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Research Grants Peer Review

ESRC Reference: ES/T008849/1

Document Status: With Council

SDAI open call

Applicant Details

Applicant	Dr Timothy L Mullett	Organisation	University of Warwick
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Title of Research Project

The behavioural economics of domestic abuse

Review Information

Response Due Date	15/10/2019	Reviewer Reference:	130837269
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Research Council Contact Details

ESRC Administration Contact:	Email:	Telephone:
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Application Assessment

Please select a grade to indicate your assessment according to the following criteria. Detailed comments in support of these grades should be provided in the free text overall assessment section. Refer to Help for further guidance.

Originality; potential contribution to knowledge

Outstanding	Excellent	✓ Good	Satisfactory	Fair / Some Weaknesses	Poor	Unable to Assess
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Research design and methods

Outstanding	Excellent	✓ Good	Satisfactory	Fair / Some Weaknesses	Poor	Unable to Assess
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Value for money

Outstanding	✓ Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair / Some Weaknesses	Poor	Unable to Assess
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Outputs, dissemination and impact

Outstanding	✓ Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair / Some Weaknesses	Poor	Unable to Assess
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				Weaknesses		Assess
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Overall Assessment

Feedback for Applicant

Please provide detailed comments in support of the grades you have given and on any other aspects of the proposal that you consider relevant. These comments will be passed on, unattributed, to the applicant(s) and also with notification of the outcome of the application, to other external reviewers if applicable. For further guidance please select Help.

The proposal is well-written and structured and provides a clear articulation of the research questions and the methods associated with responding to them. The study will make an important contribution to assessing risk in domestic abuse and uses four key questions to do so. The methods are well described and to the best of my knowledge the statistical tests and analysis documented are very relevant. Utilising existing data-sets, in particular the CSEW is both highly relevant and efficient. The study represents excellent value for money, the management plan is well thought out and the impact plan is sound. High quality publications are part of the impact plan. The impact plan also includes high level government policy impacts by influencing the next VAWG strategy, as well as national audiences such as the College of Policing and more locally the West Midland Police Force.

There are a number of issues which require further consideration:

I was surprised to see that Sylvia Walby's work had not been referenced as this was the first study to assess the costs associated with domestic abuse. Whilst I appreciate that the proposed study has a different focus, the Walby study is seminal in the field. The weakest part of the proposal is the impact of domestic abuse on children as the data sets to be used cover a one year period from what I can tell. If this is not the case, please can this be clarified. I am also concerned about the outcomes which are used in this section of the study (e.g. knife crime, gang-related violence etc) which appear to be highly gendered.

The applicants have a prior relationship with West Midlands police and this appears to be the key rationale for using data from this police force. A stronger rationale of why this police force is being used needs to be given, particularly as data from only this police force is being analysed. There also needs to be more transparency about the quality of police data, for example the missing data in relation to ethnicity, disability etc. There is also a tendency within police records to privilege physical violence above coercive control for example. Given the salience of coercive control in domestically abusive relationships, this seems a gap which the proposed research does not appear to grapple with. Financial control will potentially be addressed through the Lloyds bank database for those that have Lloyds bank accounts and this is to be commended. Please clarify whether this is Lloyds bank customers only? If so, what about those that bank elsewhere or have no bank account?. Implicit within the study is an assumption that domestic abuse happens largely in working class neighbourhoods (based on the indicators provided e.g. benefits changes). What we know from previous research on domestic abuse is that domestic abuse occurs in all sections of the population but that middle-class and wealthy victims tend not to use support services as they have more resources at their disposable e.g. to rent privately or to pay for counselling/therapy etc).

The proposed study uses the term domestic violence but the cross-party definition of domestic violence in England & Wales includes other forms of family violence e.g. adolescent to parent violence, sibling violence etc of those over 16. It appears that the study focuses only on intimate partner violence. This is fine, providing the wider definition of domestic violence is acknowledged. Given the demographics of the West Midlands, it may be useful to consider issues such as honour-based abuse and Forced Marriage in addition to intimate partner violence. Previous work also illustrates that some police forces tend to label all domestic abuse experienced by South Asian victims as honour based whether or not it is. A strength of the proposal is it's ability to link perpetrator-victim dyads over time however, it should be recognised that

perpetrators often move from one relationship to another.

The proposed study also has overlaps with a previously funded ESRC study (ES/M01178X/1) to establish risk factors for victimisation of domestic abuse using similar statistical techniques including machine learning from police force data, PI: Prof. Juan Ariza. It would have been useful to cross-reference the funded ESRC study to the proposed study to understand the similarities and differences.

A final issue which requires clarification is how the researchers will establish victim satisfaction with the police and victims' perceptions of their personal safety. If this is to be analysed via police records (rather than more independent sources) this is likely to be problematic in terms of bias?

Whilst I have no qualms about the applicants' statistical knowledge, it does not appear that they have previously worked on domestic abuse. Involving a partner or collaborator with domestic abuse specific research experience would have enhanced the application.

To conclude, there is no doubt that improving domestic abuse risk assessment is imperative. The DASH RIC that is routinely used by police forces has been shown to be a poor predictor of risk. New models of risk assessment are already being formulated and it would be useful for the proposed study to distinguish between the items on any risk assessment model and its application i.e. is it that the items on the risk assessment are poor at predicting risk or that those who are completing the form are not completing it accurately and consistently? While the proposal is well written, it has overlaps with a recently completed ESRC study and the applicants do not have a track record of domestic abuse research.

Overall Grade

Please indicate your overall assessment of the proposal

Outstanding	Excellent	✓ Good	Satisfactory	Fair / Some Weaknesses	Poor
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