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## **Child to Parent Violence: An Analysis of the Perceptions of Perpetrator and Victim Gender When Considering Offending and Victimization.**

*Gerard McElhone*

*University of Cumbria*

### **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to attempt to determine participant perceptions of Child to Parent Violence (CPV), more specifically to address gaps in current literature with regards to assumptions that may be made when considering gender and severity of perpetration, of both the aggressor and their victims. Based on available literature, definitions of CPV and four considered levels of aggression were developed allowing for a mixed design examination of the afore mentioned perceptions (Ibabe, Arnoso, & Elgorriaga, 2014; Miles & Condry, 2015). The study hypothesised that maternal figures would, in this study, be the primary victim of CPV across all four measures, males would be the predominant perpetrator across physical and financial levels of aggression, with predominant female perpetration across psychological and emotional CPV. A gender control would be used as a measure to determine how the group viewed gender prevalence in the perpetration of CPV. Results would determine partial congruence with the hypotheses, however it was shown that male to parent aggression, regardless of parental gender, was the dominant perception of this hidden phenomena, highlighting the shortcomings in societies understanding of the complexities of CPV. The author posits that ongoing CPV studies are more than necessary to inform policy making, with regards to CPV support for victims, offenders and other family members, whilst bringing issues of Intra-Family Violence (IFV) into line with empirical evidence that is relevant.

*Keywords: violence, family violence, child violence, perceptions*

Intra-Family Violence (IFV) is recognised as a major public health and societal concern that creates and inflicts serious physical and psychological harm on those who are affected (Catalano, 2007; Purcell, Baksheev & Mullen, 2014). IFV has been most commonly recognised as violence perpetrated by males against their intimate female partners and/or children (Black et al., 2011). Since the onset of the 1960's, when child welfare systems were reformed; due to the increase in public awareness of physical child abuse (Holman, 2013; Steinmetz, 2013), and the 1970's where the women's liberation movements raised societal awareness of Domestic Violence (DV; Dobash & Dobash, 1979) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV; Grama, 2000), there has been a significant increase in the amount of literature accumulated with regards to the nature, causes and extent of familial violence: particularly when regarding intimate female partner and child abuse (Loseke & Kurz, 2005; Tolan, Gorman-Smith & Henry, 2006).

In contrast to these two specific phenomena, within the larger body of IFV research, there is a paucity of work related to violence directed towards parents by their children. Cottrell (2001) would term this 'parental abuse' or 'child-parent violence' (CPV; Cottrell, 2001; Walsh & Krienert, 2007). CPV is not exclusive in the scant attention it has received within IFV victim-offender studies; elder abuse, female to male intimate partner directional IPV, violence within gay and lesbian relationships (Walsh & Krienert, 2008) being prime examples of other largely neglected and underrepresented phenomena in research. CPV and the aforementioned additional forms of violence are not recent research considerations or "new" phenomenon. Harbin and Madden (1979) are credited with having established classification of CPV naming it "battered parent syndrome". However, since then CPV has remained a subtype of IFV that is regularly omitted from research, with a lack of literature available from which socio-demographic characteristics, prevalence, and severity of offences can be drawn; notwithstanding the knowledge that CPV is omnipresent, permeating throughout society (Ibabe, Arnoso, & Elgorriaga, 2014; Miles & Condry, 2015).

Recent quantitative literature has utilised older forensic reports (e.g. Kethineni, 2004; Walsh & Krienert, 2007; Snyder & McCurley, 2008; Routt & Anderson, 2011). The data sets utilised by Kethineni (2004) and Walsh and Krienert (2007) date from 1975, whilst many others have a reliance on retrospective self-reported data that is considerably and equally outdated (Kratcoski, 1985; Peek, Fischer & Kidwell, 1985; Pelletier & Coutu, 1992; Pagani et al., 2004; Calvete et al., 2014). For example Peek et al. (1985) rely on a data set obtained from the 1966 Youth in Transition Study (Walsh & Krienert, 2007). Due, in part, to this McElhone, G. (2017) Child to parent violence: An analysis of the perceptions of perpetrator and victim gender when considering offending and victimisation. *Journal of Applied Psychology and Social Science*, 3 (1), 52-73

there is a marked difference in the estimates of prevalence when considering CPV, ranging from 7% (Peek et al., 1985) to 29% (Pelletier & Coutu, 1992) perpetration in the US and Canada, while the only recent comparative figures from Europe can be demonstrated by Ibabe, Jaureguizar and Bentler (2013) whose study shows that across Spain the estimated rate of CPV is 21%.

There are many that may feel this form of violence is unimaginable given the implied power structures in the bulk of intra-familial relationships (Pagani et al., 2004). To obtain as accurate a figure as possible when considering the frequency of CPV, the primary focus of this research into CPV looks to examine perceptions of the predominant gender of offender and victims, studied across four forms of aggression in CPV (Jackson, 2003; Cottrell & Monk, 2004; Gallagher, 2004; Hunter, Nixon & Parr, 2010). As an example Gallagher (2004) would posit that his research is indicative of CPV being encompassed by many contextual circumstances, which stretch beyond conceptions of power and control that are generally associated with IFV and IPV theories. Similarly, much research and literature has its ideological origins in feminist based research theory (e.g., Downey, 1997; Cottrell, 2001; Jackson, 2003; Ulman & Strauss, 2003; Cottrell & Monk, 2004; Edenborough et al., 2008; Howard & Rottem, 2008), rooted deeply in the premises determined by Dobash and Dobash (1979; 2004). Much research, generally that of a quantitative nature (Kratcoski, 1985; Ibabe et al., 2013, 2014; Calvete et al., 2014), has strong foundations in seeking empirical evidence interpreted in line with scientific method, as opposed to dogmatic ideological belief, that clearly allows for any research in CPV to be conducted from a position that is less inhibited

In addition to the contradictory viewpoints of ideology and empiricism, other factors must be given attention when considering the available CPV literature. As previously mentioned much of the quantitative data is drawn from dated sources (e.g. Kratcoski, 1985; Peek, Fischer & Kidwell, 1985; Pelletier & Coutu, 1992; Pagani et al., 2004; Calvete et al., 2014), however at the time of the initial assessment the 1966 Youth in Transition Study was still the most recent and up to date with regard to CPV. Similarly, an abundance of the qualitative research currently available could be considered to be as ecologically invalid (Cottrell & Monk, 2004; Gallagher, 2004; Hunter et al., 2010) as the quantitative measures in the majority of these clinically obtained samples are small, one (Gallagher, 2004) to six (Hunter et al., 2010) participants; it must be further noted that Hunter et al. (2010) offer no definitive figures for interviewing perpetrators of CPV (stating only that mothers were repeatedly interviewed or asked to retrospectively self-report). Not only are these samples

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small but there is no consideration in general of cultural diversity leading to a somewhat premature acceptance of ethnicity or culture as a definable characteristic of being an antecedent of CPV. In their review, Walsh and Krienert (2007; 2008) concluded, conversely to those whose research was completed, based on historical data, or that of small clinical samples with regard to generalisation of incident, offender and characteristics.

### **Perpetrator Characteristics**

Methodology determines the prominent gender when considering level of offending violence. Clinical and forensic based studies (Harbin & Madden, 1979; Cochran et al., 1994; Laurent & Derry, 1999) suggest that sons are more likely to perpetrate violence towards a parent, when compared with daughters; however Pagani et al. (2004) found there to be no gender specific characteristic when considering child to mother violence. By contrast Pagani et al. (2004) did determine that there were very slight gender differences, 9.7% of females actively violent compared with a figure of 8.8% of males, this study reduces its generalizability however by entirely excluding fathers from its potential population of victims.

Further variation occurs when research is conducted into the onset and trajectory of CPV. When using data obtained from the 1975 Family Violence Survey, conducted across the United States, Ullman and Straus (2003) concluded that children between the ages of three to five years demonstrated the highest levels of CPV, with over one third of the sample having demonstrated CPV in the previous twelve months. It could however be stated that this is not an accurate result given that the age samples, lack of definition and lack of defined age group parameters varied dramatically across the course of the meta-analysis (Ullman & Straus, 2003).

Paulson, Coombs and Landsverk (1990) would posit that younger children were much less likely to demonstrate violence towards their parents, with 15 to 17 years being the noteworthy age of onset and peak perpetration. Kethineni (2004) would find evidence that further supported Paulson et al. (1990), her five-year study showed that 15 to 16 years were prominent in the onset and peak offending of CPV, whilst Walsh and Krienert (2007) would agree, they would expand the onset and peak year of offending to 14–17 years of age, as it was their determination that the onset for females would appear to be always slightly younger than that of their male counterparts.

### **Victim Characteristics**

Established literature (Nock & Kazdin, 2002; Kethineni, 2004) found that mothers were the victims of CPV in 81% (Kethineni, 2004) to 93.4% of cases (Nock & Kazdin, 2002), whilst figures offered by Nock and Kazdin (2002) would suggest that only 2.7% of CPV, from their 606 strong clinical sample, is directed towards a father. Cornell and Gelles (1982) reported that mothers, being the victims of their child's violence, were only slightly less likely to be the victim when compared with fathers (11% maternal victim, 8% paternal victim), however when the violence was considered to be 'severe' in its nature then mothers were five times more likely to be the victim. Walsh and Krienert (2007) found that mothers are most likely to be the target of CPV, further stipulating that, regardless of the nature of the offense, females were significantly more likely to perpetrate CPV towards their mothers. It may be that this disproportion of maternal abuse could be explained by the knowledge that mothers are much more likely to report any incident of CPV (Walsh & Krienert, 2008) when compared to figures of fathers who report, additionally these findings were based on a population sample that was high in single parent homes, where the majority of the single parents were mothers. Edenborough et al. (2008) reported that whilst mothers will report in greater numbers than fathers, the general experience of violence directed towards a parent, regardless of sex, was consistently dismissed leading to a loss of inclination in the victim to report any said offence.

At present, research offers conflicting results which suggest that fathers' experience of CPV victimisation may be disproportionate when considered alongside the experiences of mothers who are victim to this specific form of violence. Peek et al. (1985) reported that between five and eight percent of adolescent males would report CPV directed towards their father, with two to six percent reporting the identical level of offences towards their mother. This sample reported similarly when considering psychologically abusive factors, for example, financial and emotional manipulation, threats to self-harm, suicidal ideation or threats to physically harm the parental figure. What is unclear in the Peek et al. (1985) study is whether the violence was physical, psychological or a combination of CPV factors, neither did this study offer any theoretical explanation as to why, in this participatory group, CPV directed towards father was greater.

Across the spectrum of the four forms of aggression considered in this study, recording of CPV related incidents would demonstrate that female perpetrators would have a

tendency to be younger in age, when compared with their male counterparts, and would be considerably more likely to use a weapon, or household item as a weapon (Charles, 1986). In direct contrast with this, Brezina (1999) postulates that males are far more likely to commit a serious assault, wherein a weapon of one form or another is utilised, however the use of a weapon in these instances had a tendency to be used for purposes of intimidation as opposed to Charles (1986) where the weapon would be directly used by the females to cause physical harm. Conversely Nock and Kazdin (2002) would note that across the spectrum of aggression that less serious forms of CPV were most likely to be perpetrated than those that they considered to be more serious, whilst males would perpetrate more serious forms of physical violence, the tendency was found to be that females were much more likely to engage in aggression and CPV.

Whilst each of these studies offers a relevant base for purposes of review, it is difficult, given the variance on what each study considers to define and characterise CPV with any real level of clarity when considering characteristics of the offender, victim and offence. That being said, when CPV research in the UK is considered it can only be fair to regard its position as rudimentary in its evolution, however a small number of researchers are aiming to alleviate this concern, particularly more recently in research conducted by Wilcox (2012) and Miles and Condry (2014; 2015). Wilcox (2012) makes clear and definitive recognitions of difference between DV and CPV, although encouragingly she does give credence to the fact that they are comparable forms of IFV in both their demonstration of behaviour and impact upon the victim. Whilst recognising that both forms of IFV tend to involve female victims, Wilcox (2012) contends that recognition of CPV as a form of DV is the only way for services in the UK to develop any relevant services, whereas presently in the UK the situation is devoid of both appropriate intervention and support.

### **The Present Study**

The aim of the current study was to address gaps in the current available literature with regards to factors related to the characteristics of both victims and offenders, for example the potential for gender to play a role in perceptions of perpetration and victimisation. An element of difficulty exists when making attempts to estimate the extent of the violence directed from children towards their parents. The first problem that any potential researcher may encounter is in trying to define CPV. There is no singular agreed definition for this phenomenon across the current body of research and literature. This lack of definition

presents researchers with difficulties with regards to accurate recognition and comprehension of CPV when considering research, appropriate treatment practices, for both perpetrators and victims of CPV, or development of satisfactory laws to govern policy makers or legal bodies. For the purpose of this report the definition of CPV should be considered as an amalgam of those definitions most frequently referenced:

A malicious act by a child that fully intends to cause pain, physically or psychologically, to inflict financial abuse upon, or to gain power and control over a parent or parent with parental responsibilities

(Cottrell, 2001; Miles & Condry, 2015).

Care must be taken in consideration of CPV that there is an acknowledged and distinct difference between CPV and 'normal' familial conflict. It is accepted that adolescence can be a time of familial tension with regards to conflict between the need of the adolescent to achieve autonomy and independence within an environment that is dominated by parental authority (Edenborough et al., 2008; Pagani et al., 2009). CPV then should only be considered as a behavioural definition where there is an unequivocal demonstration that the behaviour of the child is troublesome beyond the boundaries of an accepted "norm" of adolescent behaviour (Tew & Nixon, 2010). Adoption of this perspective should deem further contemplation of CPV as being an abuse of power, from which the intent of the child is to coerce, dominate or constrain a parent. Based upon current and available literature the following hypotheses were determined for the purpose of this study: a) Mothers will be the primary victims of CPV experiencing all levels of measured violence more frequently than Fathers; b) Perceptions of CPV will be found to demonstrate that across two of the four levels of measured aggression, physical, and financial, there will be a statistical significance demonstrating that male adolescents will be the predominant perpetrator, whilst female adolescents will be more likely to perpetrate psychological and emotionally based CPV.

## **Method**

### **Design**

From this predetermined point of origin, this study will not only explore perceptions of violence by employing three hypothetical vignette based scenarios, but will seek to



discover what beliefs the participatory group have with regards to the characteristics of offenders and victims, that lead to the development of their present perceptions of the phenomena that is CPV. Further to this the vignettes were designed bearing in mind a number of factors from the literature review. Fifteen years would be the given perpetrator age, as this seems to be an accepted age for perpetration peaking, a range of drug and alcohol misuse was employed in the vignette characters and a variety of socio-economic settings were employed whilst family units were manipulated to reflect three potentially real family settings.

Moreover, as previously speculated, this research considered issues of offender and victim characterisation, prevalence of offenders' gender, the severity of CPV when directed towards a mother or a father and whether or not the participatory group perceived CPV as more violent when it is demonstrated through a measurement of all of the following four levels of aggression; physical, psychological, emotional and financial. These variables were then measured against the gender of the victim and the response data collated via three vignettes.

### **Participants**

The participants were gathered via opportunity sampling and the distribution of the questionnaire through Bristol Online Surveys, utilising social media as a promotional tool. In total the responses of 100 participants were recorded and measured. A gender split of the participants would show 66% females, 28% males, four gender fluid participants (4%), one pansexual participant (1%) and one transgender participant (1%). The overall mean age of the participating group was found to be 27.1 years of age, with ages ranging across all participants from 18 to 69 years. Of those who took part in the survey 63% were in a relationship, of this demographic 29% participants declared that they were either in a serious relationship or engaged, 29% declared that they were single, whilst 23% stated that they were married. Of those remaining 16% stated that they viewed their relationship as being casual, whilst 2% were widowed, with the 1% declaring as being divorced. As a group, the participants were asked whether they were parents, or had parental responsibilities; 37% responded that they were parents, whilst 63% replied that they had no parental responsibilities, further to this, participants were asked to include information about their ethnic background, 78% were White British, 7% stated that they were Black British, with 6% saying that they were Asian/British, 11% were of other ethnic backgrounds.

## **Materials**

The materials made available to the participants for the purpose of this study consisted of a questionnaire to complete having chosen a vignette, at random, to read and review. To enter the study all participants had to complete a consent form. Without agreeing to consent, no participant would be able to access any further stage of the study given the nature of the online programme employed to deliver the questionnaire. Further to this, participants were assured of full confidentiality at all times throughout the study

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics would suggest that, across the four considered subscales the participants were of the opinion that all levels of violence were more serious when aggression is directed from the male adolescent to the parental figure, the converse was found to be true where the direction of violence was from the female towards the parent. This was found to be the case regardless of the parent gender (see Table 1).

Table 1:

*Means (and Standard Deviations), and F values of Gender and Perceived Severity of Aggression Across the Measured Subscales*

		Female	Male	Non-Gender	Total <sup>a</sup>	F
Psychological	Mum	7.09 (2.17)	8.45 (1.87)	5.18 (2.47)	6.91 (2.54)	227.38**
	Dad	9.18 (3.50)	12.70 (3.29)	10.85 (3.94)	10.89 (3.83)	
Physical	Mum	13.56 (3.47)	15.42 (2.88)	14.06 (2.35)	14.34 (3.03)	.004
	Dad	13.06 (3.35)	15.76 (3.17)	14.28 (2.75)	14.35 (3.27)	
Emotional	Mum	5.18 (2.53)	7.27 (1.91)	5.00 (1.87)	5.81 (2.35)	42.93**
	Dad	3.01 (1.66)	5.42 (1.64)	4.61 (1.87)	4.64 (1.82)	
Financial	Mum	1.71 (1.19)	3.36 (1.39)	2.06 (1.12)	2.37 (1.42)	26.35**
	Dad	1.26 (.67)	2.30 (1.33)	1.94 (1.03)	1.83 (1.12)	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$ ; <sup>a</sup> Total M, SD and F values are relative to  $N=100$  participants, however for the purpose of this paper only female and male results will be reported

### Psychological Aggression

A 2 (perpetrator gender) x 2 (parent gender) Factorial ANOVA found a significant main effect for parental gender ( $F(1, 97) = 227.38, p < .001, \eta^2 = .70$ ); this was indicative of the perceptions of the participatory group when regarding the gender and direction of level of psychological aggression, in this instance the paternal figure was found to be the most likely victim. There was a significant main effect when considering the gender of the perpetrator ( $F(2, 97) = 9.82, p < .001, \eta^2 = .17$ ), this was indicative of the participants perception, suggesting that they believed a male parent would be more likely to be the victim of CPV. There was a

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significant interaction found for psychological aggression ( $F(2, 97) = 15.49, p < .001, \eta^2 = .24$ ). Further analysis using paired samples  $t$ -tests demonstrated the perceptions of psychological aggression were higher when directed towards paternal figures when compared with the maternal character: male perpetrator ( $t(33) = 5.17, p < .001$ ), female perpetrator ( $t(32) = 8.86, p < .001$ ).

### **Physical Aggression**

For physical aggression the main effect for parental gender was not significant ( $F(1, 96) = .004, p = .947, \eta^2 = .00$ ); but there was a significant main effect when considering the gender of the perpetrator ( $F(2, 96) = 5.93, p < .05, \eta^2 = .11$ ). Post Hoc testing revealed that, when comparing male and female, where physical aggression is the measured factor, that the participatory group felt that a male would be more likely to be physically violent, ( $MD = 2.28, p < .05$ ). This would suggest that a male aggressor, when compared to a female aggressor, is likely to be the perceived primary offender when considering physical aggression as the factor of measure. There was no significant interaction found for physical aggression ( $F(2, 96) = 1.006, p = .370, \eta^2 = .02$ ) across gender in this study,

### **Emotional Aggression**

For emotional aggression the main effect for gender of parent was significant ( $F(1, 97) = 42.93, p < .001, \eta^2 = .31$ ), it was perceived that a maternal figure would be the most likely victim of emotional aggression. The main effect of perpetrator gender was found to be significant ( $F(2, 96) = 10.70, p < .001, \eta^2 = .18$ ), Tukeys post hoc tests would reveal that, when comparing male and female perpetrators across the factor of emotional aggression, that the participatory group felt that a male would be more likely to be emotionally aggressive, ( $MD = 1.80, p < .001$ ). There was a significant main interaction found for emotional aggression ( $F(2, 97) = 5.56, p < .05, \eta^2 = .10$ ). Further analysis using paired samples  $t$ -tests demonstrated that perceptions of emotional aggression were higher for the maternal figure, when compared with paternal individuals: male ( $t(32) = 5.88, p < .001$ ), female ( $t(33) = 3.52, p < .001$ ). The mean difference was highest here in consideration of male perpetration, this research will posit that the participatory group firmly believe that a male aggressor will be more predominant, whilst being significantly more likely to have a maternal victim.

### Financial Aggression

For financial aggression, the main effect for parental gender was significant ( $F(1, 97) = 26.34, p < .001, \eta^2 = .21$ ); it was determined that financial aggression directed towards paternal figures was greater across both variables of perpetrator gender. There was a significant main effect when considering the gender of the perpetrator ( $F(2, 97) = 14.99, p < .001, \eta^2 = .24$ ), this was an indication of the participant group perception when they were asked to consider who was more likely to be a victim of financial aggression. Tukeys testing would reveal, when comparing male and female perpetrators, that there was a significant result, this being indicative of the participating group belief that a male would be more financially aggressive, ( $MD = 1.35, p < .001$ ). There was a significant main interaction found for financial aggression ( $F(2.00, 97.00) = 6.78, p < .05, \eta^2 = .123$ ). Further Post Hoc analysis using paired samples  $t$ -tests would significantly demonstrate that the participatory group perceived that there was a significant difference in perceptions of financial aggression for mum versus dad; male perpetrator ( $t(32) = 4.18, p < .001$ ), female perpetrator ( $t(33) = 2.60, p < .05$ ). The mean difference was higher here when participants were clear in their opinion that a male would be the most likely offender across victim gender.

### Discussion

The objectives of the present study were to explore and analyse perceptions of the role of gender differences between perpetrators of CPV (male vs. female) and the victims (mother vs. father) across four measured levels of aggression (psychological, physical, emotional and financial) to determine whether this participatory group viewed the role of the perpetrators gender, and that of the victim, as being determinate of the likelihood of victimisation and offense perpetration. Overall the results for psychological aggression in the study were significant when, highlighting the participant perception that a paternal figure is most likely to be the victim of a male aggressor. When considering current literature, males being the predominant offenders is consistent with research into gender of offenders in CPV (Harbin & Madden, 1979; Cochran, 1994; Laurent & Derry, 1999), however this result finds itself in antithesis with the majority of CPV research which promotes maternal figures as being the predominant victims of psychological aggression (Cottrell, 2001; Jackson, 2003; Ullman & Straus, 2003). This is a result of some importance as it challenges established ideologies, based in the feminist research method, of male perpetration and female victimology (Cottrell & McElhone, G. (2017) Child to parent violence: An analysis of the perceptions of perpetrator and victim gender when considering offending and victimisation. *Journal of Applied Psychology and Social Science*, 3 (1), 52-73

& Monk, 2004; Howard & Rottem, 2008; Edenborough et al., 2008) not only in CPV but across the larger scale of IFV (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; 2004).

With regards to the original hypotheses of this research these results are interestingly contradictory. Measured perceptions of CPV found that mothers were not the predominant victim, and males were found to significantly be the prevalent offenders. This could be, based on the perceptions of this group and their accrued results, a suggestion of public opinion beginning to take a recognisable shift away from a more traditionally recognised patriarchal view of CPV. A view wherein psychological aggression being the measured factor, reinforcing the fact that a large percentage of CPV research is dated: being reflective of its time more so than a contemporary view. The results for physical aggression were not significant, however further review of main effects would demonstrate that the group perceived that a male would be the most likely perpetrator of physical aggression to both maternal and paternal figures. These results are somewhat concurrent with the present body of established research (Jackson, 2003; Tew & Nixon, 2010; Ibabe & Jaureguizar, 2013)..

There is partial congruence between the original hypotheses and the acquired results. As hypothesised, males were perceived to be considerably more physically aggressive towards a maternal figure than a daughter, however the margins between violence across genders and perceptions of potential violence towards parents, regardless of victim gender was relatively small. The author would suggest that perception potential for male physical aggression is a reflection on societal views of violence with a basis in how violence is portrayed in the media. Further to this the author would posit that patriarchal ideologies still have a strong influence on how people view perpetrator likelihood, directions and severity of violence (Graham-Kevan, 2009; Walker, 2013) but also how support for victims of IFV are portrayed: predominant female victims of violence that is male in its origin. The findings of this study demonstrate that when regarding emotional levels of aggression there was significance in effect and interaction. The participating group were of the perception that parental gender was likely to play a role in victimisation, demonstrating that they believed that mothers would be most likely to be victims of this form of aggression. This is congruent with the hypothetical stance of the study in that mothers would be most likely to be victim to this form of aggression, and concurrent with published research (Nock & Kazdin, 2002; Kethineni, 2004; Walsh & Krienert, 2007).

Whilst contrary to the hypotheses of the study and present research, the participants in this study determined that males would be the most likely perpetrators of emotional aggression. This result may not be entirely unexpected as it is a further indicator of societal perceptions, belief and misconception when considering directions of and levels of aggression, further highlighting a need for considered study that is reflective and based in empirically acquired data and evidence. Across the considerations of gender there was a significant difference in perceptions of financial aggression when measuring maternal victims against paternal victims, and when studying perceived likelihoods of perpetrator gender. Male perpetrators were perceived by the group as being the most likely of offenders, with their mother being the perceived prominent victims. As with other aspects of this study the group taking part in the study, and in direct correlation with the hypotheses of the study, confirmed the research first hypothesis, this result was consistent with current and available CPV literature, (Peek et al., 1985; Edenborough et al., 2008; Walsh & Krienert, 2008) however this volunteer group have markedly strong perceptions on the predominance of male offending, reflective of ideologies and views that would suggest violence is gendered in its nature. The results of this research show that perceptions of CPV are reflective of an established ideological stance wherein the main offender, regardless of aggression form, is likely to be male, whilst the predominant victim will always be male.

### **Limitations**

In its original design this study was proposed as being mixed in its method. A mixed method would have allowed the research to conduct questions of both a quantitative nature whilst qualitative exploration would allow participants to deliver in detail their motivation for answering their questionnaire in the manner that they had (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Zhang, 2009). It was the belief of the researcher that this method of design would allow this study to draw relevant and modern comparison of two forms of data where none appears evident in previous research; by combining methodologies the research would provide validation of its findings by overcoming the limitations in method of previous studies (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). It quickly became evident that this was not feasible in that the study would not have served justice to the qualitative method (Braun & Clarke, 2006), thereby detracting from the strength and quality of the acquired qualitative data. To this ends the study was reduced to its quantitative components only.

The use of vignettes allowed for a safe and appropriate exploration of perceptions of CPV, given the social sensitivity that surrounds IFV as a whole. It could be suggested that the study lacks in ecological validity given that participants were offering responses to theoretical situations however given the tendency for CPV to be undisclosed in general, these situations were a fair reflection of a cross section of real family scenes wherein established literature suggests CPV is prominent. The reliance on volunteer participation may be somewhat problematic in that it is suggested that volunteers differ in their motivation for undertaking studies (Krumpal, 2013), mainly that they have a greater need for approval, whilst responding in the most socially desired manner, again potentially lessening the strength of any validity in the context of this study, however as each participant had access to only one vignette there is a clear positive in that the study reduces any possibilities it may have of succumbing to a prevalence of demand characteristics. Future study, as suggested, shall utilise qualitative methods to combat these concerns and offer more validity to the study. Additionally a non-gendered perpetrator could be employed to attempt to begin to determine where, societal views, or stereotypes begin to form when offering consideration to CPV as a whole, not as a gendered action.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of the current study was to address gaps in the current available literature with regards to the characteristics of both victims and offenders of CPV, for example the potential for gender to play a role in perceptions of perpetration and victimisation. The results for this study met partially with the hypotheses, in that the male figure was perceived to be the most likely to perpetrate violence across levels of physical and financial aggression. However results were in contrast to the theory that violence directed from the female character would be perceived as being the most likely to perpetrate aggression across measures of psychological and emotional aggression, findings would demonstrate that there was a clear belief that the male would be considered to be the most violent across these two factors. Mothers were only found to be the most likely victims across financial and emotional measures. With the key focus being the study of perceptions of gender role in perpetration and victimisation, there was a hope that this research would lend itself to a modern conceptualisation of CPV. It is recognised through the results of this study, that perceptions of CPV and IPV demonstrate considerable similarities, thus CPV should be afforded its rightful and relevant place at the table of discourse when considering CPV and its



place within the framework of IFV, maybe more importantly where it rests within the considerations of the policy makers for IFV phenomena.

The author would posit that there is a responsibility on policy makers to distance themselves from traditional views of offender and victim. To allow for effective treatment programmes to be developed, for both offender, victim and others within the family unit, there has to be a distinguished acceptance that ensures there can be no categorization of perpetrator through means of their gender, socio-economic status or other negligent construction of characteristic equating to any individual likelihood and propensity to offend. CPV is an almost hidden phenomena, to resolve this the grossly dated characterisations of offenders must in the first instance be removed to ensure violence is viewed as the primary problem, not gender of offender.

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