

Dating Violence in Young Adult Intimate Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Research on intimate partner violence focuses predominantly on the adult population in South Africa; however, intimate partner violence also affects young adults in dating relationships. The purpose of this research was to explore how young adults in the South African context understand dating violence. Three focus groups were conducted with a total of 18 students between the ages of 18 and 25 who were recruited through the distribution of posters and flyers advertising the study at the University of Cape Town. An open-ended discussion in response to a short video clip about an incident of dating violence was facilitated by the researcher. Thematic analysis was used to identify 4 categories of themes in participants' discussion of dating violence: *definitions of dating violence* ('ambivalent definitions;' 'culturally (un)acceptable'); *justifications for violence* ('you've learned that behaviour;' 'they don't know what they're doing;' 'some sort of problem within themselves'); *blame* ('what did she do to deserve that?;' 'we just get in too much like 'I love this guy';' 'sort things in a different way rather than punching') and *silence at UCT* ('it's very hush-hush'). Attention to students' construction of dating violence indicates opportunities for intervention. This study contributes towards research on dating violence in the following ways: (a) by producing knowledge about intimate partner violence in the young adult population (b) by producing research specific to the South African context (c) by identifying the limitations of participants' definitions of dating violence so that these can be considered in the development of more effective measures and prevention programmes (d) by attempting to understand the logic used by students to justify men's use of violence and to blame women for their victimisation, which serves to strengthen patriarchal relations and lastly (e) by identifying the need to address silence around dating violence at UCT.

Key words: dating violence, focus groups, young adults, students, thematic analysis

Dating is usually seen as a relationship filled with fun and romance but for many young adults it is an experience filled with fear and pain because of the reality of dating violence. The issue of dating violence has reached global proportions with 29% of university students in an international sample physically assaulting a dating partner each year and 1 in 11 American adolescents reporting physical abuse in a dating relationship each year (Black, Noonan, Legg, Eaton & Breiding, 2006; Straus, 2004).

Research on intimate partner violence in South Africa focuses predominantly on the adult population (Abrahams Jewkes, Hoffman, & Laubsher, 2004; Gass, Stein, Williams, & Seedat, 2010; Ludsin & Vetten, 2005; Mathews, Abrahams, Jewkes, Martin, & Vetten, 2008; Swaminathan, 2008). The pervasiveness of intimate partner violence in the general population of women in South Africa is indicated by the fact that 50% of murdered women were killed by their intimate partners, a rate six times the global average (Mathews et al., 2008). However, people are often unaware that intimate partner violence also affects those in dating relationships (Jewkes, Vundule, Maforah, & Jordaan, 2001). In fact, Straus (2004) found a higher rate of physical assault in dating couples than married couples in an international sample.

Current international literature on dating violence focuses predominantly on the adolescent population (Chase Treboux & O'Leary, 2002; Flisher, Myer, Me`rais, Lombard, & Reddy, 2007; Gomez, 2011; Jewkes et al., 2001; McCarry, 2009; Sathiparsad, 2005; Silverman, McCauley, Decker, Miller, Reed, & Raj, 2011; Spriggs, Halpern, Herring, & Schoenbach, 2009; Swart, Seedat, Stevens, & Ricardo, 2002; Wekerle & Tanaka, 2010; Wiklund, Malmgren-Olsson, Bengs, & Ohman, 2010). Research has indicated that marriage happens relatively late in South Africa, with women getting married at a mean age of 28 years (Jewkes, Morrell, & Christofides, 2009). Due to this trend, dating relationships proceed into young adulthood and research on dating violence in this age-group is relevant. Therefore, this research, which explores how dating violence is constructed by participants from the young adult population (between the ages of 18 and 25 years), is an important step towards addressing this pertinent problem in South Africa.

Defining Dating Violence

Intimate partner violence can be understood as a form of coercive control because, “essentially, control is the goal and the individual acts of abuse and violence is the means” (Ludsin & Vetten, 2005, p. 17). In South Africa, the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998

captures the multi-faceted nature of abuse through its broad definition of domestic violence which includes physical, sexual, economic, emotional, psychological and verbal abuse and any other abusive or controlling behaviour aimed at harming the victim (Ludsin & Vetten, 2005). Intimate partner violence that occurs in the context of a heterosexual dating relationship will be referred to as ‘dating violence’. Dating violence may occur in any form of romantic relationship, ranging from a long-term non-marital relationship to a single date (Kettrey & Emery, 2010).

However, the definition and measurement of dating violence varies across studies and sexual, verbal and emotional abuse is often excluded (Lewis & Fremouw, 2001; Werkerle & Tanaka, 2010). The way in which dating violence is understood determines how perpetrators and victims are conceptualized, how it is studied and addressed (McCarry, 2009). Misunderstandings regarding what constitutes dating violence might contribute to the fact that intimate partner violence is one of the most under-reported crimes in South Africa (Ludsin & Vetten, 2005). The measurement and targeting of dating violence can become more accurate by taking young adults’ definitions into account.

A Feminist Perspective on Dating Violence

Feminist theorists understand intimate partner violence in terms of power relations and gender inequality (Yllö & Bograd, 1988). These theorists emphasize the social construction of masculinity and femininity in explaining violence against women (Prospero, 2007). Gender is often understood in terms of a discourse of the social norm because it is couched in a set of beliefs, expectations and assumptions dictating how ‘normal’ men and women *should* behave (Pérez-Jiménez, Cunningham, Serrano-García, & Ortiz-Torres, 2007). Gender is often made out to be essential through its construction as natural, innate and stable and, in this way; masculinity and femininity are given authority (Kaminer & Dixon, 1995). However, social constructionists argue that gender is not a fixed dimension of personality but a flexible and contextual construct which is reproduced socially, culturally and historically (Durrheim, 1997). The particular meanings and definitions of masculinity and femininity in a community are shaped by the broader relations of power in that particular community (Boonzaier, 2006). Thus, dating violence, and a cultural tolerance of male aggression and dominance and female passivity and subordination, can be seen as a product of patriarchy in which men are given more power than women in the public and private domains (McCarry, 2009).

The South African Context

Most of the current literature on dating violence is from research located in the United States of America (Gomez, 2011; Graves, Sechrist, White, & Paradise, 2005; McCarry, 2009; McDonnell, Ott, & Mitchell, 2010; Pérez-Jiménez et al., 2007; Próspero, 2007; Raj, Santana, La Marche, Amaro, Cranston, & Silverman, 2006; Santana, Raj, Decker, La Marche, & Silverman, 2006; Silverman et al., 2011; Spriggs et al., 2009; Totten, 2003; Wekerle & Tanaka, 2011; Whitaker, Haileyesus, Swahn, & Saltzman, 2007) and Europe (Valls, Puigvert, & Duque, 2008; Wiklund et al., 2010). More research is needed in the South African context because its unique and violent political history has created an extremely patriarchal society in which male violence is seen as a primary tool of maintaining power (Jewkes et al., 2001).

Very few studies focused directly on South African students' views on dating violence. In two qualitative studies with student samples, focus groups were conducted around topics related to sexual violence, and analysed using discourse analysis (Harris, Lea, & Foster, 1995; Shefer, Strebel, & Foster, 2000). Shefer and colleagues (2000) explored how black male and female psychology students between the ages of 18 and 30 from the University of the Western Cape constructed the negotiation and practice of sex in heterosexual relationships. In addition, Shefer and colleagues (2000) conducted free-association exercises which revealed that sexual intimacy was most commonly associated with experiences of sexual coercion or violence. Discourses of violence and power that were identified and sexual violence against women was perceived to be widespread (Shefer et al., 2000). Harris and colleagues (1995) explored the way in which male UCT students between the ages of 18 and 33 constructed gender and gender interaction. Firstly the discourse of gender as social norm was identified (Harris et al., 1995). In this discourse, gender was framed as socially derived, normative, acceptable and appropriate (Harris et al., 1995). Secondly, a discourse of gender as natural was identified (Harris et al., 1995). In this discourse, the differences between men and women constructed as essential, innate, universal, stable and immutable (Harris et al., 1995). These discourses had been identified in a previous study of white ex-UCT students' discussions of masculinity and drinking (Kaminer & Dixon, 1995). In their subsequent focus on gender interactions, Harris and colleagues (1995) point out how the same understanding of gender is used by men to justify male sexual aggression against women, although on the surface these men appear to be condemning the concept. Indeed, these same discourses were used by students in the study of

Shefer and colleagues (2000) to legitimise male sexual violence against women, undermine women and construct masculinity as superior to femininity. Harris and colleagues (1995) suggest that it is particularly worrying that students and graduates, who are usually considered progressive, hold such patriarchal views. Significantly, in the study of Shefer and colleagues (2000), some, - mainly female - students were critical of male power and dominance in sexual intimacy and, similarly, in the study of Harris and colleagues (1995), some of their all-male sample used explanations of male aggression that challenged the status quo were identified as a 'progressive discourse'.

Several studies conducted with adolescents and young adults in townships and rural settings in South Africa, indicate that students' experiences conform to those of the majority of young South African women found in local studies. Wood, Maforah and Jewkes, (1998) conducted semi-structured interviews with a sample of Xhosa-speaking pregnant women between the ages of 14 and 18 from a township in Cape Town. This study revealed that young women's dating relationships were dominated by male sexual violence and coercion (Wood et al., 1998). Quantitative studies reveal similar trends. Swart and colleagues (2002) found that 52.4% of the females and 49.8% of the males in a large sample of school-going adolescents from a township in Johannesburg reported involvement in a physically violent dating relationship. Similarly, dating violence was prevalent in about half of a sample of adolescents from townships in Cape Town (Wong, Huang, DiGangi, Thompson, & Smith 2008). In a sample of school-going adolescents from Cape Town, 20.7% reported perpetrating violence in a dating relationship (Flisher et al., 2007). Although these prevalence rates vary across settings, the considerable levels of dating violence in South Africa may exceed those in North America and Europe (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999).

Similarly to the findings amongst student samples, interviews with young adults between the ages of 14 and 25 from a township in the Eastern Cape revealed that males, unlike females, are naturally violent, promiscuous, unable to control their sexual arousal in dating relationships and therefore their perpetration of dating violence was justified, accepted and even respected (Wood, Lambert, & Jewkes, 2008). This essentialist view of gender was shared by male adolescents in rural Kwa-Zulu Natal (Sathiparsad, 2005). Female adolescents from a township in Cape Town normalised dating violence to such an extent that they see it as "a form of communication in everyday life" (Wood et al., 1998, p. 63). Male partners were perceived to be entitled to sex and silence and submission were perceived to be the appropriate response of women (Wood et al., 1998). Across studies, exerting control over

women through violence was constructed as an expression of men's love, discipline, care, and emotional involvement in the relationship (Sathiparsad, 2005; Swart et al., 2002; Wood et al., 2008, Wood et al., 1998).

The acceptance of male violence and dominance and female subordination in dating relationships as normal in patriarchal society has been identified as a primary predictor of dating violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Swart et al., 2002; Totten, 2003). Therefore the present study is important so that students' construction of gender along patriarchal lines can be identified and challenged. The literature reviewed has focused predominantly on the adolescent population in townships and rural areas and sexual violence in heterosexual relationships. This study seeks to focus on young adult students and how they might understand the broader topic of dating violence.

Rationale for Research

Various gaps in the literature on dating violence have been identified. Firstly, research on intimate partner violence has neglected the young adult population in South Africa. Secondly, definitions vary across studies and young adults' understanding of what dating violence is, needs to inform the development of measurements and prevention programmes. Thirdly, from a feminist perspective, young adults' adherence to patriarchal masculinity and femininity is the primary cause of dating violence, and thus their views and the way in which they are constructed may present an important angle from which to research this phenomenon. Indeed, researchers have identified the power relations within abusive dating relationships as areas that require further research (Swart et al., 2002; Jewkes et al., 2001). Fourthly, research specific to the South African context is needed as current research on dating violence is largely located internationally. Lastly, very few studies have been done on South African university students' views on dating violence, which shows that there is a gap that can be filled by the proposed research.

Aim of Research

This research aims to explore the themes that emerge when students collectively construct their views, opinions, definitions and explanations of dating violence in focus group discussions, when considering the broad topic of dating violence and the dynamics at play between young adult males and females in dating relationships.

This broad research question will be explored: How do students at the University of Cape Town collectively construct meanings about what constitutes dating violence?

Method and Design

Qualitative research

Qualitative research is concerned with interpreting the meanings of human experience (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006). This study employed a qualitative design because participant-led methods were considered well suited to the purposes of this study to understand participant-generated meanings (Willig, 2001). Qualitative methods are characteristically flexible and were appropriate for addressing the open-ended research question (Willig, 2001). Qualitative methods were also used because they are appropriate for research done from a feminist theoretical perspective as they are more contextual, naturalistic and participant-focused than quantitative methods (Wilkinson, 1999). From a feminist perspective, focus groups were arguably the most suitable data collection method for an exploration of students' views on dating violence.

Focus groups

In focus groups the balance of power and control is shifted toward the participants as precedence is given to their agendas (Wilkinson, 1999). This is particularly useful for exploratory research because unanticipated areas of interest can be discovered (Frith, 2000). According to feminist theory, phenomena such as dating violence are socially constructed and focus groups are ideal because they provide a social context in which the group construction of meaning can be studied while also producing a more varied and fully articulated account (Wilkinson, 1998). Focus groups draw on people's experiences of everyday conversation (Wilkinson, 1999). This was ideal for the purposes of tapping into the language commonly used by students to gain insight into how they perceive dating violence. Focus groups are particularly effective for the discussion of high-involvement topics (Överlien, 2005). The group setting, in which agreement and consensus occurs amongst those with similar experiences, creates an empathic and supportive environment, which enhances the disclosure of opinions on sensitive topics (Frith, 2000). Furthermore, the focus group method is less intrusive than a traditional interview because participants can determine the extent of their personal contribution to the study (Överlien, 2005).

Three focus groups took place in the privacy of a room in the psychology department for a period of 50 minutes each. A vignette in the form of a short video clip about a celebrity incident of dating violence was used to gain participants interest, encourage them to feel more comfortable to express their views without having to refer to personal experiences. An

open-ended discussion was facilitated by the researcher and co-facilitated by a PhD student. The same broad questions were used for each group (see Appendix A). A voice recorder was used to record the discussions.

Participants and recruitment

Students were recruited from the University of Cape Town (UCT) through the distribution of posters and flyers advertising the study on upper campus (see Appendix B). This ensured that participation was voluntary and that any students interested in the topic participated, regardless of race, culture or class (see demographics table in Appendix C). The first focus group was attended by 4 students (3 male, 1 female), the second by 8 female students and the third by 6 students (4 male, 2 female). The sample consisted of 14 black students, 3 white students and 1 "Coloured" student. Each participant received a R25 *Steers* voucher as a token of appreciation.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent. Participants voluntarily chose to participate in the study and in this way were giving their own autonomous consent. Before the focus groups began, consent forms (Appendix D) were explained and questions were addressed.

Confidentiality. Participants were informed that voice recordings were only accessible to the researchers and the results of the study would be written up, with their anonymity retained through the assignment of pseudonyms, in the form of an honours project, which may be published. They also agreed not to share any information divulged by others.

Risks for participants. Participants may reveal more highly personal information than intended and might later regret it, especially if a participant has a relationship with another participant outside of the focus group (Smith, 1995). Therefore, facilitators emphasised that participants were under no obligation to share personal information. Furthermore, the non-individual setting of the focus group made it relatively easy for participants to remain silent if the discussion delved into topics too sensitive for them (Frith, 2000).

Debriefing. At the end of the focus group, students received a debriefing pamphlet outlining dating violence statistics, effects, and, most importantly, where to find the most

immediate help (see Appendix E). Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at UCT.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”, which focuses primarily on content, was used to analyse the focus group transcriptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79; Riessman, 2008). Because this research is exploratory and there is little research on the views of the participants, I undertook a rich description of the transcriptions in their entirety as opposed to focusing on one particular aspect (Braun & Clarke, 2006). My analysis of the content of the data went beyond description to the underlying assumptions and conceptualisations at the latent level. This approach is aligned with a feminist constructionist paradigm as it acknowledges that meaning is socially produced and reproduced, as opposed to existing within individuals, and therefore the socio-cultural contexts were taken into account (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additional attention was paid to participants’ use of language and how they framed their views.

Power and Reflexivity

Qualitative approaches maintain that because it is impossible for a researcher to be objective towards research, their subjectivity must be acknowledged throughout the research process (Willig, 2001). Reflexivity is a self-conscious “way of working with subjectivity”, so that the influence of the researcher can be recognized (Parker, 2005, p. 25). Even if researchers do not intend to be in a position of power in relation to their participants, various institutional constraints remain as researchers initially chose to conduct the research, control the logistics of the research process and receive recognition for their work. Feminist researchers practice reflexivity as a way of levelling the power relations between the researched and the researcher (Parker, 2005).

As the researcher, I affected the process of identifying themes as well as the focus groups themselves. Although my power as a researcher was diminished by the focus group setting, I was not removed from the context and also participated in the group-construction of meaning. Similarities and differences between the group members and myself affected the interaction between us and between the participants. My identity as a female student of psychology placed me in a position of expertise. For instance, Linsey, a participant, qualified her opinion by saying, “*I’m also not a psych student but my understanding is that...*”.

Similarly, Adam was defensive about the fact that he is not familiar with psychological findings: *“At least that's what I think, I don't know what studies have shown”*. This might have been because participants felt judged by me, as Blessing verbalised that, *“people are concerned about how others are gonna be judging by what they've said”*. My identity as a female researcher might have led participants to assume that I would approve of participants opposition to violence against women. This proved to be a barrier when recruiting male students as one student explained that male students did not want to attend my study because they believed it to be feminist and ‘anti-male.’ Male participants in particular might have been wary of expressing their perspective because of the embodied gender distinction between us. Furthermore, I found myself feeling more comfortable and identifying more strongly with the participants in the all-female group, compared to females in the co-ed groups. My identity as a 'Western' white individual was salient when participants veered from their story to tell me about cultural traditions. For example, Themba stated, *“you're gonna find that – ah, isiZulu - in Zulu there's this tradition”*. On a more obvious level, the few questions that I chose to ask influenced what aspects of students' constructions were emphasised.

It is important that I acknowledge the effects of my personal alliances and reasons for doing research because “data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84) and our findings and interpretations of them “are always a function of what we thought we would find and the position we try to make sense of it from” (Parker 2005, p. 27). Because I used a feminist theoretical perspective, I might have been prone to look for themes that have been identified in previous feminist research, so I tried to be reflexive during the coding and interpreting process and constantly checked that the themes I had identified reflected the transcriptions and that I was not simply looking for an argument but giving precedence to participants' agendas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In light of this, the subsequent analysis and discussion is a limited depiction of my understanding of students' constructions and is open to interpretation.

Analysis and Discussion

Thematic analysis was used to identify nine themes, which characterized participants' discussion of dating violence, and these were grouped into four categories. The first category, 'definitions of dating violence', relates to the way in which dating violence is defined and the extent to which it is acceptable. The second category, 'justifications of violence', includes themes that portray violence as appropriate, or reasonable. The third category, 'blame', includes themes that position the female victim as the partner at fault. The last category, 'silence at UCT', relates to the unspoken nature of dating violence on campus.

Definitions of Dating Violence

Ambivalent definitions. Each focus group shared a theme of ambivalence around the definition of dating violence, with physical violence being more easily accepted and definitive than non-physical violence. Most participants were uncertain of how to define dating violence. This is exemplified in Sizwe's comment, "*Yeah, okay, I don't know how to characterize it as abuse, because what I'm not sure*". Many participants expressed the, "*need to differentiate between verbal violence and physical violence*" (Sizwe). Verbal violence was operationalized as "*cussing and swearing,*" when your partner "*intimidate[s] you with the way they speak*" (Sizwe), when things are said that, "*disturb you, or make you stress or anxiety*" (Themba), as well as, "*insults*" (Linsey). However, dating violence was only considered to be clearly definitive if it progressed from non-physical violence, to physical violence, as shown by Gratitude's statement, "*I think that, you can define like if someone always beats you up like in a small little manner, and then like ends up in a physical thing*". The diminutive words used to describe non-physical violence minimise its validity and the term "*and then*" shows that physical violence is necessary in addition in order for it to be defined as dating violence. Similarly, participants were hesitant as to whether verbal violence qualified and described it as "*violence in a way I guess*" (Adam).

In contrast, physical violence was described as "*full-on violence*" (Mike). This was said to involve actions like "*punching*", "*pushing someone against the hard wall*", (Sizwe) and "*shoving*" (Sisanda). Physical violence was singled out as being particularly unacceptable and was graded according to its severity. This is demonstrated by Sizwe's specification that "*physical violence, it is wrong, especially when it goes to that extent... maybe a slap or something would have been much less than actually pushing someone against the hard wall*". This implies that less severe physical violence is more acceptable. Similarly, young women

in previous research perceived slapping as significantly less serious than other physical violence (Wood et al., 2008). In the current study, dating violence was identified as a problem worthy of being addressed when physical pain was experienced. Sisanda stated, “*but he physically inflicted pain, ‘cause if a guy shoves a girl it's strong, and in that relationship I'd want to address it’*”.

Only female participants identified emotional violence as dating violence. This could indicate that male participants did not see emotional violence as serious enough to constitute dating violence. Emotional abuse was broadly defined as when one partner, “*in the relationship gets to be sort of superior*” (Samke). For example Nonceba described a situation in residence when one, “*partner [was] taking advantage of the other, like come over here, you know while the other one's supposed to be studying*”. Emotional violence was also said to include, “*stalking*”, “*bothering*” (Linsey), and, “*aggressive possessiveness*” (Sisanda). Examples were given, such as the constant demands of your partner to know, “*who you with, what are you doing, what time will you be finished?*” (Sisanda). According to Linsey, “*if you feel unsafe in any way and if there's a sexual element or a dating element, I would say that is dating violence*”. This reference to sexual vulnerability was the only allusion to sexual violence during the discussion of the definition of dating violence and it is unsurprising that it occurred in the female-only group in which participants were more likely to feel comfortable to discuss difficult issues with each other due to their possible shared experience (Frith, 2000). Research among has indicated that male partners are seen as entitled to satisfy their sexual needs within dating relationships, which might explain why students did not explicitly identify sexual violence as definitive dating violence (Wood et al., 1998). Overall, students were doubtful as to whether verbal, emotional and sexual violence could be defined as dating violence in addition to physical violence. The following theme explores how culture affects students’ conceptualizations of dating violence.

Culturally (un)acceptable. The theme of the contradictory and simultaneous construction of dating violence as culturally unacceptable in terms of liberal ideals, but culturally acceptable in terms of traditional patriarchal ideals, was identified. Overall, participants saw dating violence as, “*socially unacceptable*” (Adam) at UCT. It was described as, “*actually kind of bad*” (Sizwe), “*illogic, barbaric acts*” (Sipho). There was a disapproval of perpetrators of violence, as demonstrated by Patricia’s comment, “*In this UCT society...you are looked down upon for being a bit violent or for having problems like that.*”

It's not accepted". Male perpetrators of violence are constructed as weak men, for example Adam said, *"being an abuser would be like a weak person"*.

However, a comparison was drawn between the liberal ideals of the university and the patriarchal ideals of traditional culture. Student's views of acceptable behaviour of men and women were reportedly influenced by cultural background. This difference in views determined by cultural norms is demonstrated in the objection of Mike (white male) to Themba's (black male) explanation that abusive males are more respected in Zulu culture.

Themba: I think this, like maybe the society as you grow up has also had the influence on guys abusing girls, because you're gonna find that – ah, isiZulu - in Zulu there's this tradition of masculine hegemony or male dominance, you know, like males...Ja, supposed to be the head, so sometimes they used to hit their wives because they're trying to show that it's the way they can deal with the situation. And if they can't deal with it, then they'll be blamed maybe by society or other people who are watching, and be like this is not a real man, he's a maid, so they are trying to express their dominance.

Mike: Ja, but with respect to Zulu culture, if you like are actually dominant over a wife, like, you have less respect from the community.

Notice how the male abuser is constructed by Themba as a, *"real man"*. Conversely, a man who does not abuse his partner is compared, not only to a woman, but likened to a, *"maid"*. This indicates that a man who cannot, *"deal with the situation"* by maintaining dominance over his partner through physical violence might be emasculated in Zulu culture. Similarly, in a different focus group Lindo concurred that a violent man is constructed as a, *"strong man"* and Mpho deduced that, *"violence on a large scale is equated to masculinity"*. Some participants voiced an opinion that male violence as a means of demonstrating authority in relationships is more acceptable in 'African' culture.

Samke: I think it's an African culture generally, and it's, I mean we are raised to think that a male is supposed to be the head of a family, and the woman is supposed to be submissive, and that's just how it is. And if it's an abusive relationship, it's fine. If you get out of that relationship you are an outcast in society. You'll never meet anybody else. That's how we're all raised to think. Now, if you're raised to think that way, you don't wanna be an outcast in society, so you'll always be submissive.

Undergirding this view is the patriarchal assumption that men have the right to hold a normative dominant role over woman. The above extract explains how the cultural prescripts

for women to be submissive are reinforced by the punishment of women who challenge them. This reflects feminist theory that patriarchal culture condones male aggression and dominance and female passivity and subordination, thus, men who abuse women are fulfilling espoused cultural prescriptions (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Themba's sentiment that male dominance and female subordination is, "*just how it is*" is echoed by Adam's statement that, "*it becomes normal you become numb to it*". In previous research, students also constructed cultural practices as factual, taken-for-granted realities (Shefer et al, 2000).

However, the dominant sentiment expressed by black and white participants alike was that, "*a man shouldn't like hit a woman or something, I think a weak man does that*" (Gratitude). This might suggest that views that are more socially acceptable from a Western world-view are expressed more freely by students at UCT because this, "*portrays an ideal*" (Sipho). However, "*behind the affluency...there is a violence*" (Sipho), and therefore it was suggested that a discrepancy exists between the politically correct views that all educated students at UCT voice and their privately held opinions and conduct. Sizwe stated, "*educated people, maybe they all just put up a mask, maybe that you know, what we all agree, that this is, is not on*". While it must be emphasized that this discrepancy by no means exists exclusively in students from a traditional African cultural background, these students might experience an added tension between the Western views upheld at university and the traditional views upheld in their homes. Long and Zietkiewicz (2006) found that black female university students experienced a schism between the patriarchal discourses of minimal women's rights at home and the liberal discourses of gender equality associated with the university. This research echoes the tension of living with oppositional desires to be a perfect university student but simultaneously a perfect cultural member (Long & Zietkiewicz, 2006). In summary, students' views of the social acceptability of violence are multiple, complex, contradictory, and it is important to understand cultural norms as well as university norms, which inform students' views on dating violence. Although I have interpreted the construction of cultural gender norms as an influence on how dating violence is defined and accepted, the difficulty reported in resisting cultural prescriptions of male dominance can also be framed as a justification for violence (Shefer et al, 2000). Cultural norms are often said to be inevitably mediated through social learning and the way in which men's perpetration of violence is justified must be explored.

Justifications for Violence

“You’ve learned that behaviour”. The idea that men’s perpetration of violence is made inevitable through social learning was identified as a theme. Social learning refers to the witnessing or experiencing of role models’ violent behaviour and the subsequent imitation of it (Prospero, 2007). Nonceba’s comment reflects the sentiment expressed in all three focus groups that, *“with guys especially, I don’t know, when you see your father hitting your mom... for some reason, the guy gets to do it when they’re older”*. Nonceba’s use of the word, “gets”, indicates that she may think it is more permissible for men to perpetrate violence and receive sympathy, because they witnessed abuse. Despite female participants’ objection that this, *“still doesn’t excuse it though!”* (Sisanda), because, *“people have choices”* (Precious), there was a consensus that the imitation of abusive behaviour is unavoidable because of the effects of social learning are subconscious. For example, Andiswa reasoned that, *“you’re moulded from the time you’re born...subconsciously, you actually realise that you’re actually doing things that you said for a long time you wouldn’t do, because you’ve learned that behaviour, you’ve picked that up”*. This quotation indicates that men’s social learning of violence is out of their control, and thus outside of their realm of agency and responsibility. In Linsey’s comment, men’s responsibility is diminished by the notion that men are passively trapped in patterns of abusive behaviour even if they do not wish to be: *“My understanding is that why we get into the traps of doing things we don’t wanna do, because if they were modelled for us, that sort of is our basis”*. The social learning of sexual violence was also constructed by students in previous research as an inevitable, irreversible and fixed process (Shefer et al., 2000). Although social learning is a contributing factor, witnessing or experiencing violence does not necessarily predict future perpetration of violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Contending that abusive behaviour is an *unavoidable* direct result of exposure to violence can be seen as a justification used to legitimate the abuser’s actions (Boonzaier, 2006; McDonnell et al., 2010; Totten, 2003). This theme, that men’s imitation of violent behaviour is inescapable, is central to the justification of male violence and might lead students to accept the status quo.

“They don’t know what they’re doing”. The clearest justification of violence was the theme of the removal of responsibility when alcohol is involved. Alcohol abuse was seen by some participants as a valid, *“justification that ‘oh we went out’ you know”* (Sipho). Alcohol abuse was perceived to be highly prevalent amongst male students and is implicated in causing men’s violent behaviour.

Gratitude: *But then, like, other influences influencing abusive relationships is alcohol, because, like, once you're drunk, you behave in a different way than normal...like okay, last year, like so I stay in Smuts, and there were these guys who, like on Friday nights they drink with their friends, every night they are like fighting and girls were there too, so I think alcohol it's a major part.*

Gratitude's suggestion that alcohol makes men act abnormally can be interpreted as a way of excusing male violence as being divorced from men's normal, sober identity and thus it does not count as their own wrongdoing. Some participants implied that drunken students are not aware of their decisions and actions. For example, Andiswa stated, "*Some people do get really drunk to the point where they don't know what they're doing, and their decision-making gets affected*". This reasoning diminishes men's agency in the violence. Siphos argued that alcohol-induced unconsciousness should exempt male perpetrators of violence from being held accountable for their actions.

Siphos: *Now these people are not really in their senses, you know, when they are drunk...Now that's another thing for me. It ought to count. ...Now when they get substances and they become violent towards each other, then for me it becomes another case altogether... that leads to um unconsciousness as we know, you know. And then during the state of unconsciousness it's very hard for one to really account for accountability.*

Drunk men's perpetration of violence against their partners is not recognised as dating violence but as "*another case altogether*". Siphos's words "*as we know*" might indicate that he was trying to get agreement from the group for this justification. Although substance abuse is associated with increased likelihood of the perpetration of dating violence, research has shown that men often attribute their violent behaviour to external factors, like alcohol, so as to deny or minimise their role in the abuse and thus absolve themselves of any responsibility (Armstrong, 2000; McDonnell et al., 2010; O'Keefe, 1997; Stamp & Sabourin, 1995).

However, in the current study this reasoning was also extended by a few female students.

"Some sort of problem within themselves". The construction of men as innately violent was identified as a theme. There was a consensus amongst the majority of participants that, "*guys... seem to be more violent than girls*" (Adam). Similarly, Kane, Staiger and Line (2000) found that violent men often report that they are more aggressive than females.

Abusers were seen to have an innate or fixed lack of self-control as Mike stated, "*I think that these people have some sort of problem within themselves before they actually get into this*"

and then *“they tend to control themselves less”*. Students in previous research also used essentialist explanations of male aggression as innate and stable (Kaminer & Dixon, 1995; Harris et al., 1995; Shefer et al., 2000). Sisanda also referred to men’s inner issues, which compel them to be aggressive, despite their love for their partners: *“probably the affections he has for the woman, they're still there, but then the fact that these issues are overpowering him to the point where he feels that he just has to do it”*. Sisanda’s statement implies that men can only contain their aggression to a certain point. The notion that men’s anger is out of their control and renders them unable to think when they are overwhelmed by it, is demonstrated by Blessings remark, *“sometimes they could lose their mind because of that anger”*, as well as Patricia’s words, *“if you're angry and you're in the heat of the moment and you're not thinking straight”*. This serves to justify men’s abusive behaviour as something uncontrollable. Similarly, research shows that men tend to depict themselves as ‘out of control’ when they describe their violent behaviour (Reitz , 1999). Although it is argued that anger, aggression, and a lack of impulse control often co-occur when men perpetrate violence against women; these individual psychological characteristics cannot be used to explain violence adequately (Adams, 1990). The corollary of the justification of men’s aggressive and violent response is the blaming of women for causing it and this will be explored in the following category.

Blame

“What did she do to deserve that?”. Blaming women for triggering men’s violent responses was identified as a predominant theme. Women were constructed as responsible for exasperating men and causing them to lose self-control.

Blessing: *Generally we can see that women are more emotional than men...I mean if a woman gets emotional for instance, you can take physical abuse: maybe she slaps you for something she misunderstands. And you can take it, but you can only take it so far... So all these factors have to be taken into account...We should also see on the other side that actually sometimes women can perpetrate that violence, and through verbal abuse and maybe not understanding the things that need to be understood.*

Blessing constructs women as more irrational as they are described as being *“more emotional than men”* and prone to *“not understanding”*. This is in line with previous research, which indicates that the psychological characteristics of women are often constructed as precipitators to the abuse (Holtzworth-Munroe, Smutzler, & Sandin., 1997). Conversely, men

are seen as able to tolerate women's verbal and physical abuse against them but Blessing's objection: *"but you can only take it so far"*, may indicate that violence against women can sometimes be an appropriate response.

Some male participants argued that verbal violence is perpetrated predominantly by females. For example, Siphso said *"women are, I believe, in many instances by and large, they are always violent verbally"*. A few male participants voiced their objections to the double standards of addressing male-perpetrated violence because *"when it comes to man, be it physically or verbal it becomes an issue"* while female-perpetrated violence *"has not been highlighted adequately and that is undermined"* (Siphso). This perception, coupled with the perception that physical violence is not prevalent amongst UCT students - *"Maybe here it does happen but not physically"* (Themba) - whereas *"verbal violence can be common at a UCT level"* (Sizwe) has implications for the male perception that the problem of dating violence at UCT is located largely in female students.

Participants explained that some people respond to dating violence by asking, *"what did she do to deserve that?"* (Andiswa). Similarly, it was suggested that others might think that a victim *"kind've deserved a bit of what she got"* (Mike). Women are constructed as the instigators of their abuse, as Adam stated, *"I guess she has some blame in the whole scheme of things because she instigated something"*. Nonceba reported that some male perpetrators might blame women by saying, *"no, it's her fault, she tampered with my temper"*. Men's abusive responses were constructed as reactions to being *"aggravated"* (Samke) *"cornered"* (Precious) or *"pushed"* (Patricia). Themba explained that a woman's unfaithfulness might precipitate her abuse: *"Cause maybe a girlfriend is cheating, she's having two boyfriends, and then the other one is abusive"*. Similarly it was suggested that women cause men to be overwhelmed with anger if they are disobedient to their partners. Patricia explained that if a female partner *"wasn't acting submissively, he couldn't handle it"*. Similarly male adolescents, a woman's disobedience and infidelity were also seen as legitimate cause for her victimisation (Sathiparsad, 2005). Participants described how male perpetrators then convince female victims believe that the abuse is their fault.

Patricia: *Sometimes he makes you think it's your fault, that you somehow had a part to play. Like if you hadn't done this, then I wouldn't have done that and blah blah blah and so eventually after months or years of conditioning you start to believe that and that's why you can walk around and say stuff like oh no and you start making excuses for him ...So you walk away feeling I should not have pushed him so far.*

Therefore, female victims may often end up feeling and being blamed for causing their partners to respond to them in a violent manner.

“We just get in too much like ‘I love this guy’”. The blaming of female victims for remaining in abusive relationships was identified as a strong theme. Some participants were aware that the victims are often blamed for not leaving the relationship.

Samke: I think mostly the one who's being violated, the one who's submissive, is the one who's mostly blamed, why doesn't this person not open their eyes why can't they see that this isn't right, why can't they get out of this relationship?

Other participants implicated the female victim through the way they spoke about dating violence. It was implied that the woman was responsible for promoting her abuse through her failure to break-up with her abuser because *“in that like sense they almost encourage the behaviour because they're getting abused, but there's no telling the abuser you shouldn't be doing that or stopping them from doing it”* (Adam). This demonstrated students' general understanding that the onus is on women to stop the abuse. Most participants conveyed that women are the partner with the problem because they remain with men who abuse them out of love.

Nonceba: My friend she stayed in the same relationship, and she claims to love him like, 'I really do love this guy', and for me as an outsider, I'm like really what do you exactly love about this guy...so I don't understand, a lot of the time with us girls I don't know what's our problem, we just get in too much like 'I love this guy', but seriously.

Similarly, in a mocking tone Siphso described how women are portrayed as willing to *“go in bruises, you know, saying ‘I love my man’”*. Women are said to remain in violent relationships because *“she believed in the idea of being in love, of being with this knight in shining armour for me, kinda thing...Prince charming”* (Nonceba). These fairytale narratives have been identified in how women described their relationships in previous research (Wood, 2001). Literature has shown that cultural constructions of romance and love act to bind women to abusive relationships because female submission and passivity is seen as a traditional romantic ideal (Townes & Adams, 2000). However, when the fairytale romantic narrative is unattainable, it was found that women drew on a “dark romance narrative”, in which violence is seen as a typical feature of a romantic relationship (Wood, 2001, p. 244). This is evident in the current study because violent dating relationships are described as *“one*

of those relationships – excuse my language – we might be fucked up but let's try be fucked up together kinda thing” (Nonceba).

Many participants spoke about women’s equation of violence with love as problematic. For example, Themba stated, *“they tend to assume that their boyfriends are beating them because they are trying to love them or they are trying to caress them”*. Women are blamed for remaining in abusive relationships because they incorrectly interpret abuse positively as a man's loving correction. Themba stated, *“So they are having the mentality that if your boyfriend beats you, doesn't mean he's abusing you, he loves you he trying to correct you to be”*. Some participants in the current study constructed violence as an expression of love, care and emotional involvement: *“Some people like it, like “oh my boy hits me, he looves me, he cares enough to get so angry about me...that means I must have some sort of effect on him”* (Precious). Students in previous research constructed violence as an indicator of love (Shefer et al., 2000). While Precious suggested that a few female victims enjoy the abuse - *“some people like it”* - reference to *“some people”* separates her views from others. Previous research shows that people misunderstand women who remain in abusive relationships and incorrectly believe that they enjoy the abuse, thus diminishing the abuser’s responsibility (Ludsin & Vetten, 2005). This assumption overlooks the complex dynamics of abusive relationships. In summary, women are blamed for their continued victimization because they do not exit the relationship.

“Sort things in a different way rather than punching”. The theme of blaming and pathologising women who fight back with violence was identified. The dominant opinion was that it is wrong for women to use violence against men, even in response to men’s violence. Only one female participant shared a story in which she used physical violence to defend herself and achieved greater justice than she would have if she had gone through the authorities.

Patricia: He pushed me back up against a table...so I just took it into my own hands, had enough, and I smacked him, punched him, something like that, in the face...so I walked away and I was like okay well I suppose I didn't make too much of a bad choice, because I deserved my justice and I took it”

However, other participants did not voice their support and suggested that women need to be taught not to respond by using violence.

Themba: *So, I think, they need to be taught that if you are in an abusive relationship, you got to step out of it, or report it, or try to sort things in a different way, rather than punching.*

Patricia herself later indicated that women's use of violence is inappropriate and that there must be a better reaction: *"Surely there should be other options available or more civilized"*. Patricia's use of the word *"civilized"*, implies that she sees women as being bound to particular ways of doing gender that are associated with civility, that is politeness and compliance. Similarly, in the literature adolescents believed a girl who behaves violently *"deserves no respect"* (Sathiparsad, 2005, p. 84). Research has shown that women's use of violence against their intimate partner, whether in retaliation or self-defence, is prohibited by cultural prescriptions of femininity (Dasgupta, 2002). In the all-female focus group, however, there was an acknowledgement of the double standards applied to men and women's use of violence as men might get punished but they do not get pathologised.

Precious: *That's the thing, like why is it when a women's violent, why is she crazy? Why is it not crazy for men? Why must the girl be put in a mental institute for hitting her husband, when a guy's just sitting in Polsmoor. Having a jam with his boys. Well not really (laughter)*

Patricia: *Still it's just giving them pills to swallow.*

Precious: *Then why aren't we giving guys pills...Why must we take pills?*

This extract suggests that these women are critical of society's acceptance of domination and power. Critical and progressive discourses were also used by predominantly female students in previous research (Shefer et al., 2000). Dasgupta (2002) suggests that women are too often constructed as passive and helpless and that their use of violence to fight back is not an inappropriate response to being victimised and is sometimes necessary for survival. Therefore, women are unfairly blamed for their legitimate response to being abused. Additionally, some female participants complained that there was not adequate assistance at UCT – an issue that demands further exploration.

Silence at UCT

"It's very hush-hush". The theme of silence around dating violence at UCT was identified. Dating violence is not spoken about amongst students as Andiswa stated, *"We don't talk about it"*. The following extract demonstrates the covert nature of campus dating violence.

Thandi: *Um, it's a reality, yes, but like it's like you say it's not being portrayed it's not like being put out there... it's well hidden in the university. I'm sure there are many cases that we're not aware of.*

Furthermore, the university was implicated in the argument that it is dealt with silently, “without any uproar, up-cry to make this awareness to us” and in this way, “they actually *perpetrating violence by not denouncing it publicly*” (Sipho). Participants interpret UCT’s silence around dating violence as an indication that the university is not seeking to address the issue, “and I don't think there's a lot done by the university to address it either” (Andiswa). Female participants said that victims are not aware of the protection and services available to them as Andiswa explained “*nobody really knows that DISCHO exists*”¹. Similarly, Linsey remarked, “*I don't even know what the university policy is*”. Participants who had sought help from the internal authorities at UCT relayed that they had been disappointed by the inadequate action taken.

Mpho: *I went to the, his warden, and spoke to the Dean about it, so they could put it on his transcript... basically what happens is they do an internal investigation and he was um, all he had to do really was to apologise to me, had to do community service...*

Sisanda: *That's it?*

Linsey: *He's still like around?*

Mpho: *He's still around, he's like, I think he's a third year... the head girl of my res told me that he had been implicated in another incident a year before where he tried to rape a girl from another res. So immediately I'm like, “why is he still here?” He hit this girl, he hit me in the face, why is he still here?*

These experiences might reinforce victims’ tendency not to report. Linsey commented, “It's so frustrating when victims are forced to make a choice of I won't take it through the official channels 'cause I know I won't get justice, and that perpetuates the system”. Most female participants expressed the sentiment that only extremely severe physical or sexual violence would be taken seriously. Mpho reported, “even if something does happen, it's minimal, it's like they want something drastic to happen, like him stabbing a girl, or him raping a girl for it to be like okay let's take this seriously”. Authorities told victims that there was little action that could be taken. Patricia wanted to explore her options after being violently assaulted by a

¹ DISCHO is the Discrimination and Harassment Office

male student and was told by Campus Protection Services, “you can report him, but like we'll make a case and we'll take it to the university court, but nothing's really going to happen”. This creates a sense of helplessness and vulnerability in victims as Mpho deduced, “it just goes to show that like, as much as you think you're safe, you're actually not”. As a result, female students live in constant fear of being victimized on campus: “I can't deal with it, I don't know what's around the next corner or behind me” (Precious). Siphos suggests that dating violence might be more hidden in affluent spaces, “there's no story or no cases that have been reported in the affluent then people think that, no, it doesn't exist”. This silence leads to much ambivalence about the prevalence of dating violence at UCT: “so I think it's very hush-hush but also I think it's not too prevalent, but also it's there” (Andiswa). This silence might lead victims to think that they are alone and that dating violence is their individual problem: “I'm sure there are many people going through it but because it's not being discussed it's a case of, ‘well okay I'm clearly doing something wrong, it's clearly my fault’” (Thandi). The understanding of dating violence as an individual problem is highly problematic because it precludes people from seeing how it is a social problem (Wiklund et al., 2010). In summary, silence around dating violence at UCT, on behalf of victims and the university, is a dominant theme in students' discussions of dating violence.

Recommendations and Conclusions

This study set out to explore how young adults in the South African context collectively construct their views on the broad topic of dating violence. Several themes characterised students' discussions and were organised into four main categories – ‘definitions of dating violence’, ‘justification for violence’, ‘blame’ and ‘silence at UCT’ – revealing an interpretation of participants' views on the topic.

This study has contributed towards research on dating violence in several ways. On a broad level this study has begun to address the gap in the literature firstly, by producing knowledge about intimate partner violence in the young adult population and, secondly, by producing research specific to the South African context.

Thirdly, this study has identified the limitations of participants' definitions of dating violence. Students' ambivalence as to whether verbal, emotional and sexual violence could be defined as dating violence in addition to physical violence might contribute to the under-reporting of dating violence.

The findings from the current study show that students may think that their experiences of non-physical dating violence are not definitive. This might lead to increased perpetration of dating violence. Therefore, students' definitions of dating violence need to be taken into account in the development of future measures and prevention programmes. While this study has identified that there are various levels of acceptability among students regarding different forms of dating violence, it would be useful for future studies to research the exact point at which couple interaction becomes seen as unacceptable dating violence.

Fourthly, this study has generated an in-depth understanding of the young adult participants' complex views on dating violence and how these might contribute to the increased prevalence of dating violence. While most students constructed dating violence as socially unacceptable in terms of liberal ideals, it was simultaneously and contradictorily constructed as culturally acceptable in terms of traditional patriarchal norms. Students' conformity and resistance to constructed cultural norms thus inform their views on dating violence. The acceptance of unequal relations in dating relationships and men's use of violence to maintain authority demonstrates the patriarchal assumption that men have the right to hold a normative dominant role over woman. According to Wood (2004), teaching men to change the way they think about masculinity and relationships is central to diminishing men's perpetration of violence against their partners. Students' complex views and identities in both their homes and at university must be acknowledged. Future research might explore how students deal with these conflicting ideals.

Fifthly, this study has attempted to understand the logic used by students to justify men's use of violence and to blame women for their own victimisation, which serves to strengthen patriarchal relations between men and women. Violence in dating relationships was justified by students through the construction of men as innately violent and unable to control their anger, as free from any responsibility when alcohol is involved, and as an inevitable result of social learning. Female students were blamed for triggering men's violent response, for remaining in abusive relationships and for retaliating or defending themselves through the use of violence. The reasoning identified in this student sample might encourage the acceptance of dating violence as the status quo at UCT. It is important that the faulty aspects of students' understanding of dating violence be addressed in the future through adequate education, programmes and interventions at UCT, with a particular focus on encouraging resistance to the widespread belief of 'gender difference' and how this informs heterosexual gender interaction so that patriarchal attitudes can be identified and challenged.

One of the limitations of this study was its lacking exploration of students' views in an all-male setting. This study should be replicated with male-only groups so that male students' co-construction of dating violence, masculinity and femininity can be explored and compared to male views expressed in a co-ed setting.

The final and most practical implication of this study is the identification of the need to address the silence around dating violence at UCT. The university's failure to create public awareness around the issue as well as the apathetic response and perceived failure of disciplinary structures render students unlikely to seek adequate help. Students' unawareness of the support structures and services available to them and prior experience of inadequate services that they received, strongly suggest that student help facilities need to be better advertised and better organised to serve the needs of victims more effectively. Furthermore, students' ambivalence about the prevalence of dating violence at UCT and the unspoken nature of the problem among students indicate that efforts need to be made to inform and educate students about this serious problem so that female victims are not led to think that they are alone and that dating violence is their individual problem.

This study has offered insight into how students at the University of Cape Town collectively construct meanings about what constitutes dating violence, and highlighted possible areas that need to be addressed in the South African context and specifically at UCT.

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Appendix A:

Questions for Focus Group Discussion

Broad and open-ended questions:

- 1) What do you think about the Chris Brown and Rihanna situation?
- 2) How would you define dating violence?
- 3) What do you think dating violence in a heterosexual relationship looks like?
- 4) What are your views on dating violence?
- 5) Why do you think dating violence occurs?
- 6) In what ways do men and women influence dating violence situations?
- 7) How do you think living in South Africa affects dating violence?

Additional prompting questions:

- 1) Why do you say that?
- 2) Can you say that in different words?
- 3) What do others think?
- 4) Let's discuss that further.
- 5) You look as though you may disagree...

Appendix B:
Advertisement

Appendix C:
Demographics Summary Table

Appendix D:
Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dating Violence in Young Adult Intimate Relationships

1. **Invitation and Purpose**

You are invited to take part in a research study about Dating Violence. We are researchers from the Psychology department at the University of Cape Town.

2. **Procedures**

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to participate in a focus group discussion. The questions will be about your views on a video clip that will be shown about Rihanna and Chris Brown situation in 2009 and your views on dating violence. It will take about 50 minutes and you may choose not to respond to any question you do not wish to answer.

3. **Discomforts & Inconveniences**

- The topic of dating violence is sensitive and you might feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to discuss it. However, the questions asked will be very broad, you will not be expected to share personal information, you will not be obligated to participate in any part of the discussion that you do not wish to discuss and you are allowed to stop participating at any point without any negative consequences.
- You might be made aware of issues related to dating violence in your own life through this discussion but referrals will be made to places you can get immediate help from. If you were interested in this discussion because you have been a victim or perpetrator of dating violence in any way, there is a 24-hour service helpline especially for UCT students who are sexual assault, rape and harassment victim/survivors (021 650 2222) or you could visit a trained Sexual Harassment advisor who can assist and support you with your complaints at the Discrimination and Harassment Office at the Cottage on Lovers Walk (021 650 3530).
- You might be influenced by the views of others regarding dating violence and for this reason you will be given a debriefing pamphlet outlining the statistics and effects of dating violence.
- You might be inconvenienced by having to give up an hour of your time.

4. **Benefits**

You are given an opportunity to share your views and experiences and your information will contribute to the larger purpose of understanding how students view dating violence.

Appendix E:

Debriefing Pamphlet

DATING VIOLENCE

- **29% of university students** in an international sample reportedly physically assaulting a dating partner within a year²
- **1 in 11 American adolescents** report physical abuse in a dating relationship each year³

EFFECTS

- Increased risk of **serious physical injury**⁴
- Increased risk of contracting **HIV and STDs**⁵
- Increased risk of **abusing alcohol and drugs**⁶
- Increased risk of **unhealthy patterns** of romantic relationships in adulthood⁷
- **Psychological and emotional distress**, such as lowered self-esteem, negative body-image, loss of sexual pride, depression, anxiety, trauma and suicidal behaviours⁸

WHERE TO FIND HELP

DISCHO- *If you need advice, assistance or just a chat, do make contact with us...no case too small or 'unimportant'*

For immediate help call the 24-hour service especially for sexual assault, rape and harassment victim/survivors on (021) 650 2222 or speed dial 8519 from any UCT extension. Visit a trained Sexual Harassment advisor who can assist and support you with your complaints at the Discrimination and Harassment Office, which can be found at the 'The Cottage' on Lovers Walk in the big parking lot as you walk from Baxter Theatre to Bremner. Call: 021 650 3530.

Student Health

A counselling service is offered where students can have individual psychotherapy and get help at a negotiable rate of R100 a session. Call: (021) 650 10200 for an appointment.

² Wiklund et al., 2010

³ Black et al., 2006

⁴ Whitaker, 2007

⁵ Wood et al., 2008

⁶ McDonnell et al. et al., 2010

⁷ Farrington, 1991

⁸ Roberts et al., 2003 as cited in Spriggs et al., 2009; Wiklund et al., 2010

Plagiarism declaration

1. I know that plagiarism is a serious form of academic dishonesty.
2. I have read the document about avoiding plagiarism, I am familiar with its contents and I have avoided all forms of plagiarism mentioned there.
3. Where I have used the words of others, I have indicated this by the use of quotation marks.
4. I have referenced all quotations and other ideas borrowed from others.
5. I have not and shall not allow others to plagiarise my work.

Name (Printed): Lauren Barkhuizen