

# **Intimate Partner Violence and the Dark Tetrad: An investigation of aggression and personality**

Dr Elizabeth Bates  
University of Cumbria, UK  
[Elizabeth.Bates@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:Elizabeth.Bates@cumbria.ac.uk)

Christie Tetrault and Lauren Bolam

# Aims

Give background context of the study

Highlight the gaps in knowledge and the need for this study

Describe method and results

Discuss the implications the findings have for research, policy and practice

# Feminist Theory and Literature

Cause of IPV is gender; it is a gendered crime

IPV is driven by patriarchal values and control

Not psychopathology or personality but socially and historically constructed control – patriarchy

IPV male perpetrators are different from other offenders



# What the feminist theory and Duluth model ignores

Risk factors (e.g. Moffitt et al., 2001)

Overlap between IPV, aggression and control (e.g. Bates, Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2014)

Sex parity and mutuality in IPV (e.g. Langhinrichsen-Rohling, et al., 2012)

Perceptions of IPV (e.g. Harris & Cook, 1994)

Same-sex relationships (e.g. Carvalho et al., 2011)

# Background and Context

Study of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) has been traditionally done one of two ways:

## Feminist/Gendered approach

- Cause of IPV is gender
- Methodology and sample differ
- IPV “special” etiology

## Family Violence approach

- Cause of IPV could be one of many risk factors, specifically a combination
- IPV is not “special” and should be studied as any other type of violence

# Background and Context

Many studies have demonstrated the link between IPV, control and same-sex aggression for both men and women

- E.g. Bates et al. (2014); Moffit et al. (2001)

Wealth of literature detailing risk factors and assessment measures used with adult violence:

- impulsivity (e.g., Campbell, 2006); personality disorder (e.g., Berman, Fallon & Coccaro, 1998); anxiety (e.g., Gratz, Tull & Gunderson, 2007)

Similar to those associated with IPV and often both:

- personality disorders (e.g., Ehrensaft et al., 2006); criminality (e.g., Babcock et al., 2003); childhood influences e.g. attachment patterns (e.g., Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000)

# Background and Context

Dark Triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Jones & Paulhus, 2010) has received much empirical attention

Addition of sadism (e.g. Buckels, Jones, & Paulhus, 2013), the Dark Tetrad was formed.

The Dark Tetrad—subclinical psychopathy, narcissism, sadism, and Machiavellianism—have been all found to be related to a propensity for aggression.

However, much of that research has focused on other types of aggression and has rarely examined both sexes

# Background and Context

Although the Dark Tetrad has a natural proclivity for aggression, they use it differently.

Psychopaths use aggression for instrumental purposes when it is easy and a low cost to them (Jones & Paulhus, 2011)

Narcissists use aggression only if their ego is threatened (Campbell, Bonanci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004)

Machiavellians only use aggression if there are significant benefits because they fear retaliation and punishment (Jones & Paulhus, 2011)

Sadists aggress in any opportunity presented to them even with a time delay and at high cost to themselves (Buckels, Jones, & Paulhus, 2013)



# Aim of the Study

The aim of the project is to explore if people with darker personalities (Dark Tetrad—subclinical Sadism, Psychopathy, Narcissism, and Machiavellianism) tend to use more aggression within an intimate partner relationship when resolving conflict; and if so, what type of aggression are they more prone to use.

A further aim is to seek cross-cultural subjects by collecting data both at the University of Cumbria and Lund University in Sweden.

# Method

$N = 360$  (60% female; 68% Swedish)

Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS): one to measure aggression to partners and one to measure aggression to same-sex others (not partners), thus allowing us to examine the associations between the two.

Short Sadistic Impulse Scale (O'Meara, Davies, & Hammond, 2011), Short Dark Triad scale (Jones & Paulhus, 2011), and seven direct sadism items from the Varieties of Sadistic Tendencies (Paulhus & Jones, in press) will comprise of the questionnaire.

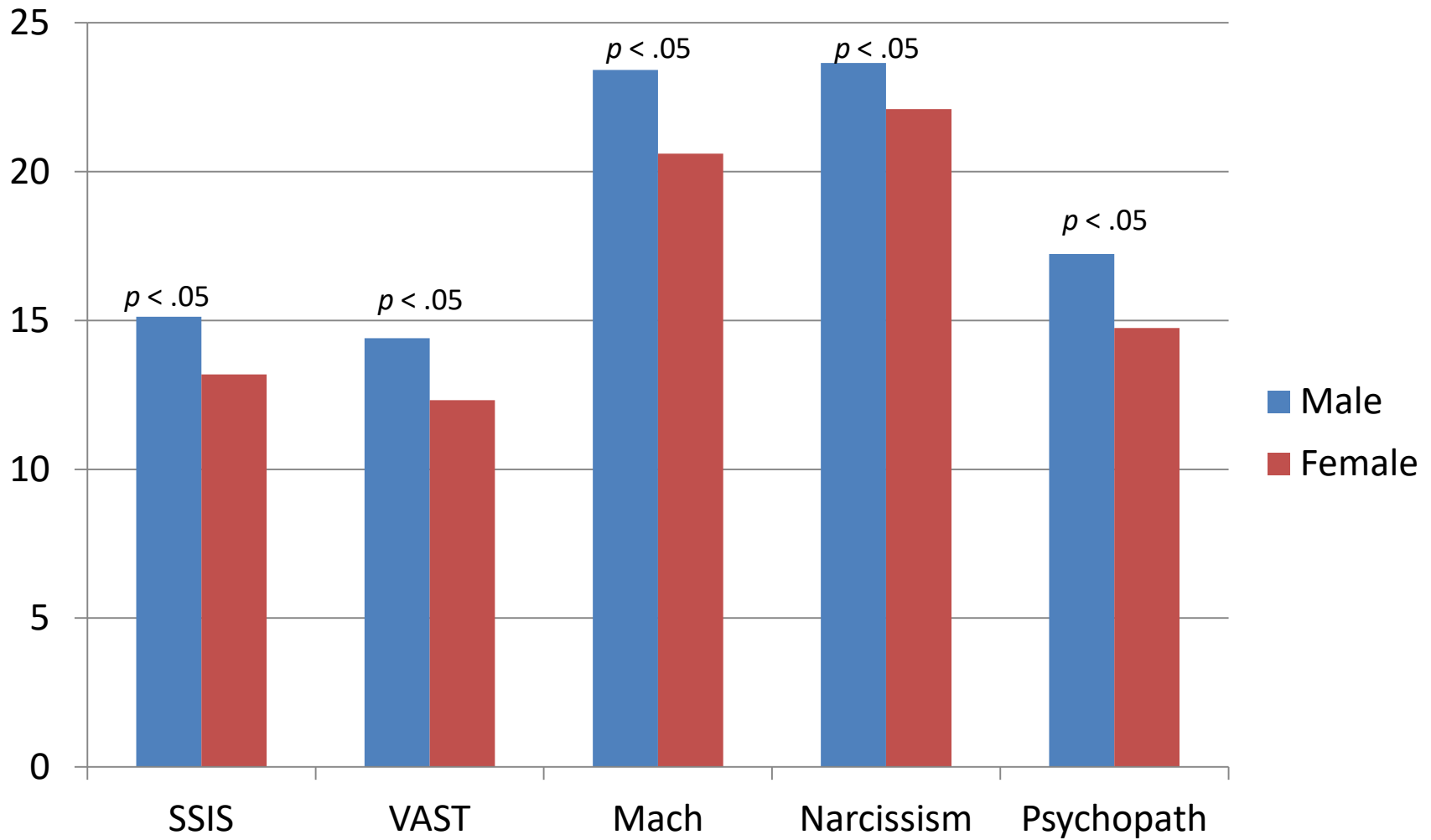
# Results

Women were significantly more verbally aggressive to their partners than men were ...but no significant difference for physical aggression

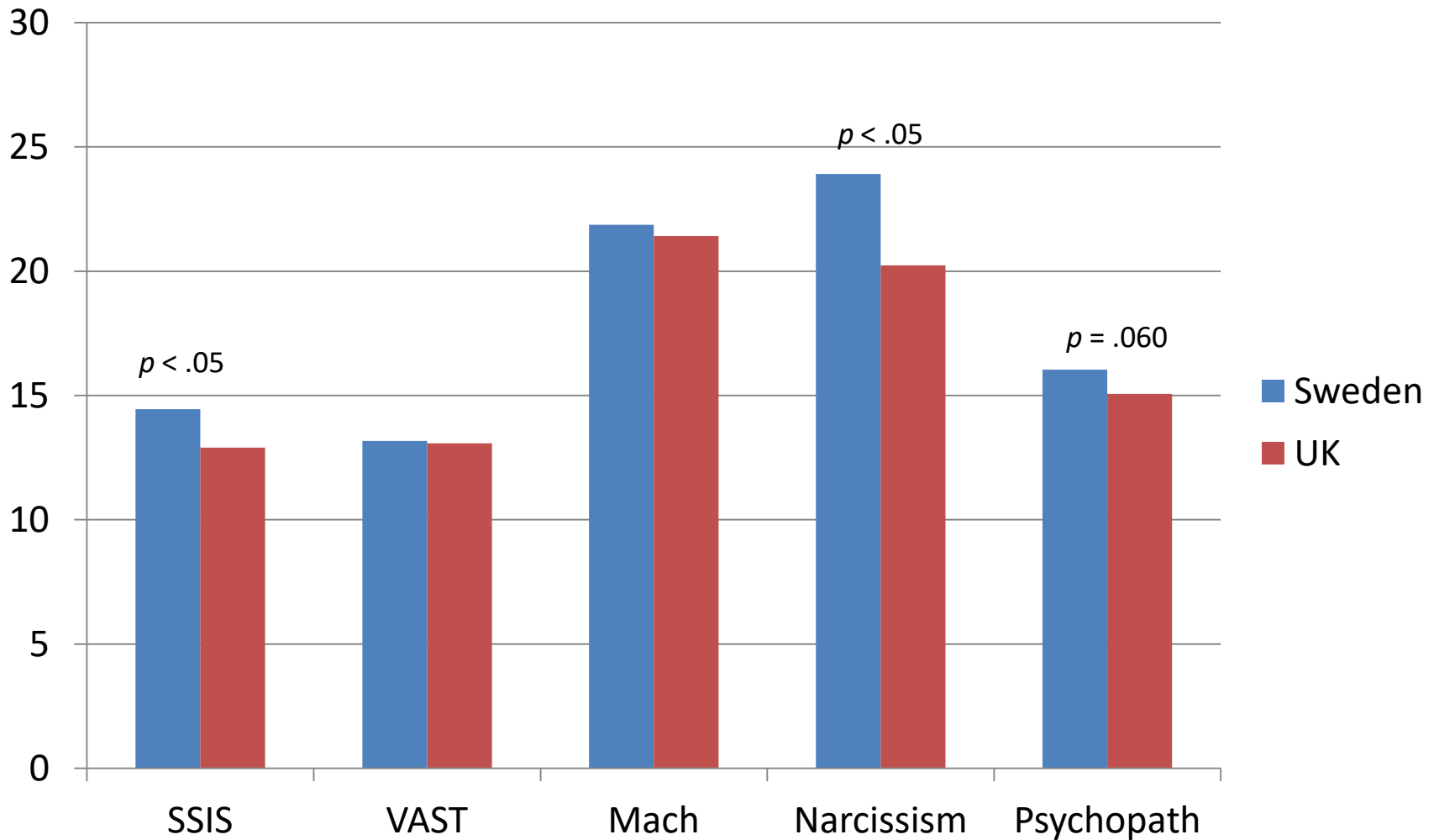
Men used significantly more verbal and physical aggression towards same-sex others than women did.

No significant differences between UK and Sweden on the above measures

# Personality



# Personality



# Regression Analysis

(Physical)	IPV	Same-sex Aggression
Men	Machiavellianism Psychopathy	Psychopathy
Women	Sadism	Sadism

(Verbal)	IPV	Same-sex Aggression
Men	Psychopathy	X
Women	Psychopathy	Psychopathy

# Regression Analysis

(Physical)	IPV	Same-sex Aggression
UK	X	Narcissim Psychopathy
Sweden	Psychopathy	Psychopathy Sadism

(Verbal)	IPV	Same-sex Aggression
UK	Psychopathy	X
Sweden	Psychopathy	Psychopathy Sadism

# Summary

Some differences between men and women, and UK and Sweden in terms of aggression and control

Men scored higher in all measures of Dark Tetrad, Sweden scored higher than UK for sadism and narcissism

Psychopathy most important predictor – fits with much previous literature (e.g. Pardini, 2006; Huss & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2000)

Similarities and differences between UK and Sweden

Similarities and differences between men and women



# Implications

Current UK, US and Canadian interventions are based on the Duluth Model

Based on a curriculum teaching men how to not be controlling and aggression to women

Implications of findings examining risk assessment such as current study

Important to find most effective way of dealing with aggression for men and women, victims and perpetrators

Need to mirror interventions that deal with other violent offenders

Need evidence based practice to inform current practice – and methodologically rigorous evaluations

# Thank you for listening!

Questions?

[Elizabeth.Bates@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:Elizabeth.Bates@cumbria.ac.uk)