

The Influence of Gender and Gender Role Attitudes on Domestic Violence Culpability Assignment in Barbados

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Abstract

The impact of gender and gender role attitudes on domestic violence culpability assignment in Barbados was investigated based on sample of 99 residents. Respondents were given a domestic violence scenario and their perceptions and attitudes analysed. Factor analysis yielded five culpability items: “general seriousness of the incident”; “the man’s culpability”; “the man’s justification”; “the woman’s culpability”; and “the woman’s pattern of abuse”. The issue of perceived provocation by the woman was also investigated. Findings revealed that Barbadian women assigned more blame to the male batterer, whereas Barbadian men assigned more blame to the female victim. There was a greater perception among women that the incident was a pattern of abuse for the female victim. Men more readily perceived that the female victim provoked the incident. With respect to gender role attitudes the study found that residents with traditional gender role attitudes perceived the batterer’s response to be justified and provoked by the female victim. Residents with egalitarian gender role attributes perceived that this was a consistent pattern of ongoing abuse for the female victim. Both gender and gender role attitudes accounted for the assignment of blame with regards to the victim’s provocation of the batterer. Our findings underscore the importance of understanding the underlying causes of domestic violence attitudes. As such, this knowledge could be incorporated into new policies that seek to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence in Barbados, to assist in changing societal perceptions about domestic violence.

Keywords: domestic violence; culpability assignment; gender; gender role attitudes; Barbados

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1. Introduction

Violence against women—an act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women (United Nations, 1993)—is a widespread practice. The definition, although broad in scope, highlights that violence against women is rooted in sex inequality. Its focus on women does not deny the fact that men experience violence. However, as violence against men differs in its aetiology and response strategies, it warrants separate consideration.

In practice, the term violence against women encompasses an array of abuses targeted at women and girls, ranging from sex-selective abortion to the abuse of elder women. The term includes geographically or culturally specific forms of abuse such as female genital mutilation, dowry deaths, acid throwing, and honour killings (the murder of women who have allegedly brought shame to their family), as well as forms of violence that are prevalent worldwide such as domestic violence and rape.

The prevalence of violence against women is such that one in every three women around the world will be victims of violence in their life time (World Health Organisation, 1997), which subsequently leads to a five percent reduction in their healthy and productive capacities (World Bank, 1993). This practice is well entrenched within the socio-cultural and political structures of society, and transcends ethnicity, class, religious affiliation, political affiliation and culture (United Nations Funds for Women (UNIFEM), 2003). Moreover, violence against women has impacts beyond its victims; it also has wider direct and indirect psychological, sociological and economic societal consequences (Hezekiah, 2001).

Many potential perpetrators exist, including spouses and partners, parents, other family members, neighbours, teachers, employers, policemen, soldiers, and other state employees. Yet, the home has been identified as a site where violence is most frequently perpetrated against women (Clarke, 1998). As such, the home is not for many women a place of comfort and security, but rather a place where violence, humiliation and extreme uncertainty are endured.

In numerous cases women suffer in silence. Many reasons account for this silence namely, fear of retaliatory violence, shame, love or social isolation. An overarching reason is the fact that many women have been socialised into believing that familial violence or intimate partner violence is a private family issue that can be resolved without outside interference (Matlin, 2000). Arising from the latter, many organisations have fought tirelessly to expose the private horrors which women and their families have endured. Efforts have focussed on education, dispelling many myths about domestic violence and also on the promotion of attainment of equal rights for women. Some gains have been made; within the last 30 years there has been a proliferation of battered women's shelters, batterer programmes, pro-arrest and no-drop prosecutorial policies (Salazar, Baker, Price, & Carlin, 2003) and condemnation by the United Nations that violence against women violates their fundamental human rights (Clarke, 1998).

While domestic violence has been widely investigated (Browne, 1993), there is a relative dearth of research, however, on culpability assignment in domestic violence, although such assignment has important ramifications for arrest and prosecution. Such research could provide insight into biases concerning domestic violence actors and beliefs about the need for interventions and public policy. For example, Ewing and Aubrey (1987) found that almost 40 percent of a

community sample of respondents believed that women are partially responsible for their abuse. Lavoie, Jacob, Hardy, & Martin (1989) report that some police officers believe that a woman is more responsible for abuse when she has shown “verbal antagonism”. It has also been found that higher blame and derogation are assigned to women who use verbal provocation prior to abuse (Kristiansen & Giulietti, 1990; Pierce & Harris, 1993).

Several studies have investigated the issue of violence against women in the Caribbean. For example, Jordan (1989) pinpointed violence against women in Barbados as having its origins in the “sexist myth that women exist to satisfy the desires of men”. In a case study of Guyana, Danns and Parsad (1989) highlighted the tendency for violence against women to be treated as a private matter; the historical unequal power relationships between men and women; the lack of laws prohibiting violence against women; failure to reform existing laws; and the Caribbean’s history of slavery and colonialism as causes of violence against women. Finally, Creque (1994) found that wife battering was the most common form of violence against women, followed by verbal and emotional abuse, in Trinidad and Tobago.

To the knowledge of the authors, no published studies exist on the assignment of culpability in domestic violence incidents in the Caribbean. As legal attention to, and restrictions on, domestic violence modify the rates of such violence in society (Harrison & Esqueda, 1999; Stewart & Maddren, 1997), understanding the attribution of culpability is highly important. It is against this background that the current study attempts to make a contribution. Specifically, the study will investigate the impact of gender and gender role attitudes on domestic violence culpability assignment in Barbados.

2. Literature Review

Attribution theories have had considerable success in predicting blame in a wide range of settings (Hewstone, 1989; Kelley & Michela, 1980). However, these theories have not always been able to predict culpability assignment in settings where seemingly passive participants are blamed for their misfortune such as rape or domestic violence (Hillier & Foddy, 1993). The main emphasis of these theories has been assessing the motives of the observers. While attribution theories have emphasised the motives of the observer, Hillier, et al., (1993) believe that other relevant attitudes of the observer may be equally important.

Gender and gender role attitudes are two such variables which have been studied extensively and found to influence culpability assignment in domestic violence disputes (Hillier, & Foddy, 1993; Berkel, 2004; Esqueda, & Harrison, 2005). Studies show that gender and gender role attitudes are important in understanding and predicting people's beliefs about violence against women and domestic violence culpability (Willis, Hallinan, & Melby, 1996).

2.1 Gender and Domestic Violence Culpability Assignment

Men and women have different perceptions about domestic violence (Seelau, & Seelau, 2005). Studies show that men are more likely than women to view domestic violence as the norm, and also to perceive the situation to be less serious (Pierce & Harris, 1993). Men and women differ in their likelihood of calling the police and also in the severity of penalty assigned to the perpetrator. Women indicated a greater likelihood of calling the police and suggested harsher penalties for perpetrators when compared to men (Burke, Etherington, & Pierch, 1990). Compared to men, women tended to be more sympathetic towards the victim (Home, 1994).

Regardless of the victim's gender, women were more likely to believe the victim, call the police, recommend that the victim press charges (Poorman, Seelau, & Seelau, 2002) and recommend that the police give a citation or arrest the perpetrator (Seelau, et al., 2005).

Gender differences have also been found with regards to culpability assignment. Harris, & Cook's (1994) study highlights this assertion. They found that women reacted more strongly to the battering incident, regardless of whether the victim was male or female. When compared to male participants, women found the incident to be more violent, felt more strongly that they would have called the police, and that the victim should leave the batterer. In Harris & Cook's (1994) study, female participants indicated that they liked the victim more and the batterer less in comparison to the male participants. They also found that female participants assigned the batterer more culpability whereas male participants assigned more culpability to the victim.

Research findings have not always supported gender differences in culpability assignment. In studies by Shotland & Goodstein (1983) and Acock & Ireland (1983), the observer's gender was found not to be related to culpability assignment. Put another way, men and women assigned culpability similarly in these studies. Furthermore, Cann, Calhoun, & Warring, (1979) suggested that the gender differences found between men and women in rape studies were not overwhelming large, stating that there were women who blamed victims of rape and men who do not blame victims.

Hillier et al., (1993) assert that the mixed findings with respect to the effect of gender on culpability assignment can be explained with reference to gender role attitude differences in

observers. Hillier et al., (1993) state that the extent to which men endorse traditional gender role attitudes towards women are reflected in their assignment of blame to the female victim. Therefore, if the sample comprises of male participants who endorse egalitarian gender role attitudes towards women, then no gender differences will be discovered.

2.2 *Gender Roles Attribution and Domestic Violence Culpability Assignment*

Gender role attitudes determine the appropriateness of roles for men and women and are conceptualised on a continuum that ranges from egalitarian to traditional (King, & King, 1990). An individual's gender role attitude is defined as a function of their expression of masculine or feminine traits or a combination of both, rather than their biological sex. Traits are called masculine, if they are evaluated to be more suitable for men. Similarly, traits are deemed feminine if they are evaluated to be more suitable for women (Konrad & Harris, 2002).

Gender role attitudes suggest that persons who hold traditional gender role attitudes are likely to endorse attitudes about masculinity and femininity, which suggest that men should be dominant, powerful and sexually aggressive, whereas women should be passive, fragile, submissive but yet still be responsible for controlling their sexual activity (Simonson, & Subich, 1999). Traditional gender roles emphasise separate spheres of influence for men and women, with women located inside of the home and men located outside of the home (Duncan, Peterson, & Winter, 1997). Conversely, individuals who endorse egalitarian gender roles hold a more non-restrictive stance where women are able to choose from a wide range of possible roles in life (Larsen, & Long, 1988).

According to Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986) gender role acquisition is developed through a learning process that involves imitation, modelling and reinforcement. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that boys and girls learn masculinity and femininity when gender role appropriate behaviours are rewarded and gender role inappropriate behaviours are punished or ignored. Bandura (1986) further highlights that even though children may have initially learned gender roles through external reinforcements; as they mature they begin to regulate their own actions through internal rewards and punishments. A study by Bussey & Bandura (1992) underscores this point. They found that children learn from a young age to discriminate between behaviours that are appropriate for boys and behaviours that are appropriate for girls, and they begin to self evaluate based on this knowledge.

Children also learn gender role appropriate behaviours by observing and imitating adults and peers and through trial and error of their own behaviour. Same sex parents and peers are seen as the most influential models for children to acquire gender roles. Research has found that as early as three years old children begin to imitate same-sex models more so than opposite sex models (Bussey & Bandura, 1984). It seems as children become more aware of gender role appropriate behaviours and are rewarded for imitating such behaviour they eventually begin to internalise these gender roles and this helps in forming their gender identity (Lips, 1997).

Research on gender role attitudes and culpability assignment has consistently found a strong relationship between traditional gender roles attitudes by both men and women and greater acceptance of rape myths, with men reporting higher acceptance of these myths (Carroll 1982;

Maxwell, Robinson & Post, 2003; Nayak, Byrne, Martin & Abraham 2003; Shotland & Goodstein 1993). Possible explanations suggest that persons who espouse traditional gender role attitudes endorse beliefs of male dominance and superiority, and are more likely to subscribe to ideas that promote female compliance with the use of force (Wallace, 1989). Therefore, women who swear, drink to excess and act contrary to the stereotype of nurturing mother may be seen as provoking negative reactions and worthy of more blame in cases where they experience abuse.

Similarly, Feather (1984) found positive links between conservative attitudes of observers and their assignment of blame. In another study, Carroll (1982) examining observer's attitudes towards the rape myth, she found a strong correlation between observers' blame and feminism. Positive attitudes towards feminism were correlated with lower victim blaming. Shotland and Goodstein's (1993) study further supports the findings of Carroll (1982). Shotland & Goodstein (1993) found that university students with traditional gender role attitudes assigned more culpability to rape victims than students with egalitarian gender role attitudes. Additionally, Nayak, et al.'s (2003) cross-national study of attitudes toward violence against women found that participants from India, Japan and Kuwait, collectivist societies, held less negative beliefs about violence against women and that their attitudes reflected gender norms and social ideologies about male dominance over women. These findings tended to be consistent with more restrictive norms for women found in these countries as compared to the United States. Further, Nayak, et al. (2003) found that individuals with traditional gender roles attitudes were more likely to endorse beliefs about violence against women and domestic violence that blames the victim. These individuals endorsed more positive attitude toward physical and verbal aggression, in comparison with men who held egalitarian gender role attitudes.

Research on gender role attitudes and culpability assignment also reveals that traditional gender role ideology influences the law enforcement's response to domestic abuse (Saunders & Size, 1986), such that police officers with traditional gender role attitudes are more likely to assign culpability to the victim and are less likely to express professional concern about domestic violence. Moreover, police officers with traditional gender role attitudes were found to show higher approval of marital violence. Other studies also suggest that a traditional gender role ideology influences the length of jail sentences and the seriousness of the abuse; traditionalists recommend shorter jail sentences for abusers and deemed the abusive situation to be less serious than persons with egalitarian gender roles attributions (Willis et al., 1996).

Studies have also assessed the impact of gender role attributions on domestic violence culpability assignment when women act in atypical roles. The literature indicates that due to the pervasiveness of traditional gender role ideology women are often not seen as abusers and similarly men are often not seen as victims (Seelau, & Seelau, 2005). It was found that laypersons' perceptions of domestic violence show a different pattern of culpability assignment for male perpetrators when compared to female perpetrators. Male perpetrators were perceived more negatively than female perpetrators. Additionally, male perpetrators were rated more culpable than female perpetrators (Willis et al., 1996). Harris and Cook (1994) also reported similar findings. Their study presented a vignette involving a husband battering his wife, a wife battering her husband, or a gay man battering his partner. When compared to female perpetrators, male perpetrators were judged less likable, more responsible for the abuse, more likely to have battered a previous partner, and more deserving of conviction for assault. Compared to female victims, male victims were judged less likable and more responsible for the

abuse, and received less encouragement to leave the relationship. When the victim was male, participants judged the incident as less serious and indicated they would be less likely to call the police.

These findings suggest that male against female violence is viewed differently than female to male violence (Seelau, et al., 2005). This pattern of judgment is consistent with gender role stereotypes of men and women and might be advanced by perceptions that men are more aggressive than women, can inflict more damage and women are more vulnerable and will suffer more injury than similarly abused men (Seelau, et al., 2005). The latter may also be the overwhelming reason why male victims are less likely to report their abuse, and why police are less likely to enforce protection orders and less likely to arrest the perpetrator when the violence is not male to female violence (Connolly, Huzurbazar & Routh-McGee, 2000).

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants and Data-Collection Procedures

The study targeted one hundred Barbadian respondents from across the country. Based on census data, quota sampling was employed. The population data was stratified by gender, parish/district, and age in order to obtain comparable proportions in our sample. Respondents from age 16 years and above only were included in the sample. Trained research assistants were employed to conduct the administration of the survey to the Barbadian population. These assistants were instructed to obtain the desired number of persons in each identified demographic category such as gender and age for each parish (for example, a certain number of males and

females in various age groups from each parish was obtained). The actual selection of these people in the specific categories was done conveniently. Ninety-nine usable surveys were collected.

3.2 *Instrument and Measures*

The main data-collection tool used was a structured questionnaire comprising several quantitative measures and scales. The instrument was comprised of the *Police Interview Transcript* and *Trial Questionnaire* (Esqueda & Harrison, 2005); an *Attitude towards Women* (ATW) scale (Spence, Helmrich & Stapp, 1973); and several demographical questions.

Police Interview Transcript

In the transcript, two police officers respond to an anonymous telephone call reporting the occurrence of a domestic dispute. Police conducted separate interviews with the alleged victim and alleged batterer. Both the victim and batterer described the domestic violence incident; each described the batterer's actions as well as the victim's level of provocation. The victim and batterer's descriptions are equal in length and content. The scenario is as follows: A couple had had a small party at their home, and an old high-school friend of the wife attended. After the party, the husband accused his wife of being overly attentive to the old high-school friend, of flirting with him, and furthermore, of having a relationship with her friend. Having failed to convince her husband that she was "merely" catching up with an old friend, in a fit of anger, she called her husband an "idiot" and told him he was "jealous and possessive". In response, the husband insulted his wife, hit her and knocked her to the floor.

Trial Questionnaire

Questionnaire items were designed to assess the perceptions of Barbadians concerning the behaviour and culpability of both actors in the domestic violence situation, including perceptions of the incident's seriousness and perceptions of culpability. Fifteen items were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much so). All items are displayed in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Attitude towards Women (ATW) Scale

The ATW is a 25-item scale that assesses attitudes towards traditional gender role stereotypes. Items were scored on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (agree strongly) to 3 (disagree strongly). Low scores indicate a more traditional attitude toward gender roles; high scores indicate a more egalitarian attitude; and mid-range scores indicate attitudes that are somewhat traditional or somewhat egalitarian respectively. Items are displayed in Table 2. In this study the Cronbach's alpha was .82 ($p < .001$).

Insert Table 2 about here

Demographic Variables

Other questions on the instrument were: gender; age; marital status; highest level of education attained; and monthly income.

3.3 *Data Analyses*

Descriptive and inferential statistics were carried out on the quantitative survey data to address the main hypotheses advanced in this study. Descriptive statistics ranged from percentages for demographic variables such as gender, age, education, marital status and number of children to arithmetic means and standard deviations for continuous variables such as ATW scale. The main inferential technique employed was ANOVA which was used to directly examine the impact of gender and gender role attitudes on domestic violence culpability attribution. All inferential tests were conducted at the 10 percent level of significance.

4. **Results**

4.1 *Demographic Profile of Respondents*

Table 3 provides a summary of the demographic profile of the sample (n = 99). There were 47 (47%) males and 53 females (54%) females in the sample. Participants' ages ranged from 16 to 78 years with an average age of approximately 41 years. Almost half of all respondents indicated that they were single (49.5%); 41 percent were married; and 9 percent divorced. The average monthly income of respondents was BDS \$2,364.07.

Insert Table 3 about here

4.2 *Preliminary Analysis*

Factor analysis was conducted on the dependent variables listed in Table 1, and principal components analysis with a varimax rotation yielded 5 factors with eigenvalues over 1.00, which

accounted for 67 percent of the variance. The dependent variables that composed the factors and their factor loadings (0.50 and above) are shown in Table 4. The factors that emerged were General Seriousness (factor 1), Man's Culpability (factor 2), Man's Justification for Physical Force (factor 3), Woman's Culpability (factor 4), which loaded by itself, and Woman's Pattern of Domestic Violence (factor 5). A regression method was used to save the factors as dependent variables. Item 6 which did not load under any factor was analysed separately.

Insert Table 4 about here

A Pearson chi square test confirms that there is no association between gender and gender role attitudes ($\chi^2 = 6.115$, $df = 3$, $p = .106$). This supports the concept that gender and gender role attitudes are independent factors.

4.3 *ANOVA Results*

A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine if the various factors identified are dependent on gender and/or gender role attitudes. The results are shown in Table 5.

Gender

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine if differences exist between men and women (gender), in their perception of the seriousness of the incident; the man's culpability; the woman's culpability; woman's pattern of abuse; the man's justification for his actions; the recommended length of sentence and the level of provocation from the woman. No significant differences were found for general seriousness of the incident $F(1, 97) = 0.051$, p

= 0.82; and the man's justification for his actions $F(1, 97) = 1.863, p = 0.18$. Significant findings were found for the man's culpability $F(1, 97) = 2.926, p = 0.09$; the woman's culpability $F(1, 97) = 20.485, p < .001$; the woman's pattern of abuse $F(1, 97) = 10.448, p < .001$; and the degree of provocation by the woman $F(1, 97) = 14.320, p < .001$.

Mean factor scores indicated that for the factor man's culpability, women were more likely to report that the man was culpable; for the factor woman's culpability, men were more likely to say that the woman was culpable; for the factor woman's pattern of abuse, women were more likely to perceive that the incident was part of a pattern of abuse; and for whether the woman provoked the incident, men were more likely to say that the woman provoked the man.

Gender role attitudes

One-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine if differences exist between individuals who espouse traditional and egalitarian gender role attitudes in their perception of the seriousness of the incident; the man's culpability; the woman's culpability; woman's pattern of abuse; the man's justification for his actions; the recommended length of sentence and the level of provocation from the woman. No significant differences were found for the general seriousness of the incident $F(3, 95) = 1.2755, p = 0.29$; the man's culpability $F(3, 95) = 1.846, p = 0.14$; and the woman's culpability $F(3, 95) = 0.628, p = 0.60$. Significant differences were found for the man's justification $F(3, 95) = 2.510, p = 0.06$; woman's pattern of abuse $F(3, 95) = 2.203, p = 0.09$ and the degree of provocation by the woman $F(3, 95) = 7.037, p < .001$.

Bonferroni post hoc examinations revealed significant differences between individuals with “very traditional” gender role attitudes and “somewhat traditional” gender role attitudes in their perception of the man’s justification for his actions. Persons with “very traditional” gender role attitudes were more likely to say that the man was justified in his response to the woman than persons with “somewhat traditional” gender role attitudes. Second, significant differences were found between persons with “somewhat egalitarian” gender role attitudes and “somewhat traditional” gender role attitudes in their perceptions of the pattern of the woman’s abuse. Persons with “somewhat egalitarian” gender role attitudes were more likely to believe that this incident was part of a pattern of abuse for the woman than persons with “somewhat traditional” gender role attitudes. Third, significant differences were found between persons with “somewhat traditional” gender role attitudes, and persons with “somewhat egalitarian” and “very egalitarian” gender role attitudes. Persons with “somewhat traditional” gender role attitudes were more likely to believe that the woman provoked the reaction of the man than persons with “somewhat egalitarian” and “very egalitarian” gender role attitudes.

5. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the assignment of culpability in a domestic violence incident is significantly associated with the gender and gender role attitudes of Barbadian residents respectively. With respect to the influence of gender, the study found that Barbadian women assigned more blame to the male batterer, while Barbadian men assigned more blame to the female victim. There was also the perception by Barbadian women that the incident was likely to have been a pattern of consistent abuse for the female victim. Finally, Barbadian men

more readily perceived that the female victim provoked the incident. Significant findings were also found with respect to gender role attitudes. There were significant relationships between gender role attitudes and the man's justification for the abuse; the woman's pattern of abuse; and the degree of provocation by the victim. It is noteworthy that both gender and gender role attitudes account for the assignment of blame with regards to the victim's provocation of the batterer.

Our results regarding gender differences and culpability assignment are consistent with Seelau & Seelau (2005), who also found differences in how men and women perceive domestic violence. Men more readily accepted domestic violence as the norm. Men also found incidences of domestic violence to be less serious and less violent (Pierce & Harris, 1993). As research has shown that women are overwhelmingly the victims of domestic violence by their male partners (Matlin, 2000), taken together, these findings have very serious implications for the perpetuation of domestic violence. First, they help to explain the high prevalence of domestic violence against women. Second, they imply that men are less likely to intervene in domestic violence disputes (Burke, Etherington & Pierch, 1990) as they are more tolerant of domestic violence. Third, men will be less prone to curb their battering behaviour.

This study also gave support to the findings of Hillier, et al., (1993) and Esqueda, et al., (2005), with regard to the influence of traditional gender roles on the culpability assignment. We found that Barbadian residents with traditional gender roles attitudes expressed a view that the male perpetrator was justified in his use of force against the female victim. One possible explanation is that persons with traditional gender role attitudes endorse beliefs of male dominance and

superiority, and are more likely to subscribe to ideas that promote female compliance with the use of force (Wallace, 1989). The pervasiveness of these beliefs has serious implications towards reducing the prevalence of domestic violence in Barbados. As such advocates should take steps to address the issue of socialising boys and girls into stereotype roles and dispel these notions and also highlight the need for greater gender equality in the society.

Traditional gender roles attitudes were also found to be related to beliefs about the pervasiveness of domestic violence. Traditionalists as opposed to egalitarians did not perceive that the battering incident was an ongoing pattern of violence. This finding underscores the idea that traditional gender role attitudes colour an individual's judgement about the pervasiveness of domestic violence and also might reflect societal norms. Therefore, efforts towards reducing the prevalence of domestic violence should attempt to create new social norms and policies that are unsupportive of domestic violence such as: "people should call the police for domestic disturbances"; "men who batter women should be held responsible"; and "batterers should be arrested and sanctioned". Efforts should also be aimed at redefining existing social norms that give rise to domestic violence and victim blaming such as: "women should behave in a certain way so as not to provoke men"; "men should control women through force in certain instances"; and "law enforcement should treat domestic violence as a private matter" (Salazar, et al., 2003). The intended goal should be towards the reshaping of social norms so that they become internalised and function to direct the behaviour of perpetrators of violence and the wider community towards a total reduction in the prevalence of domestic violence and victim blaming.

The current study also examined the influence of provocation on domestic violence culpability assignment. Provocation is often seen as an extenuating circumstance and in law it reduces murder to manslaughter (Narayan & Von Hirsch, 2002). As it relates to domestic violence, provocation has the ability to reduce the culpability of the perpetrator; the length and the severity of sentence given; influence mandatory arrest and perceptions about the seriousness of domestic violence (Esqueda & Harrison, 2005). We found that gender and gender role attitudes of Barbadians were found to influence culpability assignment when the victim had been thought to provoke the batterers' response and also supported the research findings of Esqueda & Harrison (2005). Men assigned more culpability to the female victim and less to the male perpetrator. Similarly, persons with traditional gender role attitudes assigned more culpability to the female victim and less to the male perpetrator than persons with egalitarian gender role attitudes.

Women are often seen as tormentors who provoke men to violence (Rasche, 1990), a stereotype that is very prevalent in domestic violence discourse in Barbados. The latter, coupled with our findings, points to the need for educational programmes in Barbados aimed towards dispelling stereotyped notions which suggest that women provoke men to violence. Campaigns should highlight all forms and acts of violence and, to the fullest extent possible, be incorporated into the curriculum of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Efforts should also be geared towards persons with traditional gender roles attitudes in an effort to eliminate the biased and conservative notions about what constitutes domestic violence and how it is acted out.

Additionally, this study has implications for the social justice system. Traditional gender role attitudes have been found to influence the law enforcement's response to victims of domestic

violence. They assign more culpability to the victim; view the situation as less serious and less violent; and sometimes fail to adhere to mandatory arrest policy on domestic violence (Saunders & Size, 1986). In Barbados, domestic violence is not a criminal offense and there are no mandatory arrest policies. Police intervention in domestic violence disputes is therefore left up to the police officers' discretion and this can be affected by their gender role attitudes and any inherent biases they have about domestic violence and how it is acted out. Consequently, new recruits enlisting in the police force should undergo sensitivity training in handling domestic violence disputes and should also be exposed to courses that emphasise the effects of domestic violence. Existing police officers should have ongoing re-training exercises in an effort to minimise any inherent biases they have may hold about traditional roles for men and women and domestic violence.

Practical applications from the study's findings can also be extended to the judicial system. Judges' traditional notions of women's roles and domestic violence have been found to influence their judgements in domestic violence disputes (Hartman & Belknap, 2003). Rulings that are supposed to be unbiased might be coloured by biased attitudes and beliefs that judges hold about women and domestic violence. Moreover, people take their cues regarding the seriousness of behaviour from the judicial system (Hingson & Howland, 1989). The imposition of penalties for perpetrating domestic violence is likely, therefore, to provide a standard by which individuals gauge their behaviour and the behaviour of others. Additionally, owing to the influence of provocation in law (Narayan & Von Hirsch, 2002) and the impact of traditional gender role attitudes and provocation on domestic violence culpability assignment (Esqueda & Harrison, 2005), it is not a leap to imagine that these attributes could influence the outcome, severity of

sentencing and the remedies given in cases of domestic abuse in Barbados. Thus, the enactment of new laws regarding domestic violence such as mandatory arrest and no-drop prosecution would convey the seriousness as well as the criminal nature of domestic violence and could also serve to inform new social norms about domestic violence that ultimately serves in reducing the prevalence of domestic violence and victim blaming. Another possible solution could be the incorporation of courses in the curricula of law schools in order to educate future judges and lawyers on the prevalence, aetiology and scope of domestic violence.

Finally, this study adds to the body of scientific knowledge about what is known about domestic violence in Barbados. It highlights the role and influence of gender and gender role attitudes on culpability assignment. Findings underscore the need for public education campaigns that dispel stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity and domestic violence in Barbados. They also emphasise the need for ongoing domestic violence training for personnel in the judicial system. More importantly, this study points to the need for judicial reform as it relates to domestic violence, more scientific studies and documentation of the prevalence of domestic violence as well as the antecedent factors of domestic violence and culpability assignment, by clinicians, police, laypersons and others who came into contact with abused victims as well as the antecedent factors of domestic violence and culpability assignment in Barbados.

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Table 1: Dependent Measure Items

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1. How serious was this situation?
 2. How violent was this situation?
 3. Was the man to blame for the incident?
 4. Was the woman to blame for the incident?
 5. How truthful was the woman about the incident?
 6. To what degree did the woman provoke the man's response?
 7. How justified was the man in hitting the woman in this situation?
 8. How likely is it that this was the first incident of this kind for the couple?
 9. How likely is it that the man has been involved in this situation before?
 10. How likely is it that the woman has been involved in this situation before?
 11. In a similar situation, would another man respond in the same way to this woman?
 12. Was the man guilty of assault?
 13. How responsible was the man?
 14. How responsible was the woman?
 15. If you had witnessed this incident from the window next door, how likely is it that you would have called the police?
-

Notes: All items were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all; 5 = very much so).

Table 2: Attitudes towards Women Scale (Spence, Helmrich and Stapp, 1973)-Short version

-
1. Swearing and obscenity are more repulsive in the speech of woman than a man
 2. Women should take responsibility for a leadership in solving the intellectual and social problems of the day*
 3. Both husband and wife should be allowed the same grounds for divorce *
 4. Telling dirty jokes should be mostly a masculine prerogative
 5. Intoxication among women is worse than intoxication among men
 6. Under modern economic conditions with women being active outside the home, men should share in household tasks such washing dishes and doing*
 7. It is insulting to women to have the “obey” clause remain in the marriage ceremony*
 8. There should be strict merit in job appointment and promotion without regard to sex*
 9. A woman should be as “free” as a man to propose marriage*
 10. Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers
 11. Women earning as much as their dates should bear equally the expenses when they go out together*
 12. Women should assume their rightful place in business and all professions along with men*
 13. A woman should not expect to go exactly the same places or have the same freedom of action as a man
 14. Sons in a family should be given more encouragement to go to university than daughters
 15. It is ridiculous for a woman to drive a bus
 16. In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in the upbringing of a children
 17. Women should be encouraged not to become sexually intimate with anyone before marriage, even with fiancés
 18. The husband should not be favoured by the law over the wife in the disposal of a family property or income*
 19. Women should be concerned with their duties of childbearing and house tending rather than with desires for professional or business careers
 20. The intellectual leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of men
 21. Economics and social freedom is worth far to women than acceptance of the ideal of femininity which has been set up by men*
 22. On the average, women should be regarded as less capable of contributing to economic production than are men
 23. There are many jobs in which men should be given preferences over women in being hired or promoted
 24. Women should be given equal opportunity with men for apprenticeship in various trades*
 25. The modern girl is entitled to the same freedom from regulation and control that is given to the modern boy*
-

* Items reverse scored

Table 3: Demographic Profile

	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
Gender	
• Male	47
• Female	53
Age Group	
• 15-19 years	7.1
• 20-29 years	20.2
• 30-44 years	35.4
• 45-59 years	16.2
• 60 years and over	21.2
Highest Level of Education	
• Primary	2.0
• Secondary	18.2
• Technical/Vocational	18.2
• A-Level/Associate Degree	20.2
• Bachelors	27.3
• Postgraduate Diploma	9.1
• Masters/PhD	5.1
Marital Status	
• Single	49.5
• Married	41.4
• Divorced	9.1

Table 4: Factor Loadings for Dependent Variables

	<i>Factors</i>				
	General Seriousness	Man's Culpability	Man's Justification	Woman's Culpability	Woman's Pattern
Item 1	0.79	0.20	0.03	-0.03	0.23
Item 2	0.88	0.15	-0.01	-0.01	0.02
Item 3	0.71	0.17	-0.14	-0.39	0.05
Item 4	-0.13	-0.73	0.06	0.38	-0.16
Item 5	0.13	-0.11	-0.50	-0.10	0.63
Item 6	-0.20	-0.54	0.11	0.32	-0.28
Item 7	-0.38	0.03	0.62	0.35	0.23
Item 8	0.21	-0.11	0.74	-0.19	0.07
Item 9	0.34	-0.03	0.27	-0.23	0.64
Item 10	-0.07	0.33	0.11	0.04	0.77
Item 11	-0.35	0.32	0.44	-0.55	0.07
Item 12	0.46	0.13	-0.44	-0.03	0.02
Item 13	0.22	0.75	0.14	0.28	-0.16
Item 14	-0.22	-0.02	-0.01	0.83	-0.09
Item 15	0.19	0.57	-0.42	-0.01	0.16

Note: Items which loaded are in bold.

Table 5: ANOVA Results

Dependent Variable	Gender	Gender Role Attitudes
General Seriousness	F(1, 97) = 0.051	F(3,95) = 1.276
Man's Culpability	F(1, 97) = 2.926*	F(3,95) = 1.846
Man's Justification	F(1, 97) = 1.863	F(3, 95) = 2.510*
Woman's Culpability	F(1, 97) = 20.485****	F(3, 95) = 0.628
Woman's Pattern	F(1, 97) = 10.448***	F(3,95) = 2.203*
Provocation	F(1, 97) = 14.320****	F(3,95) = 7.037****

* $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$; and **** $p < .001$.