5-1-1997

An analytical study of the relationship among sex role socialization, history of family violence, and being a victim of domestic violence

Angela R. Taylor
Clark Atlanta University

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ABSTRACT

SOCIAL WORK

TAYLOR, ANGELA R. B. A. SPELMAN COLLEGE, 1995

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG SEX ROLE SOCIALIZATION, HISTORY OF FAMILY VIOLENCE, AND BEING A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Advisor: Dr. Jerome Schiele

Thesis dated May, 1997

This study examined the relationship among sex role socialization, history of family violence, and being a victim of domestic violence. The unit of analysis consisted of 30 women that are victims of domestic violence from the Mount Ephraim Baptist Church Educational Program in Atlanta, Georgia. The study was based on the premises that: 1) there would be a significant relationship between history of family violence and being a victim of domestic violence; and 2) there would be a significant relationship between sex role socialization and being a victim of domestic violence.

A face to face survey research design was used to collect the data. The sample was a convenient sample of women taking educational classes at Mount Ephraim Baptist Church. Results of the findings indicated that there was no significant relationship between sex role socialization and domestic violence as well as no significant relationship between history of family violence and domestic violence. Implications for practice and future research are discussed.
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG SEX ROLE SOCIALIZATION, HISTORY OF FAMILY VIOLENCE, AND BEING A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY

ANGELA R. TAYLOR

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 1997
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I give thanks to God, for all his many blessings and for giving me the strength to endure this educational journey. To my mother Rosa and my entire family, thank you for all of your unwavering support, your love, your guidance, and your dedication, every person should be so blessed. To Tiffany Reese, thank you for your friendship and English skills. To Helen Williams Pratt, the Davenport Family, Dr. and Mrs. White, Rev. Lee Franklin, Alma Williams, the Mount Ephraim Baptist Church Family, and the Saint Mark Baptist Church Family, thank you for your spiritual guidance, encouragement, and support. Finally, to Dr. Schiele, thank you for your patience, your kindness, and for sharing with me a portion of your knowledge. Thank all of you for richly blessing my life. Mom, I dedicate this thesis to you. By example I have learned to pray, love, and give my best. THANK YOU!!
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**........................................................................................................... ii

**LIST OF TABLES**................................................................................................................ iv

**CHAPTER ONE**
- Introduction and Statement of Problem........................................................................ 01
- Significance of Study........................................................................................................ 04
- Purpose of Study.............................................................................................................. 05

**CHAPTER TWO**
- Literature Review........................................................................................................... 06
  - Trends in Domestic Violence......................................................................................... 07
  - History of Family Violence......................................................................................... 11
  - Sex Role Socialization................................................................................................. 14
  - Current Perspectives.................................................................................................... 18
  - Theoretical Framework............................................................................................... 23
  - Research Questions and Hypotheses.......................................................................... 27

**CHAPTER THREE**
- Methodology.................................................................................................................. 28
  - Setting and Participants.............................................................................................. 28
  - Procedure.................................................................................................................... 28
  - Measurements of Variables........................................................................................ 29

**CHAPTER FOUR**
- Results................................................................................................................................ 31
  - Table 1.......................................................................................................................... 32
  - Table 2.......................................................................................................................... 34

**CHAPTER FIVE**
- Discussion and Implications......................................................................................... 35

**APPENDICES**.................................................................................................................. 41
- A. Letter to Participants.................................................................................................... 41
- B. Sex Role Socialization: Beliefs, Values, and Perceptions.......................................... 42
- C. History of Family Violence....................................................................................... 44
- D. Partner’s Abuse Scale: Physical (PASPH)................................................................. 45

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**.............................................................................................................. 47
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Frequency Distribution of Study Variables</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Correlation Matrix of Study Variables</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Domestic violence is a problem that has an impact on everyone’s lives. More often than not, many individuals are involved in or know someone involved in a violent marital relationship. For many years, when violence was discussed, it focused primarily on violence within the community and child abuse. It was not until the early 80’s that researchers noticed the increase amount of family violence, specifically domestic violence. Straus and Gelles were recognized as being among the first to research domestic violence as a social problem.  

Historically, the “right” of husbands to beat their wives has its roots in Roman Law, which originally permitted a husband to kill his wife if she committed a variety of offenses, particularly adultery. This common law tradition was modified in Medieval Europe, limiting male-directed punishment to beating women rather than taking their lives. As time progressed, and reforms were made into laws, the British put limits on how harshly a husband could legally chastise his wife. “The rule of thumb” stipulated that the object used for restraint of the wife should be no thicker than the husband’s thumb.

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3 Ibid., 17.
As domestic violence made the transition from being a socially acceptable act to becoming a social problem, it forced individuals to view wife beating as more than a phenomenon of violent individuals or relationships. Wife beating was thus defined as the “chronic battering of a person of inferior power who for that reason can not effectively resist.”

With domestic violence being considered a social ill, researchers and mental health professionals studied this phenomena, evaluating men specifically, and concluded that men are socialized to be batterers. Because it was thought that the batterer grew up in a violent home, and viewed violence between guardians, the batterer (most often males) subconsciously identified with the more aggressive parent responsible for the battering. Also, “the basis of wife beating is male dominance not superior physical strength.”

During the early 80’s Straus and Gelles recorded that one out of six wives are beaten each year and that at least one out of three married couples “accept the idea that it is permissible to hit their spouse.” With these ideas, domestic violence and violent homes have escalated with the assumption that 50% of

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married couples have had an incident.\textsuperscript{7} Data from the National Crime Survey indicates that husbands or ex-husbands are responsible for one-fourth of all assaults against their spouses and intimate partners.\textsuperscript{8}

Most often, researchers focus on the perpetrators of domestic violence and try to offer rationales as to why they are so volatile in domestic situations. Most documented research examines underlying circumstances that would trigger rage in a male partner and force them to hurt their spouse. Furthermore, researchers have documented characteristics of a batterer.

It has not been until recently that researchers have began to evaluate the impact of sex role socialization on women. It is now being concluded that women can grow up in an abusive environment, identify with their female guardian, who has been abused and thus, be at risk of physical abuse from their significant partner.

Because most research focuses on the batterer, insufficient attention is given to how an abused woman is socialized in early childhood, and how history of family violence impacts the woman’s life. Women as victims have not been given sufficient attention as a target population group to examine the effects of history of family violence and sex role socialization on domestic violence. Most


\textsuperscript{8}Nancy Hastings, \textit{The Violent Family}. (New York: Human Services Press Inc. 1988), 68.
of the studies focus on why men hit or intervention programs for batterers, but there appears to be little concern given to why women remain in abusive relationships.

**Significance of Study**

The discussion of domestic violence as mentioned previously focuses on the batterer. This in many ways minimizes the victims and the issues that they must encounter and counteract. Thus, this research becomes significant because it examines domestic violence from the victim’s perspective. This research takes the same ideas used to explain why men become batters to explain why women become victims of domestic violence. Also, this research may contribute to other studies that examine the victimization of women in violent relationships.

This research may possibly have a significant impact on how victims of domestic violence are treated. The research could become a fundamental component in developing interventive strategies in helping women avoid or remove themselves from abusive relationships. With research like this, practitioners may be able to understand that there are some subconscious motives that aid the woman or victim to rationalize staying in an abusive relationship.
Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of sex-role socialization and history of family violence on female abuse (violence), in marriage. This is to acquire an understanding as to why women stay in abusive marriages.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the largest studies on domestic violence was conducted by Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz in 1980. This study was considered to be a national survey of violence focusing primarily on child abuse and domestic violence. The results of this study forced social researchers and professionals to consider domestic violence as a social problem. Through their research, Straus and his colleagues made several startling assumptions that they generalized to the entire population. The most documented assumption stated that “one out of eight couples experienced at least one beating incident in the course of their marriage.” Also, this research stated that many couples consider a marriage license to be a beating license.¹

The fact that Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz’s national survey was so general served as the catalyst for other research on domestic violence. There were still others who wanted to evaluate those contributing factors to domestic violence or those predisposition’s that might force a person to become a participant in a violent marriage. Because the issue surrounding this research is the impact of socialization and the history of family violence on women involved in violent

relationships, the discussion will center around research on history of family violence, sex role socialization, and domestic violence.

**Trends in Domestic Violence**

The estimates of spousal violence varies greatly. In 1972, Gelles found in his research that 56% of the couples in his sample of 80 families had at one point in their relationship experienced violence. This same research found that 20% of these couples had repeated incidences of violence. Other researchers suggest that the incidence of violence in marriage is 60% for all married couples. "The more conservative estimates reveal that 12% of all wives are physically abused by their husbands."² In 1980, Tormon, a social researcher, found that 37% of wives surveyed who applied for divorce gave physical abuse as one of the complaints.³ Furthermore, Pagelow in 1981 indicated that 25% of married couples engage in physical violence.⁴

With the prevalence of domestic violence being so high in marriages, many researchers began to investigate the characteristics of battered women and the


cycle of violence. Lenore Walker author of The Battered Woman, developed the Cycle of Violence. It was through many interviews with physically abused women that Walker noted that violence in marriages occur in cycles or in three phases.

Phase one: Tension Building Phase, the battering male engages in minor battering incidents and verbal abuse while the woman, beset by fear and tension, attempts to be as placating and passive as possible in order to stave off more serious violence. 

Phase two: Acute Battering Incident: The triggering event that initiates phase two is most often an internal or external event in the life of the battering male, but provocation for more severe violence is sometimes provided by the woman who can no longer tolerate or control her phase one anger and anxiety. 

Phase three: Characterized by extreme contrition and loving behavior on the part of the battering male. During this period, the man will often mix his pleas for forgiveness and protestations of devotion with promises to seek professional help, to stop drinking, and/or to refrain from further violence. For some couples this period of relative calm may last as long as several months, but in a battering relationship the affection and contrition of the man will eventually fade and phase one cycle will start anew.5

Fiora-Gormally describe women in an abusive relationships as having the following characteristics:

1. Being forced into a role of submissiveness, home oriented, non-aggressive, and not at all ambitious

2. Economically and socially dependent on her husband

3. Feels powerless to stop the abuse.6

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5 Sara Lee Johann, Domestic Abusers: Terrorists In Our Own Homes. (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1994), 11.
Eber further states that women in abusive marriages have low self-esteem, fear their husbands, feel they deserve their beatings, are shameful, lack confidence to reach out to other people, fear reprisals from an angry spouse, and possess a false hope that the abuser will reform.7

Because of the consensus on the characteristics of a battered woman by researchers, the “Battered Woman Syndrome,” defined as a sociological theory on the affects and sustained pattern of physical, psychological, and often sexual abuse over time from the male in the husband/boyfriend role in woman’s life has upon the abused woman, was developed to show the common characteristics shared between battered women.8

Other researchers state that domestic violence is an under-reported crime. The reasons that victims do not report crime include:

1. Intimate violence is viewed as an embarrassment
2. Fear of condemnation
3. The belief that they “deserved” the punishment9

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7 Sara Lee Johann, Domestic Abusers: Terrorists In Our Own Homes. (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1994), 11.

8 Ibid., 11.

Also researchers have established that there is a certain bond between the victim and perpetrator in a domestic situation. One researcher called this bond a "Traumatic Bonding." This form of bonding is based on two aspects of an abusive relationship. The aspects are:

1. One person holding more power than the other and intermittent reinforcement is a powerful motivator that keeps one coming back for more.
2. The victims hope is, that maybe this time it will be better, maybe this time, he'll stop. And for reasons she cannot understand, a powerful emotional bond keeps pulling her back. These bonds are formed by intermittent reinforcement.\(^\text{10}\)

This idea is further substantiated by Anna Freud's theory of a "Paradoxical Bond." This is a bond that exist when one is in a life and death situation in which she is powerless against a potentially lethal other, she comes to identify with that person as a means of warding off danger. According to Freud, a potential victim believes that if she could see the world through the eyes of the aggressor, she might be able to save herself from destruction.\(^\text{11}\) It is believed that the bonds that bind abuse victims to their tormentors are legendary. "They are like giant bungee


cords. As the woman dives out of the relationship that cord stretches to the breaking point. But, the further she gets, the greater the tension to snap back.\textsuperscript{12}

At this point, it is important to realize that most literature does not handle singly the affect of domestic violence on the victim, but there are some researchers that actually record the psychological state of the woman when encountering an assault by her batterer. It is stated that the woman in a "desperate attempt to avoid the inevitable usually goes into a survival mode. She swallows her own outrage and caters to her man's every whim, she tries at first, to avoid the inevitable by pacifying him, making sure nothing upsets him by doing little extra favors.\textsuperscript{13}

During an assault, the victim realizes that an escape is futile. After this, the victim dissociates herself from the assault. Women through survey, stated that they leave their body with their mind. "A surrealistic state of calm may occur during which the wife experiences the abuse like a slow motion movie."\textsuperscript{14}

History of Family Violence

Straus and colleagues stated that the fountainhead of both love and violence is the family. Through the history of family violence, be it through physical


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 53.
punishment or observing altercations between authority figures three lessons are learned. These lessons have significant effect on actions in adult life.

Lesson one: Those who love you the most are also those who hit you

Lesson two: Violence can and should be used to secure good ends

Lesson three: Violence is permissible when other things do not work.\textsuperscript{15}

Straus and associates research also makes the assumption that individuals learn violence in the home, and by being exposed to this violence, there is a greater likelihood the child will become involved in a violent marriage.\textsuperscript{16} Even though Straus and associates work is the most documented in research, the findings did not specify whether these characteristics can be found in one gender or is equally distributed among sexes.

Poteat and colleagues working off the research of Straus and others researched domestic violence by assessing the reliability and validity of the “Wife Abuse Inventory.” In their research, the notion is made that violence is learned and transmitted from one generation to the next.\textsuperscript{17} Therefore, most abused parties either were abused as children or viewed violence between their parents when they were young.


\textsuperscript{17} Michael Poteat, William Grossnickle, John Cope and Carol Wyne, “\textit{Psychometric Properties of the Wife Abuse Inventory}.” \textit{Clinical Psychology}. 46.6, 828.
were growing up. Even though Poteat and colleagues discussed the impact of family violence on domestic violence and wife abuse, this research did not evaluate a representative sample of both women and men. Like the research provided by Straus and colleagues, women’s view of observing violence during childhood and being involved in a violent marriage was not discussed.

It was not until the works of Hilberman and others involved in the feminist movement that research on domestic violence became race and gender specific. Hilberman explained the clinical implications of domestic violence. This was done in order to give therapist and counselors a means to assist women who are victims of domestic violence. Even though Lockhart and White research focused on race and domestic violence, it added insight to the impact of history of family violence on violent relationships. Their findings lended support to the theory that emphasizes the cycle of violence. This meant that the more an individual has a history of family violence, the more likely he/she learns to be a victim of violence or a batterer. Researchers are not specific with their data analysis, but try to explore this issue in a manner to make mental health professionals more aware of domestic violence. The researchers discussed that individuals involved in violent

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marriages were either abused as a child or viewed marital violence between
parents.

Hutchings a professor of Social Work, examined the issue of family
violence and why it occurs. Without any empirical data, Hutchings made the
assumption that “violence is self-perpetrating so that once it is accepted in a family
as a means of communication or as punishment, it is hard to change this behavior.”
She further states that violence is very acceptable in the United States. Because of
this acceptance, crimes are increasing and children who are exposed to violence
will become violent adults.\textsuperscript{20}

Hutchings offered rationales for her statement. Her rationale included the
assumption that there is a belief that the husbands and fathers treat women and
children like they are property to be controlled. A second cause of violence is the
dependence of wives and children on men to give them economic support, and to
provide the basic necessities of food and shelter.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Sex Role Socialization}

Sex role socialization also contributes to domestic violence. Like history of
family violence, sex role socialization is unconscious. It is not only those day to

\textsuperscript{20} Nancy Hutchings, \textit{Family Violence}. \textit{Peace Reviews}. (Fall, 1992), 24.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 25.
day ritualistic actions, but those unconscious ideologies that forces an individual to consider what he or she is doing.

Murphy and Meyer when researching gender, power, and marriage stated that from “childhood to adulthood, through a variety of socialization experiences including different toys, play activities, and work activities, the typical man will have been much more consistently encouraged to develop harness and employ physical strength than the typical woman.” Unfortunately, many articles similar to this, that focused on sex role socialization and domestic violence emphasized what impact socialization will have on the batterer.

Birns and colleagues examined sex role socialization as it relates to domestic violence. This research focused on how the family primarily introduces to children their gender specific roles. “From birth males and females are socialized into dichotomized sex specific behavior.” The socialization of males and females within the family structure is quite different. The male learns to assume the dominant role, they are instructed, encouraged, and rewarded for being in control and aggressive.


Birns also stated that females learn the significance of nurturance and the value of interpersonal relationships.\textsuperscript{25} She further states that even though the family contributes mostly to the socialization of an individual, education (teacher's response), parent's response, and television may also contribute to the socialization of both men and women.\textsuperscript{26} With this being the case, most adults today operate and display strategies that were learned during infancy and childhood.

Hutchings suggest that socialization takes place through sex role stereotyping. Her assumptions are that treating boys and girls in different ways from their earlier years establishes their identities. She further states that the earliest role model for the girls is the nurturant female, the mother.\textsuperscript{27} Through research, Hutchings alluded to the fact that the female child is encouraged to follow the mother's role.

The research that focused on the socialization of women as victims, states that there is no behavioral or psychological pattern that predicts for being a


\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 51.


battered woman. There is only one consistent marker that identifies a woman as a victim of domestic violence, that is the woman's witnessing violence during her childhood. Margolin and Burman explains that witnessing violence between one's parents may lead women to believe that nothing they do will alter the spouses battering.28

Through sex role stereotyping and socialization, boys and girls are trained differently at home, in school, and in the community. "It is acceptable for boys to have fights and to be more aggressive and competitive, but girls are not allowed these same behaviors."29 Today, it is viewed that women are expected to be a primary caregiver in the home and their jobs are more passive. The media, states Hutchings, also encourages stereotyping, because women are depicted as housekeepers, as mothers, or as sexual partners. This stereotyping may result in women feeling like they are in a secondary position in society and in some ways the women learn to value themselves in relation to their male partner, or their male authority figure.30 Although there was no empirical data to substantiate her view, Hutchings research has practical significance and provides research practitioners with reasons why domestic violence occurs and is occurring at an increasing rate.


30 Ibid., 26.
Current Perspectives

Davidovich researched psychological variables that have been identified as characteristics of males who physically abuse their partners. This research did not discuss the socialization of women to becoming victims in abusive relationships, but instead tries to examine the personality perspective of domestic violence and the batterer.  

Davidovich in her research suggests, along with Kihlstrom that by integrating theories of personality with social psychology one will be provided with a clearer, more comprehensive view of the batterer in his social context. 

Davidovich states that in order to understand battering, it is necessary to look to batterers themselves, to comprehend the process of translating stressors and life events into acts of violence.

Even though this research did not examine the impact of intimate interpersonal violence on women it examined the personality of the man that often times assault and mistreat their intimate partner, the woman.

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32 Ibid., 40.

Johann in her research documented fifteen characteristics of batterers. She stated that batterers tend to have certain characteristics which distinguish them from nonabusive, nonassaultive males.34

Basccelli examined a battered woman’s abusive environment with emphasis placed on:

1. The kind of men who beat their wives
2. The kind of woman who becomes a battered wife and why she remains with her assailant
3. How society keeps them in this environment.35

This article makes the assumption through the evaluation of practitioners that there are two types of batters, treatable and untreatable. The treatable type of wife batterer is not really classified as a batterer who invokes physical punishment. He is considered to be in total control of all his emotions and his energy is heavily invested in not letting go. This type of wife beater often demonstrates, states the researcher, a great deal of remorse and shame for his actions. The untreatable type of wife abuser usually does not care about his wife and because violence is a way of life, he will invoke physical punishment without a second thought.36

34 Sara Lee Johann, Domestic Abusers: Terrorists In Our Own Homes. (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1994), 38-42.
Basccelli states that the victim of domestic violence is usually society’s image of an ideal woman. He further states that women remain in abusive relationships for more than financial dependence, guilt, and fear of their husbands. Often times, victims remain in abusive relationships because “helplessness” becomes a reality. “The repeated battering, like that electric shock, extinguish the woman’s motivation to respond voluntarily, and she becomes the passive victim of her abuser. The battered woman soon believes that nothing she can do will alter the situation.”

Basccelli research examined the perceptions of women and how they view themselves and being involved in an abusive relationship. He examined issues beyond societal needs and examined the psychological impact of domestic violence on the female victim. His research did not address history of family violence or socialization, but it expressed the viewpoint of women who are victimized in their marriages and intimate relationships.

Operating from a similar perspective, Walker discussed current perspectives on men who batter. Through research, she determined that there were different types of batterers and depending upon the woman’s personality, she may become

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involved with any of the typologies. Because of this, she states that women are more accurate reporters of the entire context of family violence.\textsuperscript{38}

Sugarman and Cohen examined who women and men blame for domestic violence. In their study, Sugarman and Cohen asked 176 men and 178 women to read a vignette of a woman being abused by her husband. After reading the vignette, the subjects were asked who they blamed for the violence in the relationship. Most subjects placed the blame on the battering husband rather than on the women who chose to remain in the abusive relationship.\textsuperscript{39} Sugarman and Cohen examined sex differences and how it impacts one's view on abuse in a relationship. This research illustrated how two genders can have unique definitions and views on domestic abuse.

Very little research has been conducted on characteristics of women who are victims of domestic violence. Hotaling and Sugarman examine this issue in their research. "The aim of the research was to examine the present pattern of findings on husband to wife violence through a review of 52 case comparison studies. These studies would identify factors associated with violent men in


comparison to nonviolent men as well as the factors that differentiate female victims from non-victims.\textsuperscript{40} There are at least three reasons why this particular research was completed. The reasons consisted of 1) identifying what is known on the basis of reliable research, 2) the soundness of knowledge, and 3) the examination of knowledge base concerning that relationship between research, policy, and treatment.\textsuperscript{41} Through their research, it was concluded that “women who have been victimized physically by their husbands, are more likely to have witnessed violence between parents/caregivers while growing up.\textsuperscript{42} This research also alluded to the fact that women who are socialized to “accept male dominant family relationships or hold traditional sex expectations may be more likely to experience violence in adult relationships.”\textsuperscript{43} Hotaling and Sugarman research also emphasized the fact that not many researchers are examining or studying predisposing factors that significantly impact domestic violence but are evaluating the effectiveness of intervention programs for batterers.


\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 102.


Often times, analysis were utilized when studying the impact of race and socioeconomic status on domestic violence. Primarily, underlying issues like that of socialization and history of family violence were evaluated to rationalize why men abuse and what impact the aforementioned factors may have on the male. Many researchers failed to conceptualize that a woman may accept she is a victim because that is what she saw as a child, and that as a woman and identifying with the mother she is the weaker sex.

**Theoretical Framework**

As mentioned earlier, history of family violence and sex role socialization are contributing factors to being a victim of domestic violence. Similarly to the aforementioned literature there are very few theories that examine the relationship among these variables. For the purpose of this study, the Social Learning Theory will be used to explain the relationship between the study variables. At this point, it is imperative to mention that sex role socialization and history of family violence are closely related. Both variables serve as predisposing factors of domestic violence. Because of this fact, they must be addressed together when explained by the Social Learning Theory.

The Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura discusses how behavior is learned through different methods. These methods include modeling, observation, reinforcement, and punishment. In the Social Learning Theory,
“aggression is treated as complex events including behavior that produces injurious and destructive effects as well as social labeling processes.”

Bandura through this model makes the assumption that a person’s actions and beliefs are learned. He states that, much of the Social Learning Theory is fostered through the examples set by individuals one encounters in everyday life. It is through the benefits or punishments that a person continues with a behavior or perpetuates a certain belief. Women involved in violent marriages as presented in literature have often observed violence in their childhood homes or were abused as children. Because of this, women are taught violence or to be the receiver of violence and become involved in the cycle of abuse. She then learns that violence is a facet of life. This may be the beginning of the woman becoming socialized to be a victim. This means that the woman through many contributing factors most importantly, the family, learns her specific role.

Through identifying with same sex parent and observing the mother, the woman begins to model her. This modeling of the abused mother aids the woman into becoming submissive and the nurturer. This attitude is ‘reinforced’ by

45 Ibid., 73.
abusing the woman as a child and exposing the female child to societal factors which in many cases promotes her oppression.

In 1973, Bandura proposed that criminal violence is manifested in social learning. Violence is not innate, it is learned through socialization. He further states that aggressive behavior is learned and is acquired through direct experience (trial and error), by observing the behavior of others (modeling), or in both ways. Bandura in his Learning Theory suggests that the family serves as a breeding ground for violent behavior. Furthermore, when a child observes rewards for bad or anti-social behavior, then the child learns that this type of behavior is attractive.

The Social Learning Theory places domestic violence in a societal context. This theory can be used to legitimize that women are socialized to be victims, because as a child the woman is exposed to violence regularly through child abuse or the abuse of the mother. This is reinforced by the sex-role stereotyping ideologies placed on a woman at an early age.

For the sake of this research, the Social Learning Theory substantiates that women remain in abusive relationships and are socialized to become victims


because of what they learned through their parents as their ascribed role in the home and society, and the learned helplessness modeled by the female authority figure when examining history of family violence of the victim. This theory supports those ideologies that a woman has learned some behaviors that places or forces her into the role of the victim.
Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the forgoing literature review, theoretical framework, and general purpose of the study, below are the research questions and hypotheses of this study.

R1. Does history of family violence have an impact on becoming a victim in an abusive marriage?

H1. There will be a significant relationship between history of family violence and being a victim of domestic violence.

R2. Does the way a woman was socialized (her beliefs, values, and attitudes) contribute to why a woman becomes involved in a violent marriage?

H2. There will be a significant relationship between a woman’s sex-role stereotyping/socialization and being a victim of domestic violence.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study will examine the relationship between family violence and sex role stereotyping/socialization and its impact on being involved in a physically abusive marriage. This is an exploratory study using survey research.

Setting and Participants

The setting of the study is the Mount Ephraim Baptist Church. This agency was chosen because it provides both religious and social services to women who have been both emotionally and physically abused.

The Mount Ephraim Baptist Church provides many services. The services include 1) individual counseling, 2) Group counseling, 3) Family Counseling, and 4) Educational classes that promote an inner healing and sense of self sufficiency. The women that use these services remain in the setting for six weeks. The population for this study is 30 women who receive services from this organization. The women range in age from 17 to 65. These women are City of Atlanta residents.

Procedure

The instruments in the questionnaire packet were administered by the researcher. Before administering the scales, the researcher introduced herself and
informed potential participants that the purpose of the research was to obtain information on sex role socialization and history of family violence and the role these variables play in being a victim of domestic violence. It was also announced that their participation in the study is completely voluntary, and that during anytime, they were free to withdraw their consent. Additionally, each participant was informed that the information would remain confidential and will be destroyed after the termination of the study.

The researcher administered the survey to each participant. The researcher made herself available to clarify any questions that seemed confusing to the participants. The time frame for completing the instruments was 30 minutes.

Measurement of Variables

The three variables measured in this research were domestic violence, sex role socialization, and history of family violence. Domestic violence, the dependent variable is operationalized by the researcher as the extent to which a woman is physically threatened, slapped, punched, kicked, and forced to perform sexual activity by her mate. To assess this variable, the researcher used the Partner’s Abuse Scale: Physical (PASPH). This scale was developed by Walter W. Hudson. It is composed of twenty five questions, but was adapted for this study and has 23 items. The instrument is a standardized scale where the respondents are asked to respond to each statement. The highest score for this
scale is 161 and the lowest being 23. The higher the score the more violence the respondents are experiencing.

Sex role socialization, an independent variable for this study, is operationalized by the researcher as the extent to which a woman ascribes to societal or traditional gender Roles and behavioral norms. To appropriately assess this variable, the scale call “Sex role Socialization: Beliefs, Values, and Perceptions” was used. This scale is a 15 item questionnaire developed by Dr. Cynthia Spence of Spelman College. The highest score for this instrument is 60 with the lowest score being 15. The higher the score on the scale the more the respondents ascribe to traditional roles.

History of family violence, the second independent variable is operationalized by the researcher as the extent to which a woman has viewed physical altercations between her guardians or was abused physically abused by her guardians as a child. To assess this variable, the researcher developed the scale, “History of Family Violence.” This scale consists of four closed ended items. The highest score for this scale is 28 with the lowest score being 04. The higher the score, the more history of family violence the respondents have experienced.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

In this research study, descriptive statistics, and Pearson r were used to analyze the study variables. Table 1 depicts descriptive statistics. These statistics are the frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations of the variables in this study. The scores for each of the three variables used in this study were categorized into low, moderate, and high levels.

Eleven (36.5%) of the respondents had low levels of sex role socialization. Sixteen (53.6%) of the respondents had moderate levels of sex role socialization. Three (9.9%) of the respondents had high levels of sex role socialization. Most of the respondents moderately ascribed to the sex role stereotypes taught during childhood. Sex role socialization had a mean score of 33.7 and a standard deviation of 8.4.

One (3.3%) of the respondents had low levels of history of family violence. 25 (83.5%) of the respondents had moderate levels of history of family violence. Four (13.2%) of the respondents had high levels of history of family violence. Majority of the respondents have experienced or viewed moderate levels of family violence during their childhood. History of family violence had a mean score of 17.5 and a standard deviation of 3.6.
Four (13.2%) of the individuals surveyed had low levels of domestic violence. Twenty one (69.8%) had moderate levels of domestic violence. Five (17%) had high levels of domestic violence. The percentages indicate that most respondents have experienced moderate levels of abuse in their marriage.

Domestic violence had a mean score of 93.6 and a standard deviation of 25.5.

**Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Study Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
<th>Value Range</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex-role Socialization</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>15-30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>46-60</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Family Violence</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>04-12</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>13-20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>21-28</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>23-69</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>70-116</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>117-161</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sex role socialization mean = 33.7 Standard Deviation = 8.4
History of Family Violence mean = 17.5 Standard Deviation = 3.6
Domestic Violence mean = 93.6 Standard Deviation = 25.5
Table 2 reveals the results of a Pearson Correlation Analysis of the study variables. The alpha level used to reject or accept the null hypothesis was .05.

The research hypotheses presumed that: 1) there will be a statistically significant relationship between sex role socialization and being a victim of domestic violence; and 2) there will be a statistically significant relationship between history of family violence and being a victim of domestic violence. Based on the analysis, Pearson r, hypothesis 1, which posited a significant relationship between sex role socialization and domestic violence, is rejected. The results indicated that there was a weak and statistically non-significant relationship between sex role socialization and domestic violence.

The data in Table 2 also indicated that hypothesis 2, which posited a significant relationship between history of family violence and domestic violence is rejected. The results indicated that there was a weak statistically non-significant relationship between history of family violence and domestic violence.
Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Domestic Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Family Violence</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Role Socialization</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p<.05

It was concluded that, there was no statistically significant relationships, leaving the researcher to reject both of the two study hypotheses.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The rate of domestic violence is drastically increasing in the United States. There are serious concerns about why women become involved in and remain in violent relationships. This research revealed three major findings. These findings are: 1) most respondents experienced moderate levels of domestic violence, 2) there was no relationship between sex role socialization and domestic violence; and 3) there was no relationship between history of family violence and domestic violence.

Finding 1 states that 69.8% of the respondents experienced moderate levels of domestic violence. The number of respondents should have been increased to accurately determine the variance between the scores. The "Partners Abuse Scale: Physical (PASPH)" used to assess domestic violence may have needed to be more sensitive and gender specific. Social desirability and biased responses among the respondents may have also influenced the scores. Domestic violence is a sensitive topic and a hidden crime. Many women are afraid or ashamed to admit that they are victims of domestic violence. This view significantly impacts the sample size. It is difficult to find respondents (victims of domestic violence) that are willing to discuss their current living situations and their abusive relationships.
Finding 1 is inconsistent with most research. In previous literature, researchers utilizing victims of domestic violence as a target population, often report high levels of incidences in the family setting. As mentioned previously in the literature review, it is believed that 50% of all married couples have at least one violent incident. Current literature is now focusing on the trend of domestic violence and determining how widespread it has become in this society.

Finding 1 has important implications for social work practice at the micro and macro levels. At the micro level, social workers serve as an important asset to the target population. Social workers can provide ways to assist and treat women with the target problem. As practitioners, social workers can provide strategies and interventions that will assist women in coping or leaving a violent marriage. Also, as research practitioners, social workers can develop scales that are more sensitive to the issue of domestic violence.

At the macro level, social workers can develop programs and seminars that discuss the prevalence and indicators of domestic violence. These seminars could be developed in a manner that would allow them to be implemented in community meetings, and awareness programs. Also, social workers can aid in the development of policies in agencies that focus on assisting women in violent relationships.
Finding 2 states that there was no relationship between sex role socialization and domestic violence. One reasoning for this statistically non-significant relationship is sample size. The sample size was extremely small making it difficult to better examine the variance within and between the variables. Another possible explanation is the lack of published and/or standardized scales on sex role socialization. The scale, Sex Role Socialization: Beliefs, Values, and Perceptions, used by the researcher could have been more specific. The questions could have focused on the involvement of the victims' and their female figureheads during childhood, and how that relationship may have significantly impacted how they, the victims, view their gender specific role. Another limitation of this study is the validity of the measure used to assess sex role socialization. The measure may have contained items that did not accurately tap the information needed for this study.

Finding 2 is inconsistent with previous research. Researchers have stated that sex role socialization or ascribing to certain gender specific roles may impact whether a woman becomes a victim of domestic violence. In past literature, it was found that there is a significant relationship between sex role socialization and domestic violence. The strength of the relationship depended upon the sample size and the measurements used.
Even though there was no significant relationship between sex role socialization and being a victim of domestic violence this finding has implications at both the micro and macro level. At the micro level, when working with clients, social workers can discuss with females other causal factors of them experiencing domestic violence. These causal factors may include low self esteem, children, and economic dependency. As clinicians, social workers should discuss with clients the impact that socialization has on the decision making process. Counseling sessions that focus on the aforementioned idea may help victims of domestic violence to understand why they became involved in and remain the victim of violent relationships.

At the macro level, social workers can develop and publish scales that are both valid and reliable. These scales should have items that would gather the respondents attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about victimization in intimate relationships. Also, social workers can develop support groups. These support groups would allow women to discuss their violent relationships and receive feedback from other victims about healing processes and coping mechanisms on living in a violent environment. Social workers can assist in developing policies that would govern how social service agencies treat and provide services to victims of domestic violence. Also social workers can assist in developing legislation that govern the legal processes of handling domestic violence cases.
Research finding 3 indicated that there was no relationship between history of family violence and domestic violence. Again, this finding may be attributed to the fact that the sample size was very small. Furthermore, social desirability was a limitation. It is just as difficult to admit living in a abusive home as it is admitting to being a victim of domestic violence. Similarly to finding 2, the validity of the scale used by the researcher to assess history of family violence is questionable. This is due to the fact that there are very few published standardized scales to assess history of family violence, thereby forcing the researcher to develop a scale. The items in the scale may not have tapped the dimensions needed to assess the study variable.

Finding 3 was found to be very inconsistent with other investigators. Most research demonstrates that history of family violence is a primary indicator of becoming involved in an abusive relationship. History of family violence is viewed as one of the key characteristics of both batterers and victims. Research indicates that the more violent the household, the more likely it is that the children will become batterers or victims.

Finding 3 has significant implications at both the micro and macro levels. Because finding 3 was proven to be insignificant, therapies should focus on individualized assessments to determine the actual causal factors of domestic violence. As mentioned earlier, individual counseling sessions may assist women
in understanding why they remain in violent marriages/relationships. Also, as research practitioners, social workers can develop scales that accurately assess history of family violence.

At the macro level, social workers can develop focus groups to examine other dimensions that may significantly impact being a victim of domestic violence. This data can be published and distributed to community based agencies, to aid in the reduction of domestic violence. Also, social workers can develop seminars on the current trends of the target problem. These workshops would also examine signs and other predisposing factors that contribute to being or becoming a victim of domestic violence.

The study findings also have implications for future research. Some recommendations for research are as follows: 1) develop scales that are both valid and reliable, 2) produce research with larger sample sizes that are more reflective of the women in abusive marriages/relationships, 3) produce research that names other causal factors for domestic violence, i.e. low self-esteem, children, and economic dependency, and 4) produce research from the victims perspective. Also, researchers may use experimental and time series designs as well as survey research to accurately report and document data on domestic violence.
APPENDIX A

Dear Participants:

I am a graduate student at Clark Atlanta University, School of Social Work. I am conducting research for my thesis, which involves the association between socialization and physical abuse in marriage.

The administration of these questionnaires will be conducted with respect, sensitivity, and concern for the dignity and welfare of the participants. All information will be kept confidential, and therefore, your responses will not be revealed.

Please assist me by completing the attached questionnaire. Your participation is strictly voluntary and if you choose to participate, your assistance in completing the questionnaire will enable me to assess the relationship between socialization and physical abuse in marriage. Some questions may be considered to be very personal and you may not feel as if you want to answer them. I would like for you to try and answer every item as precisely as possible. If, however, you do not wish to continue completing the questionnaire you may stop at any time and return the questionnaire.

It is my hope that this research will contribute to an understanding of some of the variables associated with domestic violence and will further the development of treatment programs for women who are victims of domestic violence. Your time and participation in the completion of the questionnaire are greatly appreciated. If you would like to find our about the results of this study, please contact me by phone (770) 915-4029.

Sincerely,

Angela R. Taylor
The purpose of this exercise is to examine the sex role socialization experiences of participants. Please give each item very careful and honest consideration. Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Circle 4 if you (SA) Strongly Agree, 3(A) Agree, 2(D) Disagree, or 1 if you (SD) Strongly Disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I was socialized to believe</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The man should assume the leadership role within the family</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Men should assume leadership role in business and the home</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A woman needs a man around for protection</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The male partner should assume the responsibility for the care of the children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The male partner should assume a leadership role in intimate interpersonal relations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In some situations a man may have a right to use physical force against the female partner</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In some situations women provoke physical assaults</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Forcible sexual intercourse in a marriage situation often occurs because the male partner can not control his urges</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Men are often violent because of stressors that occur away from the home.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Men need to feel like they are the “king of the castle”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The female partner is responsible for providing a “happy household”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The male partner should have ultimate decision making authority</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. If a man treats you well most of the time you should not consider the first physical assault as an indication of his overall feelings about you</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. You should consider jealousy a compliment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The male partner should make more money than the female.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX C

HISTORY OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

This questionnaire is designed to measure the amount of violence that you witnessed in your family as a child. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer each item carefully and as accurately as you can by placing a number beside each one of the following statements.

1 = None of the time
2 = Very Rarely
3 = A little of the time
4 = Some of the time
5 = A good part of the time
6 = Most of the time
7 = All of the time

As a child:

1. _____ I saw my father hit my mother.
2. _____ I saw my mother hit my father.
3. _____ My father hit me.
4. _____ My mother hit me.
APPENDIX D

PARTNER'S ABUSE SCALE: PHYSICAL (PASPH)

This questionnaire is designed to measure the physical abuse you have experienced in your relationship with your partner. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer each item carefully and as accurately as you can by placing a number beside each one of the following statements.

1 = None
2 = Very Rarely
3 = A little of the time
4 = Some of the time
5 = A good part of the time
6 = Most of the time
7 = All of the time

01. ____ My partner physically forces me to have sex.
02. ____ My partner pushes me and shoves me around violently.
03. ____ My partner hits and punches my arms and body.
04. ____ My partner threatens me with a weapon.
05. ____ My partner beats me so hard I must seek medical help.
06. ____ My partner slaps me around my face and head.
07. ____ My partner beats me when he or she drinks.
08. ____ My partner physically throws me around the room.
09. ____ My partner hits and punches my face and head.
10. ____ My partner beats me in the face so badly that I am ashamed to be seen in public.
11. ____ My partner threatens to cut or stab me with a knife or other sharp objects.
12. ____ My partner tries to choke or strangle me.
13. ____ My partner knocks me down and then kicks or stomp me.
14. ____ My partner twists my fingers, arms, or legs.
15. ____ My partner throws dangerous objects at me.
16. ____ My partner bites and scratches me so badly that I bleed or have bruises.
17. ____ My partner violently pinches or twists my skin.
18. ____ My partner badly hurts me while we are having sex.
19. ____ My partner injures my breast and genitals.
20. ____ My partner tries to suffocate me with pillows, towels, or other objects.
21. ___ My partner pokes or jabs me with pointed objects.
22. ___ My partner has broken one or more of my bones.
23. ___ My partner kicks my face and head.

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