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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Impact of Gendered Stereotypes on Perceptions of Violence: A Commentary

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Abstract

The present commentary explores the impact of gender role stereotypes on perceptions of both intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence. Two papers published in this issue of *Sex Roles* explored the influence of gender stereotypes on both IPV (Bates et al. 2019) and rape myths (Klement et al. 2019). An overarching theme of these papers is how gender stereotypes may influence incorrect beliefs in how we view and approach interventions to these two types of violence. Reflecting on this convergence, we have come together as authors to consider how influential and damaging these stereotypes can be to victims of both partner violence and sexual violence. Our paper considers the nature of these stereotypes, who is harmed by them considering both gender and sexuality, and also the impact they have in societal and service responses to violence, as well as policy and practice development.

Keywords Gendered stereotypes · Domestic violence · Sexual violence · Victims

During his confirmation hearings for the Supreme Court of the United States, the U.S. Senate held hearings about the allegations of whether Justice Brett Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted Dr. Christine Blasey Ford in 1982, and if true, whether that assault should disqualify him from the bench (Kim et al. 2018). Both Dr. Blasey Ford and Justice Kavanaugh testified about the alleged assault; Dr. Blasey Ford stated that Justice Kavanaugh had attempted to rape her at a party when she was 15, and Justice Kavanaugh denied the incident. During her testimony Dr. Blasey Ford was calm, if nervous, and was adamant that she was recalling the events correctly (Ryan 2018). Justice Kavanaugh was angry and forceful, at times choking up with tears as he claimed that although Dr. Blasey Ford may have been assaulted, he was not the assailant (Ryan 2018). The responses to the two testimonies varied widely (Bowden 2018); whereas there were many who believed Dr. Blasey Ford and pressured their Senators to vote against Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation, nearly the same number were persuaded by Justice Kavanaugh's emotional display.

These differing opinions of Dr. Blasey Ford and Justice Kavanaugh, who did go on to be confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court in a 50–48 vote (Daniel et al. 2018), may highlight the impact that gendered stereotypes and beliefs can have on perceptions of gendered violence, particularly sexual violence and intimate partner violence (IPV). Some thought that Dr. Blasey Ford was cold and calculating in her speech, although it is likely that the same individuals would view her as overly emotional and hysterical had she acted like Justice Kavanaugh. Research on display rules indicates that women are regularly stereotyped as being more emotional than men (Brody et al. 2016) although in some cases, such as anger, it is more acceptable for men than for women to express emotion. Justice Kavanaugh's heated outbursts were perceived by some as diagnostic of his righteous indignation rather than as indicative of an entitled mindset (St. Félix 2018). Thus, individuals who were more likely to endorse such gendered beliefs—those who are also more likely to be

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on the conservative side of the political spectrum (Hockett et al. 2009)—were also more likely to support Justice Kavanaugh's nomination.

Gender stereotyping is both a significant and prevalent phenomenon (Fiebert and Meyer 1997). The gendered attitudes we hold are important in influencing how we feel and respond to behaviour (e.g., reinforcing gender inequality: Morgan and Davis-Delano 2016), including how we respond to victims of IPV and sexual violence. Societal attitudes and stereotypes impact on how we respond socially (societal concern), how police and services respond, and, importantly, how victims feel about their own victimisation. Specifically, gendered stereotypes and attitudes might influence the likelihood of a victim feeling able, or not, to seek help and report to the police and criminal justice services. Gender role stereotypes have developed and become entrenched attitudes that affect our responses to domestic and sexual violence in terms of victim blaming (Davies et al. 2012; McKimmie et al. 2014; Ståhl et al. 2010), service response (Persson et al. 2018; Shechory and Idisis 2006), and punitive action (Radačić 2014).

In a multi-study paper published in *Sex Roles*, Bates et al. (2019) explored the impact of stereotype priming on implicit attitudes associated with both IPV victimisation and perpetration as well as examined how people reported they would respond to such situations. IPV was less likely to be identified in scenarios with a female perpetrator and a male victim compared to the opposite-gendered scenario. Moreover, this effect was found for the behavioural intentions around reporting, intervention, and the anticipated outcomes. These explicit attitudes, as well as implicit attitudes measured through the Implicit Association Test, were not impacted however by incongruent stereotype priming (e.g., providing participants with information depicting gender parity in rates of victimisation and perpetration). The implications of participants indicating significantly different behavioural intentions based on the gender of those in the scenarios is significant in terms of considering how IPV has been portrayed as a gendered crime, and it is likely to affect help-seeking. The authors also suggest that the lack of effect of priming on implicit and explicit attitudes may indicate that presenting information about rates of IPV is not enough to challenge deeply ingrained gender norms and societal perceptions around this type of violence. In turn, these societal perceptions may likely have a detrimental impact on men feeling able to report their victimisation, and so they represents a barrier to their help-seeking.

In the same issue of *Sex Roles*, Klement et al. (2019) explored how gendered stereotypes can interact with rape myths across four studies. Participants were assigned randomly to read sexual assault vignettes that varied the rape myths presented, as well as the genders of the victims and assailants (i.e., female victim and male assailant or male victim and female assailant). Although there were no significant differences in victim-blaming based on whether the rape myths were confirmed or debunked by expert testimony, endorsement of rape myths correlated reliably with victim and perpetrator blaming. These effects were robust regardless of the victims' and assailants' gender. Thus, the authors found a clear and consistent link between individuals' beliefs in rape myths and their willingness to assign more blame to victims of sexual assault and less blame to perpetrators of sexual assault. The lack of moderation from challenging rape myths indicates that these beliefs may not be easily changeable.

Linking this conclusion to Bates et al.'s (2019) findings, it is possible that rape myths are inextricably tied to gendered stereotypes, which are learned and instilled from an early age. The way we construct gender and gendered behaviour has ramifications for how we view men's and women's behaviour in these settings, and these are issues that are not easily challenged or altered. The parallel between these two studies is clear: Endorsement of gendered stereotypes can interfere with perceptions of IPV and sexual violence in addition to the attributions of blame individuals make for the victims and perpetrators. The aim of our commentary paper is to reflect on the issues raised that emerge in the literature around both IPV and sexual violence. First, we detail how gender role stereotypes inform stereotypes around IPV and sexual violence. Next, we discuss the harm these stereotypes can have. Finally, we suggest solutions for these issues and make recommendations for next steps.

Stereotypes about Gender, Victims, and Perpetrators of Violence

Gender Role Stereotypes and Intimate Partner Violence

Many Western stereotypes around IPV have developed from gendered and feminist models (e.g., Dobash and Dobash 1979, 2004). The gendered model of IPV positions it as a form of gendered violence, that is, "gender-based violence against women shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately" (European Institute for Gender Equality 2018; para. 1). The explanations derived from this model frame IPV as a problem of men's violence towards women—violence that is rooted in gender inequality and male privilege (Dobash and Dobash 1979, 2004). Here, physical violence is an extension of the power and control that men use to dominate women—control that is of historical and social construction. This model has been incredibly influential in raising awareness of violence against women and has brought terms like "domestic violence" and "domestic abuse" into the social narrative that enables action from agencies (e.g., within

the criminal justice system). A less helpful consequence is the development of stereotypes about what IPV looks like—specifically, societal norms dictate men as perpetrators, women as victims—and as a result we see a focus on physical violence. Indeed, within the United Kingdom, it was only in 2015 that a new law was introduced to criminalise the use of emotional abuse, psychological abuse, and coercive control in the absence of physical violence (see Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act, 2015; Crown Prosecution Service [CPS] 2017). This is congruent with Western stereotypes about men and women, specifically the notions that women are weak and in need of protection and that men are powerful, strong and self-reliant (see Gerber 1991).

The research exploring the antecedents, prevalence, and outcomes of IPV has developed into a significant body of research. Emerging research now highlights the complexity of IPV and the impact it has on all victim groups (e.g., male victims, same-sex relationships, children). For example, research provides alternative explanations of men's violence (e.g., adverse childhood experiences, trauma; Whitfield et al. 2003; Ehrensaft et al. 2003), the prevalence of women's violence to men (e.g., Bates et al. 2014; Bates and Graham-Kevan 2016; Archer 2000), the prevalence of IPV within same-gender relationships (e.g. Renzetti 1992; Tjaden and Thoennes 2000), men's and women's use of control (Carney and Barner 2012), bidirectional violence (Charles et al. 2011; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. 2012a), and an overlap in the motivations of men's and women's IPV (e.g., Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. 2012b).

Yet despite this complexity, societal stereotypes have persisted in seeing IPV as an issue of men's violence towards women. This persistence could in part be attributed to the fact that this evidence has not been enough to challenge mainstream practice and interventions that work with IPV; indeed, the Duluth model (Pence and Paymar 1993) has a curriculum with a focus on challenging men on their male privilege and patriarchal use of control. Despite a wealth of evidence that suggests this approach is ineffective (see Babcock et al. 2004), it is still an influential model in policy and practice today (see Bates et al. 2017, for a review).

Other scholars have posited that chivalry rather than patriarchy is a social norm governing behaviour around IPV; a normative protection of women is something evident in the narrative around IPV through stereotypes and societal discussions. Felson (e.g., 2002) was one of the first scholars to discuss this norm of protection for women and suggests that this norm influences behaviour that actually protects women from men's violence. Support for this notion comes from gender difference studies of helping behaviour. For example, Eagly and Crowley's meta-analysis (1986) demonstrated women were consistently more likely to receive help from men, with men being more likely to give help compared to women. This difference was more pronounced when there were audiences present, suggesting that this chivalrous effect is normative. This concept can be linked to the notion of benevolent sexism, which reflects stereotypes that may appear more positive (e.g., women as weaker and in need of protection) but are still broadly damaging (Glick and Fiske 1996). Support for the notion that chivalry has an effect on men's violence comes from Bates et al. (2014); in their within-gender analysis, they found that men showed lower levels of IPV to partners than to other men, whereas women showed higher levels of IPV to partners than to other women. Men's diminution of aggression to women suggests that in general they are more inhibited in physically aggressing to a female partner; women had no such inhibitions because perhaps because they know that chivalry will act to prevent retaliation.

We see further support for this notion within the literature that explores attitudes and perceptions of IPV. Consistently we see men's violence is condemned more than women's: IPV perpetrated against women is seen as more serious (Seelau et al. 2003); when women are violent, it is judged as less likely to need formal intervention (Sorenson and Taylor 2005); and men are seen as more able to cause injury and women more at risk of being injured (Seelau and Seelau 2005). Male victims are consistently blamed more for their victimisation (both in other- and same-gender relationships; Taylor and Sorenson 2005) compared to women.

Gender Role Stereotypes and Sexual Violence

In relation to sexual violence, gendered stereotypes are often expressed via rape myths. Rape myths are inaccurate but widely held beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists (Burt 1980; Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994). Inherent in these rape myths are expectations of how men and women should act in sexual situations and the consequences they face if they deviate from these expectations. For example, historical and benevolently sexist stereotypes of women require that they remain sexually pure by dressing modestly, not consuming alcohol, and not putting themselves in risky situations. Women who violate these requirements are punished, usually through social censure (Masser et al. 2010). Here, participants who reported higher levels of benevolent sexism also reported higher levels of victim-blame for a woman who behaved counter to gender stereotypes—specifically, a woman who left her young children alone to go to a party and meet a man, who later became sexually aggressive.

This tendency to blame victims who deviate from social scripts around sexuality is apparent in the discourse around sexual violence situations. Often discussions of an incidence of sexual assault include questions about the conduct of the victim or an acknowledgement that the victim put themselves in a risky situation, such that a foreseeable consequence was sexual assault. In a qualitative analysis, McKimmie and colleagues (McKimmie et al. 2014) found that participants were

more likely to switch their focus to the victim's behaviour when making blame attributions for an acquaintance rape, whereas they paid more attention to the perpetrator's behaviour in a stranger rape scenario. A victim who behaves counter-stereotypically by going to a party late at night, by not resisting during an assault, or by not cooperating with the police post-assault can be labelled as a "bad" victim, and thus individuals might find it easier to blame them for the assault.

There is also a large body of research supporting the idea that "bad" women are penalized for not acting in accordance with traditional gender role attitudes. Such attitudes endorse a worldview where men are dominant over women, which includes a discourse of traditional masculinity. Traditional masculinity stems from Connell's (1987) work on hegemonic masculinity. Today, it can be understood as including "a high degree of ruthless competition, an inability to express emotions other than anger, an unwillingness to admit weakness or dependency, and a devaluation of women and all feminine attributes in men" (Kupers 2005, p. 716). Work from both Lutz-Zois et al. (2015) and Truman et al. (1996) found links between traditional masculine ideologies (e.g., men should avoid behaviours and attitudes that are stereotypically feminine; men should display a veneer of toughness) and rape-supportive attitudes. These findings indicate that a traditional view of gender roles, particularly one where men and women are adversaries in sexual domains (Burt 1980), overlaps with harmful beliefs about sexual violence.

Although traditional gender role beliefs might have more in common with benevolent sexism, hostile sexist stereotypes also can play a role in how victims of sexual violence are evaluated. Yamawaki (2007) found significant correlations between hostile sexism and how much participants minimized the severity of sexual assault, attributed blame to the victim, and made excuses for the perpetrator. She suggested that negative beliefs about women—that they tend to exaggerate issues; that they want to manipulate men and take men's power via their feminine sexuality—often held by those who endorse hostile sexism lead such individuals to ascribe to beliefs that minimize and trivialize sexual violence (Yamawaki 2007). Further, hostile sexism moderated individuals' desire to excuse the perpetrator in a stranger rape scenario, but not in an acquaintance rape scenario. This difference indicates that those higher in hostile sexism have a desire to punish women for their innate qualities, not necessarily for violating prescribed gender roles (as might be the case for those higher in benevolent sexism). Indeed, hostile sexism is also found to significantly relate to rape proclivity (Masser et al. 2006; Viki et al. 2006); men who reported greater hostile sexism also reported being more willing to behave like the rapist in sexual assault scenarios. Taken together, the relationships between ambivalent sexism and rape-supportive attitudes indicate that those endorsing benevolently sexist beliefs may be more willing to approve of sexual aggression as a consequence for violating traditional gender role norms, whereas those endorsing hostilely sexist beliefs are more willing to approve of sexual aggression in almost any circumstance.

Who Is Harmed by these Stereotypes?

The persistence of these gendered stereotypes within the narrative of IPV and sexual violence is damaging to many associated groups, including women as victims, men as victims, women as perpetrators, and where there are other intersections of marginalized identities. For example, although women in general are more likely to be the victim of IPV or sexual violence (e.g., 1 in 5 women in the United States; Black et al. 2011), 37% of trans women reported experiencing sexual victimisation in the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (James et al. 2016) and 27% of trans women reported experiencing intimate partner violence. For both types of violence, the prevalence was higher among trans Women of Colour (James et al. 2016). In the following, we discuss the harms and barriers experienced by different groups that are exacerbated by the institutional endorsement of gendered stereotypes, particularly within healthcare and legal systems.

Female Victims of Violence

Despite the prevalent sexual violence narrative of men as aggressors and women as helpless victims, when female sexual violence victims come forward, they seldom receive unanimous support. As indicated by the experiences of Dr. Blasey Ford, women can be criticized for not reporting their assaults earlier as well as falsely reporting an assault to get revenge on their accused perpetrator. Despite much research showing that the rate of false rape reports are in line with other false violent crime reports (i.e., between 2 and 10%; Lisak et al. 2010), women are often disbelieved by friends and family (Deming et al. 2013; Harned 2005), law enforcement (Ask 2010; McMillan 2018; Sleath and Bull 2015), and other individuals in authority (e.g., clergy, Sheldon and Parent 2002; lawyers, Krahé et al. 2008).

This disbelief can impact their own personal labels of their experiences (Harned 2005) in addition to their desire to seek out support services, such as mental health care. In a focus group study examining interpretations of vignettes of sexual assault, Deming et al. (2013) found that university participants in different social groups framed the experiences differently. The greatest differences in the interpretations arose between the first-year and fourth-year participants. Specifically, older participants were more likely to sanction the victim's

behaviour, placing responsibility on her for not acting safely and not being clearer in her communication to the assailant (Deming et al. 2013). These impressions may have been formed by the participants' endorsement of traditional gender norms and rape myths. Thus, these interpretations and the choice to label oneself as a victim of sexual assault or not can impact whether or not a woman will report the crime to the police.

Likewise, a woman's own internalization of rape myths can dictate her willingness to report an assault (Heath et al. 2013). However, if a woman decides to report, she may face obstacles from law enforcement officers if they themselves subscribe to rape myths. Law enforcement officers have a tremendous amount of discretion regarding whether or not to investigate a reported crime. If there is not enough evidence that a crime was committed, the report might be classified as "unfounded" or "no-crimed" (Temkin and Krahé 2008, p. 17). Counter-stereotypical sexual violence cases, such as those where the victim and perpetrator are in a relationship or where the victim does not cooperate with police, have a higher chance of being deemed unfounded or in need of no further action (Edwards et al. 2011; Kelly 2010; Norton and Grant 2008).

In order to receive help from law enforcement, healthcare providers, or other actors in the legal system, female victims may feel the need to conform to gender stereotypes. Evidence from McKimmie et al. (2014) demonstrates that counter-stereotypical victims (i.e., not resisting the assault, not cooperating with police) are evaluated negatively and blamed for their assaults. Even when law enforcement officers have received training related to sexual assault investigations, they may not show a reduction in victim-blaming or endorsement of rape victim stereotypes (Sleath and Bull 2012). Although the traditional feminine gender role dictates that women be passive and submissive to men, this expectation works against many women victims who freeze during their assault or cooperate with their perpetrator. In a recent study examining the impact of romantic advances that were not reciprocated by the targets, Bohns and DeVincent (2018) found that individuals making such advances often underestimated the difficulties of saying "no" and the discomfort experienced by the targets of their advances. Importantly, those pursuing a person for romance do not appreciate the degree to which targets may change their behaviour to deal with the unwanted advances or to feel more comfortable in their surroundings. Although Bohns and DeVincent's (2018) research was set in the workplace, their findings have implications for sexual violence situations; women are expected to be nice and to acquiesce to men's advances, per the heteronormative sexual script (Ryan 2011). However, they are also punished for this behaviour in cases where the man does not respond to the woman's sexual boundaries and assaults her. Thus, women experience a Catch-22 in which they can do and say all the right things that conform to traditional gender role stereotypes, and yet still become victims of sexual violence.

Male Victims of Violence

For men as victims of both IPV and sexual violence, there are numerous barriers faced in help-seeking and reporting their experiences, and these are exacerbated by gendered stereotypes. Socialisation processes mean that men struggle to seek help generally and in a variety of settings (e.g., health; Addis and Mahalik 2003). Boys and men are socialized around masculine gender norms that dictate men are self-reliant, stoic and powerful (Gerber 1991) and so some men who identify with these dominant masculine narratives may see help-seeking as contradictory to these values (Vogel et al. 2011). Indeed, the importance of maintaining a sense of masculinity has been found with men's accounts of their IPV experiences (Hogan 2016), and these themes of self-reliance, stoicism, and control have been found in men's narratives (Migliaccio 2001). Men have been found to deny their sense of vulnerability that is created through IPV victimisation (George 1994). The masculine gender role and the stereotypes that exist about IPV in the wider social narrative come together to intensify their reluctance to report victimisation. For male victims in a recent study, they reported that they felt their experiences of abuse were perceived as a weakness, they were disbelieved, and they were reconstructed as being abusers themselves or they struggled to identify themselves as victims (Bates 2019a).

These stereotypes are also pervasive within service provision, which creates opportunities for the use of legal and administrative aggression; this occurs where someone manipulates legal and other administrative systems in a way to be harmful to their partner (Tilbrook et al. 2010). Although this manipulation is seen within women's accounts of their IPV experiences, it is thought to be something experienced more by men due to the gender role stereotypes that exist in the criminal justice system. Men have described experiences where their partners have manipulated these systems (Hines et al. 2007); for example, men report not being believed in cases of IPV victimisation (Migliaccio 2001), experiencing false allegations of IPV (Bates 2019a), and losing their homes and children through these false allegations (Cook 2009). A fear of losing their children is a significant reason for men not to leave an abusive relationship (Hines and Douglas 2010); children have been seen as a form of power to control and men often feel powerless through fear of losing contact (Drijber et al. 2013). These fears are often realised when, through post-separation abuse, their parental relationships are damaged or manipulated (see Bates 2019).

These perceptions are exacerbated further for men who experience sexual violence. Men's typically greater size and strength compared to women's means that there are assumptions about a man being able to defend himself (Bates 2019a; Bates et al. 2019). Moreover, there are perceptions about men having a much stronger desire for sex, which creates a significant stigma around women's sexual aggression that impacts on public perceptions (Weare 2017) and assumptions about physically not being able to be forced to have sex with a woman through inaccurate beliefs about the nature of men's arousal (Weare 2018). Because rape myths (both for men and women) are often rooted in Western gender role expectations, male rape may be disputed because men are socialized to be strong and powerful, and it provides a challenge to masculinity when this occurs (Javaid 2015).

Female Perpetrators of Violence

A consequence of ignoring violence by women includes underfunded male victim support services but also few options for women seeking help for their aggressive behaviour. Despite evidence of women's violence towards men, there are few women who enter the criminal justice system and are mandated treatment, and indeed evidence suggests police and other criminal justice agencies respond to men's and women's violence dissimilarly in this area (Donnelly and Kenyon 1996). This leaves some violent women being referred to victim services despite being an admitted aggressor, so services are not appropriate, and women are not getting support for behaviour change.

Outside intimate relationships, women are typically not as physically aggressive as men are (e.g., to same-gender non-intimates; Archer 2004), which fits with women's gender role of being weaker, passive, and more in need of protection (Gerber 1991). Consequently, when women are violent, people seek to explain it. Men are violent because this is a characteristic of their gender role—to be powerful and aggressive—but the same cannot be said for women, so we try and attribute some sort of reason (Bates 2019b). It is assumed that women's violence is self-defence, provoked, or due to other personal circumstances.

These gender roles impact further on our perceptions of bidirectional or mutual violence; this type of violence is reported as being more prevalent than uni-lateral violence (male only or female only; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. 2012a). Despite this, service responses and criminal justice agencies typically still work with a model of needing to identify a "perpetrator" and a "victim" (Bates 2016), and within scenario-based studies where there is a clear use of violence by both parties, people are still reluctant to label it in this way or identify women as perpetrators.

Intersecting Marginalized Identities

When considering the costs of violence, it is important to remember that victims belong to multiple identity groups and that both the risk of victimisation and the consequences of it can be intensified by membership in a marginalized group. Crenshaw (1989) used intersectionality to explain how these marginalized identities can impact each other. Black women face more structural barriers than just the combination of sexism and racism; there is a unique position of Black women at the intersection of these two types of oppressions. Thus, individuals who experience multiple forms of oppression (e.g., sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia) are both more likely to be victims of IPV and sexual violence and less likely to receive services after victimisation experiences (James et al. 2016).

Solutions and Next Steps

In the United States, the work to end gendered violence, whether IPV or sexual violence, is experiencing a conservative backlash in the public discourse. Media pundits question whether social media campaigns like #YesAllWomen (https://twitter.com/yesallwomen?lang=en) and #MeToo (https://metoomvmt.org/) have gone too far. Despite this, these movements continue to name and bring to light the abuses experienced by women. In an intervention study based on intergroup contact theory, Taschler and West (2017) found that men (and women) who had both frequent and high-quality contact with women who challenged traditional gendered stereotypes—women in positions of power and authority—also reported lower rape-supportive beliefs. This indicates that the act of breaking down the barriers erected by traditional gender roles could serve to reduce other problematic gendered ideas as well. In the 2018 mid-term elections, U.S. voters elected the greatest number of women to the federal legislature in history (Cooney 2018); perhaps these new Congresswomen and senators will have a greater reach than is apparent.

Other initiatives to reduce gendered stereotypes and rape-supportive beliefs include trainings for law enforcement officers and prevention education in public schools and universities. For example, Sleath and Bull (2012) found no differences in victim-blaming between law enforcement officers who had or had not participated in sexual assault training. However, they did find a significant difference on perpetrator-blaming: trained female officers assigned less blame to the perpetrator than did trained male officers. Rich and Seffrin (2012) found that sexual assault training for police officers increased their efficacy in handling interviews with victims

reporting sexual assault, although training had a smaller effect than did participants' rape myth acceptance.

As Klement et al. (2019) discuss, rape myth acceptance may become entrenched from an early age, and thus education to counteract it should happen as early as possible. Universities can provide a type of sexual assault prevention training, usually bystander intervention programs. However, due to the low frequency of these trainings (usually one multi-hour session), there is a lower probability that they will be effective at preventing or interrupting sexual violence. In their review of program evaluations of sexual assault trainings, Vladutiu et al. (2011) suggested that long-term attitude change was more likely when the trainings occurred over a longer period of time, especially when active learning was led by same-age peers.

In the United Kingdom, despite the gender-neutral terminology, IPV is positioned under the Violence against Women and Girls strategy (Ministry of Justice 2018) and framed as a gendered crime. This perpetuates the stereotypes that exist about men and women and about what IPV perpetrators and victims look like. It renders male victims, female perpetrators, people in same-sex relationships, and people who identify counter-stereotypically on the gender and sexuality spectrums as hidden or marginalised in some way. This approach is mirrored in both policy and practice in terms of perpetrators' and victims' services (see Bates et al. 2017) and is currently demonstrated as having little effect in terms of reducing men's IPV (Babcock et al. 2004) or providing intervention options for other perpetrator and victim groups. More recently, there has been a move toward working with IPV perpetrators in a way that is both more responsive to their needs, while recognising the complexity of IPV through tackling abusive behaviours rather than focusing too heavily on the dichotomy of perpetrator and victim labels (Ford 2019). Additionally, there are recommendations to begin working with younger people around discussing healthy relationships and working to tackle these maladaptive relationship behaviours earlier on in the developmental process (Maurer 2019).

Gender role stereotypes are pervasive but also incredibly damaging to people who experience both domestic violence and sexual violence. The impact of these roles, and the way in which they influence a spectrum of behaviours, is something that needs to be addressed to potentially help reduce the violent crime figures in both the United Kingdom and the United States. In the present issue of *Sex Roles*, Bates et al. (2019) point to the need to challenge these gender stereotypes much earlier in children's development; by the time people have transitioned into adolescence and early adulthood, these roles and stereotypes are ingrained to a point of being implicit. This means that challenging and trying to change these perceptions in adults is so much more difficult—but important. The immodest goal of our commentary is to start taking steps in this needed direction.

Compliance with Ethical Standards We can confirm we adherd to ethical guidelines in both the US and UK.

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