a model is developed policy makers are likely to continue to rely on the feminist perspective of intimate partner violence. As a result policies will continue to be focused on eradicating or reducing the occurrence of male perpetrated intimate partner violence and the problem of female perpetrated intimate partner violence will continue to be largely ignored.

Methodological Issues in Intimate Partner Violence Research

Along with definitional inconsistencies and a lack of theoretical explanations for intimate partner violence there are also two common methodological limitations in intimate partner violence research (Locke & Richman, 1999; McHugh Livingston & Ford, 2003). The first is that most intimate partner violence research is driven by feminist theory (McHugh et al., 2003). The second is that there are often significantly more female participants in intimate partner violence research than male participants (Locke & Richman, 1999; Nabors, Dietz, & Jasinski, 2006; Scclau, Scclau, & Poorman, 2003).

One of the major criticisms of intimate partner violence research is that research methodologies have been driven by the feminist perspective of intimate partner violence (McHugh et al., 2003). Researchers tend to design methodologies that are based on the premise that females are the victims and males are the perpetrators of intimate partner violence. As a result female perpetrators of intimate partner violence have not been examined in as great depth as male perpetrators of intimate partner violence and little is known about female perpetration of intimate
partner violence. When the possibility of female perpetration of intimate partner violence is considered in research, often researchers attempt to explain the behaviour with already existing theories of intimate partner violence (McHugh et al., 2003). Similarly to when other male developed theories of behaviour (such as measures of psychopathy) are applied to females, this can result in a misrepresentation of the behaviour (Salekin, Rogers, & Sewell, 1997; Sutton, Vitale, & Newman, 2002).

Additionally, research on public perceptions of intimate partner violence often involves more female participants than male participants (Nabors et al., 2006; Scclau et al., 2003). The difference in numbers between male and female participants presents problems with research on intimate partner violence. Locke and Richman (1999) found in their study that female participants were more likely than male participants to place blame on husbands for intimate partner violence and female participants were more likely to rate male perpetrated intimate partner violence as more violent than male participants. Therefore, research that examines intimate partner violence in relation to gender needs to involve samples that are equally represented by males and females (Locke & Richman, 1999).

A possible explanation for these methodological limitations of intimate partner violence research is that researchers, like other members of the public, are influenced by stereotypes (Madriz, 1997). Stereotypes are widely shared assumptions about the personality, attitudes and behaviours of people based on their group membership (Madriz, 1997). Researchers have shown that members of the public are likely to assign more negative stereotypes to men than to women (Fiebert & Meyer, 1997; Hosoda & Stone, 2000). Additionally, people are more likely to describe criminals as being male, and victims as being female (Madriz, 1997). In order to truly understand the extent and nature of both male and female perpetrated intimate
partner violence, researchers need to look beyond feminist theory and their own stereotypical views of males and females when designing research (Madriz, 1997; McHugh, et al., 2003). If these methodological issues are resolved in future research then policy developers will be better able to develop campaigns to reduce if not eradicate the occurrence of both male and female perpetrated intimate partner violence.

Types of Violence in Intimate Partner Violence Research

If the problems of definitional inconsistencies and methodological limitations in intimate partner violence research are resolved and a new theoretical model of intimate partner violence is developed then policy makers may begin to gain a better understanding of the extent and nature of intimate partner violence. However, there are also inconsistencies in the types of violence examined in intimate partner violence research. These inconsistencies lie in the types of acts that are defined as violence (Coker et al., 2000; Douglas, 2003; Thompson et al., 2006).

Generally violence is defined as those acts which cause or threaten to cause physical harm (Douglas, 2003). Some researchers have agreed with this general use of the word violence and suggested that only those acts which cause or threaten to cause physical harm should be defined as types of intimate partner violence (Douglas, 2003). Generally researchers who suggest that intimate partner violence only involves physical harm, or a threat to physical harm, do so as a result of examining intimate partner violence from a legal perspective (Douglas, 2003). However, legal perspectives of intimate partner violence may be too narrow in scope, and intimate partner violence research should examine those acts which cause or threaten to cause physical, psychological, emotional, sexual or financial harm (Coker et al., 2000; Thompson et al., 2006). It is becoming increasingly evident in research
that researchers are now examining intimate partner violence in relation to these broader constructs (Coker et al., 2000; Hegerty et al., 2000; Thompson et al., 2006). Thereby suggesting that intimate partner violence should be defined as an individual causing or threatening to cause physical, psychological, emotional, sexual and/or financial harm to a current or past intimate partner (Hegerty, et al., 2000).

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (1996) suggested that intimate partner violence should include acts which cause or threaten to cause physical, psychological, emotional, sexual or financial harm, as intimate partner violence unlike other types of violence is often a tool of oppression. The idea of intimate partner violence being used as a tool for oppression is derived from feminist theory (Chesney-Lind, 1989). The implication of such a theory is that violence is not used as a tool for oppression in situations in society except between family members. However, it could be suggested that schoolyard and workplace bullying are further examples of situations where violence is used as a tool for oppression (Craig & Pepler, 2007). What is strikingly similar about intimate partner violence, schoolyard bullying and workplace bullying is that they all occur between individuals who in some way share a great deal of their lives with each other. Therefore, intimate partner violence may be separated from other types of violence because victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence are in some way tied together through life circumstances rather than intimate partner violence acts being aimed at oppression and control. This is not to say that The United Nations Economic and Social Council’s (1996) suggestions of the types of violence that should be included in intimate partner violence research are inaccurate, just that the theoretical explanations for their inclusion may be inaccurate. Therefore, intimate partner violence can be defined as an individual causing or threatening to cause physical,
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psychological, emotional, sexual and/or financial violence to a current or past intimate partner (Hegerty, et al., 2000). In order for policies to be developed that are effective at reducing if not eradicating intimate partner violence researchers need to be clear regarding the constructs of intimate partner violence that they use by specifying the types of violence that they have examined.

Factors Influencing Policy Development

*Gender Differences in Types of Intimate Partner Violence*

If researchers are clear regarding the constructs of intimate partner violence that they use then differences between male perpetrated and female perpetrated intimate partner violence are often observed. Eagly and Steffen (1986) and Swan and Snow (2002) examined the relationship between gender and types of violence. They found that men are more likely to perpetrate physical types of intimate partner violence and women are more likely to perpetrate emotional or psychological types of intimate partner violence. This could account for why campaigns are focused on preventing male perpetrated intimate partner violence as opposed to female perpetrated intimate partner violence, because policy makers may not see psychological and emotional violence as types of intimate partner violence or they may not perceive these types of violence to be as damaging as other types of intimate partner violence (Felson & Cares, 2005; Salazar, Baker, Price & Carlin, 2003). However, researchers are now suggesting, because of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim in intimate partner violence situations, that psychological and emotional violence are types of intimate partner violence. Therefore, policy makers need to recognise that an interaction may exist between gender and the type
of intimate partner violence and take this into consideration when developing
policies to reduce the occurrence of intimate partner violence.

In contrast to the findings of Eagly and Steffen (1986) and Swan and Snow
(2002), Cercone, Beach and Arias (2005) found in their examination of individuals in
dating relationships that the only difference between the types of violence
perpetrated by men and women is that women more often than men reported
perpetrating major physical aggression and men more often than women reported
being victims of major physical aggression. This finding could be a result of Cercone
et al. (2005) examining dating rather than defacto or married couples violence.
Violence use in intimate partner relationships may therefore also be affected by
relationship dynamics and the context of the violence. Therefore, policy makers’
constructions of intimate partner violence may also be affected by a perpetrator
gender/context of the violence interaction (Richardson, 2003).

Gender Differences in the Context of Intimate Partner Violence

Richardson (2003) argues that the dynamics of a relationship, that is the
verbal and non-verbal communications that occur between two or more individuals,
may be a better determinant of violent behaviour than gender. If communications
between intimate partners are effective then intimate partner violence is less likely to
occur (Richardson, 2003). However, poor communications between intimate partners
can present in a variety of contexts and researchers have suggested that there are
perpetrator gender differences in the contexts of intimate partner violence (Cercone
et al., 2005; Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Phelan, Hamberger, Guse, Edwards, Walezak,
& Zosel, 2005; Swan & Snow, 2002). If such gender differences exist then policy
makers are likely to be influenced by this perpetrator gender/context interaction
during policy development.
A study conducted by Swan and Snow (2002) examined the context of intimate partner relationships to try and find the reasons for females perpetrating intimate partner violence. As a result of this research Swan and Snow (2002) suggested that there are three contexts in which violence occurs in relationships. These contexts are men as sole perpetrators, women as sole perpetrators, and mutual violence relationships. From the mutual violence context two sub-contexts were also identified, these were male coercive (where the male is slightly more dominant and tends to instigate the violence), and female coercive (where the female is slightly more dominant and tends to instigate the violence). Swan and Snow (2002) suggested that the second context (women as sole perpetrators) is the least common and that in general female perpetrated violence needs to be examined in terms of male perpetrated violence as women rarely abuse their partner without their partner first abusing them. Therefore Swan and Snow (2002) suggest that female perpetrators of intimate partner violence are self defending victims and an interaction exists between gender and context in intimate partner violence situations. A limitation of the Swan and Snow (2002) study is that only female perpetrators of intimate partner violence were interviewed and therefore they did not manage to gain the perspective of male perpetrators, male victims or female victims of intimate partner violence.

Researchers who examined both male and female perpetrators and victims in their sample were Cercone et al. (2005), Capaldi and Owen (2001), Kernsmith 2005 and Phelan et al. (2005). Findings of the Cercone et al. (2005), Kernsmith (2005) and Phelan et al. (2005) studies were that women are more likely than men to perpetrate intimate partner violence in the context of mutual violence or in self defence rather than as sole perpetrators. However, the findings of Capaldi and Owen (2001) were
that both men and women are more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence in the context of mutual violence rather than as sole perpetrators.

Cercone et al. (2005), Kernsmith (2005), Phelan et al. (2005) and Swan and Snow (2002) suggested in agreement with feminist theory that female perpetrators of intimate partner violence are often self-defending victims, Abel (2001) aimed to test this theory. Abel (2001) compared the trauma symptomology experienced by female perpetrators of intimate partner violence to the trauma symptomology experienced by females who are just victims of intimate partner violence. The findings of Abel’s (2001) study were that female victims of intimate partner violence experienced higher levels of trauma symptomology than female perpetrators of intimate partner violence. Based on these results Abel (2001) suggested that female perpetrators of intimate partner violence are not self defending victims.

Therefore, it can be concluded from the Abel (2001), Capaldi and Owen (2001), Cercone et al. (2005), Kernsmith (2005), Phelan et al. (2005) and Swan and Snow (2002) studies that mutual intimate partner violence is the most common context in which intimate partner violence occurs and male perpetrators of intimate partner violence are more often sole perpetrators than female perpetrators. It is likely that these findings influence policy development and perhaps mutual violence is not seen as being as great a problem as sole perpetration and therefore is not a focus of government initiatives to reduce the occurrence of intimate partner violence (Salazar et al., 2003). However, as researchers have shown mutual violence to be the most common context in which intimate partner violence occurs policies should become focused on reducing the occurrence of mutual violence as well as male perpetrated intimate partner violence (Abel, 2001; Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Cercone et al., 2005; Kernsmith, 2005; Phelan et al., 2005; Swan & Snow, 2002).
Gender Differences in Victim Fear Levels and Intimate Partner Violence

Researchers have shown that women are more likely to involve law enforcement during or after intimate partner violence has occurred than men and this provides support for the position that intimate partner violence is a male perpetrated offence (Phelan et al., 2005). Phelan et al. (2005) also suggested that the increased likelihood of women involving law enforcement implies that women are more fearful in intimate partner violence situations than men. Heightened fear levels in female victims may cause female victims to be more inclined to seek help as a result of victimisation than men (Phelan et al., 2005). Research examining gender differences in fear levels of victims of intimate partner violence has presented conflicting results (Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Felson & Cares, 2005).

Felson and Cares (2005) found that female victims of intimate partner violence are more fearful of male perpetrators than male victims of intimate partner violence are of female perpetrators. Conversely, Capaldi and Owen's (2001) findings were that women and men experienced similar levels of fear as a result of physical aggression perpetrated against them by an intimate partner. The main difference between the Capaldi and Owen (2001) and the Felson and Cares (2005) studies is that the mean age of participants in Capaldi and Owen's (2001) study (M = 21.05) was lower than the mean age of participants in Felson and Cares' (2001) study (M = 27.5). This suggests that in intimate partner violence situations victim fear levels may vary depending on both the age and the gender of the victim, however, this is an area that requires further research.

Even though Capaldi and Owen (2001) and Felson and Cares (2005) results conflicted it is likely that common perceptions are that female victims of intimate partner violence experience higher levels of fear than male victims of intimate
Researchers have suggested that the general public view male perpetrated intimate partner violence more negatively than female perpetrated intimate partner violence and are more likely to sympathise with female victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence than male victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence (Davies, Pollard, & Archer, 2006; Feather, 1996; Fraiser et al., 1983; Hendree & Nicks, 2000; Locke & Richman, 1999; Nabors et al., 2006; Seclau et al., 2003). If this is the case then it is likely that policy development is influenced by these common perceptions and therefore campaigns may be designed to reduce the occurrence of female victimised intimate partner violence as it is perceived to be the more fear invoking than male victimised intimate partner violence (Salazar et al., 2003). As a result of the conflicting findings in Capaldi and Owen's (2001) and Felson and Cares' (2005) studies further research needs to be conducted on gender difference in fear levels of victims of intimate partner violence. As policy development is also likely to be influenced by public perceptions an idea for future research would be to examine public perceptions of the interaction between perpetrator gender and victim fear levels in intimate partner violence situations (Salazar, et al, 2003).

Conclusions and Area of Future Research

In the past, authors have often supported the position that intimate partner violence is a male perpetrated crime (Chesney-Lind, 1989). However, recent researchers have questioned this position by suggesting that both males and females perpetrated intimate partner violence (Headey et al., 1999). This discrepancy in research findings presents problems for policy makers when attempting to reduce if not eradicate the occurrence of intimate partner violence. I therefore explored the
reasons for these contradictory findings and the factors that may impact on intimate partner violence policy development. Some of the reasons for these contradictory findings lie in the definitions, theoretical models, methodologies and types of violence used by researchers of intimate partner violence (Bala & Bromwich, 2002; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Coker et al., 2000; Douglas, 2003; Headey et al., 1999; Hegarty et al., 2000; Locke & Richman, 1999; McHugh et al., 2003; Nabors et al., 2006; Scclau et al., 2003; Thompson et al., 2006). Some of the factors that may impact on intimate partner violence policy development are gender difference in the types of violence, context of violence and victim fear levels in intimate partner violence situations (Abel, 2001; Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Cercone et al., 2005; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Felson & Cares, 2005; Kensmith, 2005; Phelan et al., 2005; Swan & Snow, 2002).

In order for an accurate picture of the extent and nature of intimate partner violence to be portrayed, definitions of intimate partner violence presented in research need to be explicit (Bala & Bromich, 2002; Hegarty et al., 2000). Researchers need to be clear about whether they are examining the broad construct of intimate partner violence or whether they are examining a specific form of intimate partner violence (such as dating, de facto, or married couple violence) (Bala & Bromwich, 2002; Hegarty et al., 2000). If clearer definitions of intimate partner violence are presented in the literature then policy makers may have a clearer idea of the policies that are needed to reduce or eradicate the occurrence of intimate partner violence.

Additionally, intimate partner violence research is often guided by feminist theory and stereotypes held by researchers (Chesney-Lind, 1989; Madriz, 1997; McHugh et al., 2003). Feminist theory can only explain the occurrence of some acts
of intimate partner violence and it is becoming increasingly evident that a new theoretical model is needed to explain most if not all occurrences of intimate partner violence (Chesney-Lind, 1989; Headey et al., 1999). Until such a model is developed policy makers are likely to continue to rely on the feminist perspective of intimate partner violence. Researchers are also likely to be influenced by their own personal stereotypes and as stereotypical views of males tend to be more negative than stereotypical views of females it is likely that research is influenced by these stereotypes (Madriz, 1997). As a result policies will continue to be focused on eradicating or reducing the occurrence of male perpetrated intimate partner violence and the problem of female perpetrated intimate partner violence will continue to be largely ignored. In order for the extent and nature of both male and female perpetrated intimate partner violence to be truly understood researchers need to look beyond feminist theory and their own stereotypical views of males and females when designing research.

There are also inconsistencies in the types of violence examined in intimate partner violence research (Coker, et al., 2000; Douglas, 2003; Thompson, et al., 2006). Some researchers have suggested that only physical violence and threats to physical violence can be defined as types of intimate partner violence (Douglas, 2003), however, it is becoming increasingly evident that researchers are now considering acts which cause or threaten to cause physical, psychological, emotional, sexual and financial harm to be types of intimate partner violence (Coker et al., 2000; Thompson et al., 2006). In order for policies to be developed that are effective in reducing if not eradicating intimate partner violence, researchers need to be clear regarding the constructs of intimate partner violence they use by specifying the types of violence that they have examined. If researchers are clear regarding constructs of
intimate partner violence that they use then differences between male perpetrated and female perpetrated intimate partner violence are often observed.

Researchers have found that males perpetrate different types of intimate partner violence than females (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Swan & Snow, 2002). The most common types of intimate partner violence perpetrated by women are psychological, and/or emotional types of intimate partner violence and men are more likely to perpetrate physical and/or sexual types of intimate partner violence than other types of intimate partner violence. It is likely that these findings are reflected in perceptions of policy makers (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Swan & Snow, 2002). Therefore, campaigns may be focused on preventing male perpetrated intimate partner violence as opposed to female perpetrated intimate partner violence as policy makers may not see psychological, and emotional violence as types of intimate partner violence (Felson & Cares, 2005). Further research is needed to determine the impact that perpetrator gender differences in types of intimate partner violence has on intimate partner violence policy development.

Perpetrator gender differences in the contexts of intimate partner violence may also impact on policy development (Salazar et al, 2003). Researchers have suggested that mutual intimate partner violence is the most common context in which intimate partner violence occurs and male perpetrators of intimate partner violence are more often sole perpetrators than female perpetrators (Abel, 2001; Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Cercone et al., 2005; Kensmith, 2005; Phelan et al., 2005; Swan & Snow, 2002). It is likely that these findings influence policy development and perhaps mutual violence is not seen as being as great a problem as sole perpetration and therefore is not a focus of government initiatives to reduce the occurrence of intimate partner violence (Salazar et al, 2003). However, as researchers have shown
that mutual violence is the most common context in which intimate partner violence occurs perhaps policies should become focused on reducing the occurrence of mutual violence as well as male perpetrated intimate partner violence (Abel, 2001; Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Cercone et al., 2005; Kensmith, 2005; Phelan et al., 2005; Swan & Snow, 2002). Future research should examine the impact of perpetrator gender differences in the context of intimate partner violence on intimate partner violence policy development.

Another aspect of intimate partner violence that may impact on policy development is gender differences in victim fear levels (Salazar et al., 2003). There is contention in the literature as to which gender experiences the highest levels of fear (Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Felson & Cares, 2005). It is possible that even though this contention does exist in the literature it may be that common perceptions are that female victims of intimate partner violence experience higher levels of fear than male victims of intimate partner violence (Davies et al., 2006; Feather, 1996; Fraiser et al., 1983; Hendree & Nicks, 2000; Locke & Richman, 1999; Nabors et al., 2006; Scclau et al., 2003). If this is the case then it is likely that policy development is influenced by these common perceptions and therefore campaigns may be designed to reduce the occurrence of female victimised intimate partner violence as it is perceived to be more fear invoking than male victimised intimate partner violence (Salazar et al., 2003). In order to resolve this contention in the literature further research needs to be conducted on gender difference in fear levels of victims of intimate partner violence (Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Felson & Cares, 2005). As policy development is also likely influenced by public perceptions an idea for future research would be to examine public perceptions of the interaction between perpetrator gender and victim fear levels in intimate partner violence situations.
In conclusion, contention in the literature and other factors that impact on policy development may be preventing intimate partner violence policy development from adequately reducing or eradicating the occurrence of both male and female perpetrated intimate partner violence. Therefore, the issues that may explain the contention in the literature, such as inconsistencies in the definitions and types of violence used in intimate partner violence research, need to be resolved (Bala & Bromwich, 2002; Coker et al., 2000; Douglas, 2003; Headey et al., 1999; Hegarty et al., 2000; Locke & Richman, 1999; Nabors et al., 2006; Scclau et al., 2003; Thompson et al., 2006). It is also becoming increasingly evident that in order for intimate partner violence to be better understood a new theoretical model of intimate partner violence needs to be developed (Chesney-Lind, 1989; McHugh et al., 1999). Therefore, future research on intimate partner violence should be focused on the development of a new intimate partner violence theory and determining the impact that factors such as perpetrator gender differences in types of intimate partner violence, context of intimate partner violence and victims fear levels have on policy development (Abel, 2001; Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Cercone et al., 2005; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Felson & Cares, 2005; Kensmith, 2005; McHugh et al., 1999; Phelan et al., 2005; Swan & Snow, 2002). One way of measuring the impact of these factors on policy development would be to first measure the impact of public opinion on policy development and then measure public opinions of intimate partner violence. Suggestions for future research questions are

1) Is policy development influenced by public opinions of intimate partner violence?
2) Do the general public think that physical assault, threats to physical assault, psychological assault, emotional assault, sexual assault and financial assault are all types of intimate partner violence?

3) Is there an interaction between perpetrator gender and the type of behaviour (physical, psychological, emotional, sexual or financial) on public opinions of intimate partner violence?

4) Do the general public think that mutual assault is a type of intimate partner violence?

5) Is there an interaction between perpetrator gender and the context of violence (mutual violence, men as sole perpetrators, women as sole perpetrators, men as self defending victims or women as self defending victims) in public opinions of intimate partner violence?

6) Do the general public think that fear levels in victims of intimate partner violence are different for male and female victims.
References


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20/08/2007
Public Perceptions of Gender Differences in Intimate Partner Violence: Implications for Jury Decision Making

Emily Tilbrook
Abstract

The idea of jury gender bias in cases of intimate partner violence was investigated through an examination of public perceptions of intimate partner violence. An experimental design was used to investigate whether or not the gender of the perpetrator and/or the participant, influenced the general public’s construction of the behaviour, and their perception of violence and fear levels. It was found that stalking, physical, threats to physical, psychological, and sexual assaults are all considered to be types of intimate partner violence. Additionally, public perceptions about perpetrator gender differences in intimate partner violence are based on perceived outcomes of the violence rather than on whether the violence is defined as a type of violence. Therefore, it is possible that juries may be more likely to convict a male than a female perpetrator of intimate partner violence as male perpetrated intimate partner violence is perceived to cause more damage to the victim. Also female jury members are more likely than male jury members to convict a perpetrator of intimate partner violence as females perceive intimate partner violence to cause more damage than males. From these findings it is recommended that juries contain an equal representation of both males and females and that public awareness is raised to the possibility of female perpetrated intimate partner violence, so that male and female perpetrators may receive equal treatment in court.

Key Words: Intimate Partner Violence, Gender, Juries, Public Perceptions

Emily Tilbrook

Alfred Allan and Ricks Allan

29th of October 2007
Public Perceptions of Gender Differences in Intimate Partner Violence: Implications for Jury Decision Making

Intimate partner violence is often perceived to be a male perpetrated offence (Chesney & Lind, 1989). It is therefore likely that jury members would enter court with this preconception of intimate partner violence. Past researchers have often supported the position that intimate partner violence is a male perpetrated offence (Chesney-Lind, 1989). However, research is now emerging which questions this position by producing findings which support the position that both males and females perpetrate intimate partner violence (Headey, Scott, & DeVaus, 1999). Therefore, male and female perpetrators of intimate partner violence may not receive equitable treatment in court as juries may be biased in their decisions about male and female perpetrated intimate partner violence.

Intimate partner violence, of which there are three main forms, is violence between two people who are in an intimate relationship (Hegarty, Hindmarsh & Giles, 2000). The first form of intimate partner violence is spousal violence which is violence occurring between individuals who are in or have been in a marital relationship. The second is defacto violence which is violence occurring between individuals who are living together or have been living together in an intimate relationship but are not married. The last is dating violence which is violence between individuals who are in an intimate relationship but are neither married nor living together.

Research on intimate partner violence has displayed differing results in relation to whether or not women perpetrate intimate partner violence (Chesney-Lind, 1989; Headey et al., 1999). Past researchers who did acknowledge the possibility of women perpetrating intimate partner violence often suggested that
female perpetrators were self-defending victims (Abel, 2001; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Foshee, 1996; Henning & Feder, 2004; Henriques & Manatu-Rupert, 2001; Katz, 2000; Ridley & Feldman, 2003; Swan & Snow, 2002). Chesney-Lind reviewed cases of female offending during the 1980s and from this review developed the feminist model of delinquency. The feminist model suggests that as a result of victimisation women commit crime regain a sense of independence and self, which has been taken away as a result of living in a patriarchal society. This model suggests that females are not the instigators of intimate partner violence but instead perpetrated intimate partner violence in self-defence (Chesney-Lind, 1989; Straton, 1994).

Feminist theory has since the 1990s been questioned by a number of authors (Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd, & Sebastian, 1991; Headey et al., 1999; Henning, Jones, & Holdford, 2003, 2005; Katz, Kuffel, & Coblentz, 2003). Headey et al. explored issues relating to intimate partner violence and gender using the Family Interaction Module during the International Social Science Survey in Australia. This Family Interaction Module was tested and found to be comparable to other large scale surveys on the topic of intimate partner violence (such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics' - Australian Women’s Safety Survey, 1996). Headey et al. found that women and men are equally likely to be victims of intimate partner violence and that 54% of participants who reported being victims of intimate partner violence also reported to be perpetrators of intimate partner violence. Headey et al. further found no significant difference between genders in the amount or severity of physical injuries sustained as a result of intimate partner violence. Based on these results and contrary to past research, the researchers suggest that there is an equal problem with both male and female perpetrated intimate partner violence in Australia. However, cases of intimate partner violence where a male is the perpetrator are prosecuted
more often than cases of intimate partner violence where a female is the perpetrator (Henning & Feder, 2005). If Headey et al.’s study is a true representation of intimate partner violence in Australia and women and men are equally likely to be victims and/or perpetrators of intimate partner violence, then there must be a reason for cases of female perpetrated intimate partner violence being prosecuted less often than cases of male perpetrated intimate partner violence.

One reason for cases of female perpetrated intimate partner violence being prosecuted less often than cases of male perpetrated intimate partner violence is that male victims of intimate partner violence are less likely to report their victimisation to the police than female victims. This position is supported by the findings of People (2005) who showed that 28.9% of domestic violence victims who reported their victimisation to New South Wales police in 2004 were males and 71.1% were females. Of the male victims 39% where victims to an intimate partner and of the female victims 71% were victims to an intimate partner. From these results it can be suggested that female perpetration of intimate partner violence is less likely to be reported to the police than male perpetration of intimate partner violence.

However, Henning & Feder (2005) suggested that even when reported, prosecution of cases of female perpetrated intimate partner violence are pursued less often than cases of male perpetrated intimate partner violence. They examined what factors influence the prosecution of male and female perpetrators of intimate partner violence. In this study 4178 cases of intimate partner violence were examined to determine whether the gender of the perpetrator had an effect on court decisions, bail release and prosecutors’ decisions to take the case. They found that the court decisions and bail releases were not influenced by the gender of the perpetrator, however, the prosecutors’ decision to take the case was influenced by the gender of
the perpetrator. In cases where the female was the perpetrator, prosecution was pursued less often than in cases where the male was the perpetrator. Henning and Feder suggested that the reason for this result may be that gaining a conviction in cases of female perpetrated intimate partner violence is more difficult than in male perpetrated cases. They suggested that public opinion may sway in favour of women in intimate partner violence cases as these are often decide by a jury.

These speculations of Henning and Feder (2005) suggest that people may perceive intimate partner violence differently when a man is the perpetrator than when a woman is the perpetrator. Researchers have suggested that individuals are more likely to perceive male perpetrated intimate partner violence as being violent than female perpetrated intimate partner violence (Blasko, Winck & Bieschke, 2007; Feather, 1996; McHugh, Livingston & Ford, 2003; Nabors, Dietz & Jasinski, 2006; Scclau, Scclau & Poorman, 2003). However, many of these investigations did not include a variety of types of intimate partner violence, and did not examine perceptions of victim fear levels (Abel, 2001; Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Cercone, Beach, & Arias, 2005; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Felson & Cares, 2005; Kensmith, 2005; Phelan, Hamberger, Guse, Edwards, Walczak & Zosel, 2005; Swan & Snow, 2002). Research is therefore needed to examine public perceptions of violence levels and fear levels for a variety of types of intimate partner violence.

Locke and Richman (1999) suggested that females are more likely to perceive intimate partner violence as a type of violence than males. However, Locke and Richman’s study only involved scenarios of male perpetrated intimate partner violence. Therefore, this study also examined the impact of participant gender on opinions about intimate partner violence and extended the research of Locke and Richman by including female perpetrated intimate partner violence.
Perceptions of victim fear levels during intimate partner violence situations may also vary depending on the gender of the perpetrator and the gender of the participant. There is contention in the research as to which gender experiences the highest levels of fear as victims of intimate partner violence (Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Felson & Cares, 2005). Capaldi and Owen suggested that male and female victims of intimate partner violence experience equal levels of fear as a result of intimate partner violence. However, Felson and Cares suggested that women experience higher levels of fear than men as a result of intimate partner violence. Researchers have suggested that the general public hold more negative views of male perpetrated intimate partner violence than female perpetrated intimate partner violence (Davies, Pollard & Archer, 2006; Feather, 1996; Fraiser, Bock & Henretta, 1983; Hendree & Nicks, 2000; Nabors et al., 2006; Scclau et al., 2003) and despite the contradictory research findings about fear levels the general public may view the fear levels of female victims to be higher than that of male victims. This research therefore examined perpetrator gender differences in perceptions of fear levels in intimate partner violence situations.

There are inconsistencies in research in relation to the acts which can be defined as types of intimate partner violence (Coker, Smith, McKeown & King, 2000; Douglas, 2004; Thompson et al., 2006). Some researchers have suggested that only physical and threats to physical violence can be defined as types of intimate partner violence (Douglas, 2004). However, it is becoming increasingly evident that researchers are now considering acts which causes or threaten to cause physical, psychological and/or sexual harm to be types of intimate partner violence (Coker et al., 2000; Thompson et al., 2006). Therefore, to gain a clear idea of public
perceptions of intimate partner violence all of these types of violence will be included in this study.

In summary, recent research has contradicted popular held beliefs about gender differences in intimate partner violence. However, prosecution of cases where the woman is the perpetrator are occurring less often than prosecution of cases where the man is the perpetrator. Henning and Feder (2005) speculated that this was because the public (who make up the members of the jury) hold the view that in intimate partner violence situations women are the victims and men are the perpetrators and therefore convicting female perpetrators is more difficult than convicting male perpetrators. Researchers have suggested that people are more negative in their constructions towards male perpetrated intimate partner violence than female perpetrated intimate partner violence (Blasko et al., 2007; Feather, 1996; McHugh et al., 2003; Nabors et al., 2006; Scclau et al., 2003). Additionally, females are more negative towards male perpetrated intimate partner violence than are males (Locke & Rickman, 1999). However, public perceptions of violence levels and fear levels of intimate partner violence situations have not been examined over a variety of types of violence (Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Cercone et al., 2005; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Felson & Cares, 2005; Phelan et al., 2005; Swan & Snow, 2002). Therefore, research is needed which examines public opinions of the violence and fear levels in intimate partner violence situations in relation to the gender of the perpetrator, the gender of the participant and interactions between these variables over a number of types of intimate partner violence.

In an unpublished study I undertook as an undergraduate student (Tilbrook, 2006) I examined the impact of perpetrator gender on public opinions of intimate partner violence. The results indicate that people are more likely to perceive male
perpetrated intimate partner violence as being more violent and also more fear invoking than female perpetrated intimate partner violence. However, the sample size was small ($N = 72$), the study did not include all types of intimate partner violence (physical and threats to physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence and stalking) and the influence of participant gender was not investigated. The current study was designed to extend the study of Tilbrook (2006) and address its limitations by examining the following five research questions which look at public perceptions of intimate partner violence in relation to gender, types of violence, levels of violence, and victims fear levels.

Q1: Does the general public think that physical assault, threats to physical assault, physical assault with a weapon, threats to physical assault with a weapon, psychological assault, sexual assault and stalking are all types of intimate partner violence?

Q2: Does the gender of the perpetrator influence whether or not the general public construe an incident as a type of intimate partner violence?

Q3: Does the gender of the participant influence whether or not they construe an incident as a type of intimate partner violence?

Q4: Does the gender of the perpetrator influence public opinions of intimate partner violence?

Q5: Does the gender of the participant influence public opinions of intimate partner violence?
Method

Design and Analysis

An experimental design was used in the current quantitative study to investigate whether or not the gender of the perpetrator and/or the gender of the participant influence the general public's perceptions of intimate partner violence. The two independent variables manipulated in the current experiment were the gender (male or female) of the perpetrator and gender (male or female) of the participant. The dependent variables were the general public’s construction of the behaviour (either intimate partner violence, not intimate partner violence or unsure), their perception of the level of violence (a five point Likert scale from not violent to very violent), and their perception of the level of fear (a five point Likert scale from not afraid to very afraid). Measurements for each of the dependant variables were taken on 7 different types of intimate partner violence (physical assault, threat of physical assault, physical assault with a weapon, threat of physical of assault with a weapon, psychological assault, sexual assault and stalking). A Likert scale was used to measure violence levels and fear levels as this is a scale recommended by Fitzgerald and Cox (2002) which allows for participant responses to be pre-coded. Additionally, the five point Likert scale was used by Tilbrook (2006) to measure violence levels and fear levels and found to be effective as significant gender differences were uncovered.

Separate chi-square tests for each type of intimate partner violence were conducted to investigate whether each of the scenarios were construed as a type of intimate partner violence and whether perpetrator gender and participant gender influenced these results. As chi-square tests were conducted on each of the 7 scenarios, in analysing these results a Bonferroni adjustment to the standard alpha
level of .05 was used thereby reducing the chance of making a Type I error (Field, 2005), with the adjusted alpha level being .007.

To investigate the effect of the independent variables (gender of the perpetrator and gender of the participant) on the dependent variables (perceptions of violence levels and perceptions of fear levels) two 2x2 factorial ANOVAs were conducted. In conducting the ANOVAs a mean violence rating and a mean fear rating across the 7 scenarios were calculated for each participant. Additionally, as two ANOVAs were conducted (one for violence level ratings and one for fear level ratings) to reduce the chance of making a Type I error a Bonferroni adjustment (Field, 2005) to the standard alpha level of .05 was used in analysing the results, with the adjusted alpha level being .025.

Participants

Questionnaires were distributed to 180 participants, of which 128 (54 males and 74 females) responded. Participants were gathered through a snowballing method which is a sampling technique recommended by Fitzgerald and Cox (2002) where participant complete questionnaires and then pass the experimental materials on to other people with the process repeating until the required number of participants is obtained. As snowballing sampling was used the initial contact was family members, friends and acquaintances of the researcher.

All of the participants were aged 18 years and over and they were from a variety of educational backgrounds (See Table 1). From Table 1 it is clear that the sample sizes of the male and female perpetrator groups were similar and that the gender, age and education distributions within these groups were also fairly similar.
### Table 1

**Demographics of Participants in the Male and Female Perpetrator Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics of participants</th>
<th>Male perpetrated &lt;br&gt;((n = 65))</th>
<th>Female perpetrated &lt;br&gt;((n = 63))</th>
<th>Totals &lt;br&gt;((N = 128))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>(n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
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<td>55-64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year ten</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year twelve</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Tafe</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
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<td>University</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Materials**

The materials used in this research were two questionnaires (see appendix A and B) which are adaptations of the questionnaires used by Tilbrook (2006). The questionnaires comprised two sections of fixed alternative questions, which are questions that ask participants to choose a response from a list of choices (Fitzgerald & Cox, 2002), and an example of an intimate partner argument in the form of a vignette. The first section of the questionnaires asks general background questions about the participant. The second section contains the vignette and the seven
outcome scenarios with questions that directly relate to the outcome scenarios. This is the only section that differs between the two questionnaires. One of the questionnaires contains scenarios that portray a female perpetrator and a male victim of intimate partner violence and the other questionnaire contains scenarios that portray a male perpetrator and a female victim of intimate partner violence. Scenario 1 is a form of physical assault where the perpetrator punches the victim. Scenario 2 involves an implied threat to physical assault with a weapon where the perpetrator is holding a weapon (a knife) but not using the weapon. Scenario 3 is a form of psychological assault where the perpetrator verbally demeans the victim. Scenario 4 is an implied threat to physical assault where the perpetrator punches a hole in a door. Scenario 5 is a form of physical assault with a weapon where the perpetrator uses a weapon (a knife) on the victim. Scenario 6 is a type of sexual assault where the perpetrator forces the victim to have sex and Scenario 7 involves the perpetrator stalking the victim.

Procedure

Participants were first presented with an information letter (see appendix C) about the study which contained the researcher’s and research supervisors’ contact details so that they could make contact if they had any further questions about the study. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic being researched the information letter also provided contact details for crisis and domestic violence helplines. The information letter informed participants that their participation in the research was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Participants were also presented with one of the two questionnaires. The information letter asked the participants to read the questions, vignettes and outcome scenarios carefully and then provide responses to the questions based on their personal opinions. Participants were given
as much time as they need to complete the questionnaire and when they had completed the questionnaire they either posted the questionnaire back to the researcher (in the supplied postage paid envelope) or the questionnaire was personally collected by the researcher.

Results

Chi-Square tests for goodness to fit were used to investigate the proportion of participants who answered yes, no or unsure when they were asked whether the incident described in each scenario was a type of intimate partner violence. In all the scenarios participants were significantly more likely to answer yes and the percentage answering yes varied between 73.4% for Scenario 4 and 97.7% for Scenario 5 (see Table 2).

Chi-Square tests for independence or relatedness were also performed to determine if there was an association between the dependent variable construction of the behaviour as a type of intimate partner violence and the independent variables, gender of the perpetrator and gender of the participant. The chi-square tests were not statistically significant for participant gender in any of the scenarios (see Table 4), but for perpetrator gender the only statistically significant result was in respect of Scenario 6 (see Table 3). All participants who completed the male perpetrated questionnaire construed the sexual violence portrayed in this scenario as intimate partner violence while this was the case for 84.1% of those who completed the female perpetrated questionnaire (see Table 3).
Table 2

*Construction of Intimate Partner Violence: Chi-square Goodness to Fit Test Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Physical violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>210.67</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>93.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Threat with a weapon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>205.14</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>119</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Verbal assault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>159.44</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>4. Threat to violence</td>
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<td>.000*</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Violence with a knife</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>116.28</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>6. Sexual assault</td>
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<td>.000*</td>
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<td>3.9</td>
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<td>.000*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .007$. 
Table 3

Construction of Intimate Partner Violence: Responses for Male and Female Perpetrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Male perpetrator (n = 65)</th>
<th>Female perpetrator (n = 63)</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Physical violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2.55</td>
<td>.279</td>
</tr>
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<td>57 (90.5)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 (3.1)</td>
<td>5 (7.9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (1.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Threat with a weapon</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.481</td>
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<td>57 (90.5)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2 (3.1)</td>
<td>5 (7.9)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1 (1.5)</td>
<td>1 (1.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Verbal assault</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
<td>.317</td>
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<td>5 (7.9)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6 (9.5)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>4. Threat to violence</td>
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<td>3.03</td>
<td>.219</td>
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<td>42 (66.7)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10 (15.4)</td>
<td>15 (23.8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>3 (4.6)</td>
<td>6 (9.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.541</td>
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<td>61 (96.8)</td>
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<td>0 (0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sexual assault</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>.004*</td>
</tr>
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<td>53 (84.1)</td>
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<td>7 (11.1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
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<td>4 (6.3)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .007$. 
### Table 4

**Construction of Intimate Partner Violence: Responses for Male and Female Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Male participants (n = 54)</th>
<th>Female participants (n = 74)</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>(X^2)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Physical violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>48 88.9</td>
<td>72 97.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5 9.3</td>
<td>2 2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>1 1.9</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Threat with a weapon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>48 88.9</td>
<td>71 95.9</td>
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<td>2.67</td>
<td>.263</td>
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<td>2 2.7</td>
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<td>1 1.9</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Verbal assault</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>41 75.9</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5 9.3</td>
<td>3 4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Threat to violence</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>6.29</td>
<td>.043</td>
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<td>4 7.4</td>
<td>5 6.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Violence with a knife</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>0 0</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sexual assault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>72 97.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.99</td>
<td>.018</td>
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<td>2 2.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Stalking</td>
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<td>40 74.1</td>
<td>67 90.5</td>
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<td>6.97</td>
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<td>3 4.1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5 9.3</td>
<td>4 5.4</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* \(p < .007\).*
To examine the impact that perpetrator gender and participant gender had on the perceived level of violence and the perceived level of fear two 2x2 factorial ANOVAs were conducted. ANOVA data should meet two assumptions namely that of normality and homogeneity of the variance (Keppel & Wickens, 2004). Normality is the assumption that data within each variable is normally distributed. Homogeneity of the variance is the assumption that the variance is the same for all groups.

The variables perceived level of violence and perceived level of fear displayed a negatively skewed distribution. This indicates that the majority of participant rated the levels of violence and the levels of fear in the scenarios as high. The skewness of these distributions is to be expected as the majority of participants construed each of the scenarios to be a type of intimate partner violence. Although the skewness was substantial, the values were similar for both the male and female perpetrator groups and for male and female participants. Keppel and Wickens (2004) suggest that a violation to the assumption of normality is only of concern when the sample size in each group is less than twelve. Therefore, the violation of the assumption of normality for the variable of perceived level of violence and perceived level of fear is not of great concern as the sample size for each is greater than twelve (see Table 1).

Non-homogeneity of the variance was found for the variable perceived levels of fear. Therefore, for this variable both the assumption of normality and the assumption of homogeneity of the variance have been violated and as a result there is an increased possibility of making a Type I error (Keppel & Wickens, 2004). Keppel and Wickens suggest that when the assumption of homogeneity is violated, the simplest way to reduce the chance of making a Type I error is to halve the alpha
level. If this guideline is applied to the Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .025 the new adjusted alpha level is .0125.

To examine the impact that perpetrator gender and participant gender had on the perceived level of violence a 2x2 factorial ANOVA was conducted, utilising an adjusted alpha level of .025. A significant main effect was found for perpetrator gender, $F(1,124) = 21.46, p = .000$, with male perpetrated scenarios ($M = 4.17, SD = .073$) being perceived to be more violent than female perpetrated scenarios ($M = 3.69, SD = .074$). Additionally, a significant main effect was found for participant gender, $F(1,124) = 8.74, p = .004$ with females ($M = 4.09, SD = .068$) perceiving the scenarios to be more violent than males ($M = 3.78, SD = .079$). However, no significant interaction effect was found, $F(1,124) = 2.94, p = .089$.

To examine the impact that perpetrator gender and participant gender had on the perceived level of fear a 2x2 factorial ANOVA was conducted, utilising an adjusted alpha level of .0125. A significant main effect was found for perpetrator gender $F(1,124) = 73.04, p = .000$, with male perpetrated scenarios ($M = 4.32, SD = .076$) being perceived to be more fear invoking than female perpetrated scenarios ($M = 3.39, SD = .077$). However, no significant main effect for participant gender, $F(1,124) = 5.17, p = .025$, or interaction effect, $F(1,124) = 2.61, p = .108$, was found.

**Discussion**

*Constructions of Intimate Partner Violence*

The results from this study indicate that the general public perceive each of the scenarios depicted in the questionnaire to be a type of intimate partner violence. These findings support the hypothesis that physical assault, threats to physical assault, physical assault with a weapon, threats to physical assault with a weapon,
Constructions of Intimate Partner Violence

psychological assault, sexual assault and stalking are all considered by the general public to be types of intimate partner violence. This also supports the current trend by researchers to include all of these types of violence in intimate partner violence research (Coker et al., 2000; Thompson et al., 2006).

Additionally, with the exception of the sexual assault scenario, perpetrator gender had no significant effect on participant responses to the question of whether a scenario was a type of intimate partner violence. Therefore, the hypothesis that perpetrator gender influences whether or not an individual will construe an incident as a type of intimate partner violence is not supported by this research. This contradicts the research findings of Blasko et al. (2007), Feather (1996), McHugh et al. (2003), Nabors et al. (2006) and Scclau et al. (2003) who suggested that people are more likely to perceive male perpetrated intimate partner violence as being a type of violence than female perpetrated intimate partner violence. A possible reason for this contention between the findings of Blasko et al., Feather, McHugh et al., Nabors et al., and Scclau et al. and the findings of the current research is that the current research examined a variety of types of intimate partner violence.

The exception to the finding that perpetrator gender had no significant effect on participant responses to the question of whether a scenario is a type of intimate partner violence is the sexual assault scenario. Male perpetrated sexual assault was more likely to be perceived to be a type of intimate partner violence than female perpetrated sexual assault. A possible explanation for this finding is that people may perceive it to be more difficult for a woman to perpetrate sexual assault than a man. However, this is outside of the scope of this study and an area for further research.

Participant gender was also found to have no significant effect on their response to the question of whether each scenario was a type of intimate partner
violence. Therefore, the hypothesis that the gender of the participant influences
whether or not they construe an incident as a type of intimate partner violence is not
supported. This contradicts the findings of Locke and Richman (1999) who
suggested that females are more likely to perceive intimate partner violence as a type
of violence than males. A possible reason for this contradiction is that Locke and
Richman did not examine female perpetrated examples of intimate partner violence
whereas the current study did. Therefore, the current study provides the views of
both male and female participants on male and female perpetrated examples of
intimate partner violence.

Violence Levels

When perceived levels of violence were examined the gender of the
perpetrator was found to influence participant responses. With male perpetrated
intimate partner violence being perceived to be more violent than female perpetrated
intimate partner violence. This supports the hypothesis that the gender of the
perpetrator influences public opinions of intimate partner violence. Additionally, this
finding adds to the findings of Blasko et al. (2007), Feather (1996), McHugh et al.
(2003), Nabors et al. (2006) and Scclau et al. (2003) who suggested that people are
more likely to perceive male perpetrated intimate partner violence as being a type of
violence than female perpetrated intimate partner violence. It could be speculated
that if people are more likely to construe male perpetrated intimate partner violence
as a type of intimate partner violence then they are also more likely to perceive male
perpetrated intimate partner violence to be more violent than female perpetrated
intimate partner violence. Therefore, even though the Chi-square analyses in this
study did not support the findings of Blasko et al., Feather, McHugh et al., Nabors et
al., and Scclau et al. the current study does add to their research. The findings of this
research suggests that perpetrator gender differences in public perceptions of intimate partner violence lie in the perceived level of violence rather than in whether the behaviour is defined as a type of intimate partner violence.

Additionally, the gender of the participant was found to influence their perceptions of the level of violence in the scenarios. With female participants perceiving the types of violence depicted in the scenarios to be more violent than male participants. This supports the hypothesis that the gender of the participant influences their opinions of intimate partner violence. This finding also adds to the findings of Locke and Rickman (1999) who suggested that females are more likely to perceive male perpetrated intimate partner violence as a type of violence than males. Even though the Chi-square analyses in this study did not support the findings of Locke and Rickman the current study does add to their research by suggesting that differences between male and female participants perceptions of intimate partner violence lies in their perceptions of violence levels rather than in whether they define the behaviour as a type of intimate partner violence.

*Fear Levels*

When perceived victim fear levels were examined the gender of the perpetrator but not the gender of the participant was found to influence participant responses. With both male and female participants perceiving male perpetrated intimate partner violence to be more fear invoking than female perpetrated intimate partner violence. These findings support the hypothesis that the gender of the perpetrator does influence public opinions of intimate partner violence, however, they do not support the hypothesis that the gender of the participants influence their opinions of intimate partner violence. This adds to the findings of Davies et al. (2006), Feather (1996), Fraiser et al. (1983), Hendree and Nicks (2000), Nabors et al.
Constructions of Intimate Partner Violence 57

(2006) and Scclau et al. (2003) by suggesting that the general public not only hold more negative views of male than female perpetrated intimate partner violence but that they also think that male perpetrated intimate partner violence is more fear invoking than female perpetrated intimate partner violence.

Summary of Findings and Implications

The findings of this research show that physical assault, threats to physical assault, psychological assault, sexual assault and stalking are all considered to be types of intimate partner violence supporting the current trend to include all of these in intimate partner violence research (Coker et al., 2000; Thompson et al., 2006). Additionally, the gender of the perpetrator and the gender of the participant do not impact on whether or not the behaviours are construed as a type of intimate partner violence thus refuting past research. However, adding to past research (Davies et al., 2006; Feather, 1996; Fraiser et al., 1983; Hendree & Nicks, 2000; Locke & Rickman, 1999; Nabors et al., 2006; Scclau et al., 2003) the results of this study indicate that male perpetrated intimate partner violence is perceived as being more fear invoking that female perpetrated intimate partner violence and that females perceive intimate partner violence as being more violent than males. This suggests that public perceptions about perpetrator gender differences in intimate partner violence are based on perceived outcomes of the violence rather than on whether the violence is defined as a type of violence.

In light of these findings, it is possible that juries (who are drawn from the general public) will be more likely to convict a male than a female perpetrator of intimate partner violence as male perpetrated intimate partner violence is perceived to cause more damage to the victim than female perpetrated intimate partner violence. This provides support for the suggestion of Henning and Feder (2005) that
gaining a conviction in case of intimate partner violence where the female is the perpetrator is more difficult than in cases where the male is the perpetrator as jury opinions sway in favour of women in intimate partner violence situations. Additionally, it is possible that female jury members will be more likely than male jury members to convict a perpetrator of intimate partner violence as females perceive intimate partner violence to be more violent than males.

Therefore, as researchers are now questioning the position that intimate partner violence is a male perpetrated crime it is important that public awareness is raised to the possibility of female perpetrated intimate partner violence (Headey et al., 1999). It is also important when raising public awareness of female perpetrated intimate partner violence that the public are made aware that male victims of intimate partner violence do receive injuries at the hands of female perpetrators (Headey et al., 1999). If public awareness is raised, then it is more likely that male and female perpetrators of intimate partner violence will receive equitable treatment in court. Additionally, it is recommended that juries be made up of an equal representation of both males and females to account for females perceiving intimate partner violence to cause more physical damage than males.

**Limitations and Future Research**

This research has helped to provide some understanding of potential jurors' opinions of both male and female perpetrated intimate partner violence through an examination of public perceptions of intimate partner violence. This is a valid examination of jury opinion as juries are made up of members of the general public, however, a limitation of this research is that it does not account for the dynamics of a jury group. In this study participants were surveyed individually and therefore were not influenced by any outside source besides the life influences they began the
survey with. Before making a decision as to the guilt of a defendant juries deliberate on that decision (Mills & Bohannon, 1981). This deliberation process means that each individual jury member's decision is likely to be influenced by the opinions of other jury members. Therefore, the final decision as to the guilt of a defendant is made through a group decision making process (Mills & Bohannon, 1981). Future research could examine the impact of this group decision making process on cases of male and female perpetrated intimate partner violence though the use of mock trials.

A further limitation of this research is that there was not a qualitative component to this study. The inclusion of qualitative questions in this study would have shed light on some of the inconsistencies in the result as well as provided information about why participants considered male perpetrated intimate partner violence to be more violent and more fear invoking that female perpetrated intimate partner violence. An example of an inconsistency in the results that qualitative analysis would have helped to explain is why participants were more likely to perceive the male perpetrated sexual assault scenario as intimate partner violence than the female perpetrated scenario. It is possible that this result occurred because participants found the idea of a women perpetrating sexual assault difficult to believe. However, without qualitative data this suggestion is just speculation, therefore, future research could include a qualitative component so that the reason behind participant responses is clear.

Conclusions

This research has shown that physical assault, threats to physical assault, psychological assault, sexual assault and stalking are all considered to be types of intimate partner violence. Additionally, public perceptions about perpetrator gender differences in intimate partner violence are based on perceived outcomes of the
violence rather than on whether the violence is defined as a type of violence. With male perpetrated being perceived to be more violent and more fear invoking than female perpetrated intimate partner violence. Therefore, juries (who are drawn from the general public) may be more likely to convict a male than a female perpetrator of intimate partner violence. Also, as females perceive intimate partner violence to cause more damage than males, female jury members may be more likely than male jury members to convict a perpetrator of intimate partner violence. This research is not without limitations, however, the suggestions for future research indicate how these limitations can be addressed. From the findings of this research it is recommended that juries contain an equal representation of both males and females and that public awareness is raised to the possibility of female perpetrated intimate partner violence to help prevent male and female perpetrators receiving unequal treatment in court.
References


Appendix A

Survey – Public Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence

Section 1 – Background of the Respondent

1) Please tick the box that represents your age group

- [ ] 18 – 24 years
- [ ] 25 – 34 years
- [ ] 35 – 44 years
- [ ] 45 – 54 years
- [ ] 55 – 64 years
- [ ] 65 years and over

2) Please tick the box which indicates your gender

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female

3) Please tick the box which indicates the highest level of education that you have completed

- [ ] Primary school
- [ ] Year ten
- [ ] Year 12
- [ ] Tafe
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other please specify

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Section 2 – Vignette

Jane returned home after a bad day at work where her boss had been hassling her about meeting her deadlines. After arriving home, Jane got into an argument with her husband Ben about the house being messy.

1) If during the argument Jane hit Ben with a closed fist would you think that this was a type of intimate partner violence?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Unsure
On the following scale please circle the number of the response that best represents your answer

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Violent Somewhat Violent Undecided Violent Very Violent

b) Do you think that Ben would be afraid of Jane in this circumstance?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Afraid Somewhat Afraid Unsure Afraid Very Afraid

2) If during the argument Jane picked up a weapon (such as a knife) and held it in her hand for the rest of the argument but did not use it against Ben would you think that this was a type of intimate partner violence?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Violent Somewhat Violent Undecided Violent Very Violent

b) Do you think that Ben would be afraid of Jane in this circumstance?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Afraid Somewhat Afraid Unsure Afraid Very Afraid

3) If during the argument Jane started yelling at Ben that he was worthless and stupid and that without her he is good for nothing would you think that this was a type of intimate partner violence

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure
Constructions of Intimate Partner Violence 68

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

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b) Do you think that Ben would be afraid of Jane in this circumstance?

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4) If during the argument Jane punched a door in the house and put her fist through it would you think that this was a type of intimate partner violence?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

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b) Do you think that Ben would be afraid of Jane in this circumstance?

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5) If during the argument Jane picked up a weapon (such as a knife) and did use it against Ben would you think that this was a type of intimate partner violence?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

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b) Do you think that Ben would be afraid of Jane in this circumstance?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Afraid Somewhat Afraid Unsure Afraid Very Afraid

6) If after the argument Jane forced Ben to have sex with her would you think that this was a type of intimate partner violence?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Violent Somewhat Violent Undecided Violent Very Violent

b) Do you think that Ben would be afraid of Jane in this circumstance?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Afraid Somewhat Afraid Unsure Afraid Very Afraid

7) A few months after the argument Ben moved out of the house and got a place of his own on the other side of the city from his previous home with Jane as he did not feel that the relationship with Jane was working. Soon after moving out Ben began to bump into Jane a couple of times a week and noticed a car like Jane’s following his car. Jane was also ringing Ben about 4 or 5 times a week asking him to come back and sometimes Jane became verbally abusive on the phone. Do you think that this is a type of intimate partner violence?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Violent Somewhat Violent Undecided Violent Very Violent
b) Do you think that Ben would be afraid of Jane in this circumstance?

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End of Survey
Thankyou for Participating
Appendix B

Survey – Public Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence

Section 1 – Background of the Respondent

4) Please tick the box that represents your age group

☐ 18 – 24 years
☐ 25 – 34 years
☐ 35 – 44 years
☐ 45 – 54 years
☐ 55 – 64 years
☐ 65 years and over

5) Please tick the box which indicates your gender

☐ Male
☐ Female

6) Please tick the box which indicates the highest level of education that you have completed

☐ Primary school
☐ Year ten
☐ Year 12
☐ Tafe
☐ University
☐ Other please specify

Section 2 – Vignette

Ben returned home after a bad day at work where his boss had been hassling him about meeting his deadlines. After arriving home Ben got into an argument with his wife Jane about the house being messy.

1) If during the argument Ben hit Jane with a closed fist would you think that this was a type of intimate partner violence?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure
On the following scale please circle the number of the response that best represents your answer.

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

1  2  3  4  5
Not Violent  Somewhat Violent  Undecided  Violent  Very Violent

b) Do you think that Jane would be afraid of Ben in this circumstance?

1  2  3  4  5
Not Afraid  Somewhat Afraid  Unsure  Afraid  Very Afraid

2) If during the argument Ben picked up a weapon (such as a knife) and held it in his hand for the rest of the argument but did not use it against Jane, would you think that this was a type of intimate partner violence?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

1  2  3  4  5
Not Violent  Somewhat Violent  Undecided  Violent  Very Violent

b) Do you think that Jane would be afraid of Ben in this circumstance?

1  2  3  4  5
Not Afraid  Somewhat Afraid  Unsure  Afraid  Very Afraid

3) If during the argument Ben started yelling at Jane that she was worthless and stupid and that without him she is good for nothing, would you think that this was a type of intimate partner violence?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure
a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

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b) Do you think that Jane would be afraid of Ben in this circumstance?

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4) If during the argument Ben punched a door in the house and put his fist through it would you think that this was a type of intimate partner violence?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

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- Yes
- No
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6) If after the argument Ben forced Jane to have sex with him would you think that this was a type of intimate partner violence?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

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7) A few months after the argument Jane move out of the house and got a place of her own on the other side of the city from her previous home with Ben as she did not feel that the relationship with Ben was working. Soon after moving out Jane began to bump into Ben a couple of times a week and noticed a car like Ben’s following her car. Ben was also ringing Jane about 4 or 5 times a week asking her to come back and sometimes Ben became verbally abusive on the phone. Do you think that this is a type of intimate partner violence?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

a) How would you rate the severity of this violence?

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End of Survey
Thankyou for Participating
Appendix C

Information Letter to Participants

Project Title: Exploring and Construing Intimate Partner Violence: A Study Examining Gender Differences in Public Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

You are invited to participate in this study which has been given ethical approval from the Faculty of Computing, Health and Science Ethics Committee at Edith Cowan University. The aim of this study is to define intimate partner violence and examine the relationship between gender and intimate partner violence. You will be asked to read a questionnaire which contains an example of an intimate partner argument and record your answers (based on your personal opinions) as instructed throughout the questionnaire. The questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes of your time to complete.

You should be aware that you are being asked questions about your personal beliefs on a sensitive subject. You are assured anonymity but if you feel uncomfortable with this you may wish not to participate. If you do agree to participate and you do encounter any emotional side-effects you are welcome to withdraw your participation immediately and/or contact the researcher’s supervisors. Additionally, you can also call one of the following helplines if you want to talk to someone qualified in counselling.

Crisis Care
1800 199 008 (24 hours)
Telephone information and counselling service for people in crisis needing urgent help.

Women’s Domestic Violence Helpline
1800 007 339 (24 hours)
Offers information, referral and telephone counselling.

Men’s Domestic Violence Helpline
1800 000 599 (24 hours)
Offers information, referral and telephone counselling.

Questionnaires will be collected by the researcher or you will be supplied with an addressed postage paid envelop so that you can mail the questionnaire to the researcher. All collected questionnaires will be confidential and your name will in no way be associated with your data. Upon collection your consent form will be stored separately from your questionnaire. Participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation.
at any time. If you decide to withdraw at any time during the study any data that you
completed will be shredded so that it can not be used for this research.

If you have any questions or require further information about the research project
please feel free contact the researcher whose contact details are below. Thank you for
your time and interest. If you have any additional questions concerning the rights of
research participants you may contact my supervisors on the numbers indicated
below or alternatively if want to speak to someone independent of the research
project you may contact Dr Dianne McKillop (08) 6304 5736.

Yours sincerely

Emily Tilbrook

**Supervisors**
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(08) 6304 5536

Dr. Ricks Allan
School of Psychology
Edith Cowan University
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(08) 6304 5048

**Researcher**
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APA Journals

Psychology, Public Policy, and Law

Editor: Steven Penrod, JD, PhD
ISSN: 1076-8971
Published Quarterly, beginning in February

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John Jay College of Criminal Justice
445 West 59th Street N2131
New York, NY 10019-1199

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