

<b>Institution:</b> University of Bristol
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 22 – Social Work and Social Policy
<b>Title of case study:</b> Bristol research transforming national understanding of, and response to, violence in young people's intimate relationships
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Research conducted in the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol from 2006 inspired the Government to commission a series of carefully targeted awareness campaigns on sexual coercion and violence in teenage relationships. These campaigns ran between 2010 and 2013 and reached millions of young people. The research has also underpinned developments in government policy as well as a range of practical interventions by agencies in England and Scotland. In addition, the extensive media coverage of the research has substantially increased public awareness of teenage partner violence and related issues.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The University of Bristol's research on violence in teenage relationships was conducted by Ms Christine Barter (Senior Research Fellow 2005-present), Professor David Berridge (Professor 2005-present), Dr Melanie McCarry (Research Associate/Lecturer 2004-2013), Ms Marsha Wood (Research Associate 2003-present) and Ms Kathy Evans (Research Associate 2006-2009).</p> <p>The initial research project undertaken at Bristol between 2006 and 2009 [1, 6] on partner exploitation and violence in teenage relationships was the first large-scale UK research to address this form of intimate violence. The findings clearly show that physical, sexual and emotional forms of teenage partner violence constitute a major child welfare issue. The work also challenges some of the assumptions held in US 'dating' violence research, especially in relation to the impact of gender on experiences of intimate violence in young relationships.</p> <p>The research used two approaches. A confidential survey was completed by 1,350 people aged between 13 and 17 years from eight schools in England, Scotland and Wales. In-depth interviews were undertaken with 91 young people.</p> <p><i>Main findings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% of girls and 18% of boys reported that they had experienced some form of physical partner violence.</li> <li>• Nearly 75% of girls and 50% of boys reported that they had experienced emotional partner violence, most often controlling behaviours.</li> <li>• One in three girls and 16% of boys reported sexual partner violence.</li> <li>• The majority of girls, but only a minority of boys, reported that the violence had adversely affected their welfare.</li> <li>• Many of the girls reported that the violence constituted a 'normal', though unwelcome, aspect of relationships.</li> <li>• The vast majority of young people had not spoken to an adult about the violence. Those who sought help went to peers.</li> <li>• Factors that influenced whether young people experienced this kind of violence included gender, age, having a 'much older partner', domestic violence and peer groups which used intimidation.</li> </ul> <p>A second research project [3, 7] undertaken between 2009 and 2010 focused on disadvantaged young people and partner violence. It was the first UK research to examine this issue. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 44 boys and 38 girls aged between 13 and 18 years via a range of agencies and organisations working with disadvantaged young people in south-west England.</p> <p><i>Main findings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disadvantaged young people reported greater levels of violence in their relationships, in respect of both frequency and severity, compared to young people in the general population.</li> <li>• Most participants felt that this was a normal aspect of teenage relationships.</li> </ul>

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- Disadvantaged girls reported greater levels of negative impact on their welfare than boys.
- Most young people interviewed had some form of professional support, but only a minority had told an adult about the violence. Most felt adults would not be interested or would not respond appropriately.
- Two groups were particularly vulnerable: teenage mothers and young people who had been in care.

The research has been widely disseminated – see references 2, 4 and 5 in section 3.

### 3. References to the research:

#### Outputs

- [1] Barter, C., McCarry, M., Berridge, D. and Evans, K. (2009) *Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships*, London: NSPCC.  
[http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/partner\\_exploitation\\_and\\_violence\\_report\\_wdf70129.pdf](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/partner_exploitation_and_violence_report_wdf70129.pdf)
- [2] Barter, C. (2009) In the Name of Love: Partner Abuse and Violence in Teenage Relationships. *British Journal of Social Work*, **39**, (2), pp. 211-233. DOI: 10.1093/bjsw/bcm127
- [3] Wood, M., Barter, C. and Berridge, D. (2010) '*Standing on my own two feet*': *Disadvantaged Teenagers, Intimate Partner Violence and Coercive Control*, London, NSPCC.  
[http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/standing\\_own\\_two\\_feet\\_PDF\\_wdf84557.pdf](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/standing_own_two_feet_PDF_wdf84557.pdf)
- [4] Barter, C. (2011) A Thoroughly Gendered Affair: Teenage Partner Violence and Exploitation and Violence, in Barter, C. and Berridge, D. eds (2011) *Children Behaving Badly? Peer Violence between Children and Young People*. Chichester: Wiley. DOI: 10.1002/9780470976586
- [5] Barter, C. and McCarry, M. (2013) Love, Power and Control: Girls' Experiences of Relationship Exploitation and Violence, in Lombard, N. and McMillan, L. (eds) *Research Highlights in Social Work (56): Violence Against Women*, Jessica Kingsley ISBN: 9781849051323, (available on request).

#### Grants

- [6] C. Barter (2006-2009) Safeguarding young people from exploitation and violence in their dating relationships, The Big Lottery Grant/NSPCC, £174,000.
- [7] C. Barter (2009-2010) Disadvantaged young people and partner violence, NSPCC, £68,000.

### 4. Details of the impact

#### Awareness-raising

The Government directly responded to the first research findings [1] by commissioning a £1.8 million public awareness media campaign on the issue of teenage partner violence. Barter and Berridge acted as expert consultants on the campaign, which ran in February 2010. It included a commissioned short film on teenage relationship abuse which was shown on all major terrestrial and cable TV channels and in cinemas. Awareness-raising advertisements were also placed in a range of teenage magazines and posted in public toilets and schools. A website – 'this is abuse' – was launched, aimed at raising awareness of this issue for 13 to 19 year-olds. The current Government repeated the campaign (£1.5 million) in 2011-2012 and commissioned a new awareness campaign on teenage sexual violence which ran in 2012 and 2013. The total governmental financial commitment to raising awareness around this issue is £4.5 million to date. Barter has acted as an expert consultant on all the campaigns. A quote from the Home Office lead in this area directly acknowledges the research findings' impact:

"In 2009 Home Office Communication and Violent Crime Unit colleagues were working together to consider the need for a Domestic Violence campaign. The NSPCC research 'Teen partner violence' published in 2009 backed up the Home Office findings but also found that the attitudes of teenagers were shockingly tolerant of violence in relationships but that many of them had also experienced violence themselves. It was *these revealing findings that influenced the Home Office to target teenagers about relationship abuse* with the intention of challenging these attitudes and to engage and educate teens before controlling, violent or coercive behaviours became entrenched. The Home Office contacted Dr Christine Barter from Bristol University... to agree to work together to develop a longer term X-Government campaign strategy to this end. The campaign has now been running for 4 years and a Teen Rape prevention campaign was also developed alongside. Dr

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Barter has consulted with the Home Office on these two campaigns since 2009 and continues to do so" [a].

The Home Office evaluation [b] of the first 'this is abuse' campaign in 2011 showed it reached 2.9 million young people – equating to 60% of the 13 to 19 year-old target group. The online advertisements were displayed 120 million times and over 397,000 young people clicked on the online adverts to access information. Click-through to campaign content from online ads was very high at 33%. The parents' advertisements reached 10.2 million people, 47% of the target audience. Over 90% of young people polled felt the campaign had made them think about the issue and/or encouraged them to challenge abuse in their own or friends' relationships. The domestic violence charity Refuge noticed an increase in the number of calls from young women from the time the campaign started (increasing from an average of 46 per week pre-campaign to 71 per week in the period 15 February to 31 March 2010). Anecdotally, during this time the number of calls to the charity Respect rose and Women's Aid reported a substantial increase in traffic on their 'Hideout' message board aimed at young people.

The Home Office evaluation of the second campaign [c] showed that 540,000 web users accessed further information or help during the 2012 activity, providing evidence that - according to the Home Office assessment - 'the campaign has been effective in delivering intermediate behavioural change'. The website had more hits than any other domestic violence campaign. In 2012, Yahoo had 1,286 question threads relating to the campaign and associated issues.

**Policy**

The previous Government's review on the sexualisation of girls and women [d] drew heavily on the research. A section was included specifically on teenage partner violence (chapter 7) and highlighted the research findings and their importance. Barter, who gave evidence to the review, was directly quoted in the report. A statement from the Home Office lead explains the direct impact of the research findings: "In 2009, I was the Home Office policy lead on the Sexualisation of Young People Review, conducted by Dr Linda Papadopoulos. As part of the research for this review I became aware of the research that the NSPCC (Barter et al 2009) had commissioned on the impact of teenage relationship abuse. Following evidence hearing sessions to discuss this research, a recommendation was...included in the government strategy, *Together we can end violence against women and girls* (2009). The recommendation was to run a campaign aimed at challenging the attitudes and perceptions that lead to violence within teenage relationships as the first phase in a broader cross-government communications strategy/campaign" [e].

In response, the Department for Children, Schools and Families Violence against Women and Girls Advisory Group Recommendations and Strategy [f] and Response [g] clearly identified teenage relationship violence as a priority.

Keir Starmer QC [h], Director of Public Prosecutions, in a speech on the Crown Prosecution Service and domestic violence, quoted the research to highlight the importance of recognising the problem of intimate violence in young people's relationships. In 2012, the age at which domestic violence can be officially recorded by the Police was reduced from 18 to 16 years old. The research findings were widely referenced in the accompanying consultation [i].

**Practice**

The Scottish Government commissioned the film *Crush* in response to the research findings. The film has been shown in schools in Scotland since January 2011, targeting 16 to 18 year-olds. Since August 2011 Domestic Abuse Resources and Training for Schools in Scotland (DARTSS) has been including the film in a teaching pack as part of an educational programme for all Scottish schools. Shona Bruce from the Scottish Government, who oversaw all aspects of the programme, stated:

"In the Reduce Abuse Project we have used both research reports [1, 3], to influence practice. We carry out work with staff and young people to challenge attitudes and address violence against women, to improve outcomes for local children and young people. We have built the research findings into training of teachers and multi-agency staff on teen relationship abuse, and were

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recently delivering training to staff in the Looked After and Accommodated Children's (LAAC) field, and were able to use findings from '*Standing on my own two feet*' [3] to raise awareness of issues specific to disadvantaged young people." [j]

A wide range of regional initiatives have been developed in response to the research. For example, in Bristol the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum manual has been rewritten in the light of the research projects and the Domestic Violence Strategy has identified violence in teenage relationships as a policy and practice priority. Barter has worked alongside a number of young people's organisations to develop resources on the issue.

**Media**

The research findings have generated significant media interest. The initial findings (1/9/2009-3/09/2009) were widely reported. There were articles in five tabloids (average coverage 365 words) and four broadsheets (average coverage 455 words) – the total number of 'first' readerships for the national news outlets was 6,850,000. 36 national and international media websites ran the story, and BBC Online News reported it as the 'most read' story. Four international news agencies covered the story. Six national television channels aired it, with a total of 18 repeated news items/bulletins. 12 national radio stations broadcast a total of 42 related news bulletins. In addition, there was regional coverage by 47 local radio stations and 79 local newspapers. Barter has undertaken a wide range of radio interviews, including three BBC Radio 4 half-hour interviews aimed at raising awareness of the issue for parents and professionals.

There has been substantial additional media coverage following the second report, and the research has been quoted in more than ten subsequent national press stories.

In terms of the wider media impact, Barter acted as a consultant for the BBC series *Casualty* - which included a four-episode story on a teenage girl's abusive relationship with her boyfriend - and for a BBC3 and BBC Education training pack on teenage partner violence in 2012 aimed at young people. She is currently advising on a one-hour film for the BBC aimed at raising young people's awareness of the problem. She is also acting as a consultant for the Home Office awareness unit, which is currently preparing new resources to accompany the next campaign planned for 2013. This work includes developing a storyline for the TV soap opera *Hollyoaks*.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- [a] Personal email correspondence: Home Office statements of impact April 2013.
- [b] Personal email correspondence: Home Office Evaluation of the 'This is Abuse' campaign. 17 August 2011
- [c] Personal email correspondence: Home Office Evaluation of the second campaign 2012.
- [d] Papadopoulos, L (2011) *Sexualisation of Young People Review*, Home Office.  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/http://homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Sexualisation-of-young-people2835.pdf?view=Binary>
- [e] Personal email correspondence: Home Office statements of impact April 2013.
- [f] Department for Children, Schools and Families (2010a) *Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Advisory Group final report and recommendations*.
- [g] Department for Children, Schools and Families, (2010) *Response to the Violence against Women and Girls Advisory Group's Recommendations*.
- [h] Keir Starmer QC, (12/04/2011) [http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/articles/domestic\\_violence\\_-\\_the\\_facts\\_the\\_issues\\_the\\_future/](http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/articles/domestic_violence_-_the_facts_the_issues_the_future/)
- [i] Cross-Governmental Definition of Domestic Violence: A Consultation, Summary of Responses (2012), Home Office.  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/157800/domestic-violence-definition.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/157800/domestic-violence-definition.pdf)
- [j] Personal email correspondence: 11 January 2012.