Mirror mirror on the wall, which is the most convincing of them all? Exploring anti-domestic violence posters

Abstract

Although domestic abuse of women by men has received significant media, police and research attention, domestic violence directed towards men has been marginalized across the board and is still rarely treated seriously. The purpose of this research, then, is to examine and compare different anti-domestic violence messages in which the abuser's gender is not always clear. In *Study 1,* 200 UK participants (100 females and 100 males, aged 18 to 67, *M*=28.98, *SD*=9.613) evaluated posters that varied across three levels; in that the subject (male or female) was depicted as: *being silenced; bruised; or experiencing live abuse.* The results showed that the posters featuring female victims were all rated as more effective than posters showing male victims. In *Study 2,* 140 different UK participants (95 females; 45 males) aged 18 – 59 (*M* = 27.27, *SD* = 10.662) evaluated the cartoon facial images of Disney characters who had been altered to look like victims of violence and real life corresponding photos of human models. The results showed that the realistic posters were found to be more believable, emotional and effective than the cartoons. The implications of such perceptions are discussed.

Keywords: abuse; domestic violence; message; poster

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Almost one third of all women and over ten percent of all men will experience some form of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years (ONS, 2013). Domestic abuse can result in poor physical and psychological health and affects families, children, wider society and has a high human and economic cost (Haegerich & Dahlberg, 2011). The World Health Organization estimates that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime (WHO, 2013). Sexual assault is also especially high in college samples, yet it remains grossly under-reported (Gidycz, Rich, Orchowski, King, & Miller, 2006; Orchowski, & Gidycz, 2012). Interestingly, and contrary to what the mass media typically portray, males are also often the victims of domestic abuse and in the UK, for example, more than 40% of them are male (Campbell, 2010).

Traditionally, domestic violence interventions take one of three primary forms: shelters for survivors, hot lines for survivors and perpetrators, or information services (Gosselin 2010). Increasingly however, a series of campaigns have aimed to prevent sexual assault through bystander education and intervention. These campaigns shift attention from the victim to the community as a mechanism for preventing sexual assault (see Banyard, Plante, & Moynihan, 2004, 2005). While such campaigns show great promise, for example college students who were exposed to posters encouraging bystander behavior “exhibited greater awareness of the problem (contemplation) and greater willingness to participate in actions aimed at reducing sexual violence (action) compared to those students who did not report seeing the poster” (Potter et al., 2009,

p.118), such campaigns require sufficient investment in research in order to "ensure that campaigns' benefit from research… [increasing] the chances that the campaign will achieve its purpose" (Cismaru & Lavack, 2011, p. 195). This is especially important given that anti-domestic abuse campaigns, if poorly designed, can cause a "boomerang" or "backlash" effect, in which messages aimed at decreasing a given behavior actually *increase* it. For example, the 'Open Your Eyes' campaign (Keller & Otjen, 2007) sought to increase awareness of the severity of abuse.

However despite the intention behind the campaign, the actual outcomes were quite the opposite. The use of highly emotionally charged ads promoted the male population in a stereotypical, unflattering view, which resulting in a 'backlash' effect from the male participants. In addition to this, female participants found the ads to be significantly more effective than male participants, and as the severity of the ads increased (i.e., the degree of abuse they depicted), so too did the differences between the male and female participants' responses. Male participants showed no alteration in their responses with the emotional charged ads, and in some cases showed no sign of effect at all (Cho & Salmon, 2007). In explaining this 'boomerang' effect Witte, Meyer, and Martell (2001) suggest that some people perceive media campaigns (especially sensitive ones) as frightening, which causes them to deny the message (e.g., viewing it as 'not that big a problem'), or become defense-avoidant (e.g., 'not thinking about it'; see Witte et al., p. 27). This backlash effect of is also not unique to IPV; exposure to fear appeals about the negative health effects of smoking was shown to increase intentions to smoke (Rogers & Mewborn, 1976). Similar results exist for exposure to campaigns related to drinking (Kleinot and Rogers 1982), and unsafe sex (Witte 1992).

When looking at the science of effective media campaign, researchers have also identified that there are separate aspects of the campaign influence their effectiveness; namely message content and message delivery strategy (Elder et al., 2004). Regarding message-content, media campaigns have, in the past, adopted several different content themes in an attempt to elicit the desired behavior. Common themes include emphasizing the negative outcomes of a given, typically legal or health-related, behavior. 'Fear-based' campaigns, for example, are based on the principle of deterrence, but their effectiveness (in comparison to health and social-based themes) is not consistent (see Elder et al., 2004).

Other research has indicated that campaigns that cause too much anxiety are actually ignored or discounted (McGuire, 1989). An additional consideration is platform through which the message is delivered (e.g., visually or auditory). Wider research on influence of campaigns (including business ads and promotional campaigns) has identified that 'influence' achieved by such efforts is mitigated by the quality of the message. In such decisions, visual cues are used to make judgments regarding the nature of the message (the so-called 'peripheral route to persuasion'; see Cialdini, 2007) and perceptions of its source quality (Slater & Rouner, 1996). From a theoretical standpoint, the Health Belief Model (HBM) holds that behavioural change is a result of a cost: benefit analysis, weighing perceived susceptibility with severity of a potential outcome (Ogden, 2012). The Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM), on the other hand, suggests that behavioural change is dependant upon the ability the degree of comprehension the individual has in regards to the campaign (Eagley & Chaiken 1984). What this means then is that the effect of campaigns (both specific to IPV and wider) are mediated by

factors at the individual level. In support of this, in addition to the role of campaign content (see above), a viewers' mood (Schwarz, Bless & Bohner, 1991); gender (Gadd, Corr, Fox & Butler, 2014); educational status and race all affect the likelihood that a campaign will result in a behavioral or attitudinal change (e.g., Smith & Stutts, 2006).

This research, which introduces novel measures comprising the diverse IPV-themed images carefully selected by the team of authors, seeks to extend our understanding of the interaction of message and recipient by focusing on gender-specific responses to anti-domestic abuse campaigns. Specifically this research will investigate the interaction of recipient-gender and the severity of an anti-domestic abuse campaign. Furthermore, it will investigate the interaction of recipient-gender and the content of the anti-domestic abuse campaign. These research questions, and the rationale for them, are expanded upon below.

Study 1

In advertising, women are typically portrayed as passive, shy, dreamy and gentle, men are often shown as, dominant, autonomous, and achieving (Artz, Munger, & Purdy 1999). In line with Social Learning theory, which demonstrates how behaviour is shaped through modelling by observing other people and consequences of their actions (Bandura, 1986; Hoppitt & Laland, 2013), such sexist advertising has been associated with sexual harassment, violence against women, negative self-esteem, distorted body images, eating disorders, and stereotyped perceptions of, and conduct toward, men and women (Gulas & McKeage 2000). However, as the popular media can perpetuate sexist stereotypes, their influence might also potentially be harnessed to change views on domestic violence. This can be exemplified by the public education campaign, developed by the Family Violence

Prevention Fund (FVPF) and the Advertising Council, which used television ads to deliver the message that there is no excuse for domestic violence, showing a clear promise in mobilising bystanders to intervene (Wolfe & Jaffe, 1999). Thus, given the

The larger gender inequalities in most societies are argued to hold a causal role in IPV, meaning that the perpetration of abuse by men against women is an interpersonal enactment of larger cultural forces (Keller, Wilkinson & Otjen, 2013). Dutton (1994) argues that the 'feminist paradigm' supports the notion that IPV is primarily a male-supported enterprise, with female violence being defensive and reactive (see also Bograd, 1988). Thus, whereas in Western societies men still tend to be associated with dominance, women are typically characterized by the mothering nurturing idealization (Gavin, 2009). Accordingly, then, media-campaigns (both within domestic abuse messaging, and wider advertising campaigns) often purport a female-centric stereotype (such as, females being submissive, helpless and likely to be manipulated; see Artz, Munger, & Purdy 1999).

Specifically with regards to IPV campaigns Dutton and Sonkin found that the Dutch 'Duluth Model' placed too much blame on men, causing shame and exacerbated 'tendencies to externalize blame, reject feedback and experience chronic levels of high anger' (2003, p. 2; in Keller et al., 2013). Thus, a focus on dominant gender stereotypes fostered a backlash, undermining efforts to reduce IPV. Keller, Wilkinson and Otjen (2010) reported similar findings, finding that 'male perceived severity of domestic violence moved in the opposite direction intended by the campaign' (p.62). The 'This Is Abuse' campaign took on a similar approach by conducting a discussion between three young males based on a film 'The Bedroom.' The film primarily showed females as

victims and males as perpetrators, replicating the familiarity of gender stereotypes from other previous research (Cho & Salmon, 2007). The outcome of this campaign led to annoyance from the young males when they responded defensively and attempted to justify that there were legitimate reasons for specific violent behaviors (Gadd, Corr, Fox, & Butler, 2014). Taking into account such research strands, the following experimental hypothesis was proposed:

H_1: Male evaluators will find anti-IPV posters as less effective, less emotive and less believable than females.

Method

Participants. A total of 200 participants (100 females and 100 males, aged 18 to 67, *M*=28.98, *SD*=9.61) took part in this study. All participants were based in the United Kingdom. Participants were opportunistically sampled through social media to complete an online survey. Participants were informed that the study would involve them evaluating the effectiveness of anti-IPV campaign posters.

Design. The study was a 2 (Evaluator's Gender: Male/Female) X 6 (Poster Type: Male Being Silenced – a female hand covering his mouth/Female Being Silenced – a male hand covering her mouth/Male Being Bruised – a male facial photo with one bruised eye/Female Being Bruised – a female facial photo with one bruised eye/Male Experiencing Live Abuse – a shouting female raising her fist against a submissive-looking male /Female Experiencing Live Abuse – a shouting male raising his fist against a submissive-looking female) within subjects design[1]. Each participant was therefore exposed to 12 different posters, 6 featuring a male abuser and 6 featuring a female abuser

[1] All photos featured Caucasians (please email marekpalasinski@hotmail.com for more details)

. Participants rated each poster across three dependent variables (Effectiveness/Emotionality/Believability) using a 7-point Likert Scale (Likert, 1932).

Procedure. Following participants' ticking, the informed consent box, they clicked on the survey link, which took approximately 10 minutes to complete and which was shared on the social media for 3 months. The link then redirected them to the actual self-explanatory survey that they could complete in the comfort of their homes at their leisure time. The survey individually presented each poster once at a time before asking the participants to rate each poster across the three dependent variables. The poster presentation order was randomized between participants. After participants had rated all 12 posters they were debriefed (via the survey).

Results

Effectiveness[2]**.** Overall male evaluators (M=4.13, SE=.09) evaluated the anti-IPV campaigns as less effective than female evaluators (M=4.40, SE=.09; $F(1, 177) = 3.955$, p=0.48, η^2=.022). This provides support for *Hypothesis 1*. In regards to gender differences in the effectiveness of different types of poster image, male evaluators rated the *Male Experiencing Live Abuse Poster as less effective* (M=2.47, SD=.18) than female evaluators (M=3.60, SD=.18, p<.001). Overall, the *Female Experiencing Live Abuse Poster* was viewed as the most effective (M=5.68, SD=.10), with the *Bruised Female Poster* as the second most effective (M=5.55, SD=.10) and the *Female Being Silenced Poster* as the third most effective (M=4.43, SD=.11). The posters featuring female victims were all rated as more effective than posters showing males being silenced

[2] The ratings were averaged according to the Poster Type; A regression analysis with control variables, such as age, income and years spent in formal education did not result in a statistically significant model.

(*M*=2.84, *SD*=.09), bruised (*M*=4.06, *SD*=.11) or experiencing live abuse (*M*=3.03, *SD*=.13). Regarding gender differences in perceptions of effectiveness; pairwise comparison between poster types and gender evaluator showed that male evaluators rated the *Male Experiencing Live Abuse Poster as less effective* (*M*=2.47, *SD*=.18) than female evaluators (*M*=3.60, *SD*=.18, *p*<.001).

Emotionality. Overall, males (*M*=3.72, *SD*=.10) evaluated the posters as significantly less emotive than male evaluators (*M*=4.28, *SD*=.10), *F*(1, 177)=16.22, *p*<.001, η^2= .08). The *Female Experiencing Live Abuse Poster* was rated most emotive (*M*=5.40, *SD*=.10), followed by the *Bruised Female Poster* (*M*=5.27, *SD*=.10) and the *Silenced Female Poster* (*M*=4.22, *SD*=.11). All of these posters were evaluated as more emotive than the *Silenced Male Poster* (*M*=2.65, *SD*=2.56), *the Bruised Male Poster* (*M*=3.70, *SD*=.11) and the *Man Experiencing Live Abuse Poster* (*M*=2.86, *SD*=.13). Male evaluators rated the *Silenced Man Poster* as less emotive (*M*=2.33, *SD*=.13) than female evaluators (*M*=2.79, *SD*=.13, *p*=.012). Male evaluators rated the *Bruised Males Poster* as less emotive (*M*=3.30, *SD*=.16) than female evaluators (*M*=4.09, *SD*=.16, *p*<.001). Male evaluators also rated the *Male Experiencing Live Abuse Poster* as less emotive (*M*=2.33, *SD*=.18) than female evaluators (*M*=3.40, *SD*=.18, *p*<.001).

Believability. Male evaluators rated the posters as less believable (*M*=3.82, *SD*=.09) than female evaluators did (*M*=4.19, *SD*=.10), *F*(1, 176)=7.60, *p*=.05, η^2=.04). Overall, the *Bruised Female Poster* was evaluated as more believable (*M*=5.63, *SD*=.10) than the *Female Experiencing Live Abuse Poster* (*M*=5.46, *SD*=.12) and the *Female Being Silenced Poster* (*M*=4.05, *SD*=.12). All posters depicting female abuse were evaluated as more believable than the *Silenced Male Poster (M*=2.52, *SD*=.09), *Bruised*

Male Poster (*M*=3.66, *SD*=.11) and *Male Experiencing Live Abuse Poster* (*M*=2.72, *SD*=.13). Male evaluators rated the *Bruised Male Poster* (*M*=3.32, *SD*=.15) and the *Male Experiencing Live Abuse Poster* (*M*=2.19, *SD*=.18) as less believable than female evaluators (respectively, *M*=4.10, *SD*=.16, *p*=.002; *M*=3.25, *SD*=.19, *p*<.001).

Study 1 Discussion

We did not take pre and post-test measures of attitudes towards IPV, as such we cannot comment on the degrees of change. That said, the results of *Study 1* show that the gender of the participant significantly effects the perceived believability, effectiveness, and emotionality of the anti-IPV posters they were asked to evaluate. This supports the "boomerang" effect, within which ads that promote males in a stereotypical and unflattering view will be less effective. The findings here then are similar to those reported for anti-domestic abuse campaigns such as the aforementioned Dutch "Duluth Model," in that when blame is placed on men they externalize blame and reject feedback (in Keller et al., 2010). This has significant implications, especially when considering that the target in most of these posters is male. The implications of these findings, combined with the findings from *Study 2*, are further explored in the general discussion of this article.

Study 2

The way in which a message is communicated has a significant effect on the likelihood that the message will achieve its' intended outcome. While the nature of the image (i.e., the 'severity' of the image) has often been manipulated, fewer studies have investigated the style of the images. Elsewhere, the use of editorial cartoons as a communicative tool in electoral campaigns have been examined (see Conners, 2005;

Edwards & Ware, 2005), noting that cartoons command attention and tap into a sense of ideal or fantastic reality (Edwards, 2001). When applied to IPV campaigns, there is significant empirical warrant to assume that using cartoons may have a strong effect in media campaigns for IPV and sexual abuse. Kobayashi and Hara (1996), for example, argue that people show the highest levels of emotion recognition rate with cartoon-like faces.

Cartoon images hold a long-standing role in the development of thoughts, feelings and emotions about the world (Edwards, 2001). We frequently emotionally bond with fictional characters (be it in books, or in films) and people show the highest levels of emotion recognition rate with cartoon-like faces (Kobayashi & Hara, 1996). Emotional bonds formed towards fictional characters can be both powerful and meaningful, helping to develop one's understanding and assisting in the development of emotional bonds (Mar & Oatley, 2008). Childhood connections tend to be more intense than those made in adulthood (Morgan, 2010), meaning that a strong bond to the characters, assuming they were made in childhood, could create a high level of emotions.

There is also neurobiological evidence supporting that emotion about cartoon characters is processed differently to real-life faces (Grelotti et al., 2005). In fact, in discussing the utility of cartoon characters as visual themes in products, Demirbilek and Sener (2004) highlight that employing cartoon characters as visual themes may have many potentials as they appeal to a broad age range and can remain relevant for longer. Based on the presence of cartoon character features in many successful products (e.g., the Mini Cooper; see Wells, 2003), Demirbilek and Sener question "whether we are or are not pre-conditioned in our aesthetic preferences starting from our childhood" (p.318). As

demonstrated by artists, like Magrite or Salvador Dali, visual paradoxes (such as the bruised princesses from Disneyworld used here) are strong attention attractors, especially if unfamiliar objects differ even slightly from our expectations (Messaris, 1997). Although their persuasiveness may not always be automatic, they are commonly used in advertising. In regards to campaigns against emotive subjects, such as IPV, using cartoons as subjects could also increase the emotive response an individual has because they are seeing a known entity (rather than a stranger) in pain.

Given this, we propose the following hypothesis:

H_2: Participants will rate anti-IPV cartoon posters as more emotive and more effective, but less realistic than IPV real life posters.

Method

Participants. A total of 140 different online UK participants (45 male, 95 female) aged 18 – 59 (M = 27.27, SD = 10.66) took part in this study. As in *Study 1*, participants were opportunistically sampled using social media.

Design. This study employed a 2 (Evaluator's Gender: Male/Female) X 4 (Poster Type: Real Male Victim/Real Female Victim/Cartoon Male Victim/Cartoon Female Victim) within subject design. This research used facial images of Disney characters that had been altered to look like victims of violence (developed by artist Saint Hoax) and images of human models with make-up that looked as though they had been victims of violence (they featured Caucasians and Asian Disney characters and photos). They seemed to be bearing eye, cheek, lip and nasal injuries.[3]

[3] Please email marekpalasinski@hotmail.com for more details

Procedure. Similarly to *Study 1,* following participants' ticking the informed consent box, they clicked on the survey link, which took approximately 10 minutes to complete and which was shared on the social media for 3 months. The link then redirected them to the actual self-explanatory survey that they could complete in the comfort of their homes at their leisure time. Each poster was individually presented to the participant one at a time. After seeing each poster participants were asked to rate that poster across three dependent variables (Effectiveness/Emotionality/Believability) using a 7-point Likert Scale (Likert, 1932).

Results

Effectiveness[4]. The results found males rating the posters as less effective (*M*=4.09, *SD* =.19) than females (*M* = 4.70, *SD*=.130; *F*(1, 138) = 6.96, *p*=.01, η^2=.05) and the *Real Female Posters* (*M*=4.74; *SD*=1.39) were seen as more effective than *the Real Male Posters* (*M*=4.12; *SD*=1.26), *p* <.001. The *Real Male Posters* were also seen as more effective than the *Cartoon Male Posters* (*M*=3.46; *SD*=1.68), *p*= .05. The *Real Female Posters* (*M*=5.13; *SD*=1.26) were seen as more effective than *the Cartoon Female Poster* (*M*=4.82; *SD*=1.73), *p*= 05. The *Real Female* and *Cartoon Female Posters* were seen as more effective than the *Cartoon Male Posters*, *p*<.001.

Emotionality. Overall, males rated the posters as less emotive (*M*= 3.90, *SD*= .19) than females (*M*= 4.66, *SD*=.13, *F*(1, 138)=10.80, *p*<.001, η^2=.073. The *Real Male Posters* (*M*=4.47; *SD*=1.43) were seen as less emotive than the *Real Female Poster* (*M*=5.08; *SD*=1.25), *p*<.001. The *Real Female Posters* were rated more emotive than the

[4] A regression analysis with control variables, such as age, income and years spent in formal education did not result in a statistically significant model.

Cartoon Female Posters (*M*=4.84; *SD*=1.69), *p*=.05. The *Real Female Posters* were rated as more emotive than the *Male Cartoon Posters* (*M*=3.41, *SD*=1.76), *p* <.001. The Cartoon *Female Posters* were seen as more emotive than the *Cartoon Male Posters, p*< .001.

Believability. Overall, the males rated the posters as less believable (*M*= 3.95, *SD*=.19) than females (*M*= 4.39, *SD*=.13), *F*(1, 138)=3.88, *p*=.051, η^2=.05. Specifically, the *Real Male Posters* (*M*=4.27; *SD*=1.36) were seen as less believable than the *Real Female Posters* (*M*=4.76; *SD*=1.28), *p*<.001. The *Real Male Posters* were seen as more believable than the *Cartoon Male Posters* (*M*=3.09; *SD*=1.60), *p*<.001. The *Real Female Posters* were seen as more believable than the Cartoon *Female Posters* (*M*=4.25; *SD*=1.77), *p*<.001. *The Real Female Posters* were rated as more believable than the *Cartoon Male Posters, p* <.001. The Cartoon *Female Posters* were seen as more believable than the *Cartoon Male Posters, p*<.001.

Study 2 Discussion

It was hypothesized that the recognition for a cartoon images, rather than a 'stranger', would elevate the believability, effectiveness and emotionality of IPV posters that employed altered cartoon faces. However, contrary to *Hypothesis 2*, cartoon images of both males and females were viewed (by both males and females) to be less believable, emotional and effective than anti-IPV posters involving real images. In line with theories of interpersonal violence, it is easier to dehumanize and aggress against 'faceless strangers' (Staub, 2015). Yet, here, images of known entities as victims of domestic abuse were not viewed as more believable, emotional or effective than those of strangers. This is a especially important finding given that the (self-proclaimed) goal of the

campaign is to "encourage victims to report their cases." While a claim cannot be made about the possible behavioral effects of such posters (in comparison to the cognitive evaluations measured in this research), it is worrisome that despite the significant media attention they gartered, they viewed as less effective that a generic campaign image. There are two possible theories that might explain this finding. Firstly, humans hold 'sacred values', which are principles that are absolute and protected because they tap into the subjectively meaningful and sense-making moral or ethical standards transcending mathematically logical trade-off and whose transgression results in distress (Tetlock et al., 2000). Given the centrality placed on cartoon characters in the Western culture, it may be viable to hypothesize that they project powerful subjective meanings grounded in childhood (in that our firm view of what these cartoon characters represent is relatively stable). Thus, it is viable to suggest that depictions of well-known cartoon characters[5] as victims domestic abuse may have violated these meanings, eliciting a negative reaction. A second possible explanation is that humans are often most pro-social to those they hold in their in-group. In-group members are those who we hold are closest to ourselves (Emswiller, Deaux, & Willits, 1971). The in-group bias then holds a evolutionary advantage in that we are protecting carriers of genes that our similar to our own (see Pratkanis, 2007).

Specifically, in-group biases affects perceptions of suffering and the likelihood that an individual will endure pain to alleviate the pain of others, and both helping members of the in-group, and not helping members of the out-group could be predicted

[5] It must be acknowledged that although some of the 'older' participants may not recognize some of the more modern characters, it would be rather unlikely to affect their responses.

by neural activity (Hein, et al., 2010). It is viable to propose, therefore, that while recognizable and well known, cartoon characters in this research were not classified as members of the "in-group" due to their lack of similarity. As such, empathy and perceptions of pain were equal to the non-cartoon "faceless strangers" they were presented with. While there needs to be a significant investment in both behavioral and neurological research to validate these claims, this research does question the, perhaps lay assumption, that "well-known" faces draw attention and hence lead to greater effectiveness in anti-IPV campaign. To date, the digital altering of well-known individuals is increasingly being used in deterrent campaigns. For example artist and activist Alexsandro Palombo recently developed an anti-IPV campaign involving digitally altered faces of celebrities such as Kim and Kendall Kardashian, Madonna and Angelina Jolie. While the goal of such a campaign is to increase awareness for, and reporting of domestic violence, the findings presented here imply that by violating the values and perceptions we hold of famous social figures (be it cartoon, or celebrity) may actually lead to a defensive avoidance, hampering the campaign rather than facilitating it.

General Discussion

In this paper, we first examined the interaction between the gender of the victim in anti-domestic abuse posters and the gender of the poster evaluator. Posters featuring female victims were all rated as more effective than posters showing males being silenced, bruised or experiencing live abuse. Furthermore, male evaluators found IPV posters, overall, less effective than female evaluators. In addition, we also examined the effectiveness, emotionality and believability of digitally altered images Disney

characters, finding that, contrary to our hypotheses, realistic posters were found to be more believable, emotional and effective.

Scholars have previously argued that gender differences (both culturally, socially, and biologically) play a role in IPV, resulting in the increased propensity of male on female violence compared to female on male (or male on male; Connell 1995; Keller, Wilkinson & Otjen, 2013). As such, anti-IPV media-campaigns often purport this cultural stereotype of male perpetrators (see Artz, Munger, and Purdy 1999). However, previous research has found that presenting strong stereotypes in deterrent campaigns actually creates a 'boomerang' effect within which a message aimed at decreasing a given behavior *increases* it (Witte, 1992; Witte, Meyer, & Martell, 2001). Specifically, in anti-IPV campaigns Dutton and Sonkin (2003) found that a strong gender-dominant stereotype fostered a backlash amongst male recipients (see also Gadd, Corr, Fox, & Butler, 2014). Given this, then, we tested the effect of perpetrator gender in anti-IPV posters, especially in relation to the gender of the recipient. This analysis found that, overall, males viewed all anti-IPV images as significantly less effective, emotional and believable than their female counterparts, which was universal across images depicting both male and female abusers. This supported the presence of a "boomerang" effect in this study, and significantly warrants investment in future research that is focused on identifying how anti-IPV campaigns aimed at males (as bystanders or potential perpetrators) can be developed without incurring a backlash effect.

A further finding from *Study 1* is that, overall, and across both genders, posters depicting a moderate level of severity (e.g., a bruised victim) were viewed as less emotional, but more believable than posters depicting live abuse. This has important

ramifications when considering the degree of severity to show in an anti-domestic abuse campaign. People perceive sensitive media posters as frightening (Witte, Meyer & Martell, 2001), as such severe images that evoke a strong emotional reaction may incur a backlash in that they are viewed as unrealistic as a defense mechanism incurred by the individual to mitigate the negative reaction. Accordingly, severe images that evoke a strong emotional reaction may incur a backlash in that they are viewed as unrealistic as a defense mechanism incurred by the individual to mitigate the negative reaction. An implication of this finding, therefore, is that emotive posters may have an equally negative backlash because they evoke such a strong reaction. Such reactions may also be linked to repressive coping strategies that are often employed in the face of adverse stimuli, whereby threatening stimuli are avoided in order to shield an organism from distress, which also prevents increases in counterproductive over-arousal. This has important implications for several types of deterrent campaign; for example, a host of media campaigns have also been launched to deter individuals from travelling from their Western homelands to join foreign terrorist organizations such as the "Islamic State in Syria and the Levant" (ISIL; see "Think Now Turn Away," Department of Defense, 2011). Such campaigns often focus on depicting the severity of negative outcomes for the individual. There is preliminary evidence here therefore that high-severity campaigns may be less effective than moderate campaigns.

That said, there are several limitations within this study that should be considered when interpreting these findings. Firstly, attention should be paid to small, but potentially important differences in the 'paired' images. For example, the 'female being silenced' seems frightened, whereas the expression of the 'male being silenced' might be

interpreted as rather angry. In the 'live abuse' photos, the female is covering her face whereas the male is not, which might potentially suggest slightly different levels of fear. Also, the findings are culturally-specific to the UK, and different looks of the posters based on the race and ethnicity of the victims represented might be perceived differently. Who made the choices of using these posters as experimentation? Whereas, it is likely that a similar pattern would emerge in the American setting, it would probably be very much different in countries which promote more rigid gender roles and values that are hypersensitive to reputational threats (Osterman & Brown, 2011), such as China, India or Saudi Arabia.

All measures of believability, emotionality and effectiveness were self-reported, meaning that the actual effectiveness of the messages remains to be tested in the field. We also acknowledge the known issues with the self-report, and that validity and reliability are dependent upon honesty, attention and effort. Furthermore, the recording of very subjective aspects, such as emotionality, should employ more high-fidelity research tools that do not need conscious processing. For example, increasingly research is looking at reaction to visual stimuli at the neurological level, especially as it pertains to emotional reactions to both positive and negative stimuli (e.g., Kim & Hamman, 2007; Vuilleumier, 2005).

Incorporating such technologies is a vital step for future research as both avoidance and repression have distinct neurological patterns (Sander, Roth, Scheich, 2003; Rauch et al., 2014). Employing high-fidelity neurological measures into this research methodology would therefore allow for both a more accurate assessment of emotionality, as well as a possible test for the presence of repressive coping strategies in

the face of severe and cartoon anti-IPV images. Furthermore, it is important for this research to be extended in order to allow a measure of behavior change; i.e., does exposure to these campaigns increase the likelihood that someone will report an instance of domestic abuse or be less likely to commit an act of domestic abuse? While there are, clearly, methodological issues in operationalizing these variables, addressing them is vital step towards increasing the real-world applicability of our findings.

Finally an important point to consider is that the participants were asked to rate the effectiveness, emotionality, and believability of each poster, these are all purely cognitive assessments of their perceptions of the poster. As such, this research paradigm is relatively detached from the ideal dependent variable of behavior and attitudes. This is especially important given the centrality of issues surrounding the 'boomerang' effect, a true test of which would require both pre and post-test measures for attitudes and beliefs towards domestic abuse and violence. In addition, future research may wish to use such posters as "primes" within behavioral experimental paradigms that focus on measuring pro-social behavior across gender-groups. Research paradigms may then incorporate behavioral measures such as administering "hot sauce" (see Lieberman, Solomon, Greenberg & McGregor, 1999). This would extend the line of research here by measuring the degrees to which exposure to anti-domestic abuse campaigns (using both cartoon, real images, male and female abusers, and low to high severity) can results in observable changes in behavior towards members of the opposite sex.

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