DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BLAME ATTRIBUTIONS OF POLICE OFFICERS AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Kyle Gamache
Community College of Rhode Island

This student explores domestic violence blame attributions of police officers and college students. A total of 387 college students from two institutions and 92 police officers were given the Domestic Violence Blame Attribution Scale (Petretic-Jackson et al., 1994). The results suggest that police officers and college students had significantly different ratings on the DVBS subscale scores, specifically that police officers had lower ratings of societal and perpetrator blame than college students. Continued exploration of the data showed that there were further differences within the samples. College students who had experienced domestic violence had different subscale scores than those that had not, notably that victims of domestic violence had higher ratings of situational blame. There also was a difference between college students attending a public institution and those attending a private institution. Domestic violence training appears to correlate with lower victim blaming ratings for police officers. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Key Words: domestic violence; attribution, police; intimate partner violence; blame;

Domestic violence is one of the commonly acknowledged forms of intimate-partner violence (IPV) affects society today (Johnson, 2007). Once considered a private matter that was largely ignored by police and the media (Davis, 1992; Stedman, 1996), domestic violence is now considered a major social ill and public health threat concern (Saltzman et al., 2000; Smith et al., 2018). Domestic violence and IVP are widespread in our society and affects people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or economic status.

The prevalence of intimate-partner violence is deeply concerning. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) measures the amount of IVP reported by the public (Smith et al., 2018). Conceptualizing IVP as including sexual violence, stalking, physical violence, and psychological aggression perpetrated by an intimate partner, the NISVS reports that 25% of women, and 10% of men, will experience IVP at some point in their lives, with the majority (71% of women, 57% of men) reporting this victimization occurring in adolescence and early adulthood (Smith et al, 2018). Though men are also victims of intimate-partner violence, research suggests that women more frequently experience IVP and are more severely injured during events. Additionally, women are more often sexually assaulted, and more likely to be subjected to psychological control (Eigenberg et al., 2012).

Correspondence: Kyle Gamache, Department of Psychology, Community College of Rhode Island, Kgamache1@ccri.edu

Domestic violence incidents result in cluster victimization, as millions of children witness domestic violence in their homes annually (Straus & Gelles, 1990). These effects can be long-lasting as exposure to domestic violence during childhood has been correlated with multiple child and adult psychological and medical issues (Kitzmann et al., 2003; Stover, 2012)

Domestic violence is frequently implicated in homicides. Women are much more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than men, with over thirty percent of female homicide victims being murdered by their intimate partner compared to five percent of men (Bridges et al., 2008). The Violence Policy Center's (2018) analysis of the 2016 FBI Homicide Report, explores the characteristics of women murdered by men. Of the female homicide victims murdered by men, 93% knew the offender. In the cases where the victim knew the offender, 63% were current or former intimate partners (Violence Policy Center, 2018). The CDC expands on this, stating that over half (55%) of all female homicides are committed by a current or former intimate-partner (Petrosky et al, 2017).

Even with increased social and political attention to intimate-partner violence, it is widely believed that domestic violence is under reported. Catalano and colleagues (2009) suggest that only half of all incident are reported to the police. The decision to report intimate partner violence to police can be influenced by societal attitudes and beliefs regarding domestic violence. Specifically, the presence of victim-blaming attitudes, as well as domestic violence and rape myths, influence a victim's decision to come forward (Policastro & Payne, 2013; Westbrook, 2009; Worden & Carlson, 2005). It has been suggested that women are victimized twice with intimate-partner violence, first in the incident of violence and, second, in the public's perception of their responsibility for their victimization (Summers & Feldman, 1984). The attribution that women can be at fault for their own victimization is called "blame attribution" (Sinclair, 1985).

Blame Attribution
Causal attribution is a natural cognitive process that people use to make sense of the world around them (Heider, 1958). Unfortunately, causal appraisal through attribution can lead to inaccurate assessments of a situation. Most noteworthy is the *fundamental attribution error*, the theory that people are more likely to attribute behavior to internal personal factors rather than external, situational factors (Ross, 1977). There are additional, contrasting errors of attribution that can cloud perspectives of intimate-partner violence. Shaver's (1970) *defensive attribution theory* suggests that victim-blame decreases as a subject identifies with the victim. Additionally, the belief in the *just world hypothesis* (Lerner, 1980) that the world is fair, leads to victim-blaming attitudes by suggesting that victims directly or indirectly contributed to their own victimization. Multiple factors influence blame attribution, and these factors have far-reaching effects as public perception influences policy (Davis et al., 1994; Witte et al., 2006).

Gender differences.
Studies examining the relationship between gender and victim blaming have yielded mixed results. An extensive amount of research has shown that men are much more

likely to blame victims for their victimization, particularly if the victim is female (Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Flood & Pease, 2009; Harris & Cook, 1994; Goddard & Hiller, 1993; Pierce & Harris, 1993). This common finding supports the defensive attribution theory, with women less likely than men to blame domestic violence victims because they identify with the victim (Kleinke & Meyer, 1990).

Research has also found that people holding traditional gender-role values were more likely to blame female victims compared to individuals with not subscribing to traditional gender-roles (Finn, 1986; Goddard & Hiller, 1993; Nabors & Jasinski, 2009). Schult & Schneider (1991) found that male students are more likely than female students to make harsher judgments about victims of domestic violence. Still, other studies have revealed that both male and female use of dating aggression is correlated with their belief that domestic violence was justified (O'Keefe, 1997). Koski and Mangold (1988) found that while most respondents in their study expressed domestic violence to be a problem, females were more likely to respond that it was a serious problem. Even with this, Carlson & Worden (2005) found that a third of surveyed New York City residents believed that domestic violence was part of the "normal course" of a relationship, a quarter reported believed that victims wanted to be abused, and two-thirds believed that women could leave abusive relationships if they truly wanted to.

Situational Factors.
When making causal attributions about intimate-partner violence, external and situational factors can influence decision-making (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2004). Delgado and colleagues (1997) found that if jealousy was a factor for the cause of domestic violence, it was deemed to be more acceptable and "unavoidable" by older observers in Europe. This was also discovered in American domestic violence studies (Pavlou & Knowles, 2001). Cook and Harris (1995) found that observers were more likely to blame the victim if the victim was believed to have done something to instigate the violence done to them. Gender also plays a role in how external factors are attributed to domestic violence. Female observers are more likely to blame the male perpetrator for the violence, and less likely to blame external factors (Sugarman & Cohn, 1986). On the other hand, men are more likely to blame external causes for the domestic violence, such as alcohol (Richardson & Campbell, 1980). Bryant and Spencer (2003) found that older students who had reported witnessing domestic violence in their family of origin were more likely to attribute domestic violence to societal factors.

Police views and intimate partner violence.
Police officers are the frequent, and often most significant, representative of the criminal justice system for domestic violence cases. Domestic violence incidents are the most common crime reported to police, with research suggesting that up to half of all 911 calls are for intimate partner violence (Friday et al., 2006; Stover, 2012; Ventura & Davis, 2005). Police response to domestic violence is critical because these cases are one of the few crimes that police intervention can prevent escalation of violence, and police interaction can influence arrest, conviction, and future domestic violence outcomes (Eigenberg et al., 2012; Farris & Holman, 2015; Logan et al., 2006). It is concerning then, that police

officers have been seen as unsympathetic towards victims of domestic violence (Miller, 2003) and may hold negative attitudes that can cause victims to not report assault (Barner & Carney, 2011).

Police officer's blame attribution in domestic violence cases has been shown to be unique. Davis and Carlson (1981) found that police officers had higher ratings of victim blaming when compared to domestic violence shelter staff. Home (1994) found that while police officers still blamed the assailant, they also attributed blame to situational factors and victim behavior as contributing to domestic violence. Additional factors influence police decision making, with Stewart and Maddren (1997) finding that gender of the victim and the presence of alcohol affecting police blame attribution.

Because of the important role that police officers serve the community, and their influence in domestic violence case outcomes, training on intimate partner violence is critically important. Since the 1980s, police departments across the country have conducted trainings aimed at emphasizing the unique nature of domestic violence cases to educate officers about the complexities of these events (Eigenberg et al.,, 2012). Though additional training may be beneficial for police officers (Garner, 2005), some research has charged that the training has been inadequate or met with opposition from police departments (Home, 1994; Eigenberg et al., 2012).

The current study

While research has shown differences with how police assess domestic violence blame, there has been limited research comparing police officers to the general population with ratings of victim blame. Research has suggested that police officers have unique perspectives and specialized knowledge that affects assessment (Wortley, 1997). This research study attempts to add to the existing literature by exploring the attributions of police officers and college students. Specifically, the differences between police officers and college students with assessment of victim/perpetrator blame, as well as external and demographic factors, will be assessed.

METHOD

Participants

The participants come from two groups: a sample of college students and a sample of police officers. The college student sample of 387 students was recruited from two separate 4-year institutions in a Northeastern state: a public institution and a private institution. Participants were recruited through a convenience sample of students attending general education courses at the respective institutions. Two-hundred seventy three participants were recruited from the public institution, and a further 114 participants were recruited from the private institution, for a total of 387 participants. The average age of the participants was 20 (M= 20.16, SD = 2.98), with women making up 62% of the sample. The ethnic background of the participants was overwhelmingly Caucasian (87%).

With the police officer sample, participants were recruited from five police departments in a Northeastern state. These departments were selected out of convenience and department willingness to participate in the study. An attempt was made to select police departments of variable geographic location, encompassing urban, suburban, coastal, and rural areas. The departments varied considerably in size, with the smallest having less than 15 police officers and the largest having over 100. Participants were recruited during second shift roll-call, were police officers were able to anonymously complete the study materials. A total of 92 police officers participated in the study. The average age was 35 (M = 35.46, SD = 8.09). Due to concerns with confidentiality, gender and ethnic differences were not recorded for the police sample.

Materials

All participants were given the *Domestic Violence Blame Scale* (DVBS). Developed by Petretic-Jackson and colleagues (1994) for use in research and clinical settings, the DVBS is a 23-item questionnaire designed to assess domestic violence blame attribution. Participants read statements related to domestic violence beliefs, such as "*Husbands who physically assault their wives cannot control their violent behavior*" and "*Domestic violence is more likely to occur in unstable homes*". For each item participants rate their agreement on a 6-point Likert scale, with 1 being "*strongly disagree*" and 6 being "*strongly agree*". The items on the DVBS are scored on four subscales, each assessing different kinds of attribution found in domestic violence literature: victim blame, situational blame, societal blame, perpetrator blame. The authors report normative means of: Situational Blame = 4.2, Perpetrator Blame = 4.1, Societal Blame = 3.4, and Victim Blame = 2.2.

Participants were also given a demographic questionnaire. The college students' questionnaire asked participants to list their gender, age, and ethnicity. Additionally, the participants from the college sample were asked the following yes/no questions: "*Have you ever been the victim of domestic violence?*" "*Have you ever witnessed domestic violence?*" and "*Have you known someone who has been a victim of domestic violence?*" The college student participants were also asked to rate on a 5-point Likert Scale (1= *Not effective,* 5 = *Very Effective)* the following question: "*How effective are police with handling domestic violence cases?*"

Police officers were given a different demographic questionnaire. Police officers were asked their age, but gender and ethnicity was not asked due to confidentiality concerns. Police officers were asked to list the number of years they had been police officers, and how attentive they were during mandatory domestic violence trainings using a 6-point Likert scale (1= *No Attention, 6 = Utmost Attention).* They were also asked if they sought additional trainings on domestic violence during their careers.

Procedure

In a cross-sectional research design, the effect of several independent variables on participant DVBS subscale scores were investigated. The subscale scores of police officers and college students were compared, and additional variables were also explored with each group. With college students, the effect of gender, domestic violence exposure, and type of

institution on DVBS scores and ratings of police effectiveness was evaluated. With police officers, the effect of previous trainings on DVBS was also analyzed. Based on previous research, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H₁: There would be a significant difference between genders with college student DVBS subscale scores as well as ratings of police effectiveness.

H₂: There would be a significant difference between the types of institution (private and public) with college student DVBS subscale scores as well as ratings of police effectiveness

H₃: There would be a significant difference between students with previous domestic violence experiences and those without on the DVBS subscale scores as well as ratings of police effectiveness.

H₄: There would be a statistical difference between the college students' and police officers' scores on the DVBS subscales

H₅: There would be a main effect for domestic violence training experiences on police officer DVBS subscale scores.

RESULTS

The majority of the dependent variables were related to the DVBS subscales. Petretic-Jackson and colleagues (1994) did not report measures of internal consistency for the scale. In this study, the Cronbach alpha ratings on the four subscales ranged from .49 to .79.

College Students

The mean college student DVBS subscale scores was assessed: Situational Blame =3.50, Societal Blame = 3.24, Perpetrator Blame =3.86, and Victim Blame =1.82. Using a one-sample T-test, all of these means were significantly lower than the established means presented by the creators of the DVBS (*t*-score range: -3.28 to -15.16, *df* = 386, all *P* vales < .002) (See Figure 1).

The first hypothesis was tested through a series of *t*-tests, a main effect for participant's gender was found on the DVBS subscale scores and ratings of police effectiveness. On the Perpetrator Blame Scale, men had significantly lower scores (M= 3.77, SD =.69) than women (*M*= 3.92, *SD* = .70) (*t(385)* =-2.13, *p*= .03). The opposite was found with the Victim Blame Scale men had significantly higher victim blame scores (M= 2.04, SD =.67) than women (*M*= 1.68, *SD* = .58) (*t(385)* =5.62, *p* < .001). Men also rated police officers as more effective at handling domestic violence cases (M= 3.62, SD =1.01) than women (*M*= 3.37, *SD* = .95) (*t(385)* =-2.45, *p* < .02) (See Table I).

The college student sample was drawn from two different colleges: a public institution and a private institution. The second hypothesis was that there would be a significant difference between these institutions. A series of *t*-tests confirmed this hypothesis, students

attending the private institution had significantly different scores on the DVBS subscales and ratings of police effectiveness. Specifically, when compared to their peers attending a public institution, students attending the private institution had significantly lower ratings of Situational Blame and Police Effectiveness, and significantly higher ratings of Societal Blame, Victim Blame, and Perpetrator Blame (See Table I).

The students' experiences with domestic violence served as an independent variable with the third hypothesis. In the student sample, 31% of students reported witnessing domestic violence in their family of origin, 63% reported knowing a victim of domestic violence, and 19% reported being a victim of domestic violence. A chi-square goodness of fit analysis did not reveal a significant difference in domestic violence experiences with men and women, but a gender difference with reported victimization was approaching significance (p= .054). Significant differences were found with domestic violence experiences and the type of higher education institution. Specifically, students attending the public college were more likely to have experienced domestic violence in their family of origin: χ^2 (1, n= 387) = 6.55, p = .01, more likely to know a victim of domestic violence: $\chi2$ (1, n= 387) = 12.24, p < .001, and more likely to have been victims of domestic violence themselves: $\chi2$ (1, n= 387) = 13.99, p < .001.

The domestic violence experiences had an effect on the dependent measures. Students who reported experiencing domestic violence in their family of origin had significantly lower ratings of police effectiveness (M= 3.20, SD =1.00) than those that had not (*M*= 3.59, *SD* = .95) (*t(382)* =-3.67, *p*< .001).

Table I. College Student Mean Scores on Measures

Variable	Situational Blame	Societal Blame	Perpetrator Blame	Victim Blame	Police Effectiveness
Gender					
Male			3.77	2.04	3.62
Female	*NS*	*NS*	3.92	1.68	3.37
T			-2.13**	2.15***	2.45**
d			.27	.57	.24
School					
Public	3.59	2.94	3.80	1.74	3.57
Private	3.31	3.97	4.02	2.01	3.23
T	-2.81**	11.83***	2.80**	3.95***	-3.11**
d	.33	1.26	.35	.44	.36
Witnessed DV					
Yes	NS	NS	NS	NS	3.20
No					3.59
T					-3.67***
d					.40

Variable	Situational Blame	Societal Blame	Perpetrator Blame	Victim Blame	Police Effectiveness
Experienced DV					
Yes	3.81	NS	NS	NS	NS
No	3.43				
T	3.31***				
d	.42				
Known DV					
Yes	NS	3.15	3.81	NS	3.38
No		3.40	3.96		3.61
T		-2.68**	-2.00*		-2.29*
d		.27	.21		.23

*NS= No Significant Difference *p < .05 ** p < .01 ***p< .002*

Students that reported knowing a victim of domestic violence had significantly lower ratings of Societal Blame (*M*= 3.15, SD =.88 v *M*= 3.40, SD = .93, *t*(385) = -2.68, *p*= .008) and Perpetrator Blame (*M*= 3.81, SD =.71 v *M*= 3.96, SD = .69, *t*(385) = -2.00, *p*= .045), as well as lower ratings of police effectiveness (*M*= 3.38, SD =.99 v *M*= 3.61, SD = .95, *t*(385) = -2.29, *p*= .023). Students that had been victims of domestic violence reported significantly higher ratings of Situational Blame (*M*= 3.81, SD =.88) than those that did not report victimization (*M*= 3.43, *SD* = .88) (*t*(385) = 3.31, *p* = .001) (See Table I).

Police Officers

To test the remaining hypotheses, statistical analyses of the police sample were conducted. Similar to the college students, the police officers' DVBS subscale scores were assessed and compared to the established norm. The police officer subscale scores were: Situational Blame = 3.68, Societal Blame = 2.43, Perpetrator Blame =3.58, and Victim Blame =1.82. Using a one-sample T-test, all of these means were significantly lower than the established means presented by the creators of the DVBS (*t*-score range: -5.30 to -14.46, *df* = 91, all *P* vales < .001) (See Figure 1).

Utilizing a series of *t*-tests, the DVBS subscale scores of the police officers and college students, with scores on two of the subscales revealing a significant difference. On the Societal Blame Scale, police officers had significantly lower scores (M= 2.43, SD =.63) than college students (*M*= 3.24, *SD* = .90) (*t*(188.8) = -10.02, *p*< .000). The same was found with the Perpetrator Blame, with police officers having significantly lower perpetrator blame scores (M= 3.58, SD =.66) than college students (*M*= 3.86, *SD* = .70) (*t*(477) = -3.55, *p* < .001) (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Comparison to Normative Scores
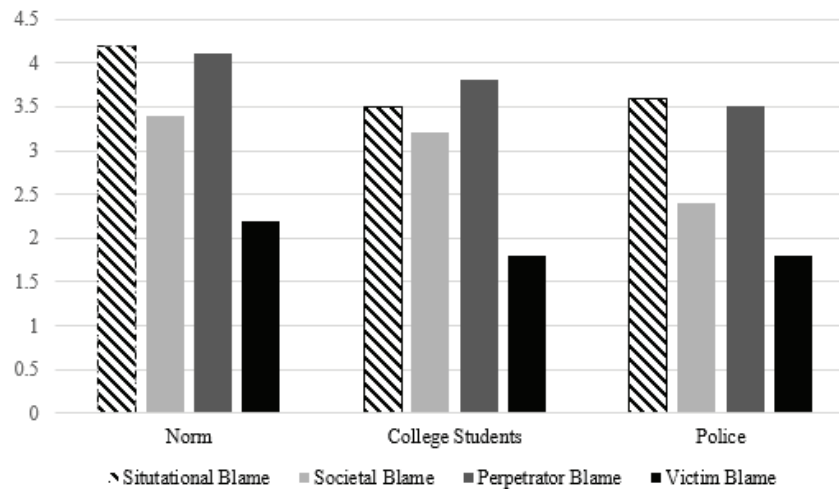
The final hypothesis concerning domestic violence training for police officers was analyzed utilizing *t*-tests and linear regression analysis. A main effect was found for training, with police officers that sought additional training on domestic violence having significantly lower ratings of Victim Blame (*M*= 1.67, *SD*= .55), than officers that had not (*M*= 2.13, *SD* = .68) (*t(89)* = -3.40, *p* = .001, *d* = .74).

This finding was further assessed using a regression analysis to explore the relationship with the self-reported attention given during the mandatory domestic violence training offered, and scores on the Victim Blame Scale. Utilizing a simple linear regression analysis, the effect of police attention given during domestic violence trainings was compared to ratings on the DVBS subscales. One significant model was observed with the Victim Blame subscale (*F*(1, 89)= 6.10, *p* = .015, with an R^2 of .064. Police officer's attention levels was observed as 2.30 - .124 when attention was rated on a 5-point scale. The ratings on the Victim Blame subscale decreased by .124 for each self-reported point on the attention scale.

DISCUSSION

All of the hypotheses were confirmed. Demographic and personal factors influenced DVBS scores, presumably showing differences between how people think about domestic violence blame. Our participant groups revealed lower scores on the DVBS than the established norm, but this must be interpreted with caution as the DVBS was normed over 25 years ago and those norms may no longer be reflective of the general population.

Confirmation of the first hypothesis supports the extensive literature (Bryant & Spencer, 2003) showing that men are more likely to blame victims of domestic violence than women. The male college students in this study had higher Victim Blame ratings, and lower Perpetrator Blame ratings, than the female participants. In assessing police effective-

ness at handling domestic violence cases, men rated police officers as more effective when compared to female students.

Limited research exists comparing domestic violence attitudes related to socioeconomic status. The second hypothesis contributes to this literature somewhat, showing a difference in the attitudes of students attending a state college, and students attending an affluent private college. Specifically, students attending the private college had higher rating of societal blame, and lower ratings of situational blame. They were less likely to rate police as effective in handling domestic violence cases. Unexpectedly, the private college students had higher ratings of both Perpetrator and Victim Blame. These findings must be interpreted with caution, as the economic status of the students cannot be assumed without further information. Additionally, the students attending the private institution had fewer experiences with domestic violence. It is unknown what potential confounds exist, but this would be of interest in future research.

The student participants' prior experiences with domestic violence influenced their ratings on the DVBS and police effectiveness, often in unexpected ways. It was surprising that there appeared to be no difference between men and women in the frequency of domestic violence. It is unknown if this is a sampling error or an accurate reflection of the population. It is known that rates of intimate-partner violence are high, and suspected that domestic violence is underreported (Catalano et al., 2009; Smith et al, 2018). Significant differences were found with domestic violence experiences between public and private students, potentially showing a difference in prevalence. This must be interpreted with caution as well, as research shows that domestic violence effects people from all groups (Saltzman et al., 2000; Smith et al., 2018).

In analysis of the effect of previous experiences with domestic violence, the third hypothesis was confirmed. Students that had experienced domestic violence personally or peripherally had different ratings on the dependent measures. Students that had known victims of domestic violence had lower ratings on societal blame, police effectiveness, and, surprisingly, lower levels of perpetrator blame. Students that had experienced domestic violence in their family of origin also had lower ratings of police effectiveness. This contrasts with Bryant & Spencer (2003)'s findings. Finally, students that had experienced domestic violence personally had higher levels of situational blame. It is clear that previous exposure to domestic violence changes how a person thinks about blame, but it is unclear the meaning of this effect. It is unknown if students were framing their responses based on their previous experiences alone, or how much their history influenced their responses.

The remaining two hypotheses involved police ratings on the DVBS subscales. Like the college students, police officers' scores on the subscales were lower than the established norm of the DVBS. Again, this must be interpreted with caution. The fourth hypothesis was that there would be a difference between student and police ratings, and this was confirmed. Police officers had lower subscale scores of Societal Blame and Perpetrator Blame. As Wortley (1997) suggested, police officers have unique perspectives on crime due to their training and experience and this could explain some of the difference. It is

concerning that police officers appear to blame the perpetrator of domestic violence less than the college student population, but their ratings of victim blame were almost identical to college students.

The final hypothesis concerned domestic violence police training. All police departments in the state where the participants work require basic domestic violence training, with additional trainings offered on domestic violence. The final hypothesis was that domestic violence training would have an effect on the DVBS scores, and this was confirmed. We found two significant results. First, with the mandated domestic violence training, the amount of attention given to the training was negatively correlated with ratings of victim blame. This result must be interpreted with caution as well, as the r^2 was very low so this effect may have low power. Second, there was a significant difference with victim blame scores between police officers that sought out additional training and those that did not, with police officers who sought additional training having lower ratings of victim blame. As with correlational data, it is unknown if this is an effect of training, or simply that police officers that pay more attention in training and seek additional training have lower ratings of victim blaming independent of training.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. It suffers from the limitations of self-report data and convenience sampling, calling elements of validity and reliability into question. The results should be interpreted with a caution due to this.

The college student sample and police sample presented challenges that may affect the generalizability of the results. The college student sample was overwhelmingly Caucasian, preventing a valid comparison between different ethnic groups. Additionally, this data was not gathered from police officers out of concern that it would violate confidentiality. Gender data for the police sample was similarly not collected. This presents an issue that made comparison of these independent variables impossible, leaving an important analysis incomplete.

The Domestic Violence Blame Scale (DVBS) presented several issues as well. Firstly, the scale is limited in its perspective, as all 23-items on the scale have a male aggressor and female victim. While this is the most common form of intimate partner violence (Smith et al., 2018), it does not address other, equally troubling incidents of domestic violence with female aggressors with male victims, or same-sex intimate partner violence. This alone could have influenced participant's responses, or only given information on participant opinion of "male-on-female" aggression. Secondly, the DVBS is "women-centered" in scope, and this may influence police officers' responses based on perceived bias (Eigenberg et al., 2012). Finally, the DVBS was the only measure utilized. Adding vignettes to the gauge practical application of blame attribution may have offered more robust findings.

An additional artifact may limit the current generalizability of the findings. The data collection occurred prior to the start of the 2017 #MeToo Movement. (Tippett, 2018) While intimate partner violence and sexual assault has always been a critical issue in so-

ciety, the social media movement of #MeToo has certainly changed public discourse about violence against women. It is unknown if this movement has affected the opinions held by police officers or the general population concerning intimate partner violence. Perhaps this study's findings may no longer be an accurate reflection of an average person's, or police officer's, blame attribution.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the literature concerning blame attribution with intimate partner violence. The findings support previous literature showing men having higher rates of victim blame than women. The results also suggest that personal experiences with domestic violence influence decisions about blame. Additionally, this research explores police officer blame attribution in a different way than previous studies.

Future research should attempt to address this study's limitations. Due to the prevalence of domestic violence, an exploration of individual's experiences with intimate partner violence and the effect on blame attribution would be important. Police officers serve as a critical gatekeeper of the criminal justice system, and deeper exploration of the effect of training is also important. Police officers are also increasingly diverse and connected to the community, thus exploration of the effects of gender and ethnicity on blame attribution should also be explored. Finally, the effects of the #MeToo and the increased exposure of other social justice issues are just beginning to be seen. Future research exploring this effect on the public's perception of domestic violence would be important for assessing long-lasting change.

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