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## Domestic violence and its link to child mental health issues

Vickie Lynn Sanderlin

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ITS LINK TO CHILD  
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

---

by  
Vickie Lynn Sanderlin  
Abraham Cruz Diaz  
June 2006

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by  
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Abraham Cruz Diaz

June 2006

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## ABSTRACT

This study utilized social learning theory in examining domestic violence's link to child mental health disorders. This framework considers how exposure to domestic violence during childhood can greatly affect children's ability to function. The study population was comprised of 47 parents whose children receive mental health services from Victor Community Support Services. The parents completed the Conflict Tactics Scale questionnaire which rated the level of violence they experience in their current or past relationships with significant others. Adequate mental health services for children must take into account aspects of the child's environment. Assessing for domestic violence will assist mental health professionals in meeting the needs of this population.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Dr. Chang and the graduate advisory committee for their assistance with this project. Their leadership and assistance gave us the inspiration needed to complete this research project.

I would like to acknowledge my girlfriend, Nadia, for helping me through my years of working fulltime and going to graduate school part-time. Without her as my foundation, I would have fallen apart. I would also like to thank my research partner, Vickie, for allowing me to assist her with this project.

Abraham Diaz

We would like to thank Dr. Chang and the graduate advisory committee for your assistance with this project. Your leadership and assistance gave us the inspiration needed to complete this process.

To my mother, thank you for all of your love and support. You came through for me when I needed you the most. I will always be grateful for the sacrifices you made to help me accomplish my dream.

Vickie Sanderlin

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to my mother, who is my inspiration and motivation to be selfless and help others less fortunate than me.

Abraham Diaz

This book is dedicated to Derrick Jr., Monique and Danielle. Thank you for your love and patience throughout this process. You all are truly my special gifts from God.

Vickie Sanderlin

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence continues to be of grave concern in our society. The perpetrator and the victim of the violence have received much attention over the years regarding treatment. We must address the silent victim, the child-witness. Many children receiving mental health services may be exposed to domestic violence and during the course of treatment never receive adequate services to address this issue. In this section we will discuss the link between exposure to domestic violence and child mental health disorders, the need for adequate services for this population, and how this issue impacts social work practice.

#### Problem Statement

Children are receiving mental health treatment for various mental health diagnoses such as conduct disorder, oppositional defiance, and attention deficit disorder. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV lists several areas of childhood mental illness. Many of these childhood disorders are linked with verbal and physical aggression. Evidence of this is seen through media

coverage of the outpouring of violence in our schools, neighborhoods, and throughout our society. Often this violence begins within a child's family of origin, which is currently referred to as "domestic violence." When domestic violence occurs within the family system, everyone involved suffers from its effects. Children of these families are at risk of being involved in abusive relationships during their adult lives. Many agencies provide services to decrease domestic violence, yet these services are generally geared toward male batterers and female victims. The effects of marital violence on children can be devastating, both during childhood and in later life.

The California Penal Code defines abuse as "intentionally or recklessly causing or attempting to cause bodily injury, or placing another person in reasonable apprehension of imminent, serious bodily injury to himself, herself or another." Domestic violence is the term applied if a spouse abuses his/her partner or a former spouse, someone he/she lives with or once lived with, someone he/she is dating or is engaged to, or someone with whom he/she has a child. It is never appropriate to use physical or mental abuse towards

others. Some programs are set up for women who are battered by their spouses or boyfriends. There are also programs throughout the legal system for batterers. The majority of batterers are court ordered to seek professional help.

Yet services are limited for the children who suffer from living in a home where violence occurs. Children witness ongoing abuse, and many times are abused themselves. These children are often referred to as "forgotten," "unacknowledged," "hidden," "unintended," and "silent victims" (Holden, 1998). This cycle of violence sometimes continues through many generations. It is important to understand that domestic violence can be fatal and many times victims of domestic violence can carry these effects into their adult relationships.

Agencies are currently providing services such as anger management to assist these children with decreasing aggressive behaviors. Yet many of these services focus on child pathology or mental health issues. Many parents seek mental health services for their children and fail to address the domestic violence issues with which the family is faced. Behavior modification is essential in

addressing the angry outbursts and physical aggression these children exhibit.

On a macro level schools are also addressing issues of violence. They provide programs that address bullying behaviors. Many of the identified bullying behaviors are similar to domestic violence behaviors such as the need to control others, the low self-esteem of the perpetrator, and possible violence modeled by care givers in the home.

The association between exposure to violence and child psychopathology is well established (Vostanis & Tischler, 2001). These children are involved in violence on a daily basis. They witness violent episodes; they are aware of their mother's fear, and/or their lives are being disrupted by the violence. A series of Canadian studies regarding children of battered women demonstrated emotional, behavioral and social problems among children exposed to family violence (Vostanis & Tischler, 2001). This, of course, can seriously affect their adult lives. Many are at high risk for adult psychopathology and social adversities (Vostanis & Tischler, 2001).

It is extremely important to develop various approaches to address this problem. The criminal justice

system holds perpetrators accountable for their actions by punishing them. This approach clearly deals with violence after the fact. The public health system proposes developing an approach that focuses on decreasing the probability that violence will occur in the first place (McMahon, 2001). The public health system follows a four-step approach in its prevention of domestic violence. Public health surveillance allows the monitoring and tracking of trends in public health. Risk factor research focuses on identifying those factors that place an individual at higher risk for an unhealthy consequence such as domestic violence, perpetration, or victimization.

To stop the cycle of violence, it is important to have a clear understanding of what domestic violence is, to recognize the systems and patterns that develop batterers and be proactive in preventing family violence. It is important to examine existing programs to determine if there is a component within the program that assists families in raising nonviolent children, thereby ending the cycle of violence.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify a relationship between childhood mental health disorders and parental experience of domestic violence. Children are diagnosed with various mental illnesses. Many of the symptoms children display may be linked to domestic violence issues within the family. This study identified the prevalence of domestic violence among parents of children seeking mental health treatment. This information can be used in assisting mental health professionals in assessing for domestic violence issues during the intake process and encourage agencies to develop and implement treatment which includes a domestic violence component.

Victor Community Support Services currently provides mental health services for children ages five to seventeen years. Many of the children are showing signs of aggression, depression, and hyperactivity. The agency provides behavior modification, clinical assessments, psychotherapy, psychiatric services, and parenting training. After working with this population for the past five years, it is apparent that many of the children and their families have a history of domestic violence,

either in their immediate family or family of origin. Mental health agencies seldom address these issues during treatment, and rarely assess for domestic violence during intake.

Victor Community Support Services provides mental health services for children at risk of losing their home or school placement. These services are provided for the children and their families. Several of these children display violent behaviors towards their family members. Upon deeper investigation, it is evident that the majority of these families have a history of domestic violence. In order to better serve this population the agency may need to implement a domestic violence component to treatment, or at least link these families with domestic violence services within the community. Data was gathered from the parents of children receiving services or who have received services in the past. This information will assist the staff of Victor Community Support Services in assessing for and developing needed services for the population they serve. It will also help to address the physical and verbal aggression among the children receiving services by implementing programs such as groups for kids regarding bullying. This information



can help in developing possible interventions for families with a history of domestic violence. The main goal is to develop interventions that focus on ending the cycle of violence. Simply leaving the batterer does not address the issues surrounding domestic violence, nor does this address the effects the violence has on the children.

#### Significance of the Project for Social Work

The number of children who are receiving mental health services has increased over the past 20 years. These children display behaviors such as depression, anxiety, aggressive behaviors, and posttraumatic stress. Victor Community Support Services provides mental health services for children ages 5 to 17 and their families. This agency partners with San Bernardino County to provide intensive community based services focusing on reducing group home placements and psychiatric hospitalizations. This agency is affiliated with Victor Treatment Centers, which provides treatment for some of the most severely emotionally disturbed children throughout California. In order for Victor Treatment Centers and similar agencies to provide the most

comprehensive services, it is imperative that these mental health professionals include domestic violence components in their treatment curriculum. Many of the symptoms children are displaying may be associated with environmental issues such as their exposure to domestic violence. Few of these agencies assess for domestic violence during the intake process, and staff lack extensive training in this area.

The social work profession focuses on meeting a client's needs. By identifying and developing specialized programs the social welfare of children and their families will benefit. Funding for this particular area is not yet well developed. This study will help to bring attention to this situation and encourage policy makers, particularly within Victor Community Support Services, to make necessary changes to accommodate the population they currently serve.

Within the generalist model, this study will provide additional information to improve assessment of client needs. The results gathered from the study were reviewed and provided to Victor Community Support Services to determine what training staff will need to address client needs. One area that does not exist at this point in time

is a formal method to assess for domestic violence during the intake process. The results from this study were provided to the agency for possible development of an assessment tool which could be utilized by the agency.

Mental health services are a vital component of social work services. When a child is diagnosed with a mental disorder, research suggests that assessing for an association between mental health problems and domestic violence can assist in determining the best course of action in treatment planning for this population.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The following literature review discusses the various ways children are affected by domestic violence, the characteristics of batterers, how environmental issues impacts social learning and possible treatment and prevention strategies to assist those affected by domestic violence.

#### Domestic Violence Affects on Children and Their Families

There are several ways in which children are affected by domestic violence. Some children are not directly assaulted, meaning they are not physically abused. Yet the affects of domestic violence can be seen over time in future relationships and continuing cycles of violence. Even if children are not direct victims of physical violence, observing violence and being present during violent episodes can be a traumatic experience (Folsom, 2003). Children who witness domestic assaults exhibit increased rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms and antisocial behaviors. A recent study

revealed that 45% of children exposed to both forms of violence exhibited many types of negative behaviors. It is estimated that the number of children exposed to domestic violence each year in this country is between 3.3 million and 10 million (Folsom, 2003).

Addressing this issue of children witnessing violence and its affect on children is a fairly recent endeavor. The first published articles regarding the problems of children exposed to family violence did not appear until 1975 (Folsom, 2003). Therefore, there is limited information about how domestic violence affects childhood mental illness.

The cycle of violence is very difficult to break. The parent's own childhood history of abuse comes into play. It is possible that these parents have not received treatment or services for the violence they experienced. Therefore, their history of physical abuse during childhood has been associated with increased levels of aggressive and antisocial behavior among victims (Folsom, 2003). Folsom's study (2003) compared the co occurrence of domestic violence and a parent's childhood history of abuse. In order to help families stop the cycle of violence, it is important that mental health

professionals have a clear understanding of domestic violence issues and how to assess for their characteristics in order to provide adequate referral sources and domestic violence treatment for families. Many children who meet criteria for receiving mental health services may struggle with issues of anger, power, and control which can be connected to family domestic violence. Having a systematic method for assessing these children can be very beneficial in their treatment.

Children who are exposed to domestic violence are often silent victims. Many times the affects of domestic violence can be displayed either as aggression or passivity. In one article (Lawson, 2001) the writer focuses on the effect of children witnessing family violence. The writer discusses how witnessing violence can be just as harmful as actual physical abuse. The article reports that the observer of family violence experiences a sense of uncertainty, and witnessing a parent being abused can give the child a feeling of being unprotected by the parent, therefore experiencing a greater sense of trauma. The article suggests several intervention methods including counseling for parent couple, counseling for mother child, counseling for

father child, counseling for siblings, conjoint family, and collaborating with the school system. By developing a network of helpers families have a better chance of overcoming domestic violence and receiving the interventions needed to address several areas of unmet needs.

There is a great impact on children who witness domestic violence. They have a wide array of mental health problems as a result of the exposure to violence. Holden, Geffner, and Jouriles (1998) conducted several studies and reviewed other studies on this subject. In their book they include information from an article by Sternberg, Lamb, and Dawud-Noursi (1998), which provides a list of children's problems associated with exposure to marital conflict. This list includes internalizing problems, externalizing problems, post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, anxiety, social and, school problems. The authors note that research in this area is very limited, although it has increased over the past 20 years. Future research is necessary in order to develop adequate treatment for children who suffer in this area (Holden, 1998). This book includes several chapters with various authors. All of the chapters are geared towards

the identification of the effects on children who witness domestic violence.

Several studies were conducted, including a survey of police officers regarding domestic violence and its effect on mothers and their children. The researchers wanted to identify women with children and how the officers viewed the effects of domestic violence. Results from the police surveys showed that the majority of law enforcement officers in the study reported that domestic disputes are the most dangerous situations they face. Officers report that the more education and referral information they have for the family, the better they are able to serve the community, particularly when children are involved (Holdenfsky, 1998). The author points out the need for further research and education.

Mental health providers are recognizing the need for specialized services for children who witness domestic violence. Many of these children are referred for treatment, due to behavioral issues. They may be showing signs of exposure to domestic violence. Groves (2002) summarizes the state of knowledge as reflected in the current mental health literature. He also summarizes issues about the effects on children, and reviews issues



related to identification and assessment of such children (Groves, 2002). Interventions for children suffering from domestic violence should include allowing children to openly discuss how the violence affects them.

Family members are often reluctant to discuss the family's business outside the home. It is imperative that treatment services include a safe place for children and families to openly discuss the affect that the violence has on the family. This article discusses various interventions that can help children and their families who experience domestic violence. Openly discussing the violence, how it affects the individual, and what steps can be taken to ensure safety, is the first step toward ending the cycle of violence. This process of breaking the silence and speaking openly about the violence serves to reduce the child's sense of isolation (Groves, 2002). The author encourages mental health professionals and educators to consider that children who are having psychological, learning or developmental problems, might be responding to domestic violence exposure. The author points out the importance of training mental health professionals and educators about signs and symptoms of domestic violence.

Over the years, several studies have been conducted focusing on the victims of domestic violence, particularly women. Several scholarly reviews agree that there are negative affects on children, which include emotional and behavioral functioning, social competence, school achievement, cognitive functioning, psychopathology and general health. Wolfe (2003) discusses the barriers to conducting research regarding child exposure to domestic violence. These barriers include relying only on the mother's report of the child's well-being. This article summarizes collective literature on children exposed to domestic violence and reviews the resulting difficulties these children face. After examining the various data, there is significant evidence that child exposure to domestic violence is harmful, although, the researcher could not report a well-documented finding that the effects of domestic violence impact a child's learning or cognitive functioning. The researcher reports that there is a need to evaluate other risk factors when considering the effects of domestic violence on children. Understanding the various risk factors and necessary treatment

planning, and program development can more specifically respond to the needs of this population.

Kernic and Wolf (2003) conducted a study using the Child Behavior Checklist to determine the association between children's exposure to domestic violence and their mental health disorders. The results showed significant association. Mothers who participated in this study were identified through the Police Department. These women had reported partner abuse to the police within a 13-month period. They participated in a Women's Wellness Study which consisted of 448 Seattle women, 18 years old and older, who were victims of domestic violence that resulted in a police reported incident. From that group, the researchers did a random sampling of their children who were between the ages of 2 and 17 years. Findings from this study provide significant evidence of the association between children's exposure to domestic violence and mental health problems.

#### Characteristics of Batterers

Ertem (2000) reviewed studies to test if the general belief that people that were physically abused as children are more likely to continue that pattern of

behavior with their own children. Of the two studies which approached the standards set, one upheld the theory and the other did not. An investigational model is presented which, if used, may improve the value of future studies.

Peterman (2001) discussed the assessment of males who commit domestic violence crimes, referred to as batterers. The researcher conducted extensive research on the characteristics of batterers. Information gathered can be used to plan effective treatments, interventions, and strategies. Moreover, this paper examines the importance of utilizing ethnically and culturally sensitive approaches during the initial intake and subsequent assessment sessions with batterers.

#### Theories Guiding Conceptualization

The Social learning theory provided a framework for conducting this study of domestic violence and its link to child mental health issues. This framework considers how exposure to domestic violence during childhood can greatly affect children's abilities to function. It recognizes the impact exposure to domestic violence has on one's ability to cope with life. Therefore,

considering social behaviors of those exposed to domestic violence is imperative and may explain some of the mental health issues children experience. The study focused on the level of violence within the family and how this might affect the repertoire of social skills learned during the child's life therefore, affecting the child's mental health.

Social learning commonly referred to as behavioral theories, states that people learn or acquire their behaviors. Therefore children exposed to violence many times will demonstrate various forms of aggression and manipulation which was learned from their environment. Identifying domestic violence and providing adequate treatment can assist children in decreasing the negative impact of their environment and assist the family system as a whole.

#### Treatment and Prevention

Lawson (2001) found that children who are exposed to domestic violence are victims. They may display either aggressive behaviors towards others or they may be withdrawn. Treatment is vital in order to end the cycle of violence. Lawson suggest that several levels of

intervention may be necessary to treat these children such as parent-couple, mother-child, father-child, sibling, and conjoint family sessions. A network of helpers including private practitioners, school counselors, and community services providers could be considered in order to offer families a comprehensive treatment-prevention program.

McMahon (2001) approached domestic violence from a prevention perspective. In order to develop a comprehensive approach to domestic violence, McMahon suggests to including legal, medical, educational components, and the community at large. After extensive research, the public health system developed a four step approach to ending the cycle of violence: 1) ongoing collection, analysis and interpretation of health data, 2) risk factor research, 3) development and evaluation of programs, and finally, 4) implementing these programs by working collaboratively with various systems within the community.

#### Summary

The current literature is limited regarding the effects of domestic violence and its link to child mental

health issues. The literature in this chapter speaks to the effects of domestic violence on the family system and the various studies conducted determining domestic violence effects on children. Further research is needed to better understand the devastating affects of domestic violence link to child mental health. With adequate research, appropriate services can be developed and implemented in serving this population.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods used to determine the association between mental health disorders in children and exposure to domestic violence. Parents whose children are receiving services from a mental health agency was surveyed. The level of violence among these families was measured. Descriptions of the instrument that was used in the survey are included in this chapter. A clear description of the study design and sample will be addressed.

#### Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect domestic violence has on child mental health. Having provided mental health services to children for approximately five years, concerns have been raised about the limited treatment provided for children and their families. Many of these children experience domestic violence in their homes. Assessing for domestic violence during intake and providing domestic violence treatment within the mental health system could prove to be very



beneficial. Previous research literature suggests there is a correlation between mental health disorders among children and exposure to domestic violence. It was the intention of this study to provide additional research in this area and therefore affect future research, funding and treatment within the mental health sector.

The study employed a quantitative research method. This type of method was selected in order to discover correlations. The instrument chosen to conduct this study has been used by numerous researchers and found to be a valid research tool.

A quantitative survey design was used to establish a relationship between domestic violence and child mental health disorders. It examined how exposure to domestic violence contributes to the child's ability to cope with life on a daily basis, therefore, becoming a major factor on the development of mental health disorders. This information will be valuable in determining the types of interventions, treatment, and staff training that are needed to serve this population.

## Sampling

Victor Community Support Services provides mental health services for children ages five years through seventeen years. The services include family intervention; therefore, the client's parents participate in the program. The executive director authorized the researcher to solicit parents involved in the program to participate. All the parents receiving services at the time of the study were asked to participate in the study. Currently there are approximately 90 families where children are residing with their biological mother and/or father. The final sample size was 47 participants.

## Data Collection and Instruments

The hypothesis is that domestic violence increases the probability of mental health disorders among children. The data collected for this study were the parents' reports of their participation in and exposure to domestic violence. In order to measure the extent to which partners in a cohabiting or marital relationship engage in psychological and physical attacks on each other and also their use of reasoning or negotiation to deal with conflicts, the Conflicts Tactics Scale (CTS2)

was used. This instrument consists of 79 items which include questions about the participant in the study and their partner. The length of testing time for this particular survey was approximately 10 - 15 minutes (Straus, 1990).

The instrument has been used in many studies since 1972. This instrument has proven to be a valid measure of physical assaults on partners. It has also proven to be accurate and consistent in its results. There have been several reviews of the CTS1 instrument reporting its validity and reliability (Straus, 1990). It was successfully used for various minority groups such as African Americans and Hispanic Americans, and in at least 20 countries, including Hong Kong, India and Japan (Straus, 1990). The limitations of the CTS2 instrument are that it has significant improvements, but there is not yet any evidence of its validity and reliability, and its findings are based on college student couples which, is a limited population (Appendix A).

An ordinal measurement was used to rank-order values that range from least to most times parents participated in or experienced various forms of domestic violence ranking from 1 - 8 (1 = once in the past year, 2 = twice

in the past year, 3 = 3-5 times in the past year,  
4 = 6-10 times in the past year, 5 = 11-20 times in the  
past year, 6 = more than 20 times in the past year,  
7 = not in the past year, but it did happen before and  
8 = this has never happened). Once the raw data was  
collected the data was arranged into an array that is an  
ordering of every value that occurred within the raw data  
set from 1 to 8.

The Conflict Tactics Scale was scored by adding the  
midpoints for the response categories chosen by the  
participant. There are 8 categories, the midpoint for  
categories 1 and 2 are the same as the category number.  
The midpoint for category 3 is 4, for category 4 is 8,  
for category 5 is 15, for 6 is 25. The questions are  
separated into various scale and subscale items:  
negotiation (subscale, emotional and cognitive),  
psychological aggression (subscale, minor and severe),  
physical assault (subscale, minor and severe), sexual  
coercion (subscale, minor and severe) and injury  
(subscale, minor and severe) (Straus, 1996).

## Procedures

Victor Community Support Services provides in home services, and parents participate in weekly parent support groups. It was the intention of this research to conduct a 100% participation study of the parents currently receiving services from Victor Community Support Services. Therefore each family was given the opportunity to participate in this study. These families included those actively participating in the program, any new families at the time of the study and any families who were being discharged from the program within the time period of the study being conducted.

The questionnaire was mailed to the parents and a letter that explained the reason for the survey and how it could help the agency to enhance its treatment services. The packet mailed to potential participants included an unmarked, self addressed stamped envelop for the participant to return the completed questionnaire. The office staff kept the anonymous questionnaires in a specified file drawer in the chart room. This chart room has a double lock system in place to follow HIPPA laws. The study was conducted for an one-month period. At the end of the one-month period the researcher collected the

unmarked envelopes for data analysis. A total of 47 parents participated in the study.

#### Protection of Human Subjects

The participants remained anonymous in that the researcher did not have access to the name of the person who completed the surveys. Participants were given an informed consent and debriefing statement (Appendix B and C) explaining the purpose of the study and how confidentiality was maintained. The questionnaires did not obtain any identifying information.

#### Data Analysis

This is a quantitative analysis. The theoretical basis of the CTS is conflict theory. This theory assumes that conflict is an inevitable part of all human association, whereas violence as a tactic to deal with conflict is not. The CTS measures the extent to which specific tactics, including acts of physical violence, have been used. A quantitative analysis was used to assess for overall behavior problems of children exposed to violence in the home. Statistical procedures such as descriptive statistics (e.g. frequency, distribution, measures of central tendency and dispersion) were used to

analyze the data gathered from the questionnaire to determine the relative risk estimates of children exposed to domestic violence.

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects domestic violence has on child mental health disorders. The instrument used in this study assisted the researcher in determining the association between domestic violence and child mental health disorders. The Conflict Tactics Scale measured the extent to which partners engage in psychological and physical attacks on each other. The procedures for conducting this study maintained the participant's confidentiality and utilized for research purposes only.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

The CTS2 was given to approximately 90 parents of clients from the Victor Community Support Services, of which 47 were returned. The CTS2 consisted of 78 questions, which were broken into 5 sub-categories based on the nature of the question. These sub-categories included; 1) Negotiation Scale, 2) Psychological aggression scale, 3) Physical assault scale, 4) Sexual coercion scale, and 5) Injury scale. The respondents were asked if certain activities were performed "once in the past year," "twice in the past year," "3-5 times in the past year," "6-10 times in the past year," "11-20 times in the past year," "more than 20 times in the past year," "not this year, but it has happened before," and "this has never happened."

Table 1 represents the frequency distribution of the items of the negotiation scale. For item 1, "I showed my partner that I cared even though we disagreed," 53.2% reported this behavior happened "more than 20 times in the past year," 12.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before," and 10.6% reported "11-20 times in the



past year," and 4.3% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 19.1% reported either twice, 3-5 times, or "6-10 times in the past year."

For item 2, "My partner showed care for me even though we disagreed," 42.6% reported this behavior happened "more than 20 times in the past year," 10.6% reported "not this year, but it has happened before," and 10.6% reported that "this has never happened." The remaining 36.2% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, or "11-20 times in the past year."

For item 3, "I showed respect for my partner's feelings about an issue," 59.8% reported this behavior happened "more than 20 times in the past year," and 12.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before," and 4.3% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 23.1% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, or "11-20 times in the past year."

For item 4, "My partner showed respect for my feelings about an issue," 40.4% reported this behavior happened "more than 20 times in the past year," and 17.0% reported "this has never happened before." The remaining 42.6% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times,

11-20 times in the past year or "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 5, "I said I was sure we could work out a problem," 55.3% reported this behavior happened "more than 20 times in the past year," and 12.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before," and 2.1% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 29.8% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, or "11-20 times in the past year."

For item 6, "My partner was sure we could work out a problem," 42.6% reported this behavior happened "more than 20 times in the past year," 12.8% reported "twice in the past year," and 12.8% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 31.8% reported either once, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, 11-20 times in the past year or "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 7, "I explained my side of a disagreement to my partner," 59.6% reported this behavior happened "more than 20 times in the past year," and 2.1% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 38.3% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, 11-20 times in the past year or "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 8, "My partner explained his or her side of a disagreement to me," 48.9% reported this behavior happened "more than 20 times in the past year," and 17.0% reported "this has never happened before." The remaining 34.1% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, 11-20 times in the past year or "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 9, "I suggested a compromise to a disagreement," 53.2% reported this behavior happened "more than 20 times in the past year," 12.8% reported "6-10 times in the past year," 12.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before," and 2.1% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 19.1% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, or 11-20 times in the past year. For item 10, "My Partner suggested a compromise," 38.3% reported "more than 20 times in the past year," 17% reported "this has never happened," and 12.8% reported "twice in the past year." The remaining 29.8% reported either once, 3-5 times, 6-10 times or "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 11, "I agreed to a solution to a disagreement my partner suggested," 51.1% reported this behavior happened "more than 20 times in the past year,"

12.8% reported "3-5 times in the past year," and 8.5% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 27.6% reported either once, twice, 6-10 times, 11-20 times in the past year, or "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 12, "My partner agreed to try a solution I suggested," 38.3% reported this behavior happened "more than 20 times in the past year," 14.9% reported "this has never happened before," 12.8% reported "3-5 times in the past year," and 12.8% reported "6-10 times in the past year." The remaining 21.2% reported either once, twice or "not this year, but it has happened before."

Table 1. Negotiation Scale

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1. I showed my partner I cared even though we disagreed.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0.0%
Twice in the past year		2	4.3%
3-5 times in the past year		4	8.5%
6-10 times in the past year		3	6.4%
11-20 times in the past year		5	10.6%
More than 20 times in the past year		25	53.2%
Not this year, but it has happened before		6	12.8%
This has never happened		2	4.3%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
2. My partner showed care for me even though we disagreed.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		3	6.4%
3-5 times in the past year		4	8.5%
6-10 times in the past year		4	8.5%
11-20 times in the past year		3	6.4%
More than 20 times in the past year		20	42.6%
Not this year, but it has happened before		5	10.6%
This has never happened		5	10.6%
3. I showed respect for my partner's feelings about an issue.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		4	8.5%
6-10 times in the past year		3	6.4%
11-20 times in the past year		2	4.3%
More than 20 times in the past year		28	59.6%
Not this year, but it has happened before		6	12.8%
This has never happened		2	4.3%
4. My partner showed respect for my feelings about an issue.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		3	6.4%
3-5 times in the past year		3	6.4%
6-10 times in the past year		6	12.8%
11-20 times in the past year		2	4.3%
More than 20 times in the past year		19	40.4%
Not this year, but it has happened before		4	8.5%
This has never happened		8	17.0%
5. I said I was sure we could work out a problem.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		2	4.3%
3-5 times in the past year		5	10.6%
6-10 times in the past year		3	6.4%
11-20 times in the past year		2	4.3%
More than 20 times in the past year		26	55.3%
Not this year, but it has happened before		6	12.8%
This has never happened		1	2.1%

Item	N	Frequency	Percentage
		(n)	(%)
6. My partner was sure we could work out a problem.			
Once in the past year		3	6.4%
Twice in the past year		6	12.8%
3-5 times in the past year		3	6.4%
6-10 times in the past year		5	10.6%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		20	42.6%
Not this year, but it has happened before		3	6.4%
This has never happened		6	12.8%
7. I explained my side of a disagreement to my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		2	4.3%
3-5 times in the past year		3	6.4%
6-10 times in the past year		5	10.6%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		28	59.6%
Not this year, but it has happened before		5	10.6%
This has never happened		1	2.1%
8. My partner explained his or her side of a disagreement to me.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		4	8.5%
3-5 times in the past year		4	8.5%
6-10 times in the past year		4	8.5%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0.0%
More than 20 times in the past year		23	48.9%
Not this year, but it has happened before		3	6.4%
This has never happened		8	17.0%
9. I suggested a compromise to a disagreement.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		2	4.3%
3-5 times in the past year		4	8.5%
6-10 times in the past year		6	12.8%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		25	53.2%
Not this year, but it has happened before		6	12.8%
This has never happened		1	2.1%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
10. My partner suggested a compromise.	47		
Once in the past year		3	6.4%
Twice in the past year		6	12.8%
3-5 times in the past year		4	8.5%
6-10 times in the past year		5	10.6%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0.0%
More than 20 times in the past year		18	38.3%
Not this year, but it has happened before		2	4.3%
This has never happened		8	17.0%
11. I agreed to try a solution to a disagreement my partner suggested.	47		
Once in the past year		3	6.4%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		6	12.8%
6-10 times in the past year		4	8.5%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		24	51.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		3	6.4%
This has never happened		4	8.5%
12. My partner agreed to try a solution I suggested	47		
Once in the past year		4	8.5%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		6	12.8%
6-10 times in the past year		6	12.8%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0.0%
More than 20 times in the past year		18	38.3%
Not this year, but it has happened before		4	8.5%
This has never happened		7	14.9%

Table 2 represents the frequency distribution of the items of the psychological aggression scale. For item 1 "I insulted or swore at my partner," 27.7% reported "not happen in the past year, but it has happened before," 14.9% reported "more than 20 times in the past year," 12.8% reported "6-10 times in the past year," and 17 % reported "this has never happened." The remaining 23.4%

reported either once, twice, 3-5 times or "11-20 times in the past year."

For item 2, "My partner did this to me," 29.8% reported "not happen in the past year, but it has happened before," 19.1% reported "more than 20 times in the past year," 19.1% reported "this has never happened" and 10.6% reported "6-10 times in the past year." The remaining 17.1% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, or "11-20 times in the past year." For item 3 "I shouted or yelled at my partner," 29.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before," 19.1% reported "more than 20 times in the past year," and 10.6% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 38.2% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, or "6-10 times in the past year."

For item 4, "My partner did this to me," 25.5% reported "not in the past year, but it has happened before," 21.3% reported "more than 20 times in the past year," 14.9% reported "3-5 times in the past year," and 14.9% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 21.3% reported either once, twice, 6-10 times, or "11-20 times in the past year." For item 5 "I stomped out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement," 46% reported "this never happened before," 21.3% reported



"not this year, but it has happened before," and 10.6% reported "more than 20 times in the past year." The remaining 21.3% reported either once, twice 3-5 times, 6-10 times or "11-20 times in the past year."

For item 6 "My partner did this time me," 34.0% reported "this has never happened," 25.5% reported "not this year, but it has happened before," and 10.6% reported "more than 20 times in the past year." The remaining 29.95% reported either once, twice 3-5 times, or "6-10 times in the past year." For item 7, "I did something to spite my partner," 61.7% reported "this has never happened" and 21.2% reported "not in this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 17.1% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 8, "My partner did this to me," 55.3% reported "this has never happened" and 21.3% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 12.8% reported either once, twice, 6-10 times, or "more than 20 times in the past year."

For item 9, "I called my partner fat or ugly," 70.2% reported "this has never happened," and 14.9% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 14.9% reported either once, twice, 6-10 times

or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 10, "My partner did this to me," 59.6% reported "this has never happened," and 21.3% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 19.2% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 11, "I destroyed something belonging to my partner," 85.1% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 14.9% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times or "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 12, "My partner did this to me," 66.0% reported "this has never happened" and 19.1% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 16.9% reported either once, twice 3-5 times, 6-10 times, 11-20 times or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 13, "I accused my partner of being a lousy lover" 83.0% reported "this has never happened" and 10.6% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 6.3% reported either once, 6-10 times or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 14, "My partner did this to me," 78.7% reported "this has never happened" and 14.9 reported "not this year, but it

has happened before." The remaining 6.4% reported "more than 20 times in the past year."

Table 2. Psychological Aggression Scale

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1. I insulted or swore at my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		3	6.4%
Twice in the past year		3	6.4%
3-5 times in the past year		4	8.5%
6-10 times in the past year		6	12.8%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		7	14.9%
Not this year, but it has happened before		13	27.7%
This has never happened		8	17.0%
2. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		3	6.4%
Twice in the past year		2	4.3%
3-5 times in the past year		2	4.3%
6-10 times in the past year		5	10.6%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		9	19.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		14	29.8%
This has never happened		9	19.1%
3. I shouted or yelled at my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		5	10.6%
3-5 times in the past year		5	10.6%
6-10 times in the past year		5	10.6%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		9	19.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		14	29.8%
This has never happened		5	10.6%
4. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		3	6.4%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		7	14.9%
6-10 times in the past year		4	8.5%
11-20 times in the past year		2	4.3%
More than 20 times in the past year		10	21.3%
Not this year, but it has happened before		12	25.5%
This has never happened		7	14.9%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
5. I stomped out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		3	6.4%
3-5 times in the past year		1	2.1%
6-10 times in the past year		3	6.4%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		5	10.6%
Not this year, but it has happened before		10	21.3%
This has never happened		22	46.8%
6. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		2	4.3%
3-5 times in the past year		2	4.3%
6-10 times in the past year		5	10.6%
11-20 times in the past year		3	6.4%
More than 20 times in the past year		5	10.6%
Not this year, but it has happened before		12	25.5%
This has never happened		16	34.0%
7. I did something to spite my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		2	4.3%
3-5 times in the past year		2	4.3%
6-10 times in the past year		1	2.1%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0.0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		10	21.3%
This has never happened		29	61.7%
8. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0.0%
6-10 times in the past year		1	2.1%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0.0%
More than 20 times in the past year		2	4.3%
Not this year, but it has happened before		10	21.3%
This has never happened		26	55.3%
9. I called my partner fat or ugly.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0.0%
6-10 times in the past year		2	4.3%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0.0%
More than 20 times in the past year		3	6.4%
Not this year, but it has happened before		7	14.9%
This has never happened		33	70.2%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
10. My partner called me fat or ugly.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		1	2.1%
6-10 times in the past year		2	4.3%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0.0%
More than 20 times in the past year		3	6.4%
Not this year, but it has happened before		10	21.3%
This has never happened		28	59.6%
11. I destroyed something belonging to my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		2	4.3%
3-5 times in the past year		1	2.1%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0.0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0.0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0.0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		3	6.4%
This has never happened		40	85.1%
12. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		1	2.1%
6-10 times in the past year		1	2.1%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		3	6.4%
Not this year, but it has happened before		9	19.1%
This has never happened		31	66.0%
13. I accused my partner of being a lousy lover.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		0	0.0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0.0%
6-10 times in the past year		1	2.1%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0.0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		5	10.6%
This has never happened		39	83.0%
14. My partner accused me of this.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0.0%
Twice in the past year		0	0.0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0.0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0.0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0.0%
More than 20 times in the past year		3	6.4%
Not this year, but it has happened before		7	14.9%
This has never happened		39	78.7%

Table 3 represents the frequency distribution of the items of the physical assault scale. For item 1, "I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner," 80.9% reported "this has never happened" and 12.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 6.4% reported "once in the past year."

For item 2, "My partner did this to me," 63.8% reported "this has never happened" and 23.4% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 12.8% reported either once, twice or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 3, "I threw something at my partner that could hurt," 72.3% reported "this has never happened" and 17.0% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 10.6% reported either once or "twice in the past year." For item 4, "My partner did this to me," 66% reported "this has never happened" and 23.4% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 10.6% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times or "more than 20 times in the past year."

For item 5, "I twisted my partner's arm or hair," 89.4% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 8.5% reported "not this year, but it has happened

before." For item 6, "My partner did this to me," 72.3% reported "this has never happened" and 19.1% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 6.4% reported either once or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 7, "I pushed or shoved my partner," 72.3% reported "this has never happened" and 17.0% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 8.4% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times or "more than 20 times in the past year."

For item 8, "My partner did this to me," 57.4% reported "this has never happened" and 21.3% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 19.2% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 9, "I grabbed my partner," 72.3% reported "this has never happened" and 12.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 12.8% reported either once, 6-10 times or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 10, "My partner did this to me," 51.1% reported "this has never happened," 23.4% reported "not this year, but it has happened before" and 8.5% reported "once in the past year." The remaining 14.9% reported

either 3-5 times, 6-10 times or "more than 20 times in the past year."

For item 11, "I slapped my partner," 66.0% reported "this has never happened" and 27.7% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 4.2% reported either once or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 12, "My partner did this to me," 61.7% reported "this has never happened" and 23.4% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 12.8% reported either once, 3-5 times, 11-20 times or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 13, "I kicked my partner," 83.0% reported "this behavior has never happened." The remaining 14.9% reported "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 14, "My partner did this to me," 70.2% reported "this has never happened" and 19.1% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 8.4% reported either once, twice, 6-10 times or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 15, "I punched or hit my partner with something that could hurt," 78.7% reported "this has never happened" and 14.9% reported "not this year but it has happened before." The remaining 4.3% reported "3-5 times in the past year." For



item 16, "My partner did this to me," 59.6% reported "this has never happened" and 23.4% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 15% reported either 3-5 times, 6-10 times, 11-20 times or "more than 20 times in the past year."

For item 17, "I choked my partner," 87.2% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 10.6% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 18, "My partner did this to me," 70.2% reported "this has never happened" and 19.1% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 8.5% reported either once, 11-20 times or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 19, "I slammed my partner against a wall," 89.4% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 8.5% reported "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 20, "My partner did this to me," 66.0% reported "this behavior has never happened" and 25.5% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 6.3% reported either once, twice or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 21, "I beat up my partner," 89.4% reported "this has never happened" and the remaining 8.5% reported "not this year, but it has

happened before." For item 22, "My partner did this to me," 68.1% reported "this has never happened" and 25.5% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 4.2% reported either 6-10 times or "more than 20 times in the past year."

For item 23, "I burned or scalded my partner on purpose," 95.7% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 2.1% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 24, "My partner did this to me," 91.5% reported "this has never happened" and the remaining 6.4% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 25, "I used a knife or gun on my partner," 93.6% reported "this behavior has never happened and the remaining 4.3% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 26, "My partner did this to me," 80.9% reported "this has never happened" and 12.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 4.2% reported either once or "more than 20 times in the past year."

Table 3. Physical Assault Scale

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1. I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		3	6.4%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		6	12.8%
This has never happened		38	80.9%
2. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		2	4.3%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		3	6.4%
Not this year, but it has happened before		11	23.4%
This has never happened		30	63.8%
3. I threw something at my partner that could hurt.	47		
Once in the past year		4	8.5%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		8	17.0%
This has never happened		34	72.3%
4. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		1	2.1%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		11	23.4%
This has never happened		31	66.0%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
5. I twisted my partner's arm or hair.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		4	8.5%
This has never happened		42	89.4%
6. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		9	19.1%
This has never happened		34	72.3%
7. I pushed or shoved my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		1	2.1%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		8	17.0%
This has never happened		34	72.3%
8. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		2	4.3%
3-5 times in the past year		2	4.3%
6-10 times in the past year		1	2.1%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		2	4.3%
Not this year, but it has happened before		10	21.3%
This has never happened		27	57.4%
9. I grabbed my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		3	6.4%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		2	4.3%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		6	12.8%
This has never happened		34	72.3%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
10. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		4	8.5%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		3	6.4%
6-10 times in the past year		3	6.4%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		11	23.4%
This has never happened		24	51.1%
11. I slapped my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		13	27.7%
This has never happened		31	66.0%
12. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		2	4.3%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		2	4.3%
Not this year, but it has happened before		11	23.4%
This has never happened		29	61.7%
13. I kicked my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		7	14.9%
This has never happened		39	83.0%
14. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		1	2.1%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		9	19.1%
This has never happened		33	70.2%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
15. I punched or hit my partner with something that could hurt.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		2	4.3%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		7	14.9%
This has never happened		37	78.7%
16. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		2	4.3%
6-10 times in the past year		2	4.3%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		2	4.3%
Not this year, but it has happened before		11	23.4%
This has never happened		28	59.6%
17. I choked my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		5	10.6%
This has never happened		41	87.2%
18. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		2	4.3%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		9	19.1%
This has never happened		33	70.2%
19. I slammed my partner against a wall.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		4	8.5%
This has never happened		42	89.4%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
20. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		12	25.5%
This has never happened		31	66.0%
21. I beat up my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		4	8.5%
This has never happened		42	89.4%
22. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		1	2.1%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		12	25.5%
This has never happened		32	68.1%
23. I burned or scalded my partner on purpose.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		1	2.1%
This has never happened		45	95.7%
24. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		3	6.4%
This has never happened		43	91.5%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
25. I used a knife or gun on my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		2	4.3%
This has never happened		44	93.6%
26. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		6	12.8%
This has never happened		38	80.9%

Table 4 represents the frequency distribution of the items of the sexual coercion scale. For item 1, "I insisted on sex when my partner did not want to (but did not use physical force)," 91.5% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 6.4% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 2, "My partner did this to me," 85.1% reported "this has never happened;" 8.5% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 4.3% reported "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 3, "I made my partner have sex without a condom," 91.5% reported "this



has never happened." The remaining 4.3% reported "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 4, "My partner did this to me," 89.4% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 6.4% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 5, "I insisted my partner have oral or anal sex (but did not use physical force)," 91.5% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 4.2% reported either 3-5 times or "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 6, "My partner did this to me," 87.2% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 8.6% reported either "more than 20 times in the past year" or "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 7, "I used threats to make my partner have sex," 93.6% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 2.1% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 8, "My partner did this to me," 85.1% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 10.6% reported either "more than 20 times in the past year" or "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 9, "I used threats to make my partner have oral or anal sex," 93.6% reported "this has never

happened." The remaining 2.1% reported "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 10, "My partner did this to me," 87.2% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 8.5% reported either "more than 20 times in the past year" or "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 11, "I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have sex with me," 93.6% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 2.1% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 12, "My partner did this to me," 78.7% reported "this has never happened" and 12.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 4.2% reported either 11-20 times or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 13, "I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have oral or anal sex," 93.6% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 2.1% reported not "this year, but it has happened before."

For item 14, "My partner did this to me," 89.4% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 6.4% reported "not this year, but it has happened before."

Table 4. Sexual Coercion Scale

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1. I insisted on sex when my partner did not want to (but did not use physical force.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		3	6.4%
This has never happened		43	91.5%
2. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		2	4.3%
Not this year, but it has happened before		4	8.5%
This has never happened		40	85.1%
3. I made my partner have sex without a condom.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		2	4.3%
This has never happened		43	91.5%
4. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		3	6.4%
This has never happened		42	89.4%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
5. I insisted my partner have oral or anal sex (but did not use physical force)	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		1	2.1%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		1	2.1%
This has never happened		43	91.5%
6. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		3	6.4%
This has never happened		41	87.2%
7. I used threats to make my partner have sex.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		1	2.1%
This has never happened		44	93.6%
8. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		4	8.5%
This has never happened		40	85.1%
9. I used threats to make my partner have oral or anal sex.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		1	2.1%
This has never happened		44	93.6%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
10. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		3	6.4%
This has never happened		41	87.2%
11. I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have sex with me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		1	2.1%
This has never happened		44	93.6%
12. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		6	12.8%
This has never happened		37	78.7%
13. I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have oral or anal sex.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		1	2.1%
This has never happened		44	93.6%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
14. My partner did this to me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		3	6.4%
This has never happened		42	89.4%

Table 5 represents the frequency distribution of the items of the injury scale. For item 1, "I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with my partner," 68.1% reported "this has never happened" and 21.3% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 8.5% reported either once or twice in the past year. For item 2, "My partner had a sprain, bruise or small cut because of a fight with me," 78.7% reported "this has never happened" and 14.9% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 4.2% reported either once or "more than 20 times in the past year."

For item 3, "I felt physical pain that still hurt the next day because of a fight with my partner," 63.8% reported "this has never happened" and 21.3% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The

remaining 12.8% reported either once, twice, 3-5 times or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 4, "My partner felt physical pain that still hurt the next day because of a fight with me," 83.0% reported "this has never happened" and 12.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 2.1% reported "once in the past year." For item 5, "I passed out from being hit on the head by my partner in a fight," 85.1% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 12.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 6, "My partner passed out from being hit on the head in a fight with me," 93.6% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 4.3% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 7, "I went to the doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with my partner," 80.9% reported "this has never happened" and 14.9% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 2.1% reported "more than 20 times this past year." For item 8, "My partner went to the doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with me," 95.7% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 2.1% reported "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 9, "I needed to see a doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with my partner, but I didn't," 78.7% reported "this has never happened" and 12.8% reported "not this year, but it has happened before." The remaining 6.3% reported either once, twice or "more than 20 times in the past year." For item 10, "My partner needed to see a doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with me," 93.6% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 4.2% reported either "once in the past year" or "not this year, but it has happened before." For item 11, "I had a broken bone from a fight with my partner," 91.5% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 6.4% reported "not this year, but it has happened before."

For item 12, "My partner had a broken bone from a fight with me," 95.7% reported "this has never happened." The remaining 2.1% reported "not this year, but it has happened before."



Table 5. Injury Scale Items

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1. I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		3	6.4%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		10	21.3%
This has never happened		32	68.1%
2. My partner had a sprain, bruise or small cut because a fight with me.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		7	14.9%
This has never happened		37	78.7%
3. I felt physical pain that still hurt the next day because of a fight with my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		2	4.3%
3-5 times in the past year		1	2.1%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		2	4.3%
Not this year, but it has happened before		10	21.3%
This has never happened		30	63.8%
4. My partner still felt physical pain the next day because of a fight we had.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		6	12.8%
This has never happened		39	83.0%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
5. I passed out from being hit on the head by my partner in a fight.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		6	12.8%
This has never happened		40	85.1%
6. My partner passed out from being hit on the head in a fight with me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		2	4.3%
This has never happened		44	93.6%
7. I went to a doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		7	14.9%
This has never happened		38	80.9%
8. My partner went to a doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		1	2.1%
This has never happened		45	95.7%

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
9. I needed to see a doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with my partner, but I didn't.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		1	2.1%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		1	2.1%
Not this year, but it has happened before		6	12.8%
This has never happened		37	78.7%
10. My partner needed to see a doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with me, but I didn't.	47		
Once in the past year		1	2.1%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		1	2.1%
This has never happened		44	93.6%
11. I had a broken bone from a fight with my partner.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		3	6.4%
This has never happened		43	91.5%
12. My partner had a broken bone from a fight with me.	47		
Once in the past year		0	0%
Twice in the past year		0	0%
3-5 times in the past year		0	0%
6-10 times in the past year		0	0%
11-20 times in the past year		0	0%
More than 20 times in the past year		0	0%
Not this year, but it has happened before		1	2.1%
This has never happened		45	95.7%

Table 6 represents the frequency distribution of the question "If you ever slapped, grabbed, shoved, or hit

your partner, or if your partner ever slapped, grabbed, shoved, or hit you, who was the first one to do this the last time it happened?" Over 53% reported "this has never happened," 34.0% reported that their partner hit first, and the remaining 12.8% reported that they hit first.

Table 6. Frequency Distribution of Question 79

Item	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
If you ever slapped, grabbed, shoved, or hit your partner, or if your partner ever slapped, grabbed, shoved, or hit you, who was the first one to do this the last time it happened?	47		
I hit first		6	12.8%
My partner hit first		16	34.0%
This has never happened		25	53.2%

Table 7 shows prevalence of how often the sets of acts measured by each scale took place. The respondents reported that among 91.9% acts from the negotiation scale occurred, while 0.9% reported that these acts never happened before. The respondents reported that among 50.4%, no history of occurrences from the psychological aggression scale, while 49.6% reported that these acts occurred before. The respondents reported that among 72.0% acts from the physical assault scale never occurred, while 28.0% reported these acts occurred

before. The respondents reported that among 89.4% questions on the sexual coercion scale never occurred, while 10.6% reported these acts occurred before. The respondents reported that among 84.0% acts from the injury scale never happened, while 16.0% reported these acts have occurred before. Respondents tended to report no occurrences of instances from scales containing questions of violence i.e. physical assault scale, sexual coercion scale, and injury scale. Respondents tended to report a history of occurrences of instances from scale involving nonviolent acts, i.e. negotiation scale. Occurrence of acts on the psychological aggression scale was similar.

Table 7. Prevalence of Statistics

Sub-scales	No instances	Prevalence
1. Negotiation Scale Prevalence	0.9%	91.9%
2. Psychological Aggression Scale Prevalence	50.4%	49.6%
3. Physical Assault Scale Prevalence	72.0%	28.0%
4. Sexual Coercion Scale Prevalence	89.4%	10.6%
5. Injury Scale Prevalence	84.0%	16.0%

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

The results of the present study help to understand domestic violence's link to child mental health disorders. This chapter will present the significant results and compare the findings of the present study to a study conducted with a different population. The limitations, further research and implications for social work practice will be addressed in this chapter.

#### Discussion

For this study, we assessed the prevalence of domestic violence in families with mental health issues relating to the children. The respondents reported using more negotiation skills than their partners. The respondents tended to self-report on the psychological aggression scale lower levels of psychological aggression than their partners. In addition, the respondents tended to report lower levels of occurrence of physical assault, sexual coercion, and injury compared to the reports on these same scales for their partners. The results showed that the respondents tended to report higher occurrences

of positive conflict tactic skills than their partners, and reported less frequent occurrences of negative conflict tactic skills than their partners.

The results of this current study indicate there is a higher level of prevalence of violence among those who participated in the study in comparison to the group of college students (Strauss, 1996). The participants in Strauss' study were college students who had a partner in a dating, cohabitating or marital relationship. Participants in that study tended to come from well-educated families. Over half of their fathers and over a third of their mothers had completed a 4-year college degree, therefore, placing the college students in a different socioeconomic status than the participants of the current study. It was not the purpose of this study to address the socioeconomic status of the participants; however it may be a contributing factor in the various stressors these families experience.

Participants in the present study scored higher in the areas of psychological aggression, physical assault, and incidents resulting in injuries compared to the college students. The participants in the study reported 49.6% prevalence of psychological aggression compared to

16.1% of college students. Similar findings are true for physical assault in that the participants reported 28.0% compared to 9.4% of the college students. And the prevalence of conflicts that resulted in physical injury among the participants in the study was 16.0% compared to 3.6% among the college population. Yet these same parents scored 91% on the negotiation scale, which indicates they have strong negotiation skills. This contradicts the results which indicate high rates of verbal and physical aggression are used as a means for resolving conflict.

The study conducted by Lawson, (2001) found that a child witnessing interparental abuse is at greater risk of developing poor communication skills. These witnesses are more likely to use the same aggression and assaultive methods to address conflicts, thereby, displaying a lack of appropriate coping skills for present and future relationships. These individuals, according to Lawson, are displaying behaviors resulting from their traumatic experiences. One common mental diagnosis for children exposed to family violence is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Lawson, 2001). The diagnostic criterion from the DSM IV defines the person with PTSD as



the person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:

- 1) the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat of the physical integrity of self or others.
- 2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.

There are children who live with this traumatic experience on a regular basis sometimes as much as daily or several times throughout the day. In the current study 49.6% of the participants report that they engage in psychological aggression including using profanity, insults towards partners, shouting and yelling, spiteful actions towards one another, name-calling, and destroying the property of one another. A child witnessing this type of psychological aggression on a regular basis can develop a sense of threat and insecurity.

There are many stress factors that may contribute to the prevalence of violence among this population such as socioeconomic issues, single-parenting (primarily mothers as head of household) and the parents' unresolved

domestic violence issues both during adult relationships and childhood experiences. Many of the parents may have a life-time prevalence of abuse due to their own childhood history of abuse. Parents who engage in partner abuse often times were exposed to domestic violence during their childhood. (Folsom, 2003) Although many children who witness violence in the home may not be direct victims of the violence the exposure can have traumatic effects. Further, eventhough many of the perpetrators are no longer residing with the family the effects of the violent episodes prior to their leaving the family of origin can have lasting effects.

Another factor that can constitute as a stressor among this population is the difficulties surrounding single-parenting. A very large percentage, approximately 98%, of families receiving services from this agency are mothers as head of house holds (Victor Community Support Services, 2006). Many of the fathers or significant others are no longer residing in the home. These mothers have the responsibility to parent their children alone. Providing financial and emotional support for their children can be very difficult particularly because of their limited resources.

Many of the children receiving mental health services from Victor Community Support Services are currently having difficulties coping with life. They display physical and verbal aggression towards others, have a low level of emotional and behavioral functioning, lack social competence, and demonstrate limited ability to achieve academic success and low cognitive functioning. These children's diagnoses include, as mentioned earlier, PTSD as well as Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiance Disorder, Depression and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. When you take into account the negative effects of domestic violence, which are quite similar to the difficulties mentioned above, it appears that exposure to domestic violence contributes to their mental health problems.

It is noteworthy to mention that the participants in this study reported a high rate of negotiation skills as well as psychological aggression compared to physical assault, physical injury, and sexual coercion. This implicates a need for effective communication skills training for the children who witness or have witnessed the verbal aggression among their parents, as well as the parents themselves. It is also necessary to consider how

verbal aggression may lead to physical aggression. The current study shows a 28% prevalence of physical aggression among the participants. The children who witness this violence may become physically and verbally aggressive themselves and continue the cycle of violence.

#### Limitations

The number of participants in this study was limited (47) and, therefore, the generalizability of findings is compromised. The participants were all from one agency, with a total of 90 families receiving mental health services. Another limitation is that important demographic variables such as age and gender were not included in the study. More detailed demographics might prove beneficial in determining directions for future research and treatment services.

Another important concern with this particular study is the uncertainty of the participants' degree of honesty in answering the questions. Many of the families receiving services from this agency were referred for mental health services by children's protective services, probation and school districts, and therefore they have a

certain level of mistrust due to fear of possible reports regarding their domestic violence history.

The shame and isolation surrounding domestic violence is another limitation, as participants who filled out the survey may have re-experienced negative feelings from past relationships as well as childhood experiences. The agency and the researchers provided the participants with information regarding support services should they experience any uncomfortable feelings and/or memories. However, it is possible that the truth was too painful to admit, which may be why there is a contradiction with their reports of possessing negotiation skills in resolving conflicts and their reports of the use of verbal and physical aggression as a means for resolving conflicts. This indicates the participants may have given false information or they may not have a clear understanding of true negotiation skills.

Another limitation is the length of the conflict tactics scale. It has a total of 78 questions. Many of the staff at Victor Community Support Services reported that parents complained about the length of the questionnaire. The staff also reported that having to use

this questionnaire as a part of the initial intake process would be difficult for both the staff and the clients. Some of the language included in this scale may be seen as graphic, particularly surrounding the sexual coercion scale. It is notable to mention that the sexual coercion scale was the only scale where the university students scored higher than the participants.

#### Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

The researchers propose that social work practitioners implement a system during the intake process to assess for family violence. Practitioners can assist families that enter treatment programs in completing a conflict tactics questionnaire. This will provide the practitioners with vital information regarding the child's exposure to violence in order to link the family with appropriate services both during and as they exit treatment programs.

Another recommendation would be extensive staff training regarding domestic violence. Domestic violence is such a difficult issue to address; staff may have some difficulty asking or talking about this issue initially with parents. Many times those trapped in these types of

situations are deeply embedded in denial. Yet with proper staff training these issues can be handled with support and sensitivity. The more equipped the staff are, the more effective they will be at addressing and assessing for domestic violence.

Addressing this issue collaboratively with domestic violence programs is necessary in order to develop an effective and adequate system of assessing for domestic violence and providing needed services. Service integration would be useful in meeting the needs of this population. Developing strong relationships with multidisciplinary teams, which include specialists in domestic violence, mental health, education and healthcare, will create comprehensive and effective treatment.

Further research is needed in order to fully understand the needs of this population. A study that includes a larger sample would be more representative of the population. It is also necessary to focus on the variables of socioeconomic status, history of domestic violence and single-parenting in relation to how they affect childhood mental illness. These analyses will not only help mental health agencies but social work practice

as a whole. It suggests that future research examine the effects of family violence on childhood mental disorders. An increased awareness of the relationship among these variables can greatly impact the service delivery among social work practitioners. There are many studies and services for victims of domestic violence as well as treatment for perpetrators, yet there needs to be increased awareness, advocacy and services for child witnesses of domestic violence. Further research and policies will help to address these issues and develop extensive services for this unique population.

#### Conclusion

Exposure to domestic violence and its link to child mental health disorders continue to be of great concern for our society. The results in this study indicate the need for further researcher, specialized services for this population and specialized training for the practitioners who provide services for this population. As we continue to address the issue of domestic violence we must strive to address all concerned, the batterer, the victim and the child-witness.



APPENDIX A  
CONFLICT TACTICS SCALE

## CONFLICT TACTICS SCALE

No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, want different things from each other, or just have spats or fights because of trying to settle their differences. This is a list of things that might happen when you have differences. Please mark how many times you did each of these things in the past year, and how many times your partner did them in the past year. If you or your partner did not do one of these things in the past year, but it happened before that, mark "7" on your answer sheet for that question. If it never happened, mark "8" on your answer sheet.

How often did this happen?

- 1 = Once in the past year
- 2 = Twice in the past year
- 3 = 3-5 times in the past year
- 4 = 6-10 times in the past year
- 5 = 11-20 times in the past year
- 6 = More than 20 times in the past year
- 7 = Not in the past year, but it did happen before
- 8 = This has never happened

- |    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I showed my partner I cared even though we disagreed         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 2. | My partner showed care for me even though we disagreed       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 3. | I showed respect for my partner's feelings about an issue    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 4. | My partner showed respect for my feelings about an issue     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 5. | I said I was sure we could work out a problem                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 6. | My partner was sure we could work it out                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 7. | I explained my side of a disagreement to my partner          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 8. | My partner explained his or her side of a disagreement to me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

- |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9.  | I suggested a compromise to a disagreement                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 10. | My partner suggested a compromise                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 11. | I agreed to try a solution to a disagreement my partner suggested | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 12. | My partner agreed to try a solution I suggested                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 13. | I insulted or swore at my partner                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 14. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 15. | I shouted or yelled at my partner                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 16. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 17. | I stomped out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 18. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 19. | I did something to spite my partner                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 20. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 21. | I called my partner fat or ugly                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 22. | My partner called me fat or ugly                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 23. | I destroyed something belonging to my partner                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 24. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 25. | I accused my partner of being a lousy lover                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 26. | My partner accused me of this                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 27. | I threatened to hit or throw something at my partner              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 28. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 29. | I threw something at my partner that could hurt            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 30. | My partner did this to me                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 31. | I twisted my partner's arm or hair                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 32. | My partner did this to me                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 33. | I pushed or shoved my partner                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 34. | My partner did this to me                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 35. | I grabbed my partner                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 36. | My partner did this to me                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 37. | I slapped my partner                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 38. | My partner did this to me                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 39. | I kicked my partner  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 40. | My partner did this to me                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 41. | I punched or hit my partner with something that could hurt | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 42. | My partner did this to me                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 43. | I choked my partner  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 44. | My partner did this to me                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 45. | I slammed my partner against a wall                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 46. | My partner did this to me                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 47. | I beat up my partner                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 48. | My partner did this to me                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 49. | I burned or scalded my partner on purpose                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 50. | My partner did this to me                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

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|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 51. | I used a knife or gun on my partner   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 52. | My partner did this to me   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 53. | I insisted on sex when my partner did not want to (but did not use physical force)                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 54. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 55. | I made my partner have sex without a condom   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 56. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 57. | I insisted my partner have oral or anal sex (but did not use physical force)                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 58. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 59. | I used threats to make my partner have sex  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 60. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 61. | I used threats to make my partner have oral or anal sex   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 62. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 63. | I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have sex with me      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 64. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 65. | I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have oral or anal sex | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 66. | My partner did this to me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 67. | I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with my partner                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 68. | My partner had sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with me                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 69. | I felt physical pain that still hurt the next day because of a fight with my partner   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 70. | My partner still felt physical pain the next day because of a fight we had   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 71. | I passed out from being hit on the head by my partner in a fight   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 72. | My partner passed out from a hit on the head in a fight with me  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 73. | I went to a doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with my partner   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 74. | My partner went to a doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with me  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 75. | I needed to see a doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with my partner, but I didn't   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 76. | My partner needed to see a doctor (M.D.) because of a fight with me, but didn't  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 77. | I had a broken bone from a fight with my partner   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 78. | My partner had a broken bone from a fight with me  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 79. | If you ever slapped, grabbed, shoved, or hit your partner, or if your partner has ever slapped, grabbed, shoved, or hit you, who was the first one to do this the last time it happened? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

1 = I hit first    2 = My partner hit first    3 = This never happened

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

## INFORMED CONSENT

My name is Vickie Sanderlin and I am a student in the Master of Social Work program and I am conducting a research study. I am providing you with this informed consent regarding the study I am conducting. Victor Community Support Services along with California State University, San Bernardino are overseeing this research project. The purpose of this study is to explore the effect domestic violence has on child mental health. This study will identify the occurrence of domestic violence among children seeking mental health treatment. This information will assist mental health professionals in considering domestic violence issues during the intake process and encourage agencies to develop and implement treatment which considers the needs of families. You have been provided with the Conflicts Tactic Scale, please read each question and answer honestly. Your honest answers will help to determine the needs of the families we serve. These answers will only be used for research purposes. Please complete the survey and return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided. The study will be conducted for a thirty day period. At the end of the thirty day period the researcher will collect the envelopes for data Your identity will be anonymous, therefore please do not include any identifying information in order to maintain confidentiality.

analysis. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any effect to the services you are receiving from Victor Community Support Services. If you decide to participate in this survey it is completely voluntary. You are not required at any time to participate in this survey. This research has been approved by the Department of Social Work Sub Committee of the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino.

If you have any questions about your rights or any other concerns you may contact the Executive Director of Victor Community Support Services, Alan Mann at 760-245-4695 or my research supervisor, Dr. Janet Chang, Cal State University San Bernardino, at 909-880-5184.

My mark below indicates that I have been informed about the study and volunteer to participate. I am at least 18 years old.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



APPENDIX C  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

## **DEBRIEFING STATEMENT**

This study is being conducted in order to determine the needs of the population we serve. When children receive services from mental health agencies many situations might contribute to the need for services. Understanding the various situations will help agencies to improve upon the services provided to children and their families. It is my hope that this agency will learn valuable information from your participation in this study, which will enable them to improve their services and assist other mental health agencies with their programs. The results of this study will be available in approximately nine months; you can obtain the results of this study from Victor Community Support Services. The information you provide in the questionnaire may cause some uncomfortable feelings and/or memories. You may contact the following San Bernardino County agency for needed assistance, Department of Behavioral Health, 760-955-1777. If you have any questions or concerns you may contact the Executive Director of Victor Community Support Services, Alan Mann at 760-245-4695 or my research supervisor, Dr. Janet Chang, Cal State University San Bernardino, at 909-880-5184.

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## ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:

Assigned Leader: Vickie Sanderlin

Assisted By: Abraham Diaz

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Assigned Leader: Abraham Diaz

Assisted By: Vickie Sanderlin

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

a. Introduction and Literature

Assigned Leader: Vickie Sanderlin

Assisted By: Abraham Diaz

b. Methods

Assigned Leader: Abraham Diaz

Assisted By: Vickie Sanderlin

c. Results

Assigned Leader: Abraham Diaz

Assisted By: Vickie Sanderlin

d. Discussion

Assigned Leader: Vickie Sanderlin

Assisted By: Abraham Diaz