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SEX-ROLE BELIEFS OF CHILDREN EXPOSED TO WIFE ABUSE

by

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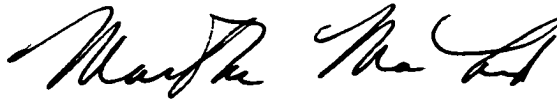
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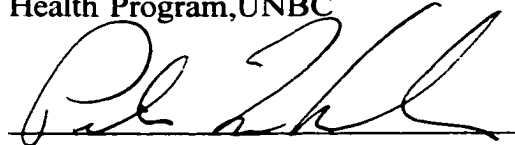
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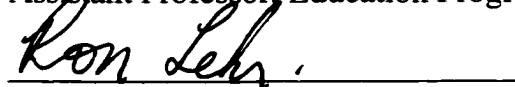
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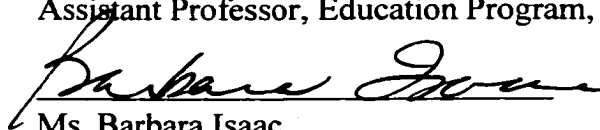
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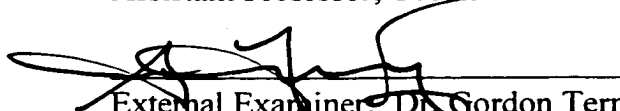
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ABSTRACT

Extensive research exists on the effects of wife abuse on its female victims, but only recently has attention been directed to the children exposed to wife abuse in their homes. Children exposed to wife abuse display a wide range of physical, emotional, behavioural, and cognitive problems. However, there are also numerous invisible effects of exposure to wife abuse which have not been extensively researched. One such effect may be the children's incorporation of the traditional sex-role beliefs often present in families characterized by wife abuse. Research shows that men who abuse their wives often hold traditional beliefs about their right to control and dominate their partner. After prolonged abuse at the hands of a dominant and controlling man, women may view themselves as powerless and weak. If children exposed to wife abuse incorporate these differential beliefs about power and control, they may be more likely to become involved in abusive relationships as adults. Specifically, boys may be more likely to hold attitudes condoning wife abuse, and girls may believe they can not prevent wife abuse from starting, or stop their victimization if wife abuse does occur.

This study included a treatment group of 12 children exposed to wife abuse and a comparison group of 12 children not exposed to wife abuse. The children completed the Child Sex Role Inventory (CSRI), a questionnaire based on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1981). The CSRI assesses the degree to which the children describe themselves as traditionally masculine or feminine sex-typed (Boldizar, 1991). The children's mothers completed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (1981), the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) (Straus, 1979), an adapted version of the CTS which assessed their children's exposure to wife abuse,

and a demographic questionnaire. The children exposed to wife abuse were compared to the children not exposed to wife abuse on their exposure to wife abuse and their self-reported sex-role beliefs. The results indicated that children exposed to wife abuse rated themselves as somewhat more traditionally sex-typed than children not exposed to wife abuse. Boys in the treatment and comparison groups did not differ significantly in the extent to which they described themselves as masculine, but boys exposed to wife abuse described themselves as significantly less feminine than boys not exposed to wife abuse. Girls exposed to wife abuse did not differ significantly from girls not exposed to wife abuse on either their self-reported masculinity or femininity. The implications of the findings for family violence researchers, counsellors, parents, teachers, and social workers are discussed, and recommendations are made for future research.

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CHAPTER ONE: SEX-ROLE BELIEFS OF CHILDREN EXPOSED TO WIFE ABUSE

Throughout the family violence literature, wife abuse is referred to as domestic violence, marital violence, spouse abuse, battering, and violence against women. I have chosen to use the term wife abuse throughout this study to reflect the fact that between 91 and 95 percent of incidents of spousal assault involve men's abuse of women (McCue, 1995). Wife abuse is a social problem which occurs in every type of male-female relationship, including common-law and marital relationships. While the prevalence of recent reports of wife abuse may suggest it is a new problem, wife abuse is by no means a contemporary phenomenon. Centuries ago, men were permitted to and even encouraged to use violence against their wives to maintain power over them (Johnson, 1996; Walker, 1979). Early marriage laws gave men the legal right to hit their wives (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Mullender & Morley, 1994). The frequently used phrase "rule of thumb" originated as a British law limiting husbands' rights to hitting their wives with a rod no thicker than their thumb (Sigler, 1989). Despite changes to laws, cultural beliefs, and social attitudes, men's domination and control of women through wife abuse continues today.

Estimates of the number of Canadian women abused annually vary considerably, but numbers between 200,000 and 450,000 are common (Copping, 1996; Johnson, 1996). These countless women are emotionally, physically, and sexually harmed by such abuse. If the women have children, they also suffer the consequences. It has been estimated that children are exposed to between 39 and 80 percent of wife abuse incidents (Health and Welfare Canada, 1992; Wolfe & Jaffe, 1991). These numbers add up to between two and three

million Canadian children being exposed to wife abuse every year (Johnson, 1996; Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990).

Witnessing specific violent acts is only one aspect of children's exposure to wife abuse. While children are seeing and hearing the abuse of their mothers, they are also being taught a powerful and frightening lesson: people who love each other may also hurt each other (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990).

Traditional beliefs of male dominance are common in families characterized by wife abuse. Abusive men are often dominant and aggressive, and believe they have the right to exercise power and control over their wives. Abused women are frequently perceived as submissive and powerless, and may become so in the face of continued abuse. These behaviours, when repeated by the children in violent families, have far-reaching consequences for the children's relationships as adults.

Long-term exposure to traditional sex-role beliefs affects children in numerous ways. Mothers' and fathers' modelling of traditional sex-role behaviours increases children's tendency to display similar patterns of behaviour (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997; Choice, Lamke, & Pittman, 1995; Gelles & Cornell, 1990). Traditional sex-role beliefs affect all human relationships, even in childhood. Children who hold traditional sex-role beliefs may develop relationships characterized by unequal power. Their peer relationships may then be vulnerable to conflict and struggles to assert or maintain power. Such relationships, when carried into adolescent or adult life, have the potential to become violent. Although they are not predetermined to be abusive, children who are exposed to wife abuse

are more likely to become abusive as adults (Barnett et al., 1997; Choice et al., 1995; Gelles & Cornell, 1990).

This study is based on the hypothesis that traditional sex-role beliefs will be more prevalent in children exposed to wife abuse than in children who have not been exposed to such abuse. Samples are used, but it is the population that is of interest. Specifically, it is hypothesized that masculinity and femininity scores on the Child Sex Role Inventory (CSRI) (See Appendix A) will show that boys exposed to wife abuse view themselves as dominant, aggressive, and forceful, while girls exposed to wife abuse view themselves as passive, yielding, and compromising. An investigation of these hypotheses will enable counsellors, parents, and the community to better understand and assist children exposed to wife abuse in their attempts to avoid involvement in abusive relationships as adults.

Definition of Terms

The use of the word “wife” in this study does not imply any legal status of the abusive relationship. Women in all types of relationships are victims of wife abuse, and the term wife is used here to describe women in any relationship with a male partner, including dating, marital, and common-law relationships. Similarly, men who abuse women may or may not be married to their victims. Women are abused by past or present boyfriends, husbands, and common-law partners. The term “partner” is used to describe men who are, or have been, intimately involved with the women they abuse.

Many types of abusive behaviour comprise wife abuse, including verbal abuse, physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, rape, sexual assault, threats, harassment,

control, financial abuse, terrorism, abuse of pets and property, intimidation, and isolation (Dutton, 1995; Johnson, 1996; McCue, 1995; Straus & Gelles, 1990; Yllo, 1993). The women in this study have experienced many of these abusive behaviours, and are deemed by themselves and their counsellors to be victims of wife abuse.

Children's exposure to wife abuse does not always involve direct observation of violent incidents. It may consist of overhearing a physical confrontation or seeing the signs of violence on their mothers' bodies. Whether or not children actually see a man abuse their mother, they are exposed to wife abuse because they live in an environment where arguments, threats, and physical abuse occur. In families where wife abuse occurs, the home environment is strongly affected. Children live in constant fear and apprehension about when the next violent incident will occur. They are also exposed to parental models whose behaviour is strongly affected by the differential power each person holds. Due to the pervasive negative home environment these children often live in, researchers have described children's exposure to wife abuse as a form of psychological maltreatment or emotional abuse (Barnett et al., 1997). Brassard, Hart, and Hardy (1991) believe children are subjected to a form of psychological maltreatment called "terrorizing" when they are exposed to violence or threats directed toward family members (p. 256). Another category of psychological maltreatment, called "exploiting and corrupting" includes the modelling of antisocial acts and unrealistic roles, and encouraging or condoning "deviant standards or beliefs" (Brassard et al., 1997, p. 256). Exposure to wife abuse, in my opinion, falls into both of these categories, as children exposed to wife abuse are repeatedly exposed to verbal and

physical aggression, threats of violence against their mothers, models of violent behaviour, unrealistic sex-roles, and the acceptance of beliefs which condone violence against women.

The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (See Appendix A) classifies the items on its scales as masculine or feminine if they are considered more socially desirable for either men or women. Those items on the scales considered 'feminine' were judged by both men and women to be more socially desirable for a woman than a man; items considered "masculine" were those judged more socially desirable for a man than a woman (Bem, 1981).

Respondents are considered masculine when they scored high on the masculine scale and low on the feminine scale and considered feminine when they scored high on the feminine scale and low on the masculine scale.

Although the BSRI does not label masculine or feminine sex-typed individuals as "traditional", I use the term "traditional" in my description of participants if they score high on one sex-role dimension and low on the other because I believe that endorsement of one type of sex-role-specific behaviour at the expense of the other is "traditional" behaviour in that it fits with society's historical views of what comprises appropriate "male" or "female" behaviour.

Basow (1992) believes traditional sex-roles and sex-role stereotypes are not based on actual differences between the sexes, but on a differential power relationship between men and women. These traditional sex-role beliefs have the power to limit what men and women are able to do, and have a negative effect on both the individual and society (Basow, 1992). Families characterized by wife abuse often hold pervasive traditional sex-role beliefs which, if adopted by their children, may affect their relationships with others.

The intergenerational transmission of violence theory argues for “the propensity for exposure to aggression in one generation to increase the likelihood of aggressive behaviour in a later generation” (Doumas, Margolin, & John, 1994, p. 158). This theory analyzes the role of gender beliefs in the transmission of wife abuse, as individuals who endorse traditional gender beliefs are more likely to be either perpetrators or victims of wife abuse (Barnett et al., 1997; Choice et al., 1995; Dutton, Starzomski, & Ryan, 1996; Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Health & Welfare Canada, 1992; Kashani, Daniel, Dandoy & Holcomb, 1992; Moore, Pepler, Weinberg, Hammond, Waddell, & Weiser, 1990; Osofsky, 1995).

Scope and Limitations of Study

The current study is limited to an analysis of the sex-role beliefs of children exposed to wife abuse in one city. Despite the small local sample, this study may present valuable information on children exposed to wife abuse, due to the fact that regardless of where they live, children exposed to wife abuse experience similar fears and threats, and are exposed to models of violence, abuse, control, and power.

Outline of Thesis

Chapter two consists of an introduction to wife abuse theory, including prevalence rates, theoretical causes, sex-role beliefs of abusers and victims, and the effects of children’s exposure to incidents of wife abuse. I include such a thorough discussion of wife abuse in order to demonstrate the attitudes and behaviours common to families in which wife abuse occurs and to which the children in these families are exposed. I then focus on the issue of sex-role beliefs of children exposed to wife abuse, and in chapter three describe my study of

the sex-role beliefs of a group of children exposed to wife abuse. I statistically analyze the results of my study in chapter four, and discuss the implications of my findings in chapter five, including possible social consequences of children's incorporation of traditional sex-role beliefs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Wife Abuse

Wife abuse is one of today's most serious and widespread social problems, affecting people of all socioeconomic statuses, cultures, ages, and education levels. Estimates of wife abuse vary considerably. Health and Welfare Canada (1992) estimates that one in ten Canadian women is the victim of abuse by a male partner. Statistics Canada's 1993 study found that 29 percent of married women or those who have lived in a common-law relationship have been physically or sexually assaulted by their partners at least once (Women in Canada, 1995). This number does not include girlfriends or divorced women who have been assaulted, nor does it include those who did not report incidents of abuse against them. Nonetheless, this 29 percent represents at least one million Canadian women (Johnson, 1996).

Although wife abuse occurs in all types of relationships and among all types of people, Statistics Canada's Violence Against Women survey found numerous variables to be correlated with wife abuse. Despite conflicting evidence in the wife abuse literature regarding these variables, studies have found mild to moderate relationships between wife abuse and age, education, income, type of relationship, and the use of alcohol (Barnett et al., 1997; Dutton et al., 1996; Johnson, 1996; McCloskey, 1996). Young women between the ages of 18 and 24 appear to be more at risk of being victims of wife abuse, as do those in common-law relationships (Johnson, 1996; McCloskey, 1996). Couples of low socioeconomic status and education levels are somewhat more likely to be involved in

abusive relationships, although income and education appear to be less of a factor than age or type of relationship (Johnson, 1996; McCloskey, 1996). In addition, men who drink alcohol are more likely to assault their wives, and are much more likely to use severe violence against them (Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Johnson, 1996). Readers may refer to Barnett et al. (1997), Gelles & Cornell (1990), Johnson (1996), or McCloskey (1996) for a thorough analysis of factors associated with wife abuse.

Straus and Gelles (1990) have conducted extensive research on family violence using the Conflict Tactics Scales (See Appendix A), finding a high incidence of both husband and wife abuse. For some people, the occurrence of husband abuse calls into question the greater focus on wife abuse. Despite the discovery of approximately equal numbers of husband and wife abuse, women's abuse of men is often in self-defense (Cantos, Neidig, & O'Leary, 1994; Straus & Gelles, 1990). Furthermore, men's greater size and strength put women at increased risk of injury and hospitalization (Cantos et al., 1994). Studies consistently indicate that female victims are three times more likely than males to require medical attention for injuries sustained in spousal assaults (Cantos et al., 1994; Straus & Gelles, 1990). Violence by women against their male partners normally would not, and could not, have the same effect.

The power differences between men and women in society also function to put women in a vulnerable position regarding abuse. Relative to men, women remain financially disadvantaged, and are often more dependent on their partners for economic support, particularly when they have children. Unlike women, men can most often use violence without fear of physical retaliation or economic repercussions (Johnson, 1996).

Thus, although husband abuse is a problem for a minority of men, I chose to focus solely on wife abuse, as women are victims of spousal assault in far greater numbers than men.

Theoretical Analyses of Wife Abuse

Due to the emotional and political nature of this social problem, there is significant controversy and disagreement about possible causes of wife abuse. Numerous theories attempt to explain wife abuse, but no one theory is universally accepted as being the most fitting. The most comprehensive theories combine individual, social, and cultural factors in their analyses of wife abuse. The main theoretical approaches to describing and understanding wife abuse may be categorized as the psychological, the sociological, and the feminist approaches. Another recent theory is Dutton's analysis of borderline personality orientation and its relationship to wife abuse (Dutton et al., 1996).

Psychological Theory

The psychological perspective on wife abuse focuses on individual personality traits of the abuser as being responsible for the violence. Psychological disorders and mental illness are blamed for the actions of the perpetrator, who is labelled psychotic, paranoid, or sociopathic (Johnson, 1996). Abused women are then labelled masochists for staying with their partners (O'Leary, 1993). These psychiatric labels serve to decrease the responsibility of the perpetrator for his actions by placing it on the victim (O'Leary, 1993).

The value of the psychological approach to wife abuse lies in its analysis of the continuum of physical aggression. Psychological studies have found that as the severity of

violence increases, so too does the likelihood of the perpetrator's having some type of personality disorder (O'Leary, 1993). Though this finding may help account for abuse perpetrated by men with specific personality traits or disorders, it does not explain why men without such characteristics abuse their wives.

Psychological theory fails to account for the prevalence of wife abuse throughout society, and does not acknowledge the interplay of individual, social, and cultural factors in the etiology of wife abuse.

Sociological Theory

While proponents of the psychological theory focus on individual responsibility, sociologists focus on the influence of society, assigning blame to a world which allows and essentially condones violence against women. Sociologists argue that people do not act independently of their surroundings; they see people and their behaviour as influenced by aspects of their social environments including age, sex, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity (Gelles, 1993). Sociologists attempt to address the shortcomings of psychological theory by focusing on the structure of the family as a powerful influence on the occurrence of wife abuse (Gelles, 1993). Sociological theory attempts to integrate numerous family characteristics with social influences that they believe make the family prone to violence.

Systems theory is the primary sociological theory of family violence. It outlines various family characteristics that put the family at risk of family violence including: a) a large amount of time spent together; b) family involvement in a wide range of activities and interests; c) intensity of involvement; d) impinging activities; e) beliefs in the right to

influence family members' values, attitudes, and behaviours; f) potential for conflicts between generations and sexes due to age and sex differences; g) assignment of roles and responsibilities based on age and sex rather than interest or competence; h) family privacy and isolation from society; i) personal, social, material, and legal commitment to the family; j) susceptibility to stress through family changes and transitions; and k) intimacy and emotional involvement (Gelles, 1993, p. 36). Family systems theorists believe that the origins of the problem of violence lie in the nature of the family, not specifically in the relationships between husband and wife (Kurz, 1993).

The concepts of positive and negative feedback are integral to the systems theory of wife abuse. Positive feedback, such as the woman trying to increase her power in the relationship, cause change in the family system (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Negative feedback, such as the woman's staying with her abusive partner, functions to maintain the abusive family system. (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).

Systems theory fails to recognize the widespread social legitimization of men's control and violence against women, and does not account for the fact that the majority of spousal assault consists of men's abuse of their wives. If the belief of systems theorists that families are generally susceptible to violence against each other were true, one would assume that similar numbers of men and women would be the victims of abuse. However, women are overwhelmingly the victims of family violence, due at least in part to the unequal power of husbands and wives (Kurz, 1993; Yllo, 1993).

Feminist theorists criticize systems theory for its suggestion that violence between family members is a matter of conflict of interest rather than one of male power and

domination (Kurz, 1993; Yllo, 1993). They argue that family violence is a “tactic of entitlement and power that is deeply gendered, rather than a conflict tactic that is personal and gender-neutral” (Yllo, 1993, p. 57). Systems theory does not incorporate social realities regarding women’s lack of power relative to that of men. Socialization of gender theories, particularly gender schema theory, attempt to address this issue by studying men’s and women’s differential status in relationships.

Socialization of Gender Theories

Developmental psychologists view the childhood socialization process as one in which parents teach or transmit rules and expectations to their children (Jacklin & Reynolds, 1993). Social learning theory and gender schema theory are the two dominant theories in this area.

Social learning theory

For many years, social learning theory has dominated children’s socialization research. Its analysis of modelling forms a succinct and comprehensive theory describing the process by which children incorporate many of their parents’ values, attitudes, and behaviours. Children are known to imitate the behaviour of others, especially others who are similar to them in some way. Boys will imitate their fathers, while girls pattern their behaviour after their mothers. Children are more likely to imitate the same forms of violence they are exposed to (Choice et al., 1995). If children are exposed to role models of male violence and female victimization and repeat the behaviours typical of abusers or victims, there may be predictable and frightening consequences.

Children exposed to wife abuse develop either passive or aggressive problem-solving strategies (Copping, 1996; Tutty & Wagar, 1994). Given the tendency for children to imitate similar or same-sex models, female children may be more likely to become passive in situations of conflict, and boys more likely to become aggressive.

Studies have found a positive relationship between men's exposure to their fathers' violence and the tendency to use violence against their own wives (Barnett et al., 1997; Choice et al., 1995; Dutton et al., 1996; Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Health & Welfare Canada, 1992; Kashani et al., 1992; Moore et al., 1990; Osofsky, 1995). Social learning theory attempts to explain this apparent intergenerational transmission of violence, suggesting that children exposed to wife abuse learn that violence is an acceptable way to deal with conflict.

Despite the consensus among researchers that violence is transmitted intergenerationally, social learning theory does not, in itself, adequately account for the prevalence of wife abuse throughout society. Specifically, the social acceptance of wife abuse and the perpetration and victimization of individuals who were not exposed to wife abuse as children are not addressed. In addition, many children exposed to wife abuse are not involved in abusive relationships as adults, despite the powerful influence of parental role models.

Gender schema theory

Gender schema theory attempts to address the shortcomings of social learning theory by explaining that children are not passive imitators of abusive behaviours. Rather, proponents of gender schema theory see children as using a process of "selective cognition"

in their formation of gender schemas (Jacklin & Reynolds, 1993, p. 200). A schema is a set of ideas that an individual uses to organize and filter information (Jacklin & Reynolds, 1993). Children develop gender schemas based on the information they receive relating to gender, allowing them to sort people, behaviour, and attributes into society's definitions of masculinity and femininity (Jacklin & Reynolds, 1993). Children exposed to wife abuse may therefore develop gender schemas which pair violence with masculinity and victimization with femininity. Children's "male" category will thus reflect the greater power men have in families and in society (Jacklin & Reynolds, 1993).

Gender schema theory incorporates the role of gender in social learning but does not sufficiently address the consequences of patriarchy for men and women as thoroughly as feminist theory does. Yllo (1993) does not see distinctions between men and women as inherent or functional; they are social constructs which create and maintain male power within the family. The social constructions of masculinity and femininity which serve to increase the power of men at the expense of women need to be altered to create a more equal and respectful balance of power in the family, which in turn would decrease the likelihood of wife abuse occurring.

Feminist Theory

In recent years, feminist theory has become the dominant theoretical model in the study of wife abuse (Gelles & Loseke, 1993). The feminist perspective challenges the psychological and sociological perspectives by moving beyond individual and social problems associated with wife abuse to focus on the effects of gender socialization and

patriarchy on men and women. Feminist theory lends itself well to integration with other theories, combining several components of social learning theory and gender schema theory to create a comprehensive theory of the history, causes, and effects of wife abuse. Feminist theorists agree with social learning theorists and gender schema theorists that men and women are socialized to develop sex-typed beliefs and attitudes. However, feminists attribute the prevalence of such beliefs and attitudes to social laws and practices that implicitly and explicitly approve of males' greater power (Johnson, 1996). Feminists argue that wife abuse cannot be adequately understood unless gender and power are taken into account (Yllo, 1993).

According to feminists, the patriarchal social system is responsible for both men's and women's gender-role socialization. Patriarchy refers to social structures that enable men to feel entitled to power and control in their relationships (Johnson, 1996; McCue, 1995; Smith, 1990). Feminists believe society views men as the dominant class, with women placed in a secondary and inferior position (McCue, 1995). In this view, society defines men as "dominant, strong, authoritarian, and aggressive", while women are traditionally viewed as "dependent, passive, and submissive" (McCue, 1995, p. 13). Feminists consider social acceptance and the condoning of male superiority and aggression to be solely responsible for violence against women. They see women's victimization as a social problem based on the psychological control and physical domination of women by men, and believe wife abuse can only be eliminated when women and men are truly equal (Yllo, 1993).

Proponents of the feminist theory believe male violence against women exists to such an extent due to society's and the family's view of men as having higher status and more

power and authority than women (Johnson, 1996). Families are affected by patriarchy in that they often “embody traditions, roles, and beliefs about the proper place for men and women and thus provide(s) both the structure and an ideology that endorses a higher status role for men” (Johnson, 1996, p. 158). Wife abuse occurs as a natural result of this unequal relationship between men and women.

Feminists argue that early sex-role socialization conditions girls to become submissive victims, while boys learn to act as perpetrators of violence (McCue, 1995). They learn that “violence is the basis of power and control in families, that women have fewer rights and less value than men, and that fathers have a right to use violence against their wives” (Johnson, 1996, p. 172).

Feminist theory has found much support through empirical and conceptual research. Gender inequality may explain variations in the incidence and rates of wife abuse (Gelles, 1993). However, psychological, sociological, and biopsychosocial theorists find its focus on patriarchy limited (Dutton et al., 1996; Gelles, 1993; O’Leary, 1993). These theorists believe feminist theory focuses on gender and patriarchy at the expense of other important aspects of wife abuse. Feminists themselves agree with some of the criticism of their theory, as they recognize that no one theory can adequately explain why only some men abuse their wives (Yllo, 1993). Feminists support continued research into the many factors associated with wife abuse, such as low income and education, stress, alcohol use, and childhood exposure to wife abuse (Yllo, 1993).

Abusive Personality Theory

Dutton's recent theory correlating borderline personality orientation with wife abuse attempts to integrate biological, psychological, and social characteristics of abusive men (Dutton et al., 1996). The "abusive personality" theory suggests that a combination of characteristics and life experiences make certain men more likely to become abusive (Dutton et al., 1996). Specifically, his study found that abusive men scored significantly higher than a control group of non-abusive men on measures of childhood exposure to wife abuse, abusive behaviour, and abusive personality (Dutton et al., 1996).

Past research has often focused on only one variable, such as psychological disorders, the social environment, family characteristics, modelling, or gender beliefs in its analysis of wife abuse. The implications of Dutton's research are that family violence researchers need to consider the effects of more than one variable on men's likelihood of being abusive and develop methods of assessing various characteristics and experiences of abusive men.

Summary of Theoretical Analyses of Wife Abuse

Although theories of family violence in general differ with regard to their conceptual focus, all support the integration of different aspects of their theories. Psychological theorists recognize the limits of psychological characteristics as the cause of wife abuse, as most men who abuse their wives do not have any psychological disorder. However, they also recognize that psychological factors are often involved in cases of severe violence. Sociological theorists see the strength of their perspective as the understanding of family characteristics which make families vulnerable to violence. Social learning theory builds on sociological

theory by considering the process through which children incorporate attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of their parents, and gender schema theory takes this model further by analyzing gender effects in greater detail. Feminist theory moves beyond individual and familial beliefs about gender to focus on the effects of patriarchy for both men and women. Feminists do not see sexism as one factor in the etiology of wife abuse; they believe it is an encompassing feature of the phenomenon of violence against women. Dutton's argument for the existence of an abusive personality brings together biological, psychological, and experiential factors to account for the prevalence of wife abuse, and shows much promise for use in future wife abuse research.

Taken together, these theories illustrate the complexity of the issue of wife abuse. Many variables are involved in its creation, maintenance, and elimination. Studying children exposed to wife abuse is one way to develop our understanding of this social problem, as each theory identifies the increased likelihood of children who are exposed to wife abuse becoming involved in abusive relationships later in life.

Theoretical Perspective of Current Study

Despite the distinct theoretical focus of each of the above theories of wife abuse, they are united in their belief that childhood exposure to wife abuse is a risk marker for involvement in abusive relationships as adults, as either the perpetrator or victim of violence. There are many paths by which children exposed to wife abuse may incorporate beliefs condoning violence in relationships. Systems theorists argue that the family system is vulnerable to abuse due to its inherent organizational and structural characteristics.

Socialization of gender theories agree that the family has a powerful influence over children's behaviour, but focus specifically on modelling and gender schemas to explain why violent couples are most often comprised of male abusers and female victims. Feminist theory expands the analysis of gender in its theory of social and familial patriarchy, arguing that boys exposed to wife abuse may learn attitudes common to perpetrators of violence and girls exposed to wife abuse may learn those common to victims. Dutton et al. (1996) found boys' childhood exposure to wife abuse to be correlated with abusing their wives in adulthood.

These theories lead directly to my research questions by suggesting that childhood exposure to wife abuse is a critical factor in the development of abusive adult relationships. However, they do not identify the specific sex role beliefs and attitudes which may make children exposed to wife abuse vulnerable to involvement in abusive relationships as adults.

My study integrates concepts of family systems theory, social learning theory, gender schema theory, feminist theory, and abusive personality theory in an attempt to analyze possible relationships between traditional sex-role beliefs and children's exposure to wife abuse.

Sex-Role Beliefs of Male Abusers and Female Victims

Researchers are often interested in personality characteristics of abusers and their victims. However, because wife abuse exists in every facet of society, there is much variation in such characteristics. Abusive men and their female victims are not easily recognized or identified. They come from all educational and economic levels, races, religions, and backgrounds, lending further credibility to the feminist idea that men's

violence against women is taught, developed, and practised throughout society (McCue, 1995).

One characteristic often present in families characterized by wife abuse is a belief in traditional sex roles. Beliefs about the rights of husbands to assert control over wives form a component of battering relationships (Johnson, 1996). Men who abuse their wives often feel entitled to control and dominate their partners. Traditional, sex-typed beliefs reflect themes of power and control which are common in abusive relationships. Extensive studies have been conducted on types of male batterers, and despite the great variety of characteristics within this group, it is united by a belief in male superiority. As early as 1979, Walker identified a belief in male superiority as a trait typical of abusive men. Since then, other researchers have substantiated this finding.

DeKeserdy and Kelly (1993) conducted a study of abusive men's beliefs and attitudes toward women. Specifically, they questioned whether men who believe they have the right to dominate women in relationships have higher rates of wife abuse than those who hold more egalitarian beliefs. Results from the sample of 1307 male college and university students showed that although most students did not believe in male dominance, those who did were most likely to physically assault their partners (DeKeserdy & Kelly, 1993).

Hurley and Jaffe (1990) found that violent families are typified by an unequal power relationship between husband and wife. They identified strong patriarchal influences in the family, which function to increase the power of the male perpetrator.

Michael Smith, a Canadian sociologist, conducted a study using a random sample of women, asking them to consider their husbands' beliefs regarding their right to control and

dominate women in intimate relationships (1990). He found support for the hypothesis that men who endorse their right to dominate women would have higher rates of wife abuse. The results from the 600 female respondents showed that men who hold traditional beliefs and condone violence against women in the family are more likely to behave violently toward marital partners than men who hold more egalitarian beliefs. Smith's study found both traditional sex-role beliefs and attitudes approving of violence against women to be statistically significant predictors of whether a man ever abused his wife. The stronger those beliefs, the greater the probability that the wife had been beaten.

Despite the demonstrated relationship between traditional beliefs and the likelihood of men abusing their wives, it is important to note that a much larger proportion of men hold traditional beliefs (18-53%) than abuse their wives (3-20%) (Johnson, 1996, p. 160). The identification of traditional sex-role beliefs as a common denominator in the personality characteristics of male abusers is not enough to say that it causes wife abuse.

Estimates of Children Exposed to Wife Abuse

Estimates of children exposed to wife abuse are usually based on parents' reports, especially those of the mothers. Studies have shown that parents often underestimate the extent of their children's exposure, perhaps due to an unwillingness to consider the harmful effects of their behaviour on their children (Sternberg, Lamb, Greenbaum, Cicchetti, Dawud, Cortes, Krispin, & Lorey, 1993). Parents may assume that their children are unaware of the abuse, particularly if the incidents occur while the children are believed to be sleeping, or while they are in another room. However, interviews with children of abused women have

found that almost all can describe incidents of wife abuse that their parents did not know they had been exposed to (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990). A recent study of fathers', mothers', and children's reports of children's exposure to wife abuse found that although mothers' and fathers' reports were similar, parents' and children's were quite different (O'Brien, John, Margolin, & Erel, 1994). Apparently, estimates of how much wife abuse children are exposed to depends on who is asked.

A national survey of abused women residing in shelters found that 25 percent thought their children had been exposed to their abuse (Tomkins, Mohamed, Steinman, Macolini, Kenning, & Afrank, 1994). In a study of married women who were victims of wife abuse, 39 percent said their children had been witnesses (Johnson, 1996). Wolfe and Jaffe (1991) found that children observed 68% of wife assaults in which charges were laid and Health and Welfare Canada (1992) estimates that children are exposed to as many as 80% of all incidents of wife abuse. Jaffe, Wolfe, and Wilson (1990) believe that due to underreporting of wife abuse, 3.3 million is a conservative estimate of the number of Canadian children exposed to wife abuse each year. These numbers reflect the severity and potential impact of wife abuse, not only for the direct victims of the physical violence, but for their children as well.

Effects of Children's Exposure to Wife Abuse

The effects of wife abuse are often apparent on the female victims; physical bruises and injuries, emotional distress, and feelings of hopelessness are common. Recent studies of children exposed to wife abuse describe a wide range of problems, with some children seemingly unaffected, and others displaying clinical levels of behavioural, physical, and

psychological problems. Exposure to wife abuse affects children's health, thoughts, feelings, and actions in a number of negative ways. Table 1 outlines the findings of several recent studies of children exposed to wife abuse.

Table 1: Behavioural, Physical, and Psychological Effects of Exposure to Wife Abuse

Effect	Reference
<u>Behavioural Effects:</u>	
<u>a) internalizing:</u>	
anxiety	Hughes, Parkinson, & Vargo, 1989; Hurley & Jaffe, 1990; Kashani et al., 1992; Moore et al., 1990; Osofsky, 1995; Tutty & Wagar, 1994
withdrawal	Moore et al., 1990; Tapp & Hinish, 1992
passivity	Hurley & Jaffe, 1990; Suh & Abel, 1990; Tapp & Hinish, 1992
<u>b) externalizing:</u>	
aggression	Fantuzzo et al., 1991; Hurley & Jaffe, 1990; Kashani et al., 1992; Moore et al., 1990; Suh & Abel, 1990; Tapp & Hinish, 1992
impulsivity	Hurley & Jaffe, 1990; Tapp & Hinish, 1992
delinquency	Fantuzzo et al., 1991; Moore et al., 1990
<u>Physical effects:</u>	
somatic problems	Moore et al., 1990; O'Keefe, 1994; Tutty & Wagar, 1994
poor sleep habits	Kashani et al., 1992; Osofsky, 1995; Tapp & Hinish, 1992
enuresis	Fantuzzo et al., 1991
nightmares	Fantuzzo et al., 1991; Kashani et al., 1992; Tapp & Hinish, 1992
stomach aches, headaches, ulcers	McCue, 1995; Tapp & Hinish, 1992
<u>Psychological effects:</u>	
depression	Fantuzzo et al., 1991; Moore et al., 1990; O'Keefe,

	1994; Sternberg et al., 1993; Tutty & Wagar, 1994
irritability	Kashani et al., 1992
decreased attention and concentration, intrusive thoughts	Osofsky, 1995
low self-esteem	Fantuzzo et al., 1991; Moore et al., 1990; Tutty & Wagar, 1994
powerlessness	Moore et al., 1990
limited empathy and poor prosocial competence	Fantuzzo et al., 1991; Hurley & Jaffe, 1990; Osofsky, 1995
constricted and inhibited emotions	Hurley & Jaffe, 1990; Kashani et al., 1992
post-traumatic stress disorder, negative self-image	Osofsky, 1995

Gender Differences in Behavioural Effects

Behavioural effects of exposure to wife abuse fall into two categories: a) internalizing behaviours, and b) externalizing behaviours. Many studies find boys more likely to display externalizing symptoms than girls, while others do not reveal gender effects related to exposure to wife abuse. Jaffe, Wilson, & Wolfe (1988) and Jaffe, Wolfe, and Wilson (1990) found that boys exposed to wife abuse displayed problem behaviours similar to boys who had been abused themselves, becoming aggressive, disobedient, and destructive.

While boys often express the effects of exposure to wife abuse openly, girls may become passive or withdrawn (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990). Girls express the trauma of being exposed to their mothers' abuse differently than boys, becoming "passive and withdrawn as they witness the assaults and see that their mothers are powerless to stop them"

(Johnson, 1996, p. 172). However, the invisible effects on girls may eventually express themselves externally during adolescence in the form of aggression, rebellion, and high-risk behaviour (Henning, Leitenberg, Covery, Turner, & Bennett, 1996 ; Tapp & Hinish, 1992). Immediately following an incident of abuse, young girls may become withdrawn, but they often show aggressive and impulsive behaviour later in life, particularly in adolescence.

O'Keefe (1994) found boys and girls to be equally at risk for externalizing and internalizing problems, demonstrating that boys do not necessarily react aggressively and girls passively. Regardless of who reacts aggressively and who reacts passively, both internalizing and externalizing behaviours lead to increased difficulties for these children, as aggression and impulsivity may isolate them from peers, and withdrawal and passivity can have a powerful effect on self-esteem, problem-solving abilities, and the ability to express feelings.

Many factors are involved in the interplay among children's health, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. After continued exposure to wife abuse, children may believe they are powerless. They may soon begin to act as such, becoming either withdrawn and passive or aggressive and impulsive. These behaviours increase the risk of health problems and may lead to poor relationship development, which has continued long-term consequences for them as they grow up.

Sex-Role Beliefs and the Intergenerational Transmission of Violence Theory

The intergenerational transmission of violence theory is often debated in contemporary research, especially as it applies to wife abuse. Like any other theory of wife

abuse, it does not sufficiently explain and account for the prevalence of wife abuse in society and throughout familial generations. Nonetheless, research in the field of wife abuse consistently finds a greater frequency of wife abuse among adults who were exposed to wife abuse as children (Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Hurley & Jaffe, 1990; Jaffe, Hurley, & Wolfe, 1990; Jaffe, Wilson, & Wolfe, 1988). Men exposed to wife abuse as children demonstrate greater proclivity for perpetrating wife abuse, while women exposed to wife abuse as children are more likely to be victimized.

The presence of traditional sex-role beliefs is one factor which contributes to the negative cycle of wife abuse, as children adapt and incorporate their parents' sex-role beliefs (Brassard et al., 1991; Health & Welfare Canada, 1992; Hurley & Jaffe, 1990; Kashani et al., 1992; Moore et al., 1990; Osofsky, 1995; Tapp & Hinich, 1992). From an early age, boys are commonly taught to be tough, and girls to be submissive. These lessons are not solely taught in the family; children are bombarded with sex-role stereotypes on television, in movies, in literature, and in sports. However, children exposed to wife abuse in their homes are often exposed to the extreme forms of these stereotypes. Boys are exposed to models of power, dominance, and control, and girls to models of passivity, subordination, and vulnerability. The direct modelling of such behaviours in the family is a powerful force which adds to the daily exposure to and influence of other types of sex-role stereotyping.

Growing up in male-dominated families where wife abuse occurs affects children and their understanding of gender roles. If the family has traditional sex-role beliefs and expectations, girls are trained to pattern their behaviour after their mothers, and boys are taught to expect the same authority and privileges as their fathers (Tapp & Hinich, 1992).

Hurley and Jaffe (1990) found that children assimilate attitudes and values that perpetuate the cycle of violence in the family, particularly those that foster and condone aggression toward women. When attitudes of an individual are shaped that support the use of physical force against a woman, physical aggression is much more likely (O'Leary, 1993). While many men and women do not endorse violence against women, others' attitudes are more strongly influenced by a society which suggests that violence against wives is acceptable (O'Leary, 1993). Children exposed to wife abuse learn that violence is an appropriate way to resolve conflict and that men's violence toward women can be rationalized and accepted (Health & Welfare Canada, 1992; Hurley & Jaffe, 1990; Kashani et al., 1992; Moore et al., 1990; Osofsky, 1995). They are therefore more likely to use violence themselves, and internalize these lessons about conflict, power, control, and the differential value and privileges of the genders (Tapp & Hinich, 1992).

There are serious consequences to children's exposure to their parents' sex-role beliefs and attitudes about violence in relationships. Numerous researchers have found that children identify with their parents based on gender and will use their parents' relationship as a model for their own future relationships (Groves, Zuckerman, Marans, & Cohen, 1993; Hurley & Jaffe, 1990; Jaffe, Hurley, & Wolfe, 1990). When children are exposed to the abuse of their mothers, they may rationalize the abuse, believing, "the man is boss," "she provoked it," and "you have to put up with it" (Hurley & Jaffe, 1990, p. 472). Jaffe, Hurley, and Wolfe (1990) suggest that when boys identify with a violent father and girls identify with an abused mother, they may develop attitudes and behaviours common to perpetrators and victims of violence, respectively. When parents deal with conflict through aggression or

withdrawal, boys may learn to deal with relationship conflict through aggressive means, and girls through passive means (Tutty & Wagar, 1994). This places children exposed to wife abuse at risk for responding with violence or being victimized in adult relationships (Tutty & Wagar, 1994).

Perhaps due to a lack of appropriate role models, these children do not develop conflict resolution skills, nor do they have the ability to avoid the use of violence and aggression during a conflict (Johnson, 1996; Moore et al., 1990). Therefore, they may be more likely to become involved in abusive relationships in their teenage or young adult years, setting up a pattern of relating to partners that involves the use of intimidation, control, and violence by perpetrators and eventual submission and passivity by victims.

Studies have found a relationship between childhood exposure to violence and future involvement in abusive relationships (Barnett et al., 1997; Choice et al., 1995; Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Johnson, 1996). Boys exposed to wife abuse may carry lessons about gender and power into adulthood and perpetuate the cycle of violence by abusing their own wives (Health & Welfare Canada, 1992). Men exposed to their mothers' abuse were up to three times more likely to abuse their own wives compared to men who grew up in non-violent homes. The Statistics Canada 1993 Violence Against Women Survey found that in its telephone sample of 12,300 women, 36 percent of the women's abusive male partners had been exposed to wife abuse as children, compared to 12 percent of men who had not been exposed to wife abuse as children (Johnson, 1996). Boys exposed to the abuse of their mothers learn the attitudes and behaviours typical of abusive men, which make them

significantly more likely to become abusive as adults (Johnson, 1996; Straus & Gelles, 1990).

Girls are powerfully affected by childhood exposure to their mothers' abuse, as they see their fathers' assaults and their mothers' apparent inability to stop the abuse. These experiences may teach girls that abuse is something they must endure. If violence occurs in their adult relationships, girls may feel powerless to stop it (Health & Welfare Canada, 1992; Henning et al., 1996).

The Canadian Violence Against Women Survey found that women exposed to wife abuse as children experienced abuse by their husbands at a rate almost twice as high as women who grew up without such exposure (Johnson, 1996). The pattern was also strong in the women's previous battering relationships, where 67 percent of women exposed to wife abuse as children experienced it as adults, compared to 43 percent of women not exposed to wife abuse in childhood (Johnson, 1996). Neither gender is immune to the consequences of witnessing wife abuse.

The above evidence provides support for the intergenerational transmission of violence theory. However, caution must be taken before accepting it as a causal explanation for this phenomenon. Many men exposed to wife abuse as children do not grow up to abuse their wives, and many abusive men were never exposed to wife abuse as children (Johnson, 1996; O'Keefe, 1994). While there is a relationship between childhood exposure to wife abuse and future involvement in abusive relationships, the lack of a perfect association suggests that there are other factors involved. Thus, while there is empirical support for the theory that violence is transmitted from one generation to another through modelling and the

incorporation of traditional sex-role beliefs, other factors may intervene to break or start the cycle. O'Keefe (1994) believes that learning to perpetuate or endure wife abuse is a developmental and interactive process that involves more than modelling certain parental behaviours. Exposure to wife abuse is not the only factor which increases the risk for violence in intimate relationships, but it is an important one (Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Moore et al., 1990).

Rationale for Present Study

The present study attempts to fill a gap in the research on children exposed to wife abuse. While we know that children exposed to wife abuse are at risk of numerous behavioural, physical, and psychological problems, our knowledge of the effects of exposure to wife abuse on their sex-role beliefs remains limited.

Although several studies suggest that a belief in traditional sex roles is a risk marker for involvement in abusive relationships, no studies have been conducted which focus specifically on the gender beliefs of children exposed to wife abuse. Investigating this unexplored area of research could be a critical step in our understanding of the possible intergenerational transmission of wife abuse. If wife abuse is transmitted intergenerationally, children are indeed the most appropriate focus for prevention. Since sex-role beliefs are learned rather than inherited, we have the ability to teach children more egalitarian views which would decrease their risk of becoming involved in abusive relationships as adults.

Children exposed to wife abuse are by no means predetermined to be perpetrators or victims of wife abuse. By studying their experiences of wife abuse and the subsequent

impact on their sex-role beliefs, we can develop a better understanding of the invisible ways in which wife abuse is harming children and may be setting them up for serious relationship problems as adults.

Hypotheses

My research question asked whether children exposed to wife abuse view themselves as more traditionally masculine or feminine than children not exposed to wife abuse. I broke this question into one hypotheses for each gender, and then tested each hypothesis using scores on the masculine and feminine scales of the Children's Sex Role Inventory (CSRI).

The first hypothesis stated that boys exposed to wife abuse view themselves as more masculine and less feminine than boys not exposed to wife abuse. Hypothesis 1(a) compared the masculinity scores of the boys exposed to wife abuse (EWA) with those of the boys not exposed to wife abuse (NEWA).

$$H_0: \mu_{b-cwa(M)} = \mu_{b-ncwa(M)}$$

$$H_{1a}: \mu_{b-cwa(M)} \neq \mu_{b-ncwa(M)}$$

Hypothesis 1(b) compared the femininity scores of the boys exposed to wife abuse with those of the boys not exposed to wife abuse.

$$H_0: \mu_{b-cwa(F)} = \mu_{b-ncwa(F)}$$

$$H_{1b}: \mu_{b-cwa(F)} \neq \mu_{b-ncwa(F)}$$

The second hypothesis stated that girls exposed to wife abuse view themselves as more feminine and less masculine than girls not exposed to wife abuse. Hypothesis 2(a) compared the masculinity scores of the girls exposed to wife abuse with those of the girls not exposed to wife abuse.

$$H_0: \mu_{g-cwa(M)} = \mu_{g-ncwa(M)}$$

$$H_{2a}: \mu_{g-cwa(M)} \neq \mu_{g-ncwa(M)}$$

Hypothesis 2(b) compared the femininity scores of the girls exposed to wife abuse with those of the girls not exposed to wife abuse.

$$H_0: \mu_{g-cwa(F)} = \mu_{g-ncwa(F)}$$

$$H_{2b}: \mu_{g-cwa(F)} \neq \mu_{g-ncwa(F)}$$

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

Research on wife abuse, the effects of children's exposure to wife abuse, and sex-role theory form the basis of hypothesized relationships between exposure to wife abuse and the presence of traditional sex-role beliefs. A purposive clinical sample composed of families who had experienced wife abuse was obtained and compared to a control group. Using a between-groups approach, Child Sex Role Inventory (CSRI) scores of children exposed to wife abuse were compared to those of a comparison group of children not exposed to wife abuse in order to investigate whether children exposed to wife abuse hold more traditional sex-role beliefs than children not exposed to wife abuse (Boldizar, 1991) (See Appendix A). The two specific hypotheses are: a) boys exposed to wife abuse hold more traditional masculine sex-role beliefs than boys not exposed to wife abuse, and b) girls exposed to wife abuse hold more traditional feminine sex-role beliefs than girls not exposed to wife abuse.

While this study can not determine a causal relationship between exposure to wife abuse and the development of traditional sex-role beliefs, investigating possible relationships is important. Knowledge about how exposure to wife abuse affects children's sex-role beliefs may improve our understanding of how abusive relationships begin, develop, and are maintained.

Recruitment of Treatment Group Participants

The treatment portion of the sample was obtained from client populations at three community mental health agencies in Prince George, BC. The first agency is a children's mental health agency, the second provides services to families who have experienced wife

abuse, and the third conducts a variety of women's programs. The agencies will hereafter be referred to as Agencies A, B, and C, respectively. All families in the treatment group had received mental health services from at least one of these agencies within the past year. Exploration of the children's sex-role beliefs was not a formal component of any of these services.

I initially contacted the families in the treatment group by letter. On December 4, 1996, 46 letters were mailed to clients from Agency A and 25 were distributed by the program coordinator at Agency B. The letter described the study and outlined participation requirements and the guarantee of confidentiality (see Appendix B). Interested women were asked to contact me at their earliest convenience to arrange completion of the questionnaires. After one month, two women had responded to the letter, both of whom chose not to participate. Eleven letters were returned by the post office.

Forty-four follow-up letters were mailed on January 17, 1997 reminding Agency A clients of the study and clients at Agency B received a verbal reminder from the program coordinator (see Appendix B). I informed the six women who responded to the second letter and wished to participate that they would receive 20 dollars to cover transportation and child care costs incurred by participation.

Beginning January 24, 1997, 25 letters were distributed to clients by four group facilitators at Agency C and one letter was posted on the agency's bulletin board. The letter informed women that they would receive 20 dollars to cover transportation and child care costs incurred by participation (see Appendix B). One woman contacted me and agreed to participate. Table 2 lists the numbers of women and children who came from each agency.

Table 2: Number of Treatment Group Women and Children from Each Agency

Agency	Participants	
	Women	Children
A	6	10
B	1*	2*
C	1*	2*
Total	7	12
* one family received letters from both Agency B and C		

Exclusionary criteria for treatment group participation included: a) the child's living in foster care, b) ongoing wife abuse in the family, and c) the child's not being between the ages of 6 and 12. I spoke to the mothers about these criteria before meeting the family. Therefore, no treatment group participants were excluded from the study once it began.

Recruitment of Comparison Group Participants

The comparison group included 12 children who had not been exposed to any form of abuse against their mothers. Seven of the families volunteered to participate after learning about the study through a letter distributed to each student in grades one to seven at an elementary school in Prince George, BC on April 30, 1997 (see Appendix C). Eight teachers distributed a total of 213 letters to students and parents later returned the completed form to the school where I collected them and contacted the women by telephone. Six women agreed to participate, while six others declined.

Two weeks later, teachers distributed follow-up letters reminding parents of the study and asking interested women to contact me directly (see Appendix C). One woman responded to this letter and agreed to participate.

I also posted a copy of the original recruitment letter on the bulletin board at Agency A inviting families to participate as part of the comparison group (see Appendix C). One woman contacted me in response to this letter and agreed to participate.

Exclusionary criteria for comparison group participation included: a) the child's living in foster care, b) wife abuse in the family at any point in the child's life, and c) the child's not being between the ages of 6 and 12. No families who volunteered for the comparison group were excluded from the study.

Independent Variable

The independent variable in this study, exposure to wife abuse, was operationalized in several ways. All child participants from Agency A were identified by their therapists as having been exposed to acts of violence against their mothers by a male partner. The two child participants recruited from Agency B participated in the agency's program for children exposed to wife abuse and their mother participated in a support group for women and couples who have experienced wife abuse. These programs do not specifically address sex-role beliefs in their curricula, and therefore are not believed to have affected the children's perceptions of sex roles. The woman who learned of the study through her involvement at Agency C was self-identified as having experienced abuse to which her two children were exposed.

While it would be valuable to have the children describe the violence they have been exposed to, asking children to recall and describe incidents of violence against their mothers raises numerous concerns. Based on the age of the child participants and on the desire to

protect them from possible harm or emotional trauma, I chose to rely solely on mothers' reports of violence witnessed by their children.

To assess the degree to which each child was exposed to wife abuse, the mothers completed one adapted version of the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) for each of their children participating in the study (Straus, 1979) (see Appendix A). All items regarding verbal or physical aggression were prefaced with the question, "How many times has your partner or ex-partner done the following in front of (child's name) (within sight or hearing)?" Different time frames accompanied each item to increase the accuracy of mothers' recollection of specific incidents of abuse. For example, one item asked, "During a conflict with you, how many times has your partner or ex-partner *insulted or sworn at you* in front of (child's name)?" The woman then chose the appropriate category of: 0, 1, 2, 3-5, 6-10, 11-20, or more than 20 for each of four time frames (the past 6 months, the past 12 months, the past 5 years, or ever). For the purposes of data analysis, the women's answers were converted to the median number of each interval. Answers of 3-5 were scored as a 4, 6-10 as 8, 11-20 as 15, and more than 20 as 25.

Grych, Seid, and Fincham (1992) believe that parent reports may not provide accurate estimates of children's exposure to violence. They refer to studies in which parents were found to either underestimate or overestimate children's awareness of conflict between their parents (Grych et al., 1992). Parents often assume that children are not aware of conflict which occurs in another room of the house, or while the children are believed to be asleep (Grych et al., 1992, p.559). In other cases, parents falsely believe that their children are aware of more subtle conflict between parents (Grych et al., 1992, p.559).

The families participating in the treatment group have acknowledged that wife abuse is an issue in their families which may have affected their children's behaviour. These women, by participating in a study about violence against women, are taking an active step towards recognizing the effects of wife abuse on their children, and are therefore believed to be making an honest attempt to estimate the extent of abuse witnessed. In addition, a precise estimate of abuse witnessed is not necessary for this study, as I am studying possible relationships between the three types of abuse witnessed (verbal abuse, mild violence, and severe violence) and each child's score on the CSRI.

I followed a standard procedure for collecting information from all participants. The mothers and children in both groups were given the same instructions for completion of their questionnaires, and all experienced the same debriefing procedure. Because it was not possible for me to be blind to each child's condition, I maintained a standard procedure by following a general script for the children's completion of the CSRI (see Appendix D).

Instruments

The mothers in both the treatment and comparison group completed four questionnaires: a) a demographic questionnaire, b) the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) (Straus, 1979), c) an adapted version of the CTS (Straus, 1979), and d) the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1981) (Appendix A). The children completed one instrument, the Child Sex Role Inventory¹ (Boldizar, 1991) (see Appendix A).

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire was designed to collect information about each family's members, socioeconomic status, occupation, education level, and history of abusive relationships. This information was then used to compare the treatment and comparison groups.

Conflict Tactics Scales

The Conflict Tactics Scales (1979) are well-known and frequently used instruments for measuring verbal and physical family violence. Respondents estimate how many times various incidents of reasoning, verbal aggression, and physical aggression have occurred in their families.

Reliability values of internal consistency range from .42 to .76 for the reasoning scale, and from .62 to .88 for the verbal violence scale (Bagarozzi & Schumm, 1989, p. 166). Straus has compiled a list of studies which used the CTS and found alpha values ranging from .42 to .50 for the reasoning scale, .62 to .80 for the verbal aggression scale, and .69 to .88 for the violence scale (Straus & Gelles, 1990, p. 64).

The low reliability of the reasoning scale is largely due to the fact that it is composed of only three items. In the present study, the reasoning items were not relevant to the hypotheses, and were therefore not analyzed. Thus, their low reliability will not affect the results of this study.

The conceptual focus of the scales is the physical violence scale, which displays the highest reliability of the three scales, with values ranging from .42 to .96 (Bagarozzi &

Schumm, 1989, p.166). Only 5 of 17 studies using the CTS have shown alpha coefficients of less than .80 for the physical violence subscale (Bagarozzi & Schumm, 1989, p. 166). The high reliability of the physical violence subscale is crucial, as this is the scale of most importance to the present study.

Concurrent validity of the subscales has been established through correlations between individual family members' reports of violence and by husbands and wives completing the scales in reference to their relationships (Bagarozzi & Schumm, 1989; Straus & Gelles, 1990, p.40). Large differences found between husbands' and wives' reports of violence reflect common under-reporting by perpetrators (Straus & Gelles, 1990, p. 69). In this study, the women's reports of violence provide the only estimate of violence witnessed by the children. Because the violence itself is not the focus of this study, the victim's reports are sufficient for determining the extent of wife abuse each child witnessed.

Construct validity of the CTS has been assessed by comparing the findings of the scales to both theoretical and practical studies about family violence and conflict resolution strategies. Numerous studies on topics such as the intergenerational transmission of violence, risk factors for family violence, health problems associated with family violence, and the effects of children's witnessing violence have concluded that the CTS assesses relationships between different variables associated with family violence (Straus & Gelles, 1990).

The CTS have withstood much criticism and controversy since their development. Criticism of the CTS which pertains to this study focus on the small number of violent acts described in the scales, the potential inaccuracy of self-reports, and the lack of attention to the

context of violent incidents (Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992; Straus & Gelles, 1990). The small number of violent acts is actually preferred for this study, as the women are being asked to list very personal and painful incidents. Expecting them to describe numerous incidents is unnecessary, as I require information on the general type, frequency, and severity of violence the child participants were exposed to as opposed to information on the precise nature of the women's violent relationships.

Although self-reports have the potential to be inaccurate, the CTS uses different time frames to increase the accuracy of responses. The women decide whether or not each incident has occurred in the past 6 months, 12 months, or 5 years. This study is interested in the five year category, as it represents the longest period of time during which the children were exposed to wife abuse. Once again, a precise estimate of the number of violent incidents is not necessary, because the scales will be analyzed regarding the total number of verbally aggressive, mildly violent, and severely violent incidents as opposed to the specific number of each incident.

Information about the context in which violent incidents occurred is not required for this study. Children exposed to wife abuse are unable to establish or understand its context, and I do not require this information to support or refute my hypotheses regarding exposure to wife abuse and the presence of traditional gender beliefs.

Compared to alternative measures of family violence, the CTS displays higher reliability and validity, and greater scope. Despite the controversy regarding their assessment and interpretation of violent acts, the CTS continue to dominate research in the family violence field.

Adapted Version of the Conflict Tactics Scales

The type, severity, and frequency of abuse the children were exposed to was assessed by their mothers' completion of an adapted form of the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS). A similar adaptation of this measure was used in a study by Jouriles, Barling, and O'Leary (1987) who inserted the phrase, "in front of (*child's name*)" before each CTS description to estimate the abuse children witnessed. In the present study, the women answered the question, "How many times in the past 6 months/12 months/5 years did your partner or ex-partner do the following in front of (*child's name*) ?".

Reliability and validity data are not available on my adaptation of the CTS. However, similar adaptations have been used in other research with positive results, and Straus advocates the use of adaptations for new research (Straus & Gelles, 1990). In addition, such a minor adaptation is unlikely to affect the reliability and validity values greatly, especially those as high as the scales of interest to the present study: the verbal aggression and physical violence scales.

Sex Role Inventories

Bem Sex Role Inventory

The BSRI has dominated research in the sex role beliefs field for nearly two decades. It is based on the theory that men and women judge their own behaviour and personality characteristics according to the differential value society places on traditional male and female traits.

Bem (1981) does not consider masculinity and femininity to be separate and opposite dimensions. Rather, individuals incorporate varying degrees of typical male and female characteristics. Depending on the relative strength of male and female traits in an individual's personality, he or she may be classified as masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated (Bem, 1981). Table 3 outlines the four sex-role dimensions.

Table 3: Sex-Role Dimensions of the BSRI

Sex-Role Dimension	BSRI Scale	
	M	F
Masculine	high	low
Feminine	low	high
Androgynous	high	high
Undifferentiated	low	low

Respondents who score high on the masculine scale and low on the feminine scale are considered masculine; those who score high on the feminine scale and low on the masculine scale are considered feminine; those who score high on both the masculine and feminine scales are considered androgynous; those who score low on both the masculine and feminine scales are considered undifferentiated.

Psychometric analyses were performed on two samples of undergraduate students at Stanford University (Bem, 1981). I will report the data from the more recent 1978 study which included 340 women and 476 men (Bem, 1981).

Coefficient alpha values of internal consistency were .78 for both men and women on the feminine scale and .86 for women and .87 for men on the masculine scale (Bem, 1981). These data support the theoretical proposition that the femininity and masculinity scores of the BSRI are both logically and empirically independent (Bem, 1981).

Test-retest reliability was assessed at a four-week follow-up with 28 women and 28 men. The analysis demonstrated that test-retest reliability was high for both genders on both the masculine and feminine scales. The lowest value of .76 occurred for male subjects describing themselves on the masculine scale (Bem, 1981). When describing themselves on the feminine scale, men's test-retest reliability was .89 and women's was .82 (Bem, 1981). Women's self-descriptions on the masculinity scale showed a value of .94 (Bem, 1981).

The BSRI was also analyzed regarding social desirability, with results showing that subjects did not tend to describe themselves in a socially desirable manner. Low values of .03 and .04 for women and men on the feminine scale and .21 and .02 for women and men on the masculine scale support the low tendency for subjects to tailor their responses based on social convention or approval (Bem, 1981).

Child Sex Role Inventory

The CSRI was developed directly from the widely used and respected BSRI. Both research and personal experience show us that like adults, children hold traditional sex-role beliefs. At an early age, children recognize that certain characteristics or personality traits are considered more appropriate for one gender than the other. Like adults, children hold these beliefs to varying degrees. This knowledge can affect children's views of their own gender-related personality characteristics and behaviours and influence their relationships with others (Boldizar, 1991).

Reliability of the masculine and feminine scales of the CSRI was assessed through alpha coefficients of internal consistency. Coefficient alpha for the masculine scale was .75,

and for the feminine scale was .84 (Boldizar, 1991). Stable test-retest reliabilities of .71 for the feminine scale and .56 for the masculine scale were found after a one-year follow-up (Boldizar, 1991).

Validity of the scales was evident in significant gender differences on both scales and in relationships between gender-role categories and measures of a) sex-typed toy and activity preferences; b) self-perceptions of global self-worth, scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical attractiveness, and behavioural conduct; and c) cognitive performance (Boldizar, 1991).

Due to the recent development of the CSRI, further study of its psychometric properties has not been conducted. However, as each item on the CSRI is directly related to a corresponding BSRI item, their psychometric properties are expected to be comparable. The existing data and the reputation of the BSRI support the use of the CSRI in the present study.

Summary of BSRI and CSRI

The BSRI and CSRI are composed of 20 masculine items, 20 feminine items, and 20 neutral items. Each item is a statement about the self, and respondents rate each item according to "how true of you" it is on a four-point scale. Table 4 lists sample BSRI items and the corresponding CSRI items. Masculinity and femininity scores are calculated by averaging the responses to the 20 items on each scale, thus providing scores ranging from 4 (highest) to 1 (lowest).

Table 4: Sample Items from the BSRI and CSRI

BSRI Item	CSRI Item	Sex-Role Dimension
Competitive	When I play games, I really like to win.	Masculine
Compassionate	I care about what happens to others.	Feminine
Sincere	I am an honest person.	Neutral
Analytical	I like to think about and solve problems.	Masculine
Loves children	I like babies and small children a lot.	Feminine
Friendly	I have many friends.	Neutral

In this study, the BSRI and CSRI determined the relative flexibility and rigidity of the mothers' and children's sex-role beliefs. Specifically, they determined whether the children exposed to wife abuse were more likely to describe themselves as traditionally feminine than those who had not been exposed to wife abuse.

Setting

All families in the treatment group and one family in the comparison group completed their questionnaires at Agency A with the child and mother in separate rooms. The other six families in the comparison group completed their questionnaires with the child in a seminar room at the participating school and the woman at a desk in the hallway. One family in the comparison group completed their questionnaires at the University of Northern British Columbia. The rating scale of the CSRI was posted on the wall of the interview room at all locations.

Procedure

The letters distributed to potential participants in the treatment group explained that the study's intent was to assess gender beliefs of children exposed to wife abuse (Appendix B). Women interested in participating contacted me by phone, and were informed that they would receive 20 dollars to cover transportation and child care costs incurred by participation. They were invited to read the results of the study upon its completion. During this conversation, a time was arranged to discuss and sign the informed consent forms and complete the questionnaires.

Upon arrival at both Agency A and the elementary school, I greeted the family in the reception area. We then went to a room where I described the study to the family. Each woman had been informed in the letter and by telephone that the study involved wife abuse, but the children were unaware that their participation in the study involved exposure to abuse. I told the children that the study investigated how children describe their personality characteristics. All family members signed informed consent forms once they had read, discussed, and understood them (see Appendix E).

I then escorted the woman to another room and provided verbal instructions for completing the CTS (Straus, 1979), the adapted version of the CTS, and the BSRI (Bem, 1981).

I returned to the child, and followed a general script for completion of the CSRI (see Appendix D). I read the CSRI items and marked the child's answers on the form to eliminate possible misunderstandings or confusion caused by varying reading abilities of the children.

If more than one child was participating in the study, the other(s) viewed a children's video in the reception area or played outside while their mother and sibling completed their questionnaires. Each child's interview took approximately 20 minutes. The time required for the women to complete their questionnaires ranged from 15 to 40 minutes, depending on the number of her children participating.

After completing their questionnaires, each child was asked how he or she felt about the study, and if he or she had any questions or comments. If so, they were discussed at this time. The child then returned to the reception area or played outside while I spoke to his or her mother. The woman and I discussed any negative feelings, questions, or comments that arose while completing the questionnaires.

After I discussed the experience with all family members, the children in the treatment group were given a pen and their mothers received the payment. Children in the comparison group each received a two dollar McDonald's gift certificate and a mini-stamper of their choice. All the women were informed that the results of the study would be available at Agency A.

Collection, Recording, and Analysis of Data

I compiled the questionnaires using Microsoft Word for Windows Version 6.0 (1994). The women responded to each item on the questionnaires by marking their answers in the appropriate square and I marked the children's on the paper for them. After coding and grouping the data, I recorded it in tabular form using Microsoft Excel for Windows Version

5.0 (1994). The same software was used for all statistical analysis including calculation of descriptive statistics and multiple independent samples t-tests.

Methodological Assumptions

Like in any research, several assumptions were made in conducting my study.

Firstly, I assumed that the treatment group of children exposed to wife abuse I obtained, though not randomly selected, shared characteristics with the population of children exposed to wife abuse which enabled me to make some preliminary analyses of the relationship between exposure to wife abuse and the development of traditional sex-role beliefs.

Secondly, I assumed that the information provided by the women and children in my study was accurate and honest, although I acknowledge that retrospective, second-hand accounts of children's exposure to wife abuse will be inherently flawed to some degree.

Thirdly, I assumed that the instruments I chose would be reliable and valid tools in the assessment of demographic characteristics, experiences of wife abuse, children's exposure to wife abuse, and participants' sex-role beliefs.

Limitations

Because this is an ex post-facto study using a purposive sample, it will not establish causality. Children are exposed to traditional sex-role models in every aspect of their lives. Television programs, movies, music, and peers all contribute to and affect their beliefs about gender, and it is not possible to say whether exposure to wife abuse was the main influence on the development of their sex-role beliefs. However, the inclusion of a comparison group

allowed me to compare children living in similar social circumstances, whose only major difference was exposure to wife abuse.

Due to the small, non-representative sample, the results of this study may be most applicable to a limited segment of the population of children exposed to wife abuse - those between the ages of 6 and 12 years, who live with their biological mothers, and who are no longer exposed to wife abuse in their homes.

The families met certain demographic criteria, and were predominantly of Caucasian and Aboriginal heritage. With the exception of a few participants, most of the participants were from low to middle income families, and many of the women had experienced divorce or separation.

The participants in this study were all volunteers who participated based on a belief in furthering our understanding of the difficulties children exposed to wife abuse experience or who felt that their family would somehow benefit from participation. These people may be different in some way from those who chose not to participate.

Most of the treatment group participants were identified through involvement in mental health services. This factor may further decrease generalizability, as these families may be more aware of the effects of wife abuse on family members, or may be at a different stage regarding their acknowledgment of and openness about wife abuse in their lives.

While it would have increased the accuracy of estimates of children's exposure to wife abuse and provided information about the nature of the abusive relationship, information was not obtained from the violent partners or ex-partners in this study, as I believed it would compromise the safety of the participants.

Further study of this group of children has not been planned, thus the present study will not provide a longitudinal analysis of the sex-role beliefs of these children. They may alter their sex-role beliefs as they enter adolescence, becoming either more flexible or more rigid.

This study was a preliminary step in the sex-role belief research of a very important and often neglected group of children - children exposed to wife abuse. This group of children is being identified in increasing numbers, and while it is not clear whether the incidence of wife abuse and children's exposure to it is increasing or whether it is being reported in greater numbers, these children deserve immediate attention and understanding. Establishing a relationship between children's exposure to wife abuse and the development of traditional sex-role beliefs will enable society to help these children develop more positive and egalitarian sex-role beliefs, thereby decreasing the risk of their being either victims or perpetrators of violence in their future relationships.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Participants

I collected data from a group of 15 mothers and their 24 children. Twelve children who had been exposed to the abuse of their mothers within the past five years comprised the treatment portion of the sample. The comparison group consisted of 12 children who had not been exposed to the abuse of their mothers at any point in their lives.

Children between the ages of 6 and 12 years participated in the study, as research has shown that children in this age range have knowledge of gender stereotypes (Serbin, Powlishta, & Gulko, 1993). Before the age of six, children's gender knowledge is limited to categorization of people as male or female, preferences for sex-typed toys, and a preference for same-sex peers (Serbin et al., 1993, p. 15). A study of 558 children between the ages of 5 and 12 found increases in knowledge of stereotypes, flexibility of stereotypes, and sex-typed personal preferences as the children aged (Serbin et al., 1993, p. v). Adolescents' gender knowledge reflects increasing flexibility and awareness that sex roles are not rigid or absolute (Serbin et al., 1993, p.11). Using children between 6 and 12 years ensured relatively consistent gender knowledge among subjects which was not significantly complicated by cognitive developmental differences or pubertal influences.

Treatment Group Participants

The treatment group included children who were exposed to the verbal, emotional, or physical abuse of their mothers. The children included eight boys and four girls ranging in age from 7 to 12 years, with a mean age of 9.4 years ($SD = 1.5$, $mdn = 9.7$). The mean age of

the boys was 9.2 years ($SD = 1.0$, $mdn = 9.8$), while the mean age of the girls was 8.9 years ($SD = 1.6$, $mdn = 8.9$).

Comparison Group Participants

The comparison group of 12 six to twelve year-old children participated on the basis of not living in families characterized by wife abuse. The eight boys and four girls ranged in age from 6 to 12 years with a mean of 8.9 years ($SD = 2.2$, $mdn = 9.6$). The mean age of the boys was 9.0 years ($SD = 2.1$, $mdn = 8.6$), while the mean age of the girls was 11.5 years ($SD = 1.5$, $mdn = 12.0$).

Similarity of Treatment and Comparison Group Children

The children in the treatment and comparison groups were similar in age and grade level, although the mean age of the girls in the comparison group was 2.4 years higher than the mean age of girls in the treatment group.

Mothers of Children in the Treatment Group

Table 5 outlines the characteristics of the mothers of the children in the treatment and comparison groups. The mothers of the children in the treatment group were between the ages of 25 and 44 years ($M = 36$, $SD = 5.6$, $mdn = 37$). One of the women was single, two were separated, two were divorced, and two were married. The women's annual family incomes ranged from \$9,000 to 75,500 ($M = \$29,357$, $SD = \$24,632$, $mdn = \$15,500$). Two of the women were receiving income assistance. Of the seven women, three had received high school diplomas, three continued on to trade school, college, or university, and one

reached the post-graduate level. The number of abusive relationships the women experienced ranged from one to six ($M = 2.1$, $SD = 1.8$, $mdn = 2$) and the number of years spent in abusive relationships ranged from 2 to 12 ($M = 9.6$, $SD = 4.2$, $mdn = 12$).

Two of the women had been exposed to the abuse of their own mothers as children. Three reported that their partners had been exposed to the abuse of their mothers; four did not know whether their partners had been exposed to wife abuse as children. All of the women indicated that they were not in an abusive relationship at the time of the interview, and none of the abused women was currently involved with a past abusive partner.

Mothers of Children in the Comparison Group

The mothers of the children in the comparison group were between the ages of 30 and 49 ($M = 38$, $SD = 6.4$, $mdn = 37$). Four of the women were separated, three were married, and one was widowed. All of the women were currently involved in a relationship, and none was receiving income assistance. Their annual family incomes ranged from \$45,500 to 75,500 ($M = \$58,000$, $SD = \$10,350$, $mdn = \$55,500$). Of the eight women, three had received high school diplomas, and five continued on to trade school, college, or university.

None of the women initially classified her relationship as abusive, but after completing the questionnaires, one woman realized that her daughters had been exposed to verbal abuse against her by their father (see Table 3). After considering possible complications and ramifications of excluding this participant, I decided to keep the woman in the comparison group because although she reported having experienced verbal abuse, she did not report any incidents of her children's exposure to incidents of mild or severe physical

violence. This fact separated her children from the treatment group participants, who had all been exposed to at least one incident of the physical abuse of their mothers.

Three of the women had been exposed to the abuse of their own mothers as children. Six reported that their partners had not been exposed to the abuse of their mothers; two did not know whether their partners had been exposed to wife abuse as children.

Table 5: Characteristics of the Mothers of Children in the Treatment and Comparison

Groups

Characteristic	Treatment Group n = 7	Comparison Group n = 8
Age	<i>M</i> = 36	<i>M</i> = 38
Marital Status	1 single 2 separated 2 divorced 2 married 0 widowed	0 single 4 separated 0 divorced 3 married 1 widowed
Annual Family Income	<i>M</i> = \$29,357 <i>mdn</i> = \$15,500	<i>M</i> = \$58,000 <i>mdn</i> = \$55,500
Number receiving social assistance	2	0
Education Level	3 high school 3 post secondary 1 post-graduate	3 high school 5 post-secondary 0 post-graduate
Number of abusive relationships	<i>M</i> = 2	<i>M</i> = 0
Exposed to wife abuse as a child	2	3
Partner exposed to wife abuse as a child	3	0

Similarity of Mothers in the Treatment and Comparison Groups

As Table 5 shows, the mothers of the children in the treatment and comparison groups appear to be similar regarding age, marital status, and education level. Differences appear in annual family income and use of social assistance. The large disparity between the median incomes of the two groups may be due to the presence of a second income earner in all eight of the comparison group families, compared to only four of the treatment group families.

The women also differed with respect to their partners' exposure to wife abuse as a child. While three of the women who had experienced wife abuse reported that their partners had been exposed to wife abuse as children, none of the women who had not experienced wife abuse reported their partners' exposure to wife abuse as children.

Estimates of Children's Exposure to Wife Abuse

The children's mothers indicated that their children had been exposed to at least one incident of verbal, emotional, or physical abuse against them within the past five years. Table 6 lists the mothers' estimates of each child's exposure to incidents of wife abuse. Median scores of each item on the adapted version of the CTS were added together to provide an estimate of the total number of incidents of verbal aggression, mild violence, and severe violence to which each child was exposed. The number of incidents of wife abuse each child in the treatment group was exposed to ranged from 10 to 270 ($M = 142$, $SD = 91.4$, $mdn = 140$). Of the three types of abuse listed in the CTS (verbal abuse, minor violence, and severe violence), the children had been exposed to verbal abuse most frequently, including insults and threats of physical violence against their mothers. The children had been exposed

to between 8 and 130 incidents of verbal aggression ($M = 91.3$, $SD = 46.1$, $mdn = 112$). However, many of the children had been exposed to both mild and severe physical violence, ranging in severity from objects being thrown at their mothers to their mothers' being choked, beaten up, or assaulted with a knife or gun by a male partner. Incidents of mild violence children were exposed to ranged from 1 to 75 ($M = 32$, $SD = 29.3$, $mdn = 25$), while incidents of severe violence ranged from 0 to 83 ($M = 18.3$, $SD = 31.0$, $mdn = 0.5$). The treatment group children appear to form two groups regarding their exposure to severe violence: children who have been exposed to repeated incidents of severe violence, and children who have not been exposed to any severe violence.

Table 6: Treatment and Comparison Group Children's Exposure to Wife Abuse

Verbal Aggression		Mild Violence		Severe Violence		Total Violence	
T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C
(n = 12)	(n = 12)	(n = 12)	(n = 12)	(n = 12)	(n = 12)	(n = 12)	(n = 12)
84	0	8	0	0	0	92	0
130	4	25	0	0	0	155	4
24	0	1	0	0	0	25	0
24	0	1	0	0	0	25	0
112	0	75	0	82	0	269	0
112	0	75	0	83	0	270	0
130	0	55	0	18	0	203	0
112	0	8	0	0	0	120	0
100	0	25	0	0	0	125	0
8	0	1	0	1	0	10	0
130	73*	55	0	18	0	203	73*
130	73*	55	0	18	0	203	73*

* incidents of verbal aggression against one woman in the comparison group

BSRI and CSRI Classification of Masculinity and Femininity

Because the BSRI has been standardized, I was able to use median scores of the normative sample to place the mothers of the child participants in one of the four BSRI sex-role categories previously summarized in Table 3. I used Bem's standardized t scores to classify the children's mothers as masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated on the BSRI (1981). Women scoring high on the masculine scale and low on the feminine scale were classified as masculine, those scoring high on the feminine scale and low on the masculine scale were classified as feminine, those scoring high on both the masculine and feminine scales were classified as androgynous, and those scoring low on both the masculine and feminine scales were classified as undifferentiated.

The CSRI is a relatively new instrument for which normative data are not available. As it has not been standardized, I focused on an analysis of the children's self-reported masculinity or femininity and did not classify child subjects as androgynous or undifferentiated. Table 7 outlines the score distribution used to classify children as either masculine or feminine.

Table 7: Sex-Role Categories of the CSRI

Sex-Role Classification	CSRI Scale	
	Masculine	Feminine
Masculine	high	low
Feminine	low	high

Children who scored high on the masculine scale and low on the feminine scale were considered masculine because they endorsed those qualities typically considered traditionally

masculine. Those who scored high on the feminine scale and low on the masculine scale were considered feminine because they endorsed those qualities typically considered traditionally feminine. For the purposes of this study, it was sufficient to classify the children as either masculine or feminine in order to determine whether children exposed to wife abuse hold more traditional sex-role beliefs than children not exposed to wife abuse.

Data Analysis

Given my small sample size and the exploratory nature of my study, I chose to analyze my data using multiple t-tests with a significance level of .10. I commented when results were significant at the more rigorous .05 level. I calculated Cohen's effect size (d) for each of the t-test analyses in order to clarify the significance of differences between the means of the small samples (Glass & Hopkins, 1984). These values more clearly illustrate the magnitude of any differences found between groups and are presented in standard deviation units in Tables 8 through 17.

Women's BSRI Scores

I initially ran t-tests on the women's BSRI data to determine the degree to which they described themselves as masculine or feminine. The results of these analyses are presented in Tables 8 and 9. Women who had experienced wife abuse held less traditional beliefs regarding masculinity and femininity than women who had not experienced wife abuse.

I then used the median-split method to classify each of the women as masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated, allowing me to develop a greater understanding of the women's self-described masculinity and femininity.

Women's BSRI Masculinity Scores

I analyzed the BSRI scores of the mothers of the treatment group and comparison group children to determine whether women who had experienced wife abuse described themselves as less masculine than women who had not experienced wife abuse.

Table 8 presents the results of the analysis, illustrating that women who had experienced wife abuse were significantly different from women who had not experienced wife abuse in the extent to which they described themselves as masculine ($t(13) = -2.41, p < .03$). The masculinity scores of women who had experienced wife abuse were 1.25 SD below those of women who had not experienced wife abuse. Women who had experienced wife abuse described themselves as significantly less masculine than those who had not experienced wife abuse.

Table 8: BSRI Masculinity Scores of Treatment and Comparison Group Mothers

Treatment n = 7	Comparison n = 8	t(df) = 13	Effect Size (d)
73.29 ^a	88.63	-2.41**	-1.25

^a scores out of 140
 * $p < .10$
 ** $p < .05$

Women's BSRI Femininity Scores

I analyzed the BSRI scores of the mothers of the treatment group and comparison group children to determine whether women who had experienced wife abuse described themselves as more feminine than women who had not experienced wife abuse.

Table 9 presents the results of the analysis, illustrating that women who had experienced wife abuse were significantly different from women who had not experienced

wife abuse in the extent to which they described themselves as feminine ($t(13) = -1.89, p < .08$). The femininity scores of women who had experienced wife abuse were 0.98 SD below those of women who had not experienced wife abuse. Women who had experienced wife abuse rated themselves as significantly less feminine than women who had not experienced wife abuse.

Table 9: BSRI Femininity Scores of Treatment vs. Comparison Group Mothers

Treatment n = 7	Comparison n = 8	t(df) = 13	Effect Size (d)
95.71 ^a	105.25	- 1.89*	- 0.98
^a scores out of 140			
* $p < .10$			
** $p < .05$			

Summary of Women's BSRI Results

The statistical analyses described above outline the differences in sex-role beliefs between women who have experienced wife abuse and those who have not. Table 10 summarizes the analyses, illustrating the pattern of significant findings on both the masculine and feminine scales of the BSRI.

Table 10: Summary of Treatment and Comparison Group Mothers' BSRI Results

Group	Treatment Group		
	M		F
Comparison Group	Sig. Level	$p < .05$	$p < .10$

Five of the women who had experienced wife abuse scored low on both the masculine and feminine scales, and are therefore considered undifferentiated on the BSRI. The other

two women who had experienced wife abuse scored higher on the feminine scale than the masculine scale and are therefore considered feminine.

Of the women who had not experienced wife abuse, three scored low on both the masculine and feminine scales, and are considered undifferentiated on the BSRI. Two women scored high on both the masculine and feminine scales, and are considered androgynous; three women scored high on the feminine scale and low on the masculine scale, and are considered feminine on the BSRI.

Children's CSRI Scores

The results of my study of children's sex-role beliefs are summarized in Tables 11 through 17. The CSRI differentiated between children exposed to wife abuse (EWA) and children not exposed to wife abuse (NEWA) in three of the statistical analyses. The treatment groups of children exposed to wife abuse and boys exposed to wife abuse described themselves as less feminine than the comparison group. No significant differences were discovered regarding children's self-described masculinity in either the treatment or comparison groups or in either gender.

Hypothesis 1: Boys Exposed to Wife Abuse vs. Boys Not Exposed to Wife Abuse

I analyzed the CSRI scores of boys exposed to wife abuse and boys not exposed to wife abuse to determine whether boys exposed to wife abuse described themselves as more masculine and less feminine than boys not exposed to wife abuse.

Table 11 summarizes the results of the analysis of boys' masculinity scores. Boys exposed to wife abuse were not significantly different from boys not exposed to wife abuse in

the extent to which they described themselves as masculine ($t(20) = -1.56, p < .43$). The masculinity scores of boys exposed to wife abuse were 0.78 SD below those of boys not exposed to wife abuse.

Table 11: CSRI Masculinity Scores of Boys EWA vs. Boys NEWA

EWA n = 8	NEWA n = 8	$t(df) = 14$	Effect Size (d)
54.25 ^a	60.25	- 1.56	- 0.78

^a scores out of 80
 * $p < .10$
 ** $p < .05$

Table 12 summarizes the results of the analysis of boys' femininity scores. Boys exposed to wife abuse were significantly different from boys not exposed to wife abuse in the extent to which they described themselves as feminine ($t(14) = -2.3, p < .04$). The femininity scores of boys exposed to wife abuse were 1.15 SD below those of boys not exposed to wife abuse. Boys exposed to wife abuse described themselves as significantly less feminine than boys not exposed to wife abuse.

Table 12: CSRI Femininity Scores of Boys EWA vs. Boys NEWA

EWA n = 8	NEWA n = 8	$t(df) = 14$	Effect Size (d)
51.75 ^a	62.25	- 2.30 **	- 1.15

^a scores out of 80
 * $p < .10$
 ** $p < .05$

Although the boys exposed to wife abuse did not score higher on the masculinity scale as expected, they did score significantly lower on the femininity scale (See Figure 1).

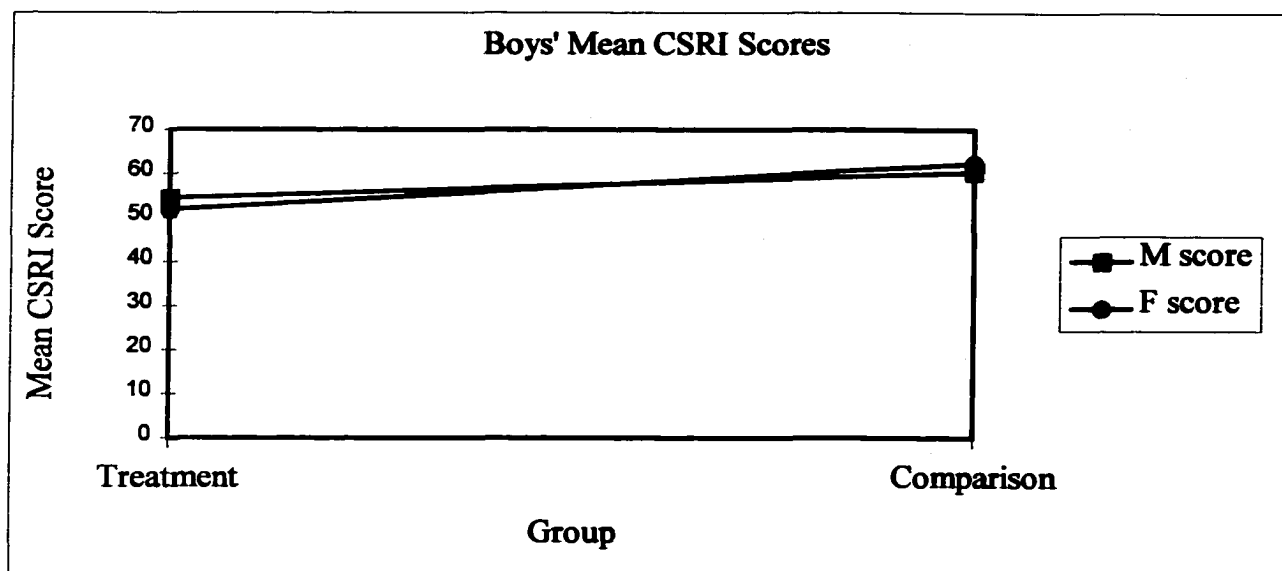


Figure 1. The apparent disordinal interaction between boys' masculinity and femininity scores on the CSRI.

Hypothesis 2: Girls Exposed to Wife Abuse vs. Girls Not Exposed to Wife Abuse

I analyzed the CSRI scores of girls exposed to wife abuse and girls not exposed to wife abuse to determine whether girls exposed to wife abuse described themselves as more feminine and less masculine than girls not exposed to wife abuse.

Table 13 summarizes the results of the analysis of girls' masculinity scores. Girls exposed to wife abuse were not significantly different from girls not exposed to wife abuse in the extent to which they described themselves as masculine ($t(6) = -0.20, p < .85$). The masculinity scores of girls exposed to wife abuse were 0.14 SD below those of girls not exposed to wife abuse. Girls exposed to wife abuse and girls not exposed to wife abuse did not differ significantly in the degree to which they described themselves as masculine.

Table 13: CSRI Masculinity Scores of Girls EWA vs. Girls NEWA

EWA n = 4	NEWA n = 4	<i>t</i> (df) = 6	Effect Size (<i>d</i>)
50.75 ^a	52.25	- 0.20	- 0.14
^a scores out of 80			
* $p < .10$			
** $p < .05$			

Table 14 summarizes the results of the analysis of girls' femininity scores. Girls exposed to wife abuse were not significantly different from girls not exposed to wife abuse in the extent to which they described themselves as feminine ($t(6) = 0.28, p < .79$). The femininity scores of girls exposed to wife abuse were 0.20 SD above those of girls not exposed to wife abuse.

Table 14: CSRI Femininity Scores of Girls EWA vs. Girls NEWA

EWA n = 4	NEWA n = 4	<i>t</i> (df) = 6	Effect Size (<i>d</i>)
63 ^a	61.5	0.28	0.20
^a scores out of 80			
* $p < .10$			
** $p < .05$			

Girls exposed to wife abuse and girls not exposed to wife abuse did not differ significantly in the degree to which they described themselves as feminine (See Figure 2).

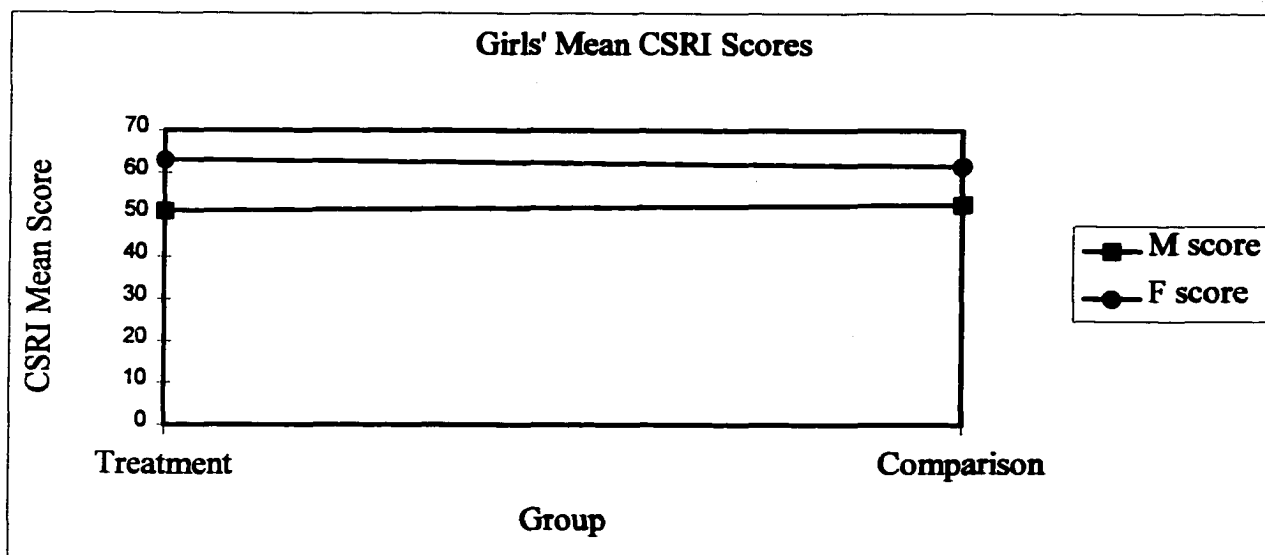


Figure 2. The apparent ordinal interaction between girls' masculinity and femininity scores on the CSRI.

Boys Exposed to Wife Abuse vs. Girls Exposed to Wife Abuse

Based on my significant findings relating to femininity, I analyzed the CSRI scores of boys and girls exposed to wife abuse to determine whether boys exposed to wife abuse described themselves as more masculine and less feminine than girls exposed to wife abuse. Similarly, I determined whether girls exposed to wife abuse described themselves as more feminine and less masculine than boys exposed to wife abuse.

Table 15 summarizes the results of the boys' and girls' masculinity scores. Boys exposed to wife abuse were not significantly different from girls exposed to wife abuse in the extent to which they described themselves as masculine ($t(10) = 0.60, p < .56$). The masculinity scores of boys exposed to wife abuse were 0.37 SD higher than those of girls

exposed to wife abuse. Boys and girls exposed to wife abuse did not differ significantly in the degree to which they described themselves as masculine.

Table 15: CSRI Masculinity Scores of Boys EWA vs. Girls EWA

Boys n = 8	Girls n = 4	t(df) = 10	Effect Size (d)
54.25 ^a	50.75	0.60	0.37
^a scores out of 80			
* $p < .10$			
** $p < .05$			

Table 16 summarizes the results of the analysis of boys' and girls' femininity scores. Boys exposed to wife abuse were significantly different from girls exposed to wife abuse in the extent to which they described themselves as feminine ($t(7) = -2.27, p < .06$; $t(10) = -2.17, p < .06$). The femininity scores of boys exposed to wife abuse were 1.33 SD below those of girls exposed to wife abuse. Boys exposed to wife abuse described themselves as significantly less feminine than girls exposed to wife abuse.

Table 16: CSRI Femininity Scores of Boys EWA vs. Girls EWA

Boys n = 8	Girls n = 4	t(df) = 10	Effect Size (d)
51.75 ^a	63	- 2.17 *	- 1.33
^a scores out of 80			
* $p < .10$			
** $p < .05$			

Summary of Children's CSRI Results

The statistical analyses above outline the apparent differences in sex-role beliefs among boys and girls exposed to wife abuse and those not exposed to wife abuse. Table 17

summarizes the results of the analyses, illustrating the pattern of significant findings relating to boys' femininity scores and non-significant findings relating to girls' femininity scores and boys' and girls' masculinity scores. Calculation of effect size (d) for each analysis clarified these findings. The largest differences were found between the femininity scores of boys exposed to wife abuse and boys not exposed to wife abuse ($d = -1.15$) and between femininity scores of boys exposed to wife abuse and girls exposed to wife abuse ($d = -1.33$).

Table 17: Summary of Children's CSRI Results

Group	All EWA	All EWA	Boys EWA	Boys EWA	Girls EWA	Girls EWA
	M	F	M	F	M	F
All NEWA	ns	$p < .10$	--	--	--	--
Boys NEWA	--	--	ns	$p < .05$	--	--
Girls NEWA	--	--	--	--	ns	ns
Girls EWA	--	--	ns	$p < .05$	--	--
-- = test not run						
ns = results not significant						

Children exposed to wife abuse described themselves as less feminine than children not exposed to wife abuse. Differences on the masculinity scale were not significant; the differences on the femininity scale reached significance at the .10 level.

Boys exposed to wife abuse did not differ significantly from boys not exposed to wife abuse on the masculinity scale. However, they differed significantly on the femininity scale, where boys exposed to wife abuse described themselves as less feminine than boys not exposed to wife abuse at the .05 level of significance.

CSRI masculinity and femininity scores of girls exposed to wife abuse and girls not exposed to wife abuse did not differ significantly. The girls exposed to wife abuse and girls

not exposed to wife abuse described themselves similarly on both the masculinity and femininity scales.

Analysis of the CSRI scores of boys and girls exposed to wife abuse showed no significant differences on their ratings on the masculinity scale. However, the boys exposed to wife abuse described themselves as significantly less feminine than the girls exposed to wife abuse at the .05 level of significance.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Literature Review

In recent years, wife abuse research has widened its focus to include consideration of the effects of exposure to wife abuse on children. Numerous researchers have identified physical, behavioural, and psychological problems experienced by children exposed to wife abuse, and some have found preliminary evidence of the presence of traditional sex-role beliefs in children exposed to wife abuse. It is this evidence which led to my study of the sex-role beliefs of a group of children exposed to wife abuse.

Summary of Methods

I gathered a treatment and comparison group of volunteers who completed questionnaires on demographic variables, the presence of relationship conflict, children's exposure to wife abuse, and sex-role beliefs. These women and children provided the data with which I tested hypotheses regarding possible relationships between exposure to wife abuse and the presence of traditional sex-role beliefs. My general inquiry focused on whether children exposed to wife abuse held more traditional sex-role beliefs than children not exposed to wife abuse. I then broke this down by both gender and sex-role scale to determine whether boys and girls in the treatment and comparison groups differed in the extent to which they held traditional beliefs regarding masculinity and femininity.

Summary of Results

Significant differences were found between children exposed to wife abuse and children not exposed to wife abuse in three of the statistical analyses. While scores on the masculinity scale did not reveal any significant differences among male or female participants, scores on the femininity scale reached significance in repeated tests. Boys exposed to wife abuse described themselves as significantly less feminine than boys not exposed to wife abuse. Boys also described themselves as significantly less feminine than girls exposed to wife abuse.

Conclusions

Women's BSRI Scores

Significant differences were found between women who had experienced wife abuse and those who had not in the analysis of both masculinity and femininity scores. However, the differences were opposite in direction to what I expected. I believed women who had experienced wife abuse would rate themselves as high on the femininity scale and low on the masculinity scale. However, women who had experienced wife abuse described themselves as significantly less masculine and feminine than women who had not experienced wife abuse.

Children's CSRI Scores

Hypothesis 1: Boys Exposed to Wife Abuse vs. Boys Not Exposed to Wife Abuse

Hypothesis one stated that boys exposed to wife abuse would describe themselves as more masculine and less feminine than boys not exposed to wife abuse. This hypothesis was partly supported, as boys exposed to wife abuse were not significantly different from boys not exposed to wife abuse on the masculinity scale, but were significantly different from boys not exposed to wife abuse on the femininity scale. Boys exposed to wife abuse rated themselves as less feminine than boys not exposed to wife abuse. Thus, hypothesis one was rejected as it pertained to masculinity, and was accepted as it pertained to femininity.

Hypothesis 2: Girls Exposed to Wife Abuse vs. Girls Not Exposed to Wife Abuse

Hypothesis two stated that girls exposed to wife abuse would describe themselves as more feminine and less masculine than girls not exposed to wife abuse. Hypothesis two was rejected, as girls exposed to wife abuse were not significantly different from girls not exposed to wife abuse on either the masculine or feminine scale.

Boys Exposed to Wife Abuse vs. Girls Exposed to Wife Abuse

After finding repeated significant results regarding femininity scores of children exposed to wife abuse, I decided to investigate whether boys and girls exposed to wife abuse would differ on their self-descriptions of femininity or masculinity. I believed that boys exposed to wife abuse would describe themselves as more masculine and less feminine than girls exposed to wife abuse. Boys exposed to wife abuse were not significantly different

from girls exposed to wife abuse on the masculine scale, but were significantly different from girls exposed to wife abuse on the feminine scale, describing themselves as less feminine than girls exposed to wife abuse.

Explanation of Findings

Women's BSRI Results

Analyzing the BSRI scores of the mothers of the children exposed to wife abuse and children not exposed to wife abuse added an interesting dimension to the children's results. My expectation that the women who had experienced wife abuse would describe themselves as more feminine than those who had not experienced wife abuse was not supported. Rather, the women who had experienced wife abuse rated themselves as less feminine and less masculine than their non-abused counterparts. This pattern of low feminine and low masculine scores was also found in the analysis of the scores of boys exposed to wife abuse. I described the concept of androgyny earlier in this paper, and classified several of the women who had experienced wife abuse as androgynous due to high scores on both of the scales. It is interesting to find that the boys exposed to wife abuse hold similar patterns in their sex-role beliefs, as it appears that women who experience wife abuse and boys who are exposed to it incorporate many of the same sex-role beliefs.

Given the treatment group women's past experiences with abuse, it is possible that their sex-role beliefs may have been different before, during, and after their abusive relationships. Being the victim of abuse affects women's self-esteem, and may cause them to describe themselves using more traditional feminine characteristics such as "yielding" and

“eager to soothe hurt feelings” and fewer traditional masculine characteristics such as “assertive”, “forceful”, and “dominant” (Bem, 1981). Thus, during an abusive relationship, they may score high on the femininity scale and low on the masculinity scale, whereas after the abusive relationship their self-descriptions may change.

All of the treatment group mothers in this study had terminated their abusive relationships, and many of them had been out of the abusive relationship for a number of years. This may have led to an increased sense of personal control, independence, and assertiveness. They may then have scored higher on the masculinity scale and lower on the femininity scale than they would have during the abusive relationship.

The women in this study who had experienced wife abuse also described themselves as less masculine than the comparison group women. I believe this may be due to a rejection of the more “negative” masculine traits and incorporation of the more positive ones. For example, I speculate that they may rate themselves as high on the “independence” item but low on the “aggressive” item, because they have seen the many negative ways in which aggression can be used against others.

Children’s CSRI Results

Hypothesis 1: Boys Exposed to Wife Abuse vs. Boys Not Exposed to Wife Abuse

Boys exposed to wife abuse described themselves as less feminine and less masculine than those not exposed to wife abuse (See Figures 3 and 4). The presence of less traditional feminine sex-role beliefs in the absence of more traditional masculine sex-role beliefs is interesting, as it focuses on the qualities of the female gender. The sex-role beliefs of boys

exposed to wife abuse and boys not exposed to wife abuse appear to differ only as they apply to traditional feminine qualities, suggesting that they resist describing themselves as feminine more than they resist describing themselves as masculine.

After continued exposure to wife abuse, boys may see traditional feminine characteristics as “weak”, as they will likely have been exposed to incidents of their fathers’ using power to control their mothers. Because they share the same gender, the boys may identify more strongly with their fathers. As boys see their mothers being abused, they may deny the existence of so-called “feminine” parts of themselves which they see in their mothers. Boys not exposed to wife abuse, not having had the same experiences, may still view many of their mothers’ traditional feminine traits as positive and valuable, and therefore do not minimize them in their own behaviours, attitudes, and feelings.

Hypothesis 2: Girls Exposed to Wife Abuse vs. Girls Not Exposed to Wife Abuse

When the girls exposed to wife abuse were singled out from the large group of children exposed to wife abuse, no significant differences were found between them and girls not exposed to wife abuse. Given the small sample size of only four girls, it is not surprising that differences were not identified. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the lack of a clear relationship between girls’ exposure to wife abuse and the presence of traditional sex-role beliefs.

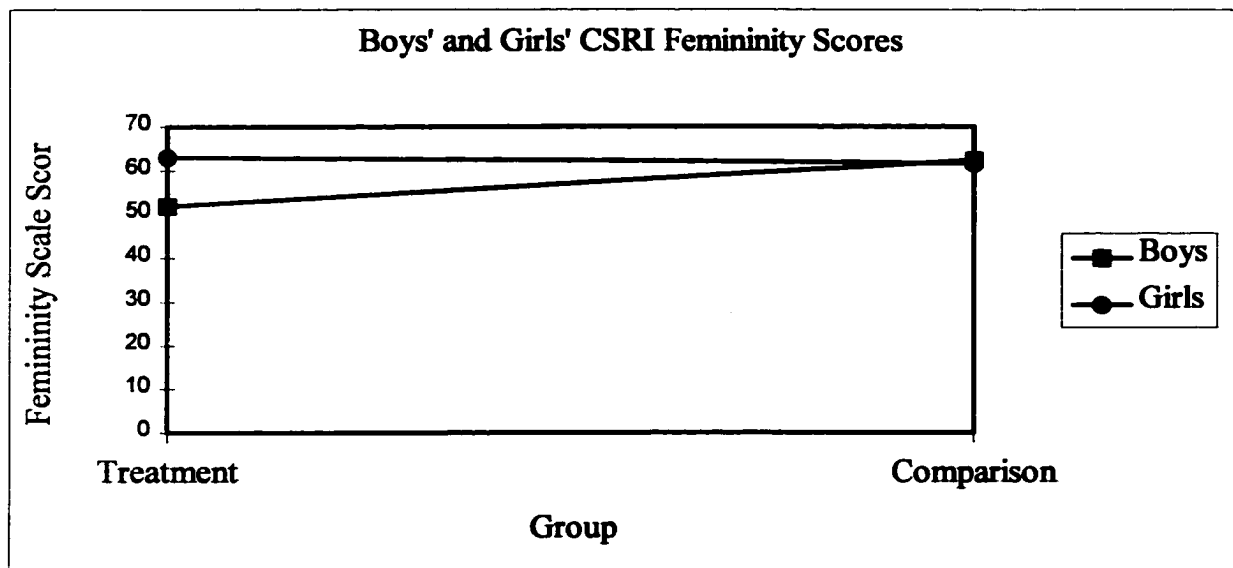


Figure 3. The apparent disordinal interaction between group and masculinity score.

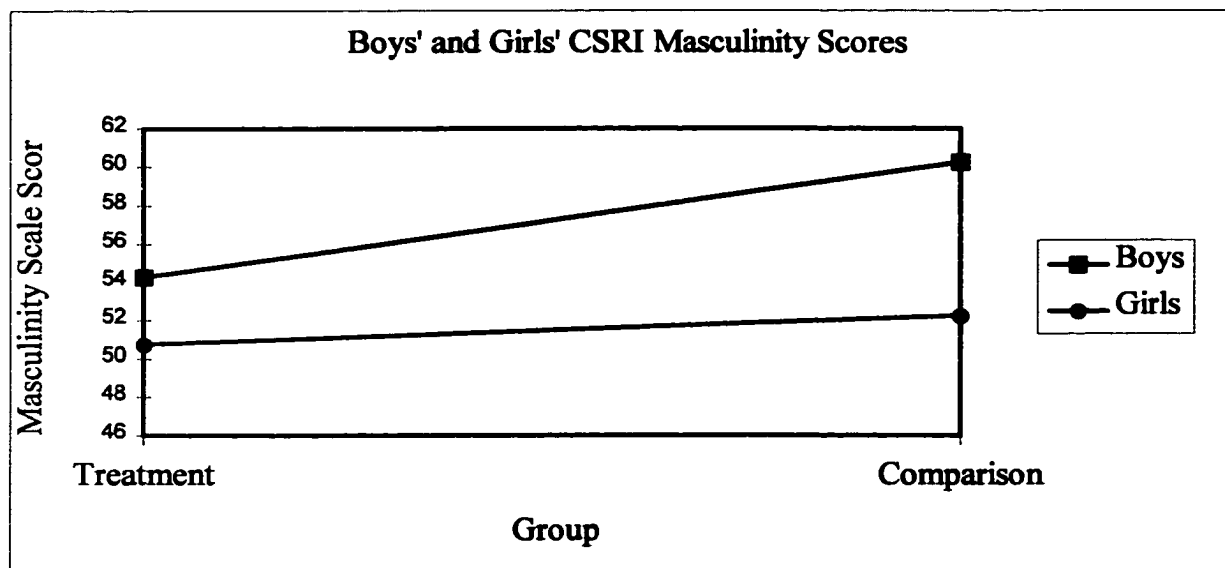


Figure 4. The apparent ordinal interaction between group and femininity score.

Although significant results were obtained only for femininity scale data, the above figures illustrate similar patterns among sex-role beliefs of boys and girls in the treatment and comparison groups. Boys exposed to wife abuse appear to become less masculine and less

feminine than boys not exposed to wife abuse, while girls in both groups do not appear to change their sex-role beliefs significantly as a result of exposure to wife abuse.

Boys Exposed to Wife Abuse vs. Girls Exposed to Wife Abuse

Dividing the group of children exposed to wife abuse into boys and girls led once again to significant findings on the femininity scale. Compared to girls exposed to wife abuse, boys exposed to wife abuse described themselves as less feminine (See Figure 4). In families characterized by wife abuse, it is common to see the male abuser belittle or criticize his wife as he simultaneously attempts to present a masculine image of power, domination, and control. Children exposed to wife abuse, in their lower self-reported femininity scores, may be reflecting this pattern of devaluing traditionally feminine characteristics. It is not necessary that they display a parallel increase in masculinity, because the sex-role inventory does not use a bipolar scale for assessing masculinity and femininity. High scores on one sex-role dimension does not necessarily result in low scores on the other.

Integration of Findings with Past Literature

The intergenerational transmission of violence theory has been studied by numerous family violence researchers, often with inconclusive results. Not surprisingly, this preliminary study failed to answer the question of whether abuse is transmitted across generations. However, it does point to the need for continued research adding to the existing literature which suggests that boys and girls exposed to wife abuse may incorporate their parents' sex role beliefs, placing them at risk of being involved in abusive relationships as

adults (Brassard et al., 1991; Health and Welfare Canada, 1992; Kashani et al., 1992; Moore et al., 1990; Osofsky, 1995; Tapp and Hinish, 1992).

Contribution of Findings to Literature

My findings, though limited to significant results on the feminine scale, clearly support continued research on the sex-role beliefs of children exposed to wife abuse. I have illustrated that children exposed to wife abuse are by no means immune to the repeated scenes of violence they are exposed to. Even in a small sample, children's exposure to wife abuse results in the incorporation of traditional sex-role beliefs among children, especially regarding their views of femininity.

Implications of Findings

Theoretical Implications

My study lends further support to contemporary theories of wife abuse. Social learning theory, gender schema theory, abusive personality theory, and feminist theory all suggest that children exposed to wife abuse are at heightened risk of involvement in relationships characterized by violence. My finding that children's sex-role beliefs are affected by exposure to wife abuse supports continued use of these theories as a foundation for further examination of the potential intergenerational transmission of violence.

Although many theorists argue for the accuracy and strength of one theory, I believe we must incorporate different aspects of numerous theories of wife abuse to develop our understanding of the effects of children's exposure to wife abuse. I do not believe any one

theory can adequately address the numerous social, familial, and individual issues involved in the relationship between exposure to wife abuse and traditional sex-role beliefs.

Research Implications

My study points to the need for continued study of the population of children exposed to wife abuse. Not only are they at risk of behavioral, physical, and psychological problems, they may incorporate sex-typed beliefs which have the power to negatively affect personal relationships throughout their lives.

Longitudinal studies of large samples of children exposed to wife abuse would be valuable in this area, as our sex-roles are altered by a number of factors throughout our lives. Age, culture, religious affiliations, family relationships, friendships, dating relationships, marital partnerships, and life experiences all have the ability to affect the flexibility of our sex-role beliefs.

Research has identified the powerful effects of wife abuse on its perpetrators and victims; now we must turn our attention to the children exposed to wife abuse as they may suffer the consequences of exposure to wife abuse throughout their entire lives. They may, in the end, inflict the same pain on their own partners and children.

Practical Implications

As young people, children are an excellent target audience for educational and preventative efforts regarding abuse in intimate relationships. Children are willing and able to change their beliefs and adopt new, healthier sex-role beliefs. Practitioners can thus focus on children as the generation to develop healthier, more balanced, egalitarian sex-role beliefs.

Because modelling is such a powerful influence in children's lives, practitioners can use it to decrease traditional sex-role beliefs regarding power and control, and enhance those of equality and respect. Counselling groups for children exposed to wife abuse are an effective method of providing such modelling; fellow group members and the group facilitators provide examples of different ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Groups are also a valuable forum for modelling conflict resolution, anger management, and communication skills - areas which children exposed to wife abuse often lack skills in.

Although the effects of exposure to wife abuse on children's sex-role beliefs was only partially supported in this study, counsellors and parents need to be aware of the potential damaging effects of children's incorporation of traditional sex-role beliefs. Counsellors can support families characterized by wife abuse develop increased understanding of the effects of exposure to wife abuse on children. Parents could then recognize these effects in their children, and better understand the power and influence of their actions, attitudes, and beliefs on their children.

When working with a family characterized by wife abuse, it is valuable to focus on the effects of society's devaluing of women and traditional feminine characteristics. Society as a whole has historically placed greater status and privilege on men, and many practitioners in the mental health and educational fields have the opportunity to address such differential treatment based on gender.

Limitations

Methodological Limitations

The most obvious limitation of my study was also the most unavoidable - the small sample size. Despite extensive efforts at recruiting a larger sample, I was unable to do so. Several factors contributed to this problem, including the controversial and emotional nature of my topic, difficulty accessing women who have experienced wife abuse without encroaching on their rights to privacy, the financial and social stressors these women often experience which make it difficult to participate in such a project, and my own financial limitations and time constraints. Although the small sample size limited my ability to identify significant differences among my treatment and comparison groups, I succeeded in identifying some important relationships among gender, exposure to wife abuse, and sex-role beliefs.

The 15 families who participated in my study did so voluntarily. As with any research study, volunteers may be different than those who choose not to participate. Those who volunteered for the treatment group may have been more open about their experiences of wife abuse, or may have spent more time out of the abusive relationship than those who chose not to participate. Women in the comparison group had very little to gain from participating, and may therefore have been more informed or concerned about the issue of wife abuse than those who chose not to participate.

Most of the women agreed to their families' participation before being informed of the 20 dollar imbursement; only one woman was informed of the money before agreeing to

participate. It is possible that the money provided some incentive for her to participate.

However, I did not feel that the 20 dollar sum was large enough to be coercive, and I feel that even though the treatment group mothers expressed appreciation for the money, all would have participated without any monetary benefit.

When using a clinical sample, there is always the possibility that the treatment group is different from the population being studied. The treatment group families had sought mental health services at one or more community agencies, and may therefore have been at a different stage regarding their acknowledgment and understanding of their experiences of wife abuse than those who chose not to participate. They have also have had more social, financial, or emotional resources than the families who had experienced wife abuse and chose not to participate.

An additional limitation which I did not assess is the extent to which the treatment group women's and children's sex-role beliefs may have been altered by their involvement in counselling or support groups. I do not know whether their individual or group sessions addressed sex-roles or gender beliefs, but as far as I know, these issues were not specifically incorporated in their counselling programs.

Generalizability

Any small, ex post-facto study is limited in the extent to which it can form generalizations about the population it studies. My study was based on very specific treatment and comparison groups, ones which consisted of children between the ages of 6 and 12, who were from low to middle-income families. Most of the treatment group families

were sole parent families headed by a woman. None of the children was currently living with their mothers' past abusive partner, who, in most cases, was the child's father. My sample was selected from a medium sized, resource-based community in northern British Columbia.

The results of my study can therefore not be generalized to the population of children exposed to wife abuse. However, I feel that regardless of their age, socioeconomic status, single or dual parent status, and place of residence, families characterized by wife abuse share many common characteristics. Home environments of fear, uncertainty, and anxiety are typical, and the population of children exposed to wife abuse share many of their early experiences of intimate relationships.

Future Directions

An ideal study of sex-role beliefs and children's exposure to wife abuse would include a large sample of boys and girls of various ages whose sex-role beliefs could be assessed at different stages in their development. Longitudinal studies could clarify those changes in sex-role beliefs which are affected by puberty, cognitive development, peer relationships, the media, and life experiences such as exposure to wife abuse. Studies of this type can also address social, religious, and cultural factors which can not always be addressed in smaller, short-term studies.

Although much family violence research focuses on the obvious negative effects of exposure to wife abuse on boys, I advocate a greater focus on the effects on girls, as they are equally at risk of lifelong, negative consequences of exposure to wife abuse. Not only are women the most frequent victims of family violence, they are also undervalued and

discriminated in society as a whole. This fact is reflected in the research on wife abuse itself, as girls' responses to exposure to wife abuse are minimized, apparently because they are not as "externalized" or obvious as those of boys (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990). I feel that whether children react to trauma aggressively or passively does not alter the significance of their experiences, and focusing research efforts on one gender at the expense of the other is a mistake which could affect generations to come.

Continued research in this area would benefit from gathering information from as many family members as possible. My study relied on the women's estimates of their children's exposure to wife abuse, but gathering information from the abusive partners would be extremely valuable. When feasible, children exposed to wife abuse could also provide estimates of their exposure to wife abuse, as mothers and fathers are often unaware of many incidents witnessed by their children. Specific information on the men's own sex-role beliefs would add considerable depth to any study, as it is beliefs about power, dominance, and control which often lead to abuse.

As the BSRI was developed nearly 20 years ago, it is appropriate and advisable to seek or develop instruments which are more contemporary in their descriptions of masculinity and femininity. I chose the BSRI because it provided the foundation for the recent CSRI and is widely respected for its reliability and validity, but I feel that as awareness of this issue increases, instruments with a more current outlook will deepen our understanding.

Qualitative studies of this population would be the most direct and thorough way of assessing children's sex-role beliefs and experiences of exposure to wife abuse. Adults often

underestimate the extent of children's understanding, and I feel that children exposed to wife abuse are a resource which is being neglected to a large degree. There are obviously many hurdles to overcome in working directly with these children, but overcoming them would be invaluable.

Continued research in the area of sex-role beliefs and children exposed to wife abuse has limitless potential for increasing our understanding of this group of children and enabling practitioners and parents to develop effective ways of helping them identify or prevent the variety of behavioural, physical, psychological effects they often experience. We can also learn to identify and address potentially damaging sex-role beliefs in an effort to minimize the likelihood of their becoming involved in abusive relationships as adults.

Footnotes

¹ As I was unable to obtain a commercial copy of the Child Sex Role Inventory, I compiled this questionnaire using Boldizar's article, "Assessing sex typing and androgyny in children: The children's sex role inventory" (Boldizar, 1991). The article contains the 60 questions comprising the CSRI, as well as instructions for its distribution and scoring.

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Appendix A

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire

This questionnaire is used to gather demographic information about you and your family. Please answer the following questions as accurately and honestly as possible.

1. Your age:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15 - 19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45 - 49 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20 - 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50 - 54 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 29 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55 - 59 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30 - 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 60 - 64 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35 - 39 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 - 69 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 40 - 44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 70 or older |

2. Occupation: _____

- ☐ Full time
☐ Part time

3. Annual income:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> < \$10,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$41,000 - \$50,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$11,000 - \$20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$51,000 - \$60,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$21,000 - \$30,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$61,000 - \$70,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$31,000 - \$40,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> > \$70,000 |

4. Please check the highest level of education you have completed.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> elementary school | <input type="checkbox"/> technical diploma |
| <input type="checkbox"/> junior secondary school | <input type="checkbox"/> some graduate courses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> senior secondary school | <input type="checkbox"/> graduate degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> some university courses | <input type="checkbox"/> some doctoral courses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> undergraduate university degree | <input type="checkbox"/> doctoral degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> some technical training | |

5. Present marital status: (please mark all that apply)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> single | <input type="checkbox"/> divorced |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cohabited | <input type="checkbox"/> remarried |
| <input type="checkbox"/> married | <input type="checkbox"/> widowed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> separated | <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ |

6. Number of children:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 or more |

7. Number of children *under the age of 19* living in your home:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 or more |

8. Ages of your children: (please mark all that apply)

Note: Place the appropriate number of check marks beside the number if you have more than one child of that age (e.g. twins, stepchildren of the same age).

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 13 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 14 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 19 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 + |

9. Are you currently involved in a relationship?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

10. If yes, is this relationship emotionally, verbally, physically, or sexually abusive?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

11. Number of past and present relationships which have been characterized by emotional, verbal, physical, or sexual abuse:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | |

12. Total number of years spent in emotionally, verbally, physically, or sexually abusive relationships:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> more than 10 |

13. Have you noticed behavioural or emotional changes in your children which seemed to begin after witnessing domestic violence?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, please describe:

Conflict Tactics Scales

No matter how well a couple get along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, or have fights because they're in a bad mood or tired or for some other reason. They also use many different ways of trying to settle their differences. The following list describes some things that you and your partner/ex-partner might do when you have an argument. I would like you to tell me how many times (Once, Twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, 11-20 times, or more than 20 times) your partner or ex-partner has done the following things.

Please use the categories below when answering the following questions.

Never	Once	Twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	11-20 times	More than 20 times
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

During a conflict with you, how many times has your partner or ex-partner...	in the past 6 months	in the past 12 months	in the past 5 years	If you chose 0, has it ever happened ?
Discussed an issue calmly				Y N
Got information to back up his side of things				Y N
Brought in, or tried to bring in, someone to help settle things				Y N
Insulted or swore at you				Y N
Sulked or refused to talk about an issue				Y N
Stomped out of the room, house, or yard				Y N
Cried				Y N
Did or said something to spite you				Y N
Threatened to hit or throw something at you				Y N
Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something				Y N
Threw something at you				Y N
Pushed, grabbed, or shoved you				Y N
Slapped you				Y N
Kicked, bit, or hit you with a fist				Y N
Hit or tried to hit you with something				Y N
Beat you up				Y N
Choked you				Y N
Threatened you with a knife or gun				Y N
Used a knife or fired a gun				Y N

Adapted Version of the Conflict Tactics Scales

Children often see or hear conflict between their parents. Using the same categories as the previous page, please try to remember how many times your partner has done the following things within sight or hearing of your child. Please complete one of these pages for each of your children that is participating in this study.

Never	Once	Twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	11-20 times	More than 20 times
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

During a conflict with you, how many times has your partner or ex-partner done the following in front of your child (within sight or hearing):	In the past 6 months	In the past 12 months	In the past 5 years	If you chose 0, has your child <i>ever</i> seen or heard it?
Discuss an issue calmly				Y N
Get information to back up his side of things				Y N
Bring in, or try to bring in, someone to help settle things.				Y N
Insult or swear at you				Y N
Sulk or refuse to talk about an issue				Y N
Stomp out of the room, house, or yard				Y N
Cry				Y N
Do or say something to spite you				Y N
Threaten to hit or throw something at you				Y N
Throw, smash, hit, or kick something				Y N
Throw something at you				Y N
Push, grab, or shove you				Y N
Slap you				Y N
Kick, bite, or hit you with a fist				Y N
Hit or try to hit you with something				Y N
Beat you up				Y N
Choke you				Y N
Threaten you with a knife or gun				Y N
Use a knife or fire a gun				Y N

Bem Sex Role Inventory

On the next page, you will find a list of personality characteristics. I would like you to use those characteristics to describe yourself. Please indicate, on a scale from 1 to 7, how true of you each of these characteristics is. Please do not leave any characteristic unmarked.

Example: sly

Write a 1 if it is *never or almost never* true that you are sly.

Write a 2 if it is *usually not true* that you are sly.

Write a 3 if it is *sometimes but infrequently true* that you are sly.

Write a 4 if it is *occasionally true* that you are sly.

Write a 5 if it is *often true* that you are sly.

Write a 6 if it is *usually true* that you are sly.

Write a 7 if it is *always or almost always true* that you are sly.

If you feel it is *sometimes but infrequently true* that you are "sly", *never or almost never true* that you are "malicious," *always or almost always true* that you are "irresponsible," and *often true* that you are "carefree," then you would rate these characteristics as follows:

Sly	3
Malicious	1
Irresponsible	7
Carefree	5

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never or almost never true	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally true	Often true	Usually true	Always or almost always true

1. Defend my own beliefs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Affectionate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Conscientious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Independent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Sympathetic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Moody	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Assertive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Sensitive to needs of others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Strong personality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Jealous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Forceful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Compassionate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Truthful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Have leadership abilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Eager to soothe hurt feelings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Secretive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Willing to take risks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Warm	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. Adaptable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Dominant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. Tender	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. Conceited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. Willing to take a stand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Love children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Tactful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Aggressive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Gentle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Conventional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never or almost never true	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally true	Often true	Usually true	Always or almost always true

31. Self-reliant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Yielding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. Helpful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. Athletic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. Cheerful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. Unsystematic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. Analytical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. Shy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. Inefficient	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. Make decisions easily	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. Flatterable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. Theatrical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. Self-sufficient	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. Loyal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. Happy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. Individualistic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47. Soft-spoken	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. Unpredictable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. Masculine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. Gullible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. Solemn	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52. Competitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53. Childlike	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54. Likable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55. Ambitious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56. Do not use harsh language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57. Sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58. Act as a leader	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59. Feminine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60. Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Child Sex Role Inventory

This questionnaire asks about how children your age think about themselves. I will read several descriptions to you, and you will decide how well each one describes you. Answer "one" if the statement is not at all true of you, "two" if the statement is a little true of you, "three" if the statement is mostly true of you, or "four" if the statement is very true or you.

Not at all true of me	A little true of me	Mostly true of me	Very true of me
1	2	3	4

1. I am an honest person.	1	2	3	4
2. I care about what happens to others.	1	2	3	4
3. It's easy for me to make up my mind about things.	1	2	3	4
4. I think I am better than most of the other people I know.	1	2	3	4
5. When someone's feelings have been hurt, I try to make them feel better.	1	2	3	4
6. I can take care of myself.	1	2	3	4
7. People like me.	1	2	3	4
8. I usually speak softly.	1	2	3	4
9. I can control a lot of the kids in my class.	1	2	3	4
10. I am a serious person.	1	2	3	4
11. I am a warm person.	1	2	3	4
12. I like to do things that boys and men do.	1	2	3	4
13. I have many friends.	1	2	3	4
14. I am a kind and caring person.	1	2	3	4
15. When a decision has to be made, it's easy for me to take a stand.	1	2	3	4
16. I usually get things done on time.	1	2	3	4
17. It is easy for people to get me to believe what they tell me.	1	2	3	4
18. I get pretty angry if someone gets in my way.	1	2	3	4
19. It is easy for me to fit into new places.	1	2	3	4
20. Sometimes I like to do things that younger kids do.	1	2	3	4
21. I am a leader among my friends.	1	2	3	4
22. I am always losing things.	1	2	3	4
23. I don't like to say bad words or swear.	1	2	3	4
24. I would rather do things my own way than take directions from others.	1	2	3	4
25. I am careful not to say things that will hurt someone's feelings.	1	2	3	4
26. I like babies and small children a lot.	1	2	3	4
27. When I play games, I really like to win.	1	2	3	4
28. I like to do things that other people do.	1	2	3	4
29. I am a gentle person.	1	2	3	4
30. I am willing to work hard to get what I want.	1	2	3	4

Not at all true of me	A little true of me	Mostly true of me	Very true of me
1	2	3	4

31. I like to help others.	1	2	3	4
32. When there's a disagreement, I usually give in and let others have their way.	1	2	3	4
33. I am sure of my abilities.	1	2	3	4
34. I am a moody person.	1	2	3	4
35. I am a cheerful person.	1	2	3	4
36. I stand up for what I believe in.	1	2	3	4
37. I am the kind of person others can depend on.	1	2	3	4
38. I feel shy around new people.	1	2	3	4
39. I would rather do things on my own than ask others for help.	1	2	3	4
40. I like acting in front of other people.	1	2	3	4
41. When I like someone, I do nice things for them to show them how I feel.	1	2	3	4
42. I am good at sports.	1	2	3	4
43. I am a happy person.	1	2	3	4
44. I feel good when people say nice things about me.	1	2	3	4
45. It is easy for me to tell people what I think, even when I know they will probably disagree with me.	1	2	3	4
46. I never know what I'm doing from one minute to the next.	1	2	3	4
47. I am faithful to my friends.	1	2	3	4
48. I make a strong impression on most people I meet.	1	2	3	4
49. I always do what I say I will do.	1	2	3	4
50. I like to do things girls and women do.	1	2	3	4
51. I can get people to do what I want them to do most of the time.	1	2	3	4
52. I feel bad when other people have something I don't have.	1	2	3	4
53. It makes me feel bad when someone else is feeling bad.	1	2	3	4
54. I like to think about and solve problems.	1	2	3	4
55. I try to tell the truth.	1	2	3	4
56. I can usually tell when someone needs help.	1	2	3	4
57. I am good at taking charge of things.	1	2	3	4
58. I like to keep secrets.	1	2	3	4
59. I am good at understanding other people's problems.	1	2	3	4
60. I am willing to take risks.	1	2	3	4

Adapted from:

Boldizar, J. (1991). Assessing sex typing and androgyny in children: The Children's Sex Role Inventory. *Developmental Psychology*, 27(3), 505-515.

Appendix B

Letters for Recruitment of Treatment Group

Initial Letter to Clients of Agency A

November 6, 1996

Dear prospective participant:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study being conducted at [Agency A] by Kendra Rogers. Ms. Rogers is a graduate student in the Master of Education in Counselling program at the University of Northern British Columbia. Kendra has served as a practicum student and an employee at [Agency A] for the past year. She is conducting a study of children who witness domestic violence and their views of themselves as masculine or feminine.

Her study will use questionnaires to gather information from mothers and their children. This information will be completely confidential, and your name will not be used at any time. The results of her study will be available at the [Agency A] library upon completion of her research project. You are welcome to read the results of the study, as it may deepen your understanding of the effects of witnessing violence.

The attached information sheet will provide you with more information about the study, which should help you in the decision whether to participate.

If you would like more information about the study, please contact Ms. Rogers at ###-####. She would be glad to answer any questions you have.

If you would like to participate in the study, please telephone me or Ms. Rogers at ###-#### to set up an appointment for distribution of the questionnaires and an interview with you child or children.

If you do not want to participate in the study, please take a few minutes to telephone Intersect, and your name will be removed from the list.

Sincerely,

(signed by each prospective participant's therapist)

Agency A

Description of Study:

This study is an investigation of how witnessing domestic violence affects children's thoughts about masculinity and femininity. The researcher is seeking information from mothers regarding their children's exposure to domestic violence, and from children and their mothers regarding their views of themselves as masculine or feminine.

Adult Consent for Own Participation:

If you decide to participate in this study, your involvement will take approximately one hour. I will ask you to complete three questionnaires. The first questionnaire gathers demographic information about you and your family. The second questionnaire determines the degree to which you see yourself as masculine or feminine. The final questionnaire describes the conflict resolution styles used by you and your partner or ex-partner. It also asks about your child's exposure to conflict between you and your partner or ex-partner.

The third questionnaire asks you to think about various conflict situations you have experienced with your partner or ex-partner. Some of the examples describe physical conflict between you and your partner or ex-partner. This may bring up some painful memories for you, and may cause emotional distress or anxiety. If this situation occurs, please feel free to stop until you feel more comfortable. If you are unable to continue, you may discontinue participation in the study.

Participation in this study may help you understand how witnessing domestic violence affects children's views of men and women.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time throughout the study, and may refuse to answer any of the questions. All information you provide for this study will be number coded and confidential. This study has been approved by [Agency A] and the University of Northern British Columbia ethics committee.

Questions?

If you have any questions about this study, contact Ms. Kendra Rogers at ###-#### or Dr. Peter MacMillan at 960-5555.

Please check the appropriate box:

- ☐ I agree to participate in the study.
- ☐ I do not wish to participate in this study.

I have read and understood this consent form. I understand that any information about me obtained from this research will be kept strictly confidential.

Signature _____

Date _____

Initial Letter to Clients of Agency B

November 12, 1996

Dear prospective participant:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study being conducted at [Agency A] by Kendra Rogers. Ms. Rogers is a graduate student in the Master of Education in Counselling program at the University of Northern British Columbia. Kendra has served as a practicum student and an employee at [Agency A] for the past year. She is conducting a study of children who witness domestic violence and their views of themselves as masculine or feminine.

Her study will use questionnaires to gather information from mothers and their children. This information will be completely confidential, and your name will not be used at any time. The results of her study will be available at the [Agency A] library upon completion of her research project. You are welcome to read the results of the study, as it may deepen your understanding of the effects of witnessing violence.

The attached information sheet will provide you with more information about the study, which should help you in the decision whether to participate.

If you would like more information about the study, please contact Ms. Rogers at ###-####. She would be glad to answer any questions you have.

If you would like to participate in the study, please telephone me or Ms. Rogers at ###-#### to set up an appointment for distribution of the questionnaires and an interview with you child or children.

Sincerely,

(signed by psychologist at Agency A)

Name of psychologist
Agency A

Follow-up Letter to Clients of Agency A

January 17, 1997

Dear prospective participant:

I am writing to remind you of my recent invitation to participate in a study being conducted at [Agency]. It is not too late to respond, as I value your input on a very important topic - children who witness domestic violence. This study will increase our understanding of how witnessing domestic violence affects our children.

To protect your children's well-being, they will not be asked any questions about witnessing domestic violence. In fact, they will not even know that the study has anything to do with violence. The children's questionnaire focuses completely on boys' and girls' personality characteristics. It is in no way threatening or harmful to the children.

In order to determine the extent of your children's exposure to domestic violence, you will complete a questionnaire asking about specific abusive incidents between you and your partner or ex-partner. While it may be stressful or anxiety-producing for you to recall these incidents, you will learn a great deal about the effects of witnessing domestic violence on your children's opinions of boys and girls.

All information you and your children provide for this study is completely anonymous and confidential. I am the only person who will be meeting with your children, and I am the only person who will be reading the questionnaires. Your name and your children's names will not appear anywhere on the questionnaires. As soon as the interview and questionnaires are complete, they will be number-coded.

The time required to help with this study will no exceed one hour.

Please take a moment to consider whether you would like to participate in this study. You can reach me at ###-#### with you decision or if you have any further questions. I would really like to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Kendra Rogers
Agency A
###-####

Initial Letter to Clients of Agency C

January 23, 1997

Dear prospective participant:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study being conducted at [Agency A]. I am a graduate student in the Master of Education in Counselling program at the University of Northern British Columbia. I have served as a practicum student and an employee at [Agency A] for the past year. I am conducting a study of children who witness domestic violence and their views of themselves as masculine or feminine.

My study will use questionnaires to gather information from mothers and their children. This information will be completely confidential, and your name will not be used at any time. The results of my study will be available in the [Agency A] library upon completion of my research project. You are welcome to read the results of the study, as it may deepen your understanding of the effects of witnessing violence.

The attached information sheet will provide you with more information about the study, which should help you in the decision whether to participate.

If you would like more information about the study, please contact me at [Agency A] at ###-####. I would be glad to answer any questions you have.

If you would like to participate in the study, please telephone me at ###-#### to set up an appointment for distribution of the questionnaires and an interview with your child or children.

Sincerely,

Kendra Rogers
Agency A

Appendix C

Letters for Recruitment of Comparison Group

Initial Letter to Prospective Elementary School Participants

April 29, 1997

Dear parents:

A graduate student in the Master of Education in Counselling program at UNBC is conducting a study of how children's gender beliefs are affected by exposure to domestic violence. Both UNBC and School District 57 have given ethics approval for the study. The portion of the study involving families whose children have witnessed domestic violence has been completed.

The researcher is now looking for women whose children **HAVE NOT** witnessed domestic violence. These women and their children will form a group which will be compared to the existing group of families whose children have witnessed domestic violence.

Participation in this study is completely anonymous and confidential.

Participation requirements:

- ✍ your children are between the ages of 6 and 12 years
- ✍ your children **have not** witnessed domestic violence

What does participation involve?

If you participate in this study, you will complete three questionnaires. The first is a demographic questionnaire; the second asks you to rate yourself on various personality characteristics; and the third asks about incidents of conflict between you and your partner or ex-partner. The questionnaires take a total of approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Your children will complete one questionnaire which asks them to rate themselves on various personality characteristics. The questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. **Your children will not be asked ANY questions about domestic violence.**

Benefits of participating:

If you choose to participate in this study, you will build our knowledge and understanding of how domestic violence affects our children. This information is not only valuable to those directly involved. All of our lives are affected by violence, and we share the responsibility for doing something about it.

Your children will each receive a small gift for participating in the study.

Please return this completed form to school with your children before May 16, 1997.

You may keep the information sheet for your records. Results of this study will be available at the [Agency A] library in the fall of 1997.

Please mark the appropriate box after reading the description of the study:

☐ I do not wish to participate.

☐ I would like more information before I make my decision.

Please phone me at _____ (h) or _____ (w).

My name is _____ .

☐ I would like to participate.

Please phone me at _____ (h) or _____ (w) .

My name is _____ .

If you have decided to participate, please list the names and birth dates of your children who will be participating with you.

Name

Birth date

If you require more information or have any questions, please feel free to contact us.
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ms. Kendra Rogers
##-#### or ###-####

Dr. Peter MacMillan
960-5828

Follow-up Letter to Prospective Elementary School Participants

Dear prospective participant:

I am writing to remind you of my recent invitation to participate in a study being conducted by the University of Northern British Columbia and School District #57.

I am still looking for participants for the comparison group of children who **have not** witnessed any domestic violence. These children's questionnaires will be compared to questionnaires of a group of children who have witnessed domestic violence.

The requirements for participation in the comparison group are:

- ◆ your children are between the ages of 6 and 12
- ◆ your children live with you
- ◆ your children have not witnessed any form of domestic violence

All information you and your children provide for this study is completely anonymous and confidential. Your name and your children's names will not appear anywhere on the questionnaires. As soon as the interview and questionnaires are complete, they will be number-coded.

The time required to help with this study will not exceed one hour.

Please call me at ###-#### if you would like to participate in this study. I would really like to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Kendra Rogers
 Graduate Student, University of Northern British Columbia
 Master of Education in Counselling
 ###-####

Letter Posted on Bulletin Board at Agency A

Dear parents:

A graduate student in the Master of Education in Counselling program at UNBC is conducting a study of how children's gender beliefs are affected by exposure to domestic violence. Both UNBC and School District 57 have given ethics approval for the study. The portion of the study involving families whose children have witnessed domestic violence has been completed.

The researcher is now looking for women whose children HAVE NOT witnessed domestic violence. These women and their children will form a group which will be compared to the existing group of families whose children have witnessed domestic violence.

Participation in this study is completely anonymous and confidential.

Participation requirements:

- ✍ your children are between the ages of 6 and 12 years
- ✍ your children **have not** witnessed domestic violence

What does participation involve?

If you participate in this study, you will complete three questionnaires. The first is a demographic questionnaire; the second asks you to rate yourself on various personality characteristics; and the third asks about incidents of conflict between you and your partner or ex-partner. The questionnaires take a total of approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Your children will complete one questionnaire which asks them to rate themselves on various personality characteristics. The questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. **Your children will not be asked ANY questions about domestic violence.**

Benefits of participating:

If you choose to participate in this study, you will build our knowledge and understanding of how domestic violence affects our children. This information is not only valuable to those directly involved. All of our lives are affected by violence, and we share the responsibility for doing something about it.

Your children will each receive a small gift for participating in the study.

Please leave your name and phone number with the receptionist if you are interested in participating in the comparison group or call Kendra at ###-####.

Appendix D

Instructions for Children's Completion of the CSRI

I provided the following instructions to each child before beginning the CSRI:

"I asked your mother to bring you here today to take part in a study of what boys and girls think about themselves. I am going to read several sentences to you, one at a time. What I would like you to do is rate each sentence on a scale of 1 to 4 for how well each sentence describes you (refer to poster of scale on wall). Answer '1' if the sentence is *not at all true of you*, '2' if the sentence is *a little true of you*, '3' if the sentence is *mostly true of you*, or '4' if the sentence is *very true or you*. Then I will write down your answer on this piece of paper. Do you have any questions right now?" (If yes, answered now).

"To help you get used to using these numbers for answers, let's do three practice questions. I will say something, and you use these numbers to tell me how true it is about you. The first one is, 'I love Brussels sprouts.'" (Child answers, with help if necessary).

"The second one is, 'I would like a pet rhinoceros.'" (Child answers, with help if necessary).

"The last one is, 'I love school.'" (Child answers, with help if necessary). "Do you have any questions before we start?" (Answer questions as required). "Okay, let's begin."

"As I said before, these sentences are talking about you. What I would like you to do is use those numbers to tell me how true it is about you. Don't forget you can ask questions whenever you want to. Are you ready?" (Answer questions as required).

Proceed through the CSRI.

Appendix E

Treatment and Comparison Group Letters of Consent to Participate

Treatment Group Consent Forms

Description of Study:

This study is an investigation of how witnessing domestic violence affects children's thoughts about masculinity and femininity. The researcher is seeking information from mothers regarding their children's exposure to domestic violence, and from children and their mothers regarding their views of themselves as masculine or feminine.

Adult Consent for Own Participation:

If you decide to participate in this study, your involvement will take approximately one hour. I will ask you to complete three questionnaires. The first questionnaire gathers demographic information about you and your family. The second questionnaire determines the degree to which you see yourself as masculine or feminine. The final questionnaire describes the conflict resolution styles used by you and your partner or ex-partner. It also asks about your child's exposure to conflict between you and your partner or ex-partner.

The third questionnaire asks you to think about various conflict situations you have experienced with your partner or ex-partner. Some of the examples describe physical conflict between you and your partner or ex-partner. This may bring up some painful memories for you, and may cause emotional distress or anxiety. If this situation occurs, please feel free to stop until you feel more comfortable. If you are unable to continue, you may discontinue participation in the study.

Participation in this study may help you understand how witnessing domestic violence affects children's views of men and women.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time throughout the study, and may refuse to answer any of the questions. All information you provide for this study will be number coded and confidential. This study has been approved by [Agency A] and the University of Northern British Columbia ethics committee.

Questions?

If you have any questions about this study, contact Ms. Kendra Rogers at ###-#### or Dr. Peter MacMillan at 960-5555.

Please check the appropriate box:

- ☐ I agree to participate in the study.
☐ I do not wish to participate in this study.

I have read and understood this consent form. I understand that any information about me obtained from this research will be kept strictly confidential.

Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Consent for Child's Participation:

I would like to ask your permission for your children to participate in a study of domestic violence and children's views of themselves as masculine or feminine.

If you agree to your children's participation in this study, they will complete one questionnaire. The questionnaire assesses the degree to which the children view themselves as masculine or feminine.

Your children's participation is completely voluntary. They may withdraw at any time throughout the study, and may refuse to answer any of the questions. All information obtained from your children will be number coded and confidential. This project has been approved by both [Agency A] and the University of Northern British Columbia's ethics committee.

Questions?

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Ms. Kendra Rogers at ###-#### or Dr. Peter MacMillan at 960-5555.

Please check the appropriate boxes:

- ☐ I give consent for my child / children to participate in this study.
☐ I do not want my child / children to participate in this study.

I have read and understand this consent form. I understand that any information about my children obtained from this research will be kept strictly confidential.

Signature: _____ Date _____

Child's/Children's Name(s): _____

Child's Consent for Own Participation:

I understand that I have been asked to be in a project looking at how children think about themselves. If I agree to be in this project, I will be interviewed by Kendra and asked about boys' and girls' personality characteristics. This will take about one hour.

I understand that I do not have to answer any questions I don't want to, and I can stop early if I feel uncomfortable. If I feel bad about any of the questions, I can talk to my parent(s) or Kendra about it.

I understand that my name will not be used and that Kendra will not tell anyone what I say.

If I have any questions, I can ask my parent(s) or have them call Kendra.

Please check the appropriate box:

- ☐ I agree to participate in this project.
- ☐ I do not want to participate in this project.

I have had the chance to ask questions.

Child's Signature _____

Date _____

Interviewer Signature _____

Date _____

Comparison Group Consent Letters

This study is an investigation of how witnessing domestic violence affects children's thoughts about masculinity and femininity. The researcher is seeking information about children's exposure to domestic violence, and about mothers' and children's views of themselves as traditionally masculine or feminine.

If you decide to participate in the comparison group for the study, your involvement will take approximately thirty minutes. I will ask you to complete three questionnaires. The first questionnaire gathers demographic information about you and your family and asks about the history of violence against you in past relationships. The second questionnaire determines the degree to which you see yourself as masculine or feminine. The final questionnaire describes the conflict resolution styles used by you and your partner or ex-partner. This questionnaire also asks about your child's exposure to conflict between you and your partner or ex-partner. Some of the examples describe physical conflict between you and your partner or ex-partner. Since you are part of the comparison group, you should find that this questionnaire does not apply to you. However, it may still bring up some painful memories for you, and may cause emotional distress or anxiety. If this situation occurs, please feel free to stop until you feel more comfortable. If you are unable to continue, you may discontinue participation in the study.

If you choose to participate in this study you will receive a small gift for each of your children that participates.

This study is being conducted by the University of Northern British Columbia and has been approved by School District #57 and the UNBC ethics committee.

All information you and your children provide for this study will be number coded, anonymous, and confidential.

Questions?

If you have any questions about this study, contact Ms. Kendra Rogers at ###-#### or Dr. Peter MacMillan at 960-5828.

Please check the appropriate box:

☐ I agree to participate in the study.

☐ I do not wish to participate in this study.

I have read and understood this consent form.

Signature _____

Date _____

Parent Consent for Child's Participation:

If you agree to your children's participation in this study, they will complete one questionnaire each. The questionnaire assesses the degree to which the children view themselves as traditionally masculine or feminine. All information obtained from your children will be number coded, anonymous, and confidential.

Your children's participation is completely voluntary. If they feel uncomfortable during the study, they may withdraw at any time, and may refuse to answer any of the questions.

Please check the appropriate boxes:

- ☐ I give consent for my child / children to participate in this study.
☐ I do not want my child / children to participate in this study.

Child(ren)'s Name(s):

Child(ren)'s Birth date(s):

Mother's Signature:

Date _____**Child's Consent for Own Participation:**

I understand that I have been asked to be in a project looking at how children think about themselves. If I agree to be in this project, Kendra will ask me a list of questions about how I describe myself. This will take about twenty minutes. I understand that my name will not be used and that Kendra will not tell anyone what I say.

I do not have to answer any questions I don't want to, and I can stop early if I feel uncomfortable. If I feel bad about any of the questions, I can talk to my parent(s) or Kendra about it. If I have any questions later, I can ask my parent(s) or have them call Kendra.

Please check the appropriate box:

- ☐ I agree to participate in this project.
☐ I do not want to participate in this project.

Child's Signature: _____**Date** _____

Date _____