



Domestic violence in heterosexual and homosexual relationships: perceptions and attitudes in a comparative study between police and non-police students

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April 2012

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Abstract

Recent research has indicated that victim and perpetrator sex can negatively influence perceptions and attitudes towards domestic violence. Research has also indicated that police officers are more unwilling to arrest perpetrators of domestic violence if the altercation is not in concordance with traditional gender stereotypes (male on female). One hundred and thirty eight participants from police courses vs. non police courses completed a questionnaire booklet involving a real life domestic violence vignette where sex of the perpetrator and the victim were manipulated. Two 2 X 4 ANCOVA's and one 2 X 4 X 2 ANCOVA identified that perpetrator and victim sex can influence people's perceptions of the believability, severity and prospective sentence for perpetrators. No significant main effect was found for course type and domestic violence attitudes. Bivariate correlations indicated negative correlations for knowledge and perceived severity in the male/female condition and negative correlations for homophobia on perceived believability in the male/male scenario. The potential interest of the findings from this research is to ensure the equality of both heterosexual and homosexual domestic violence cases in the eyes of the law.

KEY WORDS:	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	BELIEVABILITY	SEVERITY	PROSPECTIVE SENTENCE	POLICE SAMPLE
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Introduction

While an extensive, international literature base exists into domestic violence in heterosexual relationships (Hester, 2004), research into same-sex relationships domestic violence enjoys a more recent history with the focus most heavily placed on lesbian relationships (McClennen, 2005). Statistics surrounding domestic violence are somewhat understated as not all incidents are reported to the police (Nicolson & Wilson, 2004). However, what figures prevail indicate that nearly one in three adults will experience an act of physical violence by their partner in adulthood (American Psychological Association, 1998); one in nine women in the United Kingdom has experienced domestic violence in the past year (Criminal Statistic, 1997). Although conclusions drawn from domestic violence in heterosexual couples is well reported, it can be difficult to draw comparisons on research into same-sex domestic violence as they implement various methodologies and samples (McCarry, Hester & Donovan, 2008). Moreover, although domestic violence in same-sex couples is as frequent as that in heterosexual couples, it is extremely under reported for fear of ridicule, shame and embarrassment (Seelau & Seelau, 2005).

Research on same sex domestic violence is few and far between as domestic abuse remains an issue shrouded by shame, denial, erroneous beliefs and fear (Nicolson & Wilson, 2004). Although there is a large research base surrounding domestic violence in the United States, research on samples within the United Kingdom is few and far between and has predominantly been undertaken by Broken Rainbow UK (Mullender & Morley, 1994). Approximately one in three individuals in same sex relationships experience some form of domestic abuse. This statistic is similar to the figures and statistics of the occurrence of domestic violence in heterosexual relationships, where the violence is perpetrated against women (Henderson, 2003). The increase in literature surrounding same-sex domestic violence has made it clear that it is to be perceived no less serious than domestic violence in heterosexual relationships. The government have also come to acknowledge the prevalence of domestic violence in same sex relationships, with political reform reflecting this (Donovan, Hester, Holmes & McCarry, 2006). This reform is evident with the most recent definition of domestic violence including same sex domestic violence: 'any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality' (Home Office). Additionally, the Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act 2004 has included the availability of an injunction towards perpetrators in same sex couples (Donovan, Hester, Holmes & McCarry, 2006).

Despite the slow increase in awareness of domestic violence in same sex couples, fewer than fifty articles have been published reporting such domestic abuse (Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003; Wise & Bowman, 1997; Seelau & Seelau, 2005; Poorman, Seelau & Seelau, 2003; Rohrbaugh, 2006; Harris & Cook, 1994; McCarry, Hester & Donovan, 2008). It is estimated that domestic violence in same sex relationships is as prevalent as in heterosexual couples (Brand & Kidd, 1986; Knauer, 1999; Peterman & Dixon, 2003; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Burke & Owen, 2006). Although domestic violence in same sex relationships is regarded as a social problem, it is still not viewed to be as serious as domestic violence where the female is the victim. A pattern has emerged amongst domestic violence in homosexual couples which is alike to the violence endured amongst heterosexual couples (Seelau, *et al.*, 2003).

That is, domestic violence tends to persist, increase overtime, and is often likely to culminate in some form of psychological or physical harm (Island & Letellier, 1991; Margolies & Leeder, 1995; Renzetti, 1992).

The majority of domestic violence cases which are reported are of cases where there is a male perpetrator, and a female victim (Hague & Malos, 1993; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Grace, 1995). There is evidence which highlights that individual's perceptions and attitudes towards domestic violence can be influenced and altered by the sex of the perpetrator and the victim (Seelau & Seelau, 2005). Incidents where males abuse females are viewed more negatively and more serious than when a woman abuses a male (Harris & Cook, 1994; Feather 1996; Peters, 2003; Home, 1994; Seelau & Seelau, 2005). Violence perpetrated against a female by a male was perceived as more serious than violence perpetrated against a male by a female. They also appeared more likely to contact the emergency services if they witnessed an altercation with a female victim and a male abuser, suggesting that the offender suffers more severe punishments (Burke, Ames, Etherington & Pietsch, 1990; Seelau & Seelau, 2005). In heterosexual couples, males were judged to be more deserving of punishment, more responsible and more likely to be charged with a harsher sentence (Rohbaugh, 2006). Moreover, women are more likely to sympathise with the victim than men (Home, 1994), whereas men are more likely to deem abuse acceptable (Pierce & Harris, 1993; Stalans, 1996; Gerber, 1991; Harris & Cook, 1994; Archer, 2000; Pan, Neidig & O'Leary, 1994). It was more likely that the victim would press charges and higher sentences attributed to men than women (Poorman *et al.*, 2003).

Gender role stereotypes have dominated and shaped the perception of domestic violence with the majority of research being conducted through mock-juror judgements of heterosexual domestic abuse (Mayhew, Aye Maung, & Mirrlees-Black, 1993). Participant's judgements in domestic violence research perpetuates the traditional view of women being the victim and men as domineering and intimidating (Gerber, 1991). It has been further supported that the gender of the perpetrator, victim and perceiver has a powerful effect on perceptions and attitudes towards domestic violence (Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003). Females are always portrayed as being in greater need of assistance, and males are always portrayed as more threatening than female perpetrators (Seelau & Seelau, 2005). In comparison to men, women tend to sympathise more towards victims of abuse, regardless of the victim gender (Home, 1994, Poorman *et al.*, 2003). Male-against-female abuse is generally viewed as more serious and thus resulting in more physical damage than female-on-male abuse (Feather, 1996; Riggs, Caulfield & Street, 2000; Seelau *et al.*, 2003). However, it is evident from the mentioned research is that sexual orientation is not considered. Present research does not focus on the sexual orientation of either participants or individuals in vignettes used. Whilst it is evident that sexual orientation will differ in the scenarios depending on which individuals are involved in the domestic abuse incident, this is never explicitly specified. Moreover, previous research has not included sexual orientation into the research design Seelau & Seelau (2005). Thus the present research will endeavour to incorporate sexual orientation into the research design.

Seelau *et al.* (2003) proposed that individuals find it hard to imagine a male as a victim as it does not sit congruent with their preconceived notions and stereotypes regarding masculinity. An altercation which does not comply with the traditional male

on female violence will be less likely to be classed as domestic violence. This is consistent with homosexual domestic abuse scenarios. Participants displayed higher levels of apprehension about domestic violence when the victim was a woman in a non stereotypical situation (when a woman is abused by her lesbian partner). Thus, reinforcing the societal view that females will consistently be victimised and males will always be the victimiser (Seelau *et al.* 2003; Byrant & Spencer, 2003; Seelau & Seelau, 2005; Renzetti, 1989; Letellier, 1996). This gender role stereotype is further supported by the beliefs that are held regarding the victim's responsibility for the abuse (Poorman, Seelau & Seelau, 2003). Participants placed more blame on the victim when they were female rather than a male. Females are expected to be less aggressive than males (Cicone & Ruble, 1978) whilst males tend to inflict more physical harm through violent acts (Eagly & Steffen, 1986). Consequently, if a female was thus to break the gender stereotypical role and physically or verbally abuse her partner, she must have been provoked (Nicholson & Wilson, 2004).

Seelau *et al.* (2003), after concluding that both perpetrator sex and victim sex can influence attitudes and perceptions towards domestic violence, provides some methodological criticism which prevents the majority of results from domestic violence research being generalised to actual domestic violence cases. The researchers argue that issues which arise with domestic violence vignettes that the content divert the attention of participants away from the altercation itself and draws it to insignificant details such as age of perpetrators/victims and height. Therefore, the present research will focus more heavily on how the violence is detailed, rather than the characteristics of the individuals. Moreover, Seelau & Seelau (2005) argue that research into domestic violence may be negatively influenced by latent anti-homosexual attitudes which previous research has not controlled for. This flaw in the methodological design could indicate why domestic violence in unfamiliar couples (male and male, female and female) is perceived as less serious.

On an individual basis, there is a large body of research surrounding the attribution of blame in domestic violence incidents (Bryant & Spencer, 2003). It is evident from the vast body of research attributes blame to the victims for their assault (Kristiansen & Guilietti, 1990; Stewart & Maddren, 1997); however, research has provided mixed results. Some research has indicated that male students are more likely than female students to judge victims of domestic violence more harshly (Kaneker & Pinto & Mazumdar, 1985; Schult & Schneider, 1991; Stewart & Maddren, 1997; Thornton & Ryckman, 1990). Further, Hiller & Foddy (1993) suggest that men are more likely than women to attribute blame. Moreover, she suggests that people who hold traditional sex roles stereotypes were more likely to blame female victims than those with less traditional gender-role stereotypes (Gamache, 2006). Other research has found that women in fact attribute blame more than men (Kistiansen & Guilietti, 1990; Stewart & Maddren, 1997). In contrast, there is also research which suggests the underlying reason for partner aggression is related to their belief that dating violence was justified (O'Keefe, 1997; Riggs & O'Leary, 1996). However, only heterosexual couples were used in the majority of research into attribution of blame on the victim, so results are only generalisable to heterosexual couples.

There are also indicators that that as a collective, young adults were more likely to hold negative attitudes towards the use of physical violence than other groups (Cate, Henton, Koval, Christopher, & Lloyd, S 1982; Henton, Cate, Koval, Lloyd & Christopher, 1983). When young adults are exposed to dating violence they are

more likely to view physical violence (e.g. slapping) as acceptable in comparison with those who have not had previous experience (Cate, Henton, Koval, Christopher & Llyod, 1982). However, by no means does this indicate that young persons' violent attitudes predetermine violent behaviour; in contrast, it may suggest that for an individual to remain in a violent relationship they must change their beliefs on domestic violence (O'Keefe, 1997).

Attitudes of the police force are crucial in the judicial response to cases of domestic abuse (Logan, Shannon & Walker, 2006). Police attitudes towards domestic violence can often diffuse domestic violence situations, so attitudes and perceptions of police officers towards domestic violence are paramount (Belknap, 1995). The degree to which police officers view domestic violence as criminal activity has also come under much scrutiny in comparison to other crimes (Stephens & Sinder, 2000). Several studies suggest that there are key situational factors which influence how police officers handle domestic violence cases (Rigakos, 1997). For example, officers report decisions on how to handle cases are based upon sight of injury, involvement in substances and witnessing an act of violence (Belknap, 1995; Buzawa & Buzawa, 2005). As such, instances involving gay or lesbian couples are less likely to be dealt with by the police (Connolly, Huzurbazar & Routh-McGee., 2000; Renzetti, 1989). It could be argued that the reasons for this include sexual prejudices, or the stereotypical beliefs that men cannot suffer abuse and women cannot inflict it (Island & Letellier, 1991; Letellier, 1996; Renzetti, 1992; Renzetti, 1989).

What has not been the focus of much study is officer's attitudes (Saunders, 1995). Brown (1981) indicated that a higher percentage of officers would make an arrest on juveniles creating a disturbance in the home than when a man would injure his wife at home. On a study of mostly male officers, Saunders (1986) found that the more officers held traditional views on women's roles within society and displayed some advocacy of marital violence, then they were less likely to arrest male offender or provide some form of intervention. Smith (1990) concurs with Saunders (1980), that more traditional sex-roles increase the propensity of the officer to become anti-victim. The present study will control for sex role stereotypes to determine whether this association is still prevalent in contemporary society. If police officers hold these negative stereotypes, then it is expectant that others in the criminal justice system may also hold them (Seelau & Seelau, 2005). For the duration that those in the criminal justice system view domestic violence cases which do not conform with their gender stereotypes, many victims may not receive equal protection under the law (Rigakos, 1997). Although no research exists with a comparative design of police officers attitudes, the present study will attempt to adopt this into its research design.

In summary, the body of evidence into the effect that gender-role stereotypes have on the attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence primarily focuses on male-on-female violence within a heterosexual couple (Peters, 2003; Nayak, Bryne, Nayak, Byrne, Martin & Abraham, 2003; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Riggs *et al.*, 2000; Archer, 2000; Cantos, Neidig & O'Leary, 1993). The research base surrounding domestic abuse in homosexual couples is not so extensive (Seelau, & Seelau, 2005; Miller, Greene, Causby, White, Lockhart 2001; Rohrbaugh, 2006; Seelau *et al.*, 2003; Harris & Cook, 1994; McClennen, 2005). However, foundations such as Broken Rainbow have heavily researched the prevalence and effects of domestic violence in same-sex couples (Donovan, Hester, Holmes & McCarry, 2006). Thus, more

research is desperately needed into the perceptions surrounding homosexual domestic violence, which is what the present paper is attempting to determine.

It is apparent that the sex of both victim and perpetrator have a stronger impact on attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence than sexual orientation (Harris & Cook, 1994). However, Herek (1991, as cited in Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991) argues it is possible that previous research may not have been sensitive to confounding variables that could have negatively impacted on results. For example with individuals holding homophobic attitudes, people may show less concern for gay and lesbian relationships if they perceive them to lack in intimacy (Miller, Greene, Causby, White & Lockhart, 2001). These perceptions may, in turn, influence decisions and sentences which are made in the criminal justice system (Seelau & Seelau, 2005).

Aims and Objectives

The present study will apply the research questions to a sample from a university campus in the United Kingdom. As was previously mentioned, participant's perceptions of seriousness, believability and the severity of sentence given are influenced by the sex of both the perpetrator and the victim (Cate *et al.*, 1982; Henton *et al.*, 1982), so the research will expect this to be the case in the present study. The researcher endeavours to replicate previous research which demonstrates that participants sanction more active intervention strategies and more harsh penalties for violence which is perpetrated by men, and more believable and perceived as more serious when the victim is a woman (Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau *et al.*, 2003; Seelau & Seelau, 2005). This judgemental pattern is consistent with gender role stereotypes of men and women. It is evident that these perceptions are headed, partly, by the fact that men are generally perceived as more violent than women, and that women are vulnerable and more likely to suffer injury as a victim (Seelau & Seelau, 2005).

Based on the methodology of Seelau & Seelau (2005), the present study will determine whether gay and lesbian relationships are viewed in a different light to heterosexual relationships. The participants will be asked to judge the likelihood that the individuals in the vignette will experience future domestic violence issues. To control for anti-homosexual and sex role stereotypes participants will be asked to complete two controlled questionnaires (Kite & Deaux, 1986). Further, Poorman, Seelau & Seelau (2003) argue that previous studies into domestic violence in both heterosexual and homosexual couples have not controlled for prior knowledge towards domestic violence. Conclusions drawn from the research base are subject to these prejudices as they have not been controlled for. In addition, no previous literature attempts to provide a comparative sample of participants studying for a Police & Criminal Justice degree with a sample of those with no prior knowledge of police studies. This comparison will allow the researcher to determine whether there exists a definite difference between attitudes held towards heterosexual, gay and lesbian domestic violence.

It is therefore hypothesised:

- i. Police and Criminal Justice students will perceive abuse that is consistent with gender role stereotypes (male on female violence) as more serious than domestic violence in a relationship inconsistent with gender role stereotypes (female on male, male on male, female on female). Male on female violence will also be perceived as more believable and deserving of a more severe sentence than female on male, male on male and female on female domestic violence.
- ii. The scenario will moderate the relationships and any observed associations between the three covariates and the three dependant variables.
- iii. Participants will indicate that it most appropriate for police and courts to become involved in cases of domestic violence where there is a male perpetrator and a female victim, and least appropriate where there is a female perpetrator and a male victim.

Methodology

Design

As previously discussed, previous research has not controlled for any potential confounding variables such as homophobia, gender-role stereotypes and knowledge on domestic violence. Thus, the present research will attempt to incorporate these three variables as covariates for the study. For this two different between participant designs were adopted. The researcher will manipulate which scenarios the participant will receive. The present research will understand the underlying differences in domestic violence between in more familiar (Male on Female) and less familiar (Female on Male, Female on Female and Male on Male) incidents (see table 1).

Table 1

Independent Variables for the present research design.

IV		Control Variables
Gender	Male Female	Domestic Violence Knowledge
Age	18-25 26+	Homophobia
Course type	Police and Criminal Justice Studies Non-Police and Criminal Justice studies	Sex Role Stereotypes
Scenario	Man/Woman Woman/Man Man/Man Woman/Woman	

Table 2
Dependant variables and methods of analyses for present research design.

DV	Analysis
How believable was the alleged victims accounts of the events?	2 X 4 ANOVA
How serious to you consider this case to be?	2 X 4 ANOVA
If you ruled in favour of the prosecution, how severely would you sentence the defendant?	2 X 4 X 2 ANOVA
How appropriate is it for the police and courts to become involved in cases of men abusing women?	<i>One way repeated ANOVA</i>
How appropriate is it for the police and courts to become involved in cases of women abusing men?	<i>One way repeated ANOVA</i>
How appropriate is it for the police and courts to become involved in cases of men abusing men?	<i>One way repeated ANOVA</i>
How appropriate is it for the police and courts to become involved in cases of women abusing women?	<i>One way repeated ANOVA</i>

Participants

In total, one hundred and fifty seven participants formulated the sample. Fifty eight participants were not studying for a Police and Criminal Justice degree, and ninety nine were non-Police and Criminal Justice degree students. One hundred and thirty participants were between the ages of 18-25, and twenty seven were above the age of twenty six. The sample also compromised of eighty eight males and sixty nine females. One hundred and thirty eight had self-identified as heterosexual, fifteen identified as homosexual, three identified as bisexual and one identified as other. Due to the high percentage of heterosexual participants homosexual individuals were excluded from the analysis. Permission was sought and gained from senior staff and organised mutual times where students would be available to recruit. This quota sampling ensured that all participants recruited were Police and Criminal Justice students. For the remaining group participants were randomly sampled from the University of Northampton.

Materials

The Domestic Violence Knowledge Scale Appendix A

The scale is a new measure, designed specifically for the present research paper. The questionnaire requires participants to answer twenty three items which measure their general knowledge of domestic violence. Two of these questions, however, are only filler questions and are not incorporated into the final analysis (see Appendix A). Participants indicate their answer by selecting either 'true', 'false' or 'unsure' for each item. Items which are answered as 'unsure' are automatically scored as incorrect. When totalled, the responses indicate to what extent participants possess knowledge of domestic violence. The higher a participant scores on this scale, then it is assumed they have a greater knowledge of domestic violence. The initial Cronbach's alpha was 0.72, which is well above Kline's (1986) threshold figure of acceptability (0.7). As this figure was only marginally over the threshold, an item analysis was

conducted, resulting in a final Cronbach's alpha of 0.73 (see Appendix A for full report).

The Riddle Scale (1994) Appendix J

The Riddle Scale (Riddle, 1994) measures the degree to which a participant is homophobic or not. The scale is frequently used when assessing anti-discriminatory attitudes towards sexual orientation. When developed, the Riddle scale was one of the modern measurements towards homosexuality (Tucker & Potcocky-Tripodi, 2006). While the Riddle scale was initially created to measure attitudes towards gay and lesbians in the workplace, the scale is still applicable as a valid measure of homophobia (Szymanski, Chung & 2001). The questionnaire requires the participants to answer fifteen items which measure homophobia. The original Riddle scale requires participants to simply select each statement they agree with, thus accruing a total score of fifteen. However, to increase the scales sensitivity, scores were measured on a 1-5 likert response scale where 1 was 'strongly disagree' and 5 was 'strongly agree'. The responses, when totalled, provide a figure which researchers can determine to what extent the participants holds homophobic attitudes. In the original Riddle scale the lower the participants score, the more anti-homosexual attitude the individual holds (see table 3 and table 4). However, as a five point likert scale is being used, the attitude levels which were lower scored will not become the highest scoring attitude levels.

Table 3
Levels of attitude on the Riddle Scale (1994) and their responses

Range	Attitude level	Definition
1-2	<i>Repulsion</i>	Homosexuality is seen as a crime against nature. Anything is justified to help them: prison, hospitalisation, behaviour shock therapy.
3-4	<i>Pity</i>	Represents homosexual chauvinism. Heterosexuality is considered more mature and certainly to be preferred.
5-6	<i>Tolerance</i>	Homosexuality is viewed as a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most grow out of.
7-8	<i>Acceptance</i>	Still implies that there is something to accept. Comments like 'that's fine with you as long as you don't flaunt it' are common.
9-8	<i>Support</i>	People at this level are aware of the homophobic climate however may be uncomfortable themselves.
11-12	<i>Admiration</i>	It takes strength to be gay in our society. Those attaining this level can examine their homophobic attitudes and beliefs.
13-14	<i>Appreciation</i>	The diversity of people is considered valuable and lesbian/gays are seen as a valid part of that diversity.

15-16	<i>Nurturance</i>	Assumes that homosexuals are indispensable in our society. People on this level view homosexuals with genuine affection and delight, and are willing to be their allies and advocates.
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Table 4
Response scores from the Riddle Scale

Response scores	
1-4	Personal feelings may prevent you from accepting and accepting LGBT people.
5-8	You may be accepting, however may not be willing to work against anti-LGBT bias.
9-12	You are willing to strive for equal rights for LGBT people.
13-15	You are able to fully embrace LGBT people as equal members of the community.

Tucker & Potocky-Tripodi (2006) completed a systematic review of the literature on attitudes towards homosexuals. They reported that the psychometric properties of the Riddle Homophobia Scale were unknown; however they deemed it to have acceptable face validity. Therefore an item-analysis was conducted to test the reliability of the questionnaire.

Item analysis for the Riddle Scale

The initial Cronbach's alpha was 0.51, which is not acceptable when viewed in concordance with Kline's (1986) threshold figure of acceptability of 0.7. As the initial Cronbach's alpha is under the threshold for acceptability, an item analysis was conducted in an attempt to identify any weak items. Weak items were identified in the item-total correlation column, which were scores which were in minus numbers or extremely low (See table 5). Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha if the item is deleted was compared with the initial Cronbach's alpha of .51. Items one, two, three, seven and ten were deleted increasing the Cronbach's alpha to 0.65. The revised Cronbach's alpha does not, however, sit above Kline's (1986) threshold figure of acceptability. This must be taken into account when considering the results as this item analysis indicates that the measure is not satisfactory in reliability.

Table 5
Showing the item-total statistics for all items on the Riddle Scale (1994)

Question	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha is item deleted
1) Homosexuality is unnatural and immoral.	1.52	.89	.03	.51
2) Gay people should be offered help in order to fix their gender disorder.	1.56	1.18	.03	.52
3) We should have compassion for gay people. They can't be blamed for how they were born.	3.06	1.48	.15	.49
4) Gay people did not choose to be the way they are. If they could, they would choose to be straight.	1.96	1.28	.24	.47
5) Homosexuality is a phase most people go through but grow of eventually.	1.71	1.05	.25	.47
6) Gay people need our help as they wrestle with many difficult issues associated with their lives.	2.90	1.27	.12	.50
7) I have no problem with gay people, but would rather not see them flaunt their sexual orientation in public.	2.63	1.40	-.00	.53
8) What gay people do in the privacy of their own home is up to them.	4.59	1.00	.35	.45
9) Gay people deserve the same rights and privileges as everyone else.	4.52	1.13	.35	.45
10) Homophobia is wrong. Society needs to take a stand against it.	3.86	1.60	.08	.52
11) It takes strength and courage for gay people to be themselves in today's world.	3.76	1.11	.39	.44
12) There is great value in our human diversity. Gay people are part of that diversity.	4.19	1.13	.23	.47
13) It is important for me to stand up to demonstrate homophobic attitudes.	2.92	1.16	.11	.50
14) Gay people are indispensable part of society and there is much to be learned from them.	3.36	.96	.27	.47
15) I would be proud to be part of a pro-gay organisation.	3.44	1.12	.19	.48

Sex role stereotyping questionnaire *Appendix L*

The questionnaire measuring attitudes towards females' social roles was originally developed by Slade and Jenner (1978). The questionnaire is described as a simple scale to assess attitudes towards female social roles. The questionnaire investigates opinions about the perceptions about the appropriate roles for females with regards to child care and within the home. It also explores the assumed capability of women in comparison to men and touches on the correct status of females in marriage. The original twenty-five item instrument (Appendix I) is adequately developed to avoid response sets. Perceptions of stereotypical female roles were assessed on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The neutral response category (3) was included so as not to force participants into choosing a response which was sided onto either agree or disagree. The present questionnaire was based on the item analysis that Hubbard, Ijzendoorn & Tavecchio (1982) conducted. On the original sample tested, the initial Cronbach's alpha was .92, with the test-retest reliability with an interval of ten days scoring at .84. According to Kline's (1986) threshold for acceptability (0.7), the Cronbach's alpha for the present psychological measure of testing is extremely reliable. However, this high scoring Cronbach's alpha was after five items were deleted (Table 6). Thus, explaining why the present questionnaire is adapted to replicate this deletion of items to increase the internal consistency.

A participant's score is a total of the twenty items with a possible range of 0-100. A score which is closer to zero indicates an attitude without sex-typing, whereas an attitude towards the other pole distinguishes an attitude which incorporates sex-typing.

Table 6
Deleted items total correlation based on optimal scale weights for the questionnaire measuring attitudes towards female social roles

Items that were originally deleted	Item total correlation
1) Looking after children is just as much the father's job as the mother's.	.14
2) Girls should be encouraged to be ambitious in terms of their career.	.03
3) Women are men's equals intellectually.	.21
4) The age at which a woman qualifies for a retirement pension should be the same as for a man.	.05
5) Women should feel inhibited about taking the sexual initiative.	.17

Questionnaire measuring perceptions of the abuse incident *Appendix M*

As the final questionnaire, participants completed a thirteen item questionnaire assessing items on various scales, adapted from Poorman, Seelau & Seelau (2003). The appropriateness of the courts in getting involved in incidents of domestic violence in four cases of domestic violence (see Appendix J) was measured on a scale measuring from 1 (Never appropriate) to 7 (Always appropriate). The seriousness of the incident was measured on a seven point likert scale measuring from 1 (Not at all serious) to 7 (Very serious). The believability of the victims account, the likelihood that the couple will suffer from future domestic violence problems and the severity of the attack was also measured on a seven point likert scale measuring from 1 (Not all believable/Not at all likely/No penalty) to 7 (Completely believable/Completely likely/Maximum penalty). Participants selected from various categories to indicate their most likely course of action if they had witnessed the dispute (Nothing, called the police, called a domestic abuse hotline and tried to talk to the couple). Participants also answered *Yes* or *No* to whether they would serve as a witness on the case, whether the victim should have called the police and whether the victim should press charges against the attacker. Finally, participants had to select whether or not they would rule in favour of the prosecution of the defence.

Scenario describing a domestic violence incident *Appendix F-I*

Four scenarios of a domestic abuse incident were developed by manipulating the sex of the victim and the perpetrator. The perpetrator and victim's sex were manipulated orthogonally to create four between-participant conditions: male-male, male-female, female-female, female-male. The vignettes presented to participants were identical except for the masculine and female pronouns varied across the scenarios (See Appendices F-I). The altercation described in the scenarios involved both physical and verbal abuse. Other variables such as: age of partner, length and degree of intimacy or any drug abuse were not held considered so as to avoid the participants being influenced by any pre conceived beliefs held regarding drug abuse or any of the afore mentioned factors. However, the consumption of alcohol was included in each incident. To enhance the external validity, the altercation was developed using a template domestic violence incidence case study supplied by the Police and Criminal Justice department of the University of Northampton (See Appendices F-I). There had been previous incidents between the couple involving verbal and physical abuse, however the police had never been called before. In this incident, the perpetrator (who was intoxicated) called at the victim's house late one night and verbally abused the victim. The perpetrator then entered the victim's house without permission and caused the victim to fall down the stairs, hitting their head on the way down and falling unconscious. The victim described being afraid of the safety of themselves and their children and no longer feeling safe in their own home.

Procedure

A set of materials was given to each participant, containing a one page vignette of a domestic violence incident which occurred between a romantically involved couple. The packet of materials also contained a demographic questionnaire (Appendix E), a questionnaire measuring homophobia (Appendix J), a questionnaire measuring sex role stereotypes (Appendix L) and a response questionnaire assessing perceptions of the incident. Before commencing in any voluntary participation informed consent

was obtained from every single participant in the form of an information sheet (Appendix D). In addition, the researcher verbally explained the nature of the research in terms of what was expected of each participant, including the fact that their participation was completely voluntary and that the study would take approximately ten minutes of their time to complete. Once the participants consented to participation they then proceeded to complete the questionnaire booklet. Participants then completed the three questionnaires controlling for homophobia, domestic violence knowledge and sex role stereotyping. Once these were completed each participant then read through the domestic violence scenario that was attached to their pack (n.b. each participant received one of the four scenarios). The Police and Criminal Justice students were recruited during various seminars and lectures with the permission of the lecturers and seminar leaders at the University of Northampton. All other participants were gathered around the library on Park Campus at the University of Northampton. Once all the participants had completed the questionnaire they were allowed the opportunity to read the debrief and ask any questions. The researcher also drew the attention of the participants to the 24/7 domestic advice hotline at the bottom of the page.

Ethical considerations

The present study complied with the British Psychological Society's and the universities ethical guidelines. Ethical approval was sought and obtained from the universities ethical committee. Understandably the topic of domestic violence is extremely sensitive. With this in mind, the information sheet explicitly informed participants that the experiment was primarily interested with attitudes and perceptions towards domestic violence. More importantly, it was expressed to participants that as participants they would be required to read a short vignette which took the form of a domestic violence case and answer questions on it. What was of concern was not the questions regarding the vignette, but the vignette itself. Presenting a participant who may have had prior negative experiences with domestic violence with a realistic altercation between couples could cause undue psychological distress and harm. It was stressed to participants that they retained the right to withdraw their participation from the study at any time if they began to feel uncomfortable. Participants were required to write their student number on their questionnaire booklet so that if they wished to remove themselves from the research; they just had to email the researcher so they can be easily identifiable. As the researcher did not have access to student profiles, the identity of the students could not be obtained. To ensure that participants did not feel coerced into taking part in the research, participants were approached once the class had ended ensuring that each potential participant had the right to leave the classroom if they did not want to participate.

Results

When assessing the frequencies for category age it was made apparent to the researcher that 82.6% of participants fell in the 18-25 category, thus leaving 17.4% of participants split between the remaining three age categories. As the category 36-45 only held 2.2% of all participants this category was merged with the three last age categories into a more general 26+. There was found to be no difference between age and any of the covariates that were being measured by the researcher. There was no significant difference between age and knowledge: $t(135) = -1.473$, $p < 0.143$, 95% CI $-1.98570 < 0.29027$. Further, there was no significant difference between age and homophobic attitudes: $t(136) = -1.295$, $p < 0.197$, 95% CI $-4.81524 < 1.00383$ or age and attitudes to sex role stereotypes: $t(136) = -0.367$, $p < 0.714$, 95% CI $-3.32436 < 4.84190$. Based on these findings age has been removed as an independent variable in the present study. In addition, 87.9% of the sample were heterosexual, with only 12.1% falling into either the *homosexual*, *bisexual* or *other* categories. Thus the researcher has decided to only analyse data from heterosexual participants. The normality tests were conducted and parametric assumptions were met. After visual inspection of histograms and Q-Q plots it is evident that the data is normally distributed.

Before any further forms of analysis could be conducted, the researcher ran an ANOVA to ensure that there were no differences between the scenario conditions. There was no significant difference found between the scenario and domestic violence knowledge $F(3, 121) = 0.794$, $p < 0.5$, *partial* $\eta^2 = 0.019$, there was no significance difference found between the scenario and homophobic attitudes: $F(3, 121) = 0.069$, $p < 0.976$, *partial* $\eta^2 = 0.002$, and no significant difference between the scenario attitudes towards sex role stereotypes: $F(3, 121) = 0.500$, $p < 0.683$, *partial* $\eta^2 = 0.012$ (see attached disc). This indicated that the random allocation to conditions had worked.

On average, in comparison to males, females viewed victim's accounts of the events more believable, would sentence the defendant more severely and considered the case to be more serious (see table 7). Females also displayed higher knowledge of domestic violence than males, however were less homophobic and also held less negative sex role attitudes (see table 7). Non-police students viewed the victim's accounts of events more believable than police students. Non-police students also would sentence the defendant more severely than police students (see table 7.1). Moreover, Police students on average viewed the case to be more serious than did non-police students. Police students displayed considerably more homophobic attitudes than non-police students. Further, police students also displayed higher knowledge towards domestic violence and more negative attitudes towards sex role stereotypes, however these differences were marginal (see means in table 7.1). Both conditions which included a male perpetrator were considered more believable by participants, more specifically by participants in the 26+ category (see table 7.2). Male perpetrators were also sentenced more severely than female perpetrators, with participants in the 26+ category delivering more severe punishments (see table 7.2). Again, participants in the 26+ category viewed scenarios with male perpetrators more serious than those with female perpetrators (see means in table 7.2).

Table 7
Descriptive and inferential statistics for each of the dependant and control variables comparing gender

	Male		Female		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Knowledge	17.52	2.70	18.01	2.56	-1.33	.89	-0.18	-1.32	.35
Homophobia	36.52	6.73	35.10	7.04	-3.35	.00	0.21	-7.55	3.59
Sex role attitudes	34.06	9.86	30.79	8.22	-0.97	.92	0.35	.32	6.14
How believable was the alleged victim's account of the events?	5.25	1.13	5.82	1.21	-3.06	0.01*	-0.49	-.94	-.20
If you ruled in favour of the prosecution, how severely would you sentence the defendant?	5.18	1.27	5.36	1.22	-.89	.37	-0.14	-.57	.21
How serious do you consider this case to be?	6.15	0.93	6.15	1.37	-.01	.99	-0.00	-.36	.36

Table 7.1
Descriptive and inferential statistics for each of the dependant and control variables comparing course type

	Police Students		Non-Police Students		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>				<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Knowledge	17.76	2.63	17.70	2.68	-1.33	.89	-0.02	-.92	.81
Homophobia	37.27	6.07	33.56	7.58	-3.35	.001	-0.54	-5.86	-1.52
Sex role attitudes	32.68	9.19	32.51	9.54	-0.97	.92	-0.02	-3.18	2.88
How believable was the alleged victim's account of the events?	5.32	1.19	5.81	1.16	2.49	0.14	0.40	0.10	0.87
If you ruled in favour of the prosecution, how severely would you sentence the defendant?	5.22	1.25	5.32	1.24	0.50	0.61	0.08	-.30	0.51
How serious do you consider this case to be?	6.32	0.72	5.87	1.57	-2.40	0.02	-0.39	-0.80	-0.07

Table 7.2

Descriptive statistics for each of the dependant variables comparing scenario

	Scenario	Mean	SD	Lower	95% CI
					Upper
How believable was the alleged victim's account of the events?	Man/Woman	5.86	.96	5.56	6.15
	Woman/Man	5.13	5.13	4.74	5.52
	Man/Man	5.49	1.39	5.09	5.88
	Woman/Woman	5.39	1.22	4.96	5.82
If you ruled in favour of the prosecution, how severely would you sentence the defendant?	Man/Woman	5.60	1.07	5.27	5.93
	Woman/Man	4.70	1.02	4.31	5.08
	Man/Man	5.88	1.35	5.20	5.97
	Woman/Woman	4.81	1.21	4.38	5.24
How serious do you consider this case to be?	Man/Woman	6.48	.79	6.24	6.73
	Woman/Man	5.83	1.08	5.42	6.23
	Man/Man	6.43	.98	6.15	6.70
	Woman/Woman	5.60	1.47	5.08	6.13

Hypothesis 1

How serious do you consider this case to be?

A 2 x 4 factorial ANCOVA indicated a significant main effect for scenario $F(3, 145) = 5.444, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.101$. A significant main effect was also indicated for course type $F(1, 145) = 5.080, p < 0.026, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.034$. No significant two way interaction between scenario and course was discovered $F(3, 145) = 0.331, p < 0.803, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.007$. Participants generally perceived domestic violence to be more serious when the perpetrator was male ($M = 6.484; M = 6.4314$), and less serious when the perpetrator was female ($M = 5.833; M = 5.5635$) (see figure 1 and Appendix A).

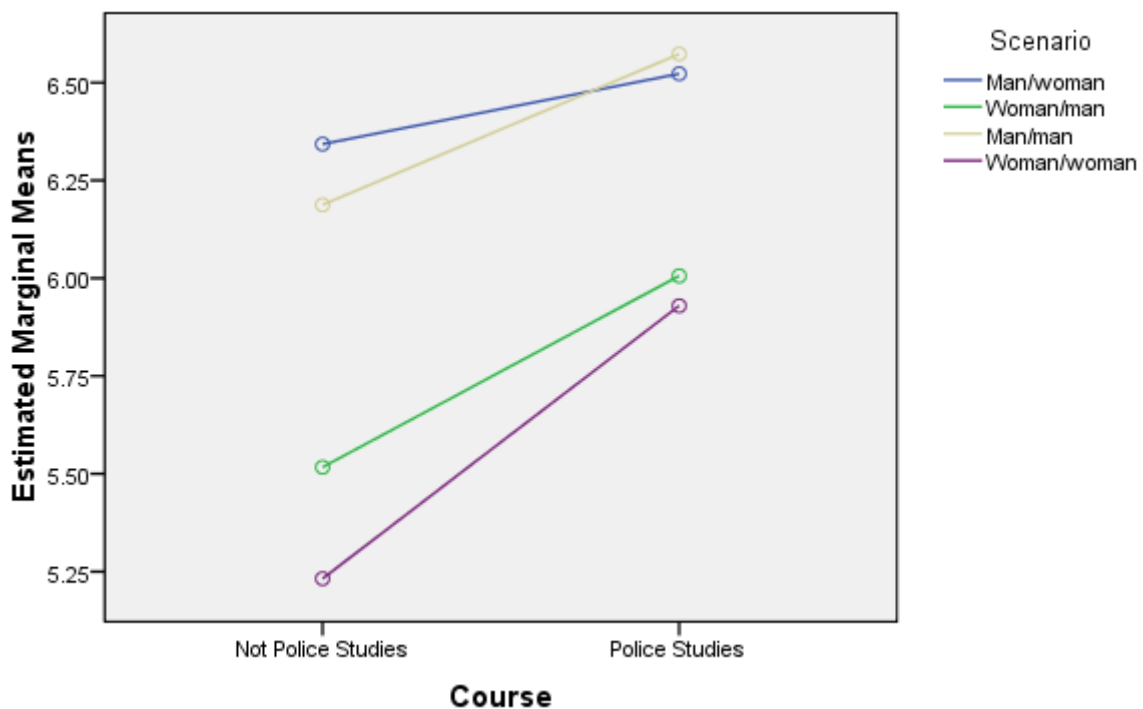


Figure 1: Estimated marginal means of how serious do you consider this case to be?

If you ruled in favour of the prosecution, how severely would you sentence the defendant?

A 2X4 factorial ANCOVA indicated a significant main effect for scenario: $F(3, 145) = 6.135, p > 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.113$. However, no significant main effect was found for course type on how severely participants would punish the perpetrator: $F(1, 145) = 0.829, p > 364, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.006$. There was also found to be no significant two way interaction between scenario and course type: $F(3, 145) = 0.066, p > 0.05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.001$. Further, on observation of the reported means indicated that participants were more likely to deliver a more severe sentence where the male was the perpetrator ($M = 5.6047, SD = 1.07215; M = 5.5882, 1.35907$) than when there was a female perpetrator ($M = 4.7, SD = 1.02217; M = 4.75, SD = 1.16398$). Moreover, from observation of both figure 2 and the reported means, Non-police students ($M = 5.3276, SD = 1.24799$) were more likely to deliver a more severe sentence than Police students ($M = 5.2041, SD = 1.25147$) (see figure 2).

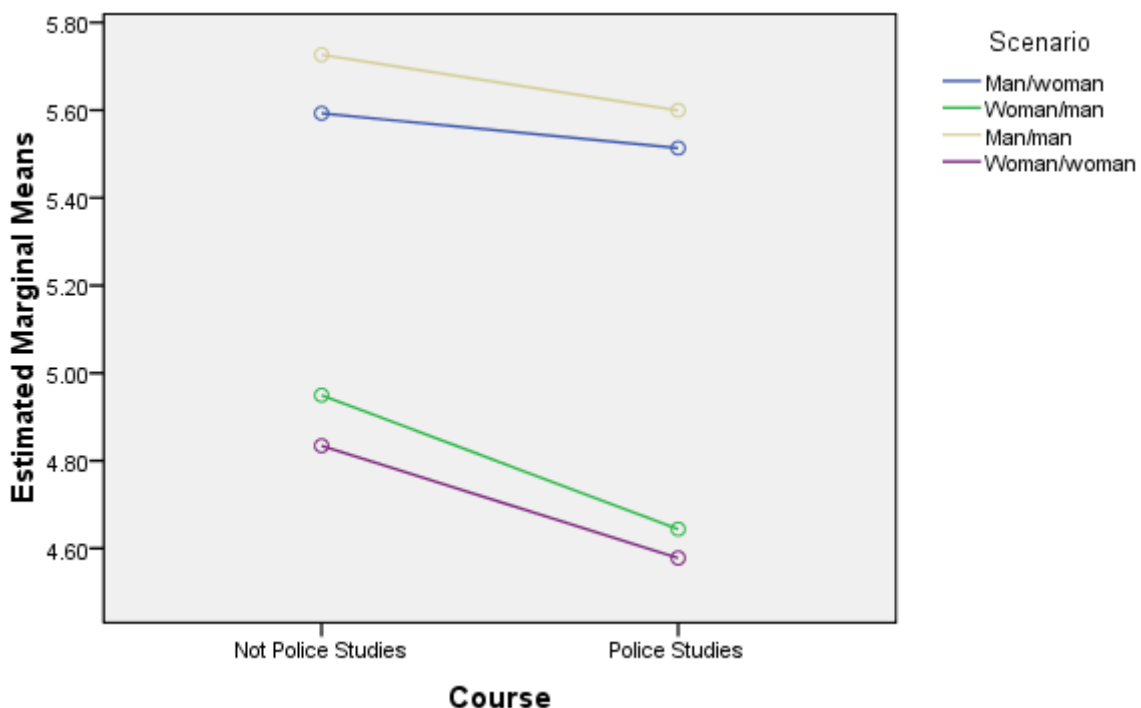


Figure 2: Estimated marginal means of if you ruled in favour of the prosecution, how severely would you sentence the defendant?

How believable was the alleged victims accounts of the events?

A 2 X 4 X 2 mixed factorial ANCOVA indicated a significant main effect for scenario on how believable participants judged the victims accounts of the events: $F(3, 137) = 2.731, p < 0.046, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.056$. Specifically, the extent to which participants believed the alleged victim in the Woman/Man scenario ($M = 5.1333, SD = 1.04166$)

less than in the Man/Woman scenario ($M = 5.8605$, $SD = 0.96563$). There was also an approaching significant three way interaction found between scenario, course and gender on how believable the alleged victims accounts of the events were: $F(3, 137) = 2.453$, $p < 0.66$, $partial \eta^2 = 0.051$. However, there was no significant main effect indicated for either course: $F(1, 137) = 1.543$, $p > 0.216$, $partial \eta^2 = 0.11$, or gender: $F(1, 137) = 2.711$, $p > 0.102$, $partial \eta^2 = 0.19$. On average, Police students indicated less believability than Non-police students for each scenario (see figure 3).

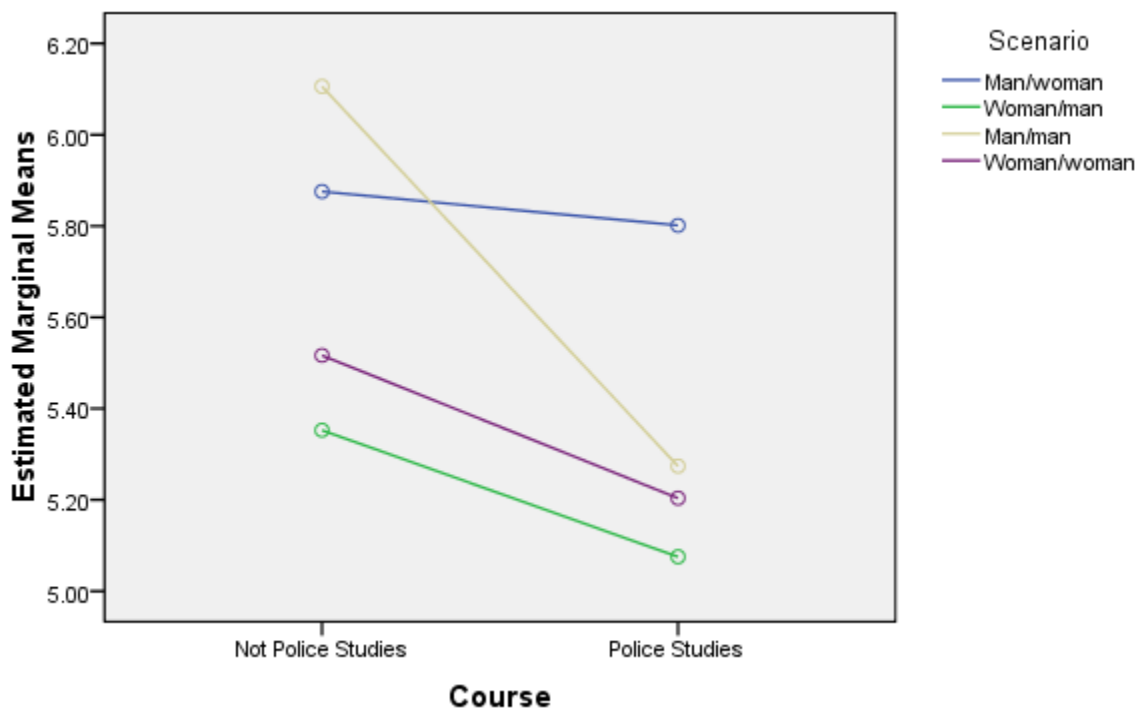


Figure 3: Estimated marginal means of how believable was the alleged victim's account of the event for course

Hypothesis 2

In a sample of 138 participants, bivariate correlations indicate negative relationship was observed between knowledge and how severely participants thought the perpetrator should be sentenced (see table 8).

In the Male/Male scenario, bivariate correlations indicate A strong negative relationship was indicated between homophobia and how believable participants judged the case to be (see table 8). These correlations indicate the moderating effect for scenario. As homophobia is significantly related to believability in only the male/male scenario, and knowledge is significantly correlated to the severity of sentence given in only the male/female scenario. No significant correlations were indicated in the women/women scenario (see table 8).

Table 8
Correlation analysis for all dependant and control variables on scenario

Scenario	Covariates	Seriousness ¹	Belief ²	Prosecution ³
Man/Woman	Homophobia	-.12	.21	.05
	Sex role stereotypes	.06	.26	.17
	Domestic Violence Knowledge	.04	-.16	-.341*
Woman/Man	Homophobia	-.12	-.30	-.30
	Sex role stereotypes	.28	.15	.02
	Domestic Violence Knowledge	-.20	-.16	-.29
Man/Man	Homophobia	-.09	-.435**	.03
	Sex role stereotypes	-.19	-.21	.12
	Domestic Violence Knowledge	.15	.28	-.26
Woman/Woman	Homophobia	.07	.24	.03
	Sex role stereotypes	-.04	-.14	.09
	Domestic Violence Knowledge	.03	.18	.09

Key: * Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

¹ How serious do you consider this case to be?

² How believable was the alleged victims accounts of the events?

³ If you ruled in favour of the prosecution, how severely would sentence the defendant?

Hypothesis 3

A one way repeated ANOVA was run on the final four questions of the final questionnaire. These questions measured how appropriate participants felt the courts should get involved in cases of domestic violence in the four scenarios (Table 5). A one way repeated ANOVA indicated a significant difference in appropriateness of the police and courts involvement in cases of domestic violence: $F(2, 316) = 52.830$, $p < 0.001$, $partial \eta^2 = 0.253$. Post hoc analysis indicated these differences to be between conditions 1 & 2 ($p < 0.001$), conditions 1 & 3 ($p < 0.001$), conditions 1 & 4 ($p < 0.001$), conditions 2 & 3 ($p < 0.001$) and conditions 2 & 4 ($p < 0.004$). However, post hoc analysis also indicated no significant difference between conditions 3 & 4 ($p < 0.265$). From visual observation of the means it is evident that participants viewed it most appropriate for the police and courts to become involved with domestic violence cases where the male is the perpetrator and the female is the victim ($M = 6.3248$, $SD = .92831$). Participants viewed it least appropriate for the police and courts to become involved in domestic violence cases when the victim is male and the perpetrator is female ($M = 5.2310$, $SD = 1.94920$).

Table 9
Descriptive statistics for a repeated measures one-way ANOVA on
appropriateness of police and courts to involved themselves in incidents of
domestic violence

Question	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.</i> <i>Deviation</i>	<i>95%</i> <i>CI</i> <i>Lower</i>	<i>95% CI</i> <i>Upper</i>
1) How appropriate is it for the police and courts to become involved in cases of Men abusing Women?	6.32	.92	6.17	6.47
2) How appropriate is it for the police and courts to become involved in cases of Women abusing Men?	5.12	1.94	4.81	5.42
3) How appropriate is it for the police and courts to become involved in cases of Men abusing Men?	5.45	1.55	5.20	5.69
4) How appropriate is it for the police and courts to become involved in cases of Women abusing Women?	5.38	1.59	5.13	5.64

Discussion

This study replicates and extends previous findings regarding perceptions of domestic violence incidents. As in previous research (Feather, 1996; Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau & Seelau, 2005; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003), participants indicated domestic violence which is committed against female victims more serious, more believable and in need of a more severe punishment than domestic violence perpetrated towards male victims. As hypothesised, Police and Criminal Justice students perceived all scenarios more serious than non-police students did. Police and Criminal Justice students did also perceive victims accounts as more believable than non-police students, however this was not found to be significant. Surprisingly, participants perceived that when the male was both the victim and the perpetrator, a more severe punishment would be appropriate. However there was measurable homophobia within the Police and Criminal Justice students. This attribution of punishment may be a measure of homophobic attitudes rather than a true measure of participant's perception of the said domestic incident. If this is assumed, then in concurrence with traditional gender role stereotypes, cases with female victims were attributed a more severe punishment than those with a male victim. Moreover, homophobia was also found to significantly correlate with participant's perceived believability in only the male/male scenario. Knowledge of domestic violence was also found to significantly correlate with perceived severity of punishment, but only in the male/female scenario. As predicted, participants indicated that it was more appropriate for police and courts to become involved in cases of domestic violence where there is a male perpetrator and a female victim. Consistent with previous research, neither males nor females responded differently to homosexual cases of domestic abuse compared to that in straight relationships (Seelau *et al.*, 2003).

The results from the present research are consistent with research indicating that individuals perceive violence against females as being more serious than violence perpetrated against males (see, e.g., Seelau *et al.*, 2003; Seelau & Seelau, 2005; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003; Harris & Cook, 1994; Feather, 1996). It was proposed that individuals may find it difficult to view a man as a victim as this does not fit the congruent image held of a man being the perpetrator rather than the victim. On the other hand, incidents which do not fall congruent with individual's traditional views of domestic violence may be labelled less serious than an incident of domestic abuse may be. Logan, Shannon & Walker (2006) stipulate that police officers indicated that they were less inclined to intervene in an incident if there was not a female victim and a male perpetrator. Moreover, this could be explained by the fact that abuse perpetrated by a woman is perceived less serious than abuse perpetrated by a man (Poorman, Seelau & Seelau, 2003; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Dutton & Nicholls, 2005). The present research did not control for any differences in perceived strength, height, weight or build in the present research. This allowed participants to produce their own mental representation of the perpetrator and the victim which was not contrived to the researcher's specifications. Police and Criminal Justice students rated the male on male scenario as more serious, in comparison to the remaining participants rating the male on women scenario as more serious. If one was to view the present study in line with traditional gender role stereotypes then one would expect the entire sample to perceive male on female abuse as more serious. One explanation is that Police and Criminal Justice students have

experience with either dealing with or studying about real life domestic violence incidents. Traditional gender stereotypes may not apply to their understanding of domestic violence as firsthand experience may have altered their opinion. The vignette utilised is explicit that the violence is only one sided and no retaliation is experienced (Buzawa, 1988, as cited in Hotaling, Finkelhor, Kirkpatrick & Staus, 1988).

Participants perceived believability also partially supports previous research into gender role stereotypes (Poorman, Seelau & Seelau, 2003). Participants indicated that the incident where the perpetrator was male and the victim female, was more believable. Cicone & Ruble (1978) highlight that males are generally expected to be more aggressive than females. Particularly, when aggression is displayed in a physical form and results in some form of physical injury on the victim (Eagly & Steffen, 1986). Thus, participants may assume that if the perpetrator was female, then they must have been provoked to break this assumed gender role. The present research supports this as the female and male condition was rated least believable. With a female and a male victim an incongruent image of gender role stereotypes is presented. Coupled with the perception that females are vulnerable, timid and incapable of perpetrating violence, participants may have assumed that domestic abuse could not occur if the perpetrator is not male and the victim not female.

Interestingly, Police and Criminal Justice students appeared to sentence the perpetrator less severely than other students, regardless of the scenario given. Whilst the statistical difference is relatively small, its implications are still troubling. This is rather surprising because as members of the criminal justice system, they appear to bias towards more lenient sentences than the general public. Albeit, the difference in severity of punishment between course type was rather small (see table 7.1). As there was an observable difference in course type, there was no statistically significant difference. When assessing the severity of punishment in terms of the different scenarios, participants were more likely to select a more severe punishment when the male was the perpetrator. As there was no significant difference identified between anti-homosexual attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence, it is evident that perceptions of domestic violence perpetrated by males may have influenced perceptions somewhat. The perception of how severe the perpetrator should be punished may not reflect the participant's true perceptions on the incident in hand, but rather personal feelings toward males abusing females. Kristiansen & Giulietti (1990) indicate that females may indicate a higher level of blame upon male perpetrators in an attempt to regain their perceived control over any possibility that they may be victimised. Further, males indicate a more severe sentence as they attain a perceived notion that they would never inflict harm on a female. Alternatively, research has shown that individuals are more likely to engage and recommend more severe punishments for criminals when there have been reports of injury, previous engagements in violence and involvement in substances (Logan, Shannon & Walker, 2006). More specifically, when perpetrators are under the influence of substance, individuals are most likely to recommend severe punishments (Rigakos, 1997). When assessing individual's perception of male criminals, Haghghi & Lopez (1998) highlight that male criminals are more commonly associated with alcohol abuse, committing violent acts and of being recurring offenders. Particularly, when a violent altercation occurs between two males, it is viewed as more serious and most likely to result in physical harm than between a male and a female (Archer & Côté, 2005; Archer, 2005). Whilst no affirmation was made that the victim had retaliated, it is

possible that participants may have assumed that because the victim is male, in line with gender role stereotypes then they are invulnerable and thus will retaliate in an aggressive manner. Moreover, Cicone & Ruble (1978) conclude that men are expected to act more aggressively especially in retaliation to physical harm or pain. Thus, participants may have perceived the situation to be more violent than it was due to both the victim and perpetrator being male. This is supported by how participants perceived the seriousness of the situation (see page 38).

An interesting point of discussion is the relationship between the control variables and the dependant variables. In the Man/Man scenario, the researched identified a moderately strong negative correlation between homophobia and the perceived believability of the event. This supports the results of the t-tests that were run identifying any significant effect that homophobia may have on perceived seriousness, believability and severity of sentence. However, the Man/Man scenario is the only one to register any significant correlation between homophobia and any of the dependant variables (see table 8.2). Koppelman (1994) highlights that gay females are perceived as more acceptable to society than gay men, thus explaining why believability was negatively correlated with homophobia. However, if one considers Koppelman's (1994) conclusion, homophobia should have negatively correlated with all three of the dependant variables, not just one (Blanchard, Clemmensen & Steiner, 1985). As no casual relationship can be assumed, this particular result can provide a basis for a more tangible homophobia measure which is able to detect the subtleties in participant's responses. Furthermore, the only other control variable correlation was knowledge and severity of sentence. This is interesting as the negative correlation was only observed in the Man/Female scenario. What is interesting is that these two control variables only influence perception in two of the scenarios, and only on two perceived believability and severity of sentence.

The final four questions on the domestic violence perception questionnaire assessed participant's attitudes towards the police and courts involving themselves in each of the four domestic violence scenarios (see page 48). Consistent with the majority findings regarding perceived seriousness, believability and the severity of punishment, participants indicated that it was most appropriate for the police and courts to become involved with cases of domestic violence where males abuse females. What is worrying, however, is that the one way ANOVA that was run did not control for course type. With over sixty percent of the sample formed of students studying for a Police and Criminal Justice degree, it is worrying that with such a large percentage, there is still considerable difference in the indication of how involved the police and courts should be in all cases of domestic violence. In concordance with previous research, participants indicated it was most appropriate for the police and courts to be involved in the incident with the male perpetrator and female victim ($M = 6.324$; $SD = 0.99$), and less so for the incident with the male victim and the female perpetrator ($M = 5.12$; $SD = 1.95$) (see table 9) (Rohrbaugh, 2006; Seelau & Seelau, 2005; Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau, Seelau & Poorman, 2003). Whilst this was hypothesised, it is startling that participants who could be future law enforcement officers and jurors perceive domestic violence perpetrated by a female as in less need of involvement by the judicial system. Although the sample utilises only undergraduate students, it is safe to assume that is these perceptions regarding domestic violence are held by students then they may well be deep rooted in the upper echelons of the judiciary and emergency services. Cases of domestic violence

in homosexual relationships are underreported, so lack of exposure could aid explain why individuals perceive these altercations as in less need of outside intervention. Nonetheless, as highlighted violence which is not perpetrated by males on females is perceived as less serious, coupled with the perceived appropriateness of intervention by police and courts, it is unlikely that both victims and perpetrators alike will receive equal protection under the law. However, what must be considered before drawing any serious implications from the results is that although there was a statistically significant difference, participants still indicated that they it was appropriate for the police and courts to intervene. So practically, although certain scenarios may evoke participants to indicate that it is less appropriate for courts and the police to become involved, they still indicated that it was appropriate.

There are, however, various methodological issues that limit the generalisability of the results to actual domestic violence cases. Firstly, the present sample is rather homogenous; undergraduate heterosexual students do not hold representative attitudes and perceptions held by the general public. Greater homophobic attitudes and attitudes towards traditional sex roles have been found in older, less educated, more rural populations (Herek, 1994). Thus, it is possible that studies which incorporate a more representative sample may highlight that homophobia is a confounding factor in individuals' perception and attitudes towards domestic violence. Anti-homosexual attitudes and knowledge of domestic violence were found to significantly affect perceptual attitudes, albeit in with small significance. Thus, one must question whether these findings may be different with a more representative sample size. With a large proportion of the sample size formulated of Non-police students, knowledge of domestic violence could be lower than that of police students. In addition, with the majority of undergraduate students aged between 18-25, it is unlikely that any strong feelings towards traditional sex roles would have been fostered as these are more prominent in older generations (Murtaugh, Burns & Schuster, 1999; O'Keefe & Hyde, 1983). A sample which is over the age of thirty and which does not enjoy a university education may hold more negative attitudes towards homosexuality and traditional sex roles, and thus allow these to measurably influence their perception of domestic violence in same-sex relationships.

Secondly, the present study aimed to identify any difference in attitudes and perception of domestic violence between a sample of Police and Criminal Justice students and Non-police and Criminal Justice students. Police officer training appears to have a large overlap between partner violence and more generalised violence (Logan, Shannon & Walker, 2006; Logan, Walker & Leukefeld, 2001). As many perpetrators of domestic violence are already involved in acts of criminality (Buzawa, Hotaling & Klein, 1998), it is likely that these individuals are already involved in the criminal justice system (Logan, Nigoff, Jordan & Walker, 2002). It is possible that police officers are privy to these individuals' criminal histories and will be more likely to view an incident of domestic violence as less serious (Keilitz, Hannaford & Efkefan, 1997 as cited in Logan, Shannon & Walker, 2006). Current serving police officers are less likely to intervene in domestic violence incidents compared to other criminal acts (e.g. Grievous Bodily Harm or burglary) and where the victim is not a woman (Smith, 1990; Saunders, 1986). Moreover, the Home Office publications 'Living Without Fear – an Integrated Approach to Tackling Violence against Women' (Cabinet Office & Home Office, 1999) and 'Domestic Violence: Break the Chain' (Home Office, 2003) are used as a basis for police officer training. These publications focus primarily on domestic violence where the male is

the perpetrator and the female the victim. Coupled with the implementing of the Violence Against Women Initiative, police officers are not edified on domestic violence that occurs in relationships which are not traditional (i.e. male and female). Unlike previous research into serving police officers, the present sample focuses on participants studying a Police and Criminal Justice degree. The syllabus for this degree at the University of Northampton ensures students are presented with practical and theoretical evidence of domestic violence cases in both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships, thus providing an explanation as to why no significant difference in attitudes toward domestic violence was found for course type.

It is evident that participants judged domestic violence incidents where the victim was female as more serious, believable and in need of more serious intervention than when the victim is a male or when the partners are either male-male or female-female. If these attitudes are shared by members of the criminal justice system, serving police officers or potential jurors, it is unlikely that victims who are not female will not receive equal treatment when put in front of the law. Whilst no biases were found based on sexual orientation, it is probably that these biases are common (Herek, 2000) and do influence the verdicts passed in domestic violence cases (Renzetti, 1992). However, as the present research indicates that Police and Criminal Justice students do not hold more negative attitudes towards domestic violence than Non-police and Criminal Justice students, this highlights how beneficial current training programmes are. If this level of education can be attained in training programmes for all members of the criminal justice system, then there is a greater chance that exposure to all possible scenarios of domestic violence will produce more favourable attitudes towards domestic violence in gay, lesbian and heterosexual relationships; ensuring that all cases are tried equally, void of any personal prejudices.

The vignettes that were utilised in the present research were developed by the Police and Criminal Justice department of the University of Northampton. Whilst extremely realistic in terms of content, the vignette itself does not adequately control for any confounding attitudes which participants could derive from the altercation. Poorman, Seelau & Seelau (2003) paid particular attention to other sources of variation within the vignette, for example: age of partner, length of their relationship, provocation by the victim and degree of injury. Whilst they were not measured, there were kept constant throughout the four scenarios. Nevertheless, without these controls the results still indicated that the sex of both the perpetrator and the victim can influence the perceived believability, severity and suggested length of sentence. It is possible that future research that incorporates fictional domestic violence vignettes need not pay too much attention to the minutiae of situational attributes and focus more on the degree and severity of violence encountered (Weisz, Tolman & Saunders, 2000).

Particular attention was attributed to selecting police students to formulate part of the sample as police officers are usually at the forefront of all reported cases of domestic abuse. Whilst Police and Criminal Justice students displayed no difference in attitudes to domestic violence than other students, this cannot be said for serving police officers. Additionally, police officers are not the only services that deal with domestic violence victims. Nurses, doctors, physicians, social workers and psychologists all deal with the psychological and physical welfare of victims of domestic violence (Tilden, Schmidt, Limandri, Chiodo, Garland & Loveless, 1994).

Due to the equal exposure these professionals experience with victims of domestic violence, one would hope they share the same attitudes as police students. It is encouraging to see that sex role stereotypes had no effect on perception, and homophobia and domestic violence had little effect on perception. There is a low domestic violence knowledge rate prevalent in current professionals, any attitudes that may be held towards domestic violence stem from their disciplinary backgrounds, rather than a factual basis (Goldberg & Tomlanovich, 1984). However, as discussed, there is no evident relationship between domestic violence knowledge and perceptions of domestic violence. Results from this paper imply that in a practical setting, lack of knowledge will not compromise the duty of care entrusted to professionals to ensure all victims of domestic violence receive the same treatment.

As with the present research, the same methodological design should be adopted as it appears to be valid. However, less emphasis should be placed on participant's prior knowledge of domestic violence. With the development of a new psychometric measure for prior knowledge of domestic violence, the present research has indicated very little impact on perceptions of domestic abuse. The research has great implications for the implementation of new training schemes. Whilst in some professions knowledge of domestic violence is a necessity in training (e.g. police officers), others may only incorporate domestic violence in homosexual relationships as an obligation to meet equality standards (domestic abuse hotlines) (Bennett, Riger, Schewe, Howard & Wasco, 2004). Whilst this is encouraging to see, it is now not required, leaving professions free to focus on core training regimes which will greatly benefit any service they may provide. As the sample from the present study was formulated from a university campus, it is assumed that they would possess greater general knowledge towards domestic violence, explaining why there was no significant difference highlighted between course type. Nabors, Dietz & Jasinski (2006) indicate that students of university education will have a greater chance of being exposed to literature surrounding domestic violence on and around campus than those not studying for a degree. Future research must provide a more representative sample in less educated, rural areas where knowledge of domestic violence may not be as common. Thus highlighting any significant interaction that may occur between lack of domestic violence knowledge and perceptions and attitudes towards domestic violence. When applying the design to any other sample, it may produce more significant results.

In conclusion, this research suggests that there should be great concern surrounding the likelihood that male victims would be unjustly treated whilst under trial. Although there is no differentiation in the violence sustained across the scenarios, participants perceived that the altercation between a male perpetrator and a female victim was more serious than between a female perpetrator and a male victim. In real life domestic violence cases, the perceived severity of the incident and the believability of the victim should not be a factor considered when deciding who receives protection under the law. The present research shows that nearly all viewed that it would be less appropriate for the courts to become involved in domestic violence cases with women abusing men. When a crime occurs with a female perpetrator they may be similarly overlooked if women do not traditionally fit the threatening, aggressive stereotype. Even though there are less reported cases of domestic violence which occur between female perpetrators and male victims, there is no indication that these cases are any less serious (Seelau & Seelau, 2005). This implies that steps have to be taken to increase awareness within both the criminal

justice system and health care system to the realities of domestic abuse. If greater education is offered then it is possible that these perceptions and attitudes can be altered to be more favourable. The more researchers can understand the perceptions that are held about domestic abuse, the more that can be done to ensure these perceptions are rectified and all cases and individuals are treated fairly.

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