

# **FAMILY VIOLENCE IN HIGH CONFLICT FAMILIES**

## **Differentiating Substantiated and Unsubstantiated Allegations of Family Violence in High Conflict Families**

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(Clinical) at the University of Tasmania**

Statement

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain material from published sources without proper acknowledgement, nor does it contain material which has been accepted for the award of any other higher degree or graduate diploma in any university.

Judy Chu

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**Table of Contents**

|                                                                 |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Abstract .....                                                  | 1  |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....                                 | 2  |
| The Research Problem .....                                      | 5  |
| Overview of the Research .....                                  | 5  |
| CHAPTER TWO: FAMILY VIOLENCE .....                              | 7  |
| Definition of Family Violence .....                             | 8  |
| Prevalence of Family Violence .....                             | 9  |
| Psychological Impact of Family Violence .....                   | 10 |
| Family Violence and Children .....                              | 11 |
| Family Violence and Child Abuse .....                           | 13 |
| Families at Risk .....                                          | 14 |
| CHAPTER THREE: FAMILY VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF FAMILY LAW ... | 18 |
| Family Violence and the Law .....                               | 19 |
| Rates of Reporting in the Family Law Context .....              | 20 |
| False Reporting in Family Law .....                             | 21 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: THE CURRENT STUDY .....                           | 24 |
| Introduction .....                                              | 25 |
| The Current Study .....                                         | 26 |
| Method .....                                                    | 27 |
| Design .....                                                    | 27 |
| Participants .....                                              | 27 |
| Materials .....                                                 | 28 |
| Procedure .....                                                 | 29 |
| Results .....                                                   | 30 |

|                                              |    |
|----------------------------------------------|----|
| Group Allocation .....                       | 30 |
| Application Information .....                | 31 |
| Information Relating to the Child .....      | 32 |
| Information About the Mothers.....           | 37 |
| Information About the Fathers .....          | 41 |
| Nature of Parental Relationship .....        | 46 |
| Child's History of Violence and Abuse .....  | 50 |
| Child's Adjustment.....                      | 52 |
| Mother's History of Violence and Abuse.....  | 53 |
| Mother's Psychological Functioning.....      | 53 |
| Father's History of Violence and Abuse ..... | 55 |
| Father's Psychological Functioning .....     | 56 |
| Summary of Results. ....                     | 58 |
| Discussion .....                             | 60 |
| Group Allocation .....                       | 61 |
| Applicant Information .....                  | 61 |
| Information Relating to the Child .....      | 64 |
| Information About the Mothers.....           | 67 |
| Information About the Fathers .....          | 69 |
| Nature of Parental Relationship .....        | 73 |
| Child's History of Violence and Abuse .....  | 76 |
| Child's Adjustment.....                      | 76 |
| Mother's History of Violence and Abuse.....  | 77 |
| Mother's Psychological Functioning.....      | 78 |
| Father's History of Violence and Abuse ..... | 79 |

Father’s Psychological Functioning .....80

Distinguishing Substantiated and Unsubstantiated Family Violence Groups .....82

Limitations.....85

Future Directions .....85

Conclusion.....85

References .....86

APPENDIX .....100

### **Abstract**

Family violence is a significant social and psychological issue. Allegations of family violence are common in child custody evaluations. There is evidence to suggest that approximately 50 percent of family violence allegations are unsubstantiated.

Therefore, it is important for psychologists conducting child custody evaluations to be able to differentiate between true and false allegations of family violence. The aim of this study was to examine high conflict family law cases to determine what factors would differentiate substantiated from unsubstantiated family violence allegations in child custody disputes. The results showed a number of distinguishing factors between the three groups: no family violence, unsubstantiated family violence and substantiated family violence. The distinguishing factors related to employment history, community integration, parental relationship, parenting, home environment, and timing of application. Limitations and future directions are discussed.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION



Family Violence is a serious social and clinical problem (Austin, 2000; Morgan & Chadwick, 2009; Saunders, 2002). Family violence generally is characterised by behaviours that aim to exert power and control over an intimate partner (Mitchell, 2011). Although the intimate partner is seen as the direct victim, children who are exposed to family violence are considered as indirect victims of family violence (Hartley, 2002).

The impact of family violence is related to a myriad of psychological and social issues in adults and children. Psychological consequences include depression, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and suicide (Mitchell, 2011). Social issues include challenging behaviours and difficulties forming social connections for children (Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008), and homelessness and a heavy reliance on support services and legal services for the entire family (Laing & Bobic, 2002).

The issue of family violence is one of the factors frequently considered in child custody disputes (Geffner, Conradi, Geis, & Aranda, 2009). Exposure to an aggressive home environment characterised by limited stability can influence a child's psychological development (Holt et al., 2008). The unpredictability inherent in such an environment can foster stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms in some children (Wolfe & Jaffe, 1991). Further, exposure to family violence may result in a child mimicking the aggressive behaviours s/he witnesses (Minze, McDonald, Rosentraub, & Jouriles, 2010) resulting in the intergenerational transmission of violent behaviour (Black, Sussman, & Unger, 2010; Kwong, Bartholomew, Henderson, & Trinke, 2003).

In addition to these effects, there has been a demonstrated link between the presence of family violence in the home and an increased likelihood of child abuse (Appel & Holden, 1998; Hartley, 2002; Holden, 2003; Kaye, Stubbs, & Tolmie,

2003; Neilson, 2004; Smith-Slep & O'Leary, 2001; Stanley, 1997). Indeed, partner and parent aggression have been identified as being associated with a history of or current partner violence increasing the chances of these parents abusing their children (Smith-Slep & O'Leary, 2001). Appel and Holden (1998) conducted a review of the literature on the co-occurrence of family violence and physical child abuse and reported a co-occurrence rate of 40 percent.

A review of the literature identified a number of risk factors common to both family violence and child abuse (Smith-Slep & O'Leary, 2001). These included drug and alcohol use, impulsivity, depressive symptoms and personality disturbance. Although it may be the case that these factors are related to physical abuse of children, it may not be the case that they can be generalised to other forms of abuse.

It has been suggested that emotional abuse of children can be even more damaging than the physical abuse of children (Kaplan, Pelcovitz, & Labruna, 1999). Holt and colleagues (2008) described exposure to family violence as a form of emotional abuse. Parental alienation, a term that is commonly used in child custody litigation to describe one parent negatively influencing the attitude of the child towards the other parent, in combination with parental conflict, have been identified as forms of emotional abuse (Fidler & Bala, 2010). Fidler and Bala (2010) reported that alienated children are at a greater risk of emotional distress and adjustment difficulties compared to children in child custody litigation who are not alienated. They stated that alienated children may present with a variety of symptoms such as simplistic and rigid information processing, distorted interpersonal perceptions, disturbed interpersonal functioning, low self-esteem, pseudo-maturity, aggression and conduct disorders, disregard for social norms and authority, poor impulse control and a lack of remorse or guilt.

## **The Research Problem**

The literature concerning family violence has indicated that family violence allegations are common in child custody litigation (Fidler & Bala, 2010; Johnston, Lee, Olesen, & Walters, 2005; Kayser-Boyd, 2009; Neilson, 2004). According to Neilson (2004), 40 to 50 percent of separating and divorcing couples' report that family violence occurred during their relationship and that family violence rates are significantly higher in this group compared to couples in continuing relationships. Maxwell (1999) reported that 50 to 80 percent of custody mediation programs included a focus on family violence. Although the literature confirms that family violence allegations are commonplace in custody cases, there is a paucity of studies on rates of false reporting in the literature. Nevertheless, there are a few studies that have investigated the proportion of family violence allegations that can be considered to be false. Johnston and colleagues (2005) reported that about 50 percent of family violence allegations made by both mothers and fathers were unsubstantiated. In addition, Bow and Boxer (2003) found that of the family violence cases, 43 percent of cases were considered as unsupported.

Due to the seriousness of these claims and the detrimental effects family violence can have on adults and children, it is important to determine a method to distinguish true cases of family violence from false allegations of family violence in child custody litigation. This highlights the need to clarify the factors that might be useful in distinguishing these cases.

## **Overview of the Research**

In order to determine the relevant factors that should be considered by psychologists when assessing the validity of family violence claims in child custody

evaluations, a review of the relevant literature will be conducted. This includes a review of the literature pertaining to family violence in general, the impact of family violence, and the link between family violence and child abuse. This is followed by a review of the literature relating to family violence within a family law context.

The report of a study conducted to identify the factors that distinguish substantiated family violence from unsubstantiated allegations of family violence in the context of child custody litigation will be presented. The results of this study will be discussed and directions for future research will be provided.

CHAPTER TWO  
FAMILY VIOLENCE

### **Definition of Family Violence**

Family violence is an abuse of power perpetrated mainly, but not exclusively, by men against women in a relationship or after separation (Mitchell, 2011; Morgan & Chadwick, 2009). Although there is a common belief that men are more often the perpetrators of family violence, some studies have reported that the ratio of female-perpetrated family violence is equal to that of male-perpetrated family violence (Bow & Boxer, 2003; Nowinski & Bowen, 2012). It is also recognised that family violence can occur in same-sex relationships (Carvalho, Lewis, Derlega, Winstead, & Viggiano, 2011).

Family violence occurs when one partner attempts to physically or psychologically dominate and control the other. The most common forms of family violence are physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional and social abuse and economic deprivation (Family Violence Coordination Unit, 2007; Kaye et al., 2003; Moore & Stuart, 2005; Morgan & Chadwick, 2009).

Since the literature considering family violence has developed, researchers have tried to describe its different forms. Jaffe, Johnston, Crooks, and Bala (2008) proposed four general categories of family violence based on relationship characteristics, namely, abusive-controlling violent relationships (ACV), conflict-instigated violence (CIV), violent-resistance (VR) and separation-instigated violence (SIV). ACV relationships involve a pervasive pattern of threat, force, emotional abuse, and other coercive methods to assert power and control over one partner in order to induce fear, submission, and compliance (Haselschwerdt, Hardesty, & Hans, 2011; Jaffe et al., 2008). CIV occurs when both partners are the perpetrators of violence, typically as a function of limited skills in conflict resolution. VR occurs

when a partner or victim uses violence in retaliation to violence inflicted by the perpetrator. SIV pertains to isolated acts of violence perpetrated by either partner reacting to the stress experienced during the relationship breakdown (i.e., separation, divorce) (Haselschwerdt et al., 2011).

### **Prevalence of Family Violence**

Family violence represents a significant social problem. Results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Personal Safety Survey in 2005 found that 1 in 20 Australian women (4.7%) experienced physical violence in the 12 months prior to survey. The most common location for physical assaults to occur for women was reported to be in the home regardless of the sex of the perpetrator, with 64 percent of physical assaults being perpetrated by men. In contrast, men were more likely to have been assaulted at licensed premises (34%) or in the open (35%). Family members or friends were the most likely perpetrators of physical assault on women (37%) and strangers were more likely to physically assault men (66%).

In a report by the Australian Institute of Family Studies it was stated that 16.8 percent of separated fathers and 26 percent of separated mothers experienced physical abuse during and after the relationship (Kaspiew et al., 2009). In addition, 36.4 percent of separated fathers and 39 percent of separated mothers experienced emotional abuse before or after separation (Cook et al., 2005). In 2011, there were 2,509 family violence incidents attended by police in Tasmania alone (Department of Police and Emergency Management, 2012).

### **Psychological Impact of Family Violence**

The impact of family violence may be severe. There is a range of negative consequences of experiencing family violence, including physical health outcomes such as physical injuries, disability, miscarriage, sexually transmitted diseases, and homicide (Family Violence Coordination Unit, 2007). Less direct physical outcomes like headaches, irritable bowel syndrome, and self-injurious behaviour also have been reported (Family Violence Coordination Unit, 2007). Psychological consequences such as depression, fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem in addition to other consequences from psychological, financial and social abuse, such as social isolation, financial debt, loss of freedom, degradation, and loss of dignity have been recognised (Johnston & Campbell, 1993; Morgan & Chadwick, 2009; O'Leary, Slep, & O'Leary, 2007).

Roberts, Lawrence, Williams, and Raphael (1998) conducted a study on the impact of family violence on the mental health of women. They found that women exposed to family violence as children had an increased likelihood of diagnoses of Dysthymia, anxiety and phobia. In women in relationships characterised by family violence, the most common diagnoses were phobias, depression, Dysthymia and Generalised Anxiety Disorder. Furthermore, Roberts and colleagues (1998) found that a history of abuse, as children or adults, related to more diagnoses of lifetime phobias, depression, Dysthymia, anxiety, psychoactive drug dependence, current harmful alcohol consumption and lifetime PTSD than women who reported no abuse in their lifetime.

Although women are most commonly reported to be the victims of family violence, men can also be victims. Male victims of family violence are possibly under reported in the research due to stigma associated with being a victim of family



violence. Hence, the research on the psychological impact of family violence on men is scarce. Randle and Graham (2011) conducted a review of the research on the impact of intimate partner violence on men and determined that men also experience significant psychological symptoms as a result of family violence. They also found a relationship between family violence and posttraumatic stress symptoms, depression, and suicide.

### **Family Violence and Children**

Undoubtedly, exposure to family violence may have serious consequences for children (Bartels, 2010). Literature on the impact of witnessing violence in the home has reported negative effects on children's physical, emotional, psychological, social, educational and behavioural wellbeing (Austin, 2000; Bartels, 2010; Morgan & Chadwick, 2009). In addition, child abuse is more likely to occur in families experiencing family violence (Laing & Bobic, 2002). Children from homes where family violence occurs also are at risk of inter-generational transmission of family violence (Laing & Bobic, 2002; Tomison, 2000). Further, children who are exposed to family violence are at an increased risk of alcohol and drug abuse and delinquency in later life (Laing & Bobic, 2002).

The literature has supported the notion that witnessing the abuse of a primary carer (often the mother) is considered to be a form of emotional abuse which can negatively impact a child's emotional and mental health and future interpersonal relationships (Brandon & Lewis, 1996; Holt et al., 2008). Children exposed to family violence between their parents often feel conflict with regard to their view of the perpetrator, commonly the father. They tend to categorise the perpetrator as "good" or "bad" but rarely maintain both views (Peled, 2000). This can be confusing for

children as, at times, they may feel they need to express strong loyalty to one parent, especially in relation to child custody disputes (Holt et al., 2008).

Exposure to family violence creates an unpredictable environment for children (McIntosh, 2002). When considering the potential effects of exposure to family violence, research has indicated that there are two factors that need to be considered, namely, the child's developmental stage at the time of exposure and the length of time the child is exposed to domestic violence (Holt et al., 2008; Morgan & Chadwick, 2009).

At the earlier stages of development, children are completely dependent on their primary care givers to care for them and meet their needs. If the psychological adjustment of the primary care giver is compromised as a result of exposure to family violence, the ability to adequately care for a dependent child also may be compromised (Family Violence Coordination Unit, 2007; Holt et al., 2008). With a child's ability to regulate emotions, in part, being dependent on exposure to relevant and appropriate caregiver behaviours, the adjustment problems experienced by a caregiver exposed to family violence may negatively influence a child's ability to adequately regulate emotion or may result in problems of attachment (Lundy & Grossman, 2005).

Other problems can develop in young children exposed to family violence. There have been reports of regressed behaviour in language and toilet training, sleep disturbances, emotional distress and a fear of being alone (Lundy & Grossman, 2005).

The effects of family violence on school-aged children (6-12years) may be different from those of younger children because children of this age are more aware of themselves and others, including the impact the abuse is having on their mother.

However, they are still egocentric in their thinking so demonstrate a tendency to blame themselves for family violence, resulting in feelings of guilt (Holt et al., 2008).

A range of psychological consequences of exposure to family violence have been reported among school aged children. Lundy and Grossman's (2006) study found that 33 percent of children exposed to family violence were described as frequently aggressive and 20 percent of children had difficulties following rules at school, were acting out, and experienced peer difficulties, sadness, and depression. By adolescence, the impact of family violence can lead to difficulty forming healthy interpersonal relationships with peers due to their experiences in their family (Holt et al., 2008).

### **Family Violence and Child Abuse**

There are several studies in the literature suggesting that a relationship exists between family violence and child abuse (Appel & Holden, 1998; Chan, 2011; Hartley, 2002; Shipman, Rossman, & West, 1999; Smith-Slep & O'Leary, 2001). Appel and Holden (1998) found that the percentage overlap of family violence and child abuse in a clinical sample of physically abused children and women from family violence relationships, ranged from 20 percent to 100 percent.

Chan (2011) conducted a study examining the prevalence of co-occurrence of family violence and child abuse and neglect in a sample of 2,363 Chinese parents in Hong Kong. They found that about a third of the perpetrators of child abuse were also involved in family violence. They found that family violence was the strongest correlate with child abuse and neglect. In Australia, Moloney et al. (2007) conducted a study investigating allegations of family violence and child abuse in

family law proceedings related to child custody. They found that more than half of both their samples (general litigants sample and judicial determination sample) involved allegations of both family violence and child abuse. Certainly, it has been determined that the presence of family violence increases the likelihood that a child will experience physical abuse (Holden, 2003).

In addition, there is evidence in the literature suggesting that children exposed to family violence have been considered to be victims of emotional abuse (Holden, 2003; Stanley, 1997). Hence, it is important to consider the presence of child abuse in the context of family violence assessments.

### **Families at Risk**

There have been a number of factors considered in the literature that increase the risk of violence, in general, and family violence, in particular. The most common factor is alcohol use or abuse (Gil-González, Vives-Cases, Álvarez-Dardet, & Latour-Pérez, 2006; Schumacher, Homish, Leonard, Quigley, & Kearns-Bodkin, 2008). However, it is important to be aware that most men and women who abuse alcohol do so without ever engaging in physical abuse against their partner (Kantor & Straus, 1987). Nevertheless, when alcohol use is combined with other moderating factors such as aggression, and impaired behavioural regulation and control, stressful life events, or poor coping strategies such as avoidance coping, the risk of family violence is increased (Schumacher et al., 2008).

Schumacher and colleagues (2008) found that hostility and avoidance coping were significant predictors of male-to-female family violence. They concluded that greater hostility and greater reliance on avoidance coping strategies were related to increased risk of family violence. When alcohol use was considered, the risk of

family violence increased. In relation to women, Schumacher and colleagues identified that partner hostility and men's excessive alcohol consumption predicted women's violence perpetration. Overall, they found that a partner's own alcohol abuse was a significant longitudinal predictor of family violence perpetration only for those with high hostility and high avoidance coping.

In a study by Stuart et al. (2006) examining family violence in men and women who had been arrested for family violence, it was found that problems with alcohol for both partners were related to psychological aggression and physical abuse in both male and female perpetrators. They stated the impact of alcohol abuse on physical and psychological aggression remained significant even after controlling for other contributory factors such as antisocial personality traits, perpetrator trait anger, and perpetrator relationship discord.

Stuart et al. (2008) examined the role of drug use and its impact on family violence in the same sample. They discovered that for males there was a correlation between the number of drugs used and the frequency of physical violence. This was not the case for females. Stuart and colleagues stated that male stimulant use and marijuana use were significantly associated with perpetrating physical abuse with this association not being evident in females.

Interestingly, in a study investigating parent and partner violence in families with young children, Smith Slep and O'Leary (2005) found that family violence originating from both parents was more common than family violence perpetrated by either the male or female. Further, when both parents were participating in the violence, there was an increased risk of child physical abuse. They reported that young families with young children are at increased risk of parent and partner

violence. They suggested that this may be related to the stress of having young children and the parents' young age.

Campbell et al. (2003) conducted a study investigating risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships. Their results showed that unemployment was the strongest socio-demographic risk factor for family violence-related femicide. Similarly, Holt and colleagues (2008) reported that women were at a lower risk of family violence when the woman and her partner were both employed but were at an increased risk of family violence when the women were employed and their partners were unemployed.

Other risk factors have been identified. For example, both partners having access to a gun and the use of illicit drugs have been identified as risk factors for femicide. In contrast, alcohol abuse was not as strongly associated with femicide as access to a gun and use of illicit drugs (Campbell et al., 2003). Living with the perpetrator with a child that is not biologically the child of the perpetrator doubled the risk of femicide. When considering controlling behaviours and verbal aggression, it was found that highly controlling behaviours and the couple separating after living together increased the risk by 9 times. Perpetrators' history of threats with a weapon and threats to kill were related to markedly higher risk of femicide (Campbell et al., 2003).

Other researchers have identified similar risk factors, such as a history of aggressive behaviours (Dutton & Kropp, 2000; Kropp, Hart, Webster, & Eaves, 1999; Webster, Douglas, Eaves, & Hart, 1997), antisocial behaviours and attitudes (Webster et al., 1997), lack of stable relationships and employment (Kropp et al., 1999; Webster et al., 1997), mental health issues and psychopathology (Laing, 2004; Webster et al., 1997), personality disorder (Webster et al., 1997), history of child

abuse or witnessing of family violence (Kropp et al., 1999), low motivation for treatment, and derogatory attitudes towards women (Dutton & Kropp, 2000; Laing, 2004).

In summary, there are a number of factors relevant to family violence. Based on the literature, it is evident that family violence is complex and is related to a combination of risk factors such as alcohol and drug use, personality characteristics, impulsivity, and anger issues. The presence of family violence can also lead to serious consequences such as death, which highlights that family violence is a serious social and psychological issue.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FAMILY VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF FAMILY LAW



## **Family Violence and the Law**

In 2004, Tasmania passed the Family Violence Act to better protect families from family violence. The purpose of the Act is to ensure the safety and psychological wellbeing of people impacted by family violence (Family Violence Act, 2004).

In Tasmania, as a result of this Act, family violence is now more strongly recognised in legislation as a criminal action (Family Violence Act, 2004). Family violence, within a legal definition, is any of the following conduct, committed by a person, directly or indirectly against that person's spouse or partner. This includes conduct such as assault, sexual assault, threats, coercion, intimidation, or verbal abuse, abduction, stalking or attempting or threatening to commit the conduct outlined above. The Act also includes economic abuse, emotional abuse or intimidation, and the contravention of any type of Family Violence Order (FVO) as a form of family violence.

The introduction of the Family Violence Act provided police officers with the power to issue Police Family Violence Orders (PFVO) and FVOs on behalf of the victim and his/her children when they presented at the scene (Family Violence Act, 2004). This made such orders more accessible. The Act allows for a pro-prosecution approach to the management of family violence allegations.

FVOs may be a way of determining the validity of family violence claims. However, three issues need to be considered. Firstly, FVOs and PFVOs may be issued without considerable verification of the veracity of the claims of family violence if the alleged perpetrator accedes or if police officers consider the order necessary at the time of intervention. Secondly, due to the relative ease of obtaining

a FVO, a FVO may be used by a parent as a tool to justify the need to have full custody. Finally, true victims may be too fearful to alert the police of family violence and may not have had the means of obtaining a FVO as evidence of family violence (Shaffer & Bala, 2003).

Australian Commonwealth legislation also has recognised the need to protect children from family violence, which lead to the amendments to Family Law legislation (Family Law Amendment, 2006). These amendments highlight that witnessing or hearing domestic disputes between parents is equivalent to causing harm to the child or children.

### **Rates of Reporting in the Family Law Context**

Family violence is a feature of many child custody cases that come before the Family Court (Fidler & Bala, 2010). Child custody court proceedings can be a stressful time for all parties involved (Kelly & Johnston, 2001). Often these proceedings occur shortly after the breakdown of a relationship or marriage when emotions are intensely felt and partners may feel the need for vengeance or to assert some control. During this stressful time, allegations of family violence can arise, whether or not these allegations subsequently can be substantiated. This is particularly the case in high conflict families (Kaser-Boyd, 2009). High conflict Family Law Court litigation refers to cases where the parties cannot agree to Orders relating to the custody of the child or children involved because of the conflict between the parents (Johnston et al., 2005).

Some research has shown an overall prevalence rate of family violence allegations in family court proceedings to be approximately 12% and this rate has remained stable over time (Austin, 2000; Gelles & Strauss, 1988). However, other

research has suggested that the rates are much higher. Johnson and colleagues (2005) conducted a study investigating allegations and substantiation of child abuse and family violence in 120 divorced families. They determined that at least one allegation was made against mothers in 56 percent of families, and against fathers in at least 77 percent of families. Mutual allegations of abuse were raised within the same family in 49 percent of cases. These allegations were not formal applications to the court but were raised as parental concerns in mediation, custody evaluation or custody counselling.

When examining frequency of allegations and substantiation of abuse, mothers were more likely to make child sex abuse allegations and drug abuse allegations against fathers. Mothers were also more likely to make allegations of alcohol abuse and family violence against fathers, and both these kinds of allegations were likely to be substantiated at higher rates compared to the fathers' allegations. Johnson and colleagues reported that mothers and fathers were equally likely to be responsible for child physical abuse and neglect (Johnson et al., 2005).

### **False Reporting in Family Law**

Undoubtedly, there is a high rate of allegations of family violence and child abuse within family law. In addition, it has been reported that there are higher rates of false allegations of family violence and child abuse in family law than in other contexts (Moloney et al., 2007).

Johnston and colleagues (2005) investigated substantiation of allegations of abuse and violence by mothers and fathers. They found that in relation to child abuse allegations, those against fathers were less likely to be substantiated compared to mothers (26% versus 46%). In relation to family violence and substance misuse,

the allegations were more likely to be substantiated against fathers compared to mothers (67% to 55%).

Austin (2001), in his study on partner violence and risk assessment in child custody evaluations, suggested that to assist in determining substantiation of partner violence allegations, outside sources of information need to be considered. These sources of information include objective verification from records (e.g., family violence order), examination of the pattern and timing of allegations, consideration of credible reports from third parties, examination of the alleged perpetrator's and the accuser's psychological assessment and history of abusive behaviour, and examination of the psychological status of the alleged victim. These objective records are necessary in order to add substantiation to family violence claims. In the absence of such collateral information, the only evidence to support family violence allegations would be the applicant's arguments versus the respondent's arguments.

Moloney and colleagues (2007) conducted a study examining allegations of family violence and child abuse in Family Law child custody proceedings. In relation to both family violence and child abuse allegations, most often these allegations did not have evidence to support them. In addition, the most common response to both family violence and child abuse allegations across both samples (general litigants sample and judicial determination sample) was 'no response' from the alleged perpetrator. The second most common response was denial of the allegation. Full or substantial admissions were uncommon.

Newmark, Harrell, and Salem (1994) reported that a high percentage of both males and females in family law cases reported being abused in the marriage. Austin (2000) confirmed that this is an issue that is often raised in the child custody cases.

False family violence allegations have been identified as a problem in these cases (Stahl, 1994).

It is worthy of note that false allegations of family violence have the capacity to significantly affect the relationship between the child and the allegedly violent parent. Children can be encouraged to adopt a negative view about a parent by the parent alleging the abuse. This process is known as parental alienation or child alienation (Bala, Hunt, & McCarney, 2010). Although the notion of a Parental Alienation Syndrome now has been rejected (Kelly & Johnston, 2001; Ziropiannis, 2001), the concept of one parent influencing or manipulating a child to side with them is not uncommon in child custody evaluations (Kaser-Boyd, 2009).

In a review of issues related to children's post-separation resistance to access with one parent, Fidler and Bala (2010) stated that children are at risk of emotional distress and adjustment issues. Kelly and Johnston (2001) reported that alienated children may present as very angry with and unhealthily focused on the 'hated' parent when the occasion demanded such an expression but would otherwise present as reasonably well adjusted in terms of psychological and academic functioning. However, it is apparent that relationship difficulties may be experienced by these children.

In summary, allegations of family violence in the context of family law and in the process of child custody disputes have been reported. Although difficult to discern, a proportion of these allegations are considered to be false. A means of determining false from true claims of family violence is important given the impact of family violence in general, and the potential harm caused to child by leading them to believe that violence occurred when it did not occur.

CHAPTER FOUR  
THE CURRENT STUDY

## Introduction

Family violence is a complex and significant social issue with serious psychological consequences for families, particularly children (Laing & Bobic, 2002; Mitchell, 2011; Morgan & Chadwick, 2009). The literature on family violence reflects the harm it can have on children and families (Bartels, 2010; Holt et al., 2008; Johnston & Campbell, 1993; Randle & Graham, 2011). The literature also shows that family violence and child abuse tend to co-occur, which emphasises the risk family violence may present for children.

Allegations of family violence often occur in child custody evaluations (Austin, 2000; Johnston et al., 2005; Moloney et al., 2007). Further, false allegations or unsubstantiated allegations of family violence have been a recognised feature of child custody disputes (Austin, 2000). Given the likely impact on children and the ramifications in terms of child custody decisions on parent-child relationships, the importance of determining the truthfulness of these allegations should be apparent. This includes both assessing risk of violence and determining the presence of violence. Although risk assessment instruments are available to assist in the prediction of future violent behaviour (e.g., Douglas & Skeem, 2005), there is little empirical evidence to assist single experts to determine the validity of family violence allegations (Austin, 2000; Jaffe et al., 2008; Tolman & Rotzein, 2007). It seems necessary to be able to identify the factors that distinguish true from false family violence claims. The identification of such factors would assist the child custody evaluator in making determinations about risk to children.

## **The Current Study**

There is little research investigating allegations of family violence with or without substantiating evidence in high conflict Family Law cases. This can be challenging for psychologists working with these cases and whose job it becomes, in the role of court appointed single expert, to assist the court in determining what is in the best interests of the child. This study aims to provide empirical evidence to aid practising psychologists in the field in an effort to guide psychological assessment of risk to children. Hence, the research aim of the study is to identify the variables that distinguish between real and false allegations of family violence.

Based on the risk factors considered in the family violence literature it is hypothesised that there will be identifiable differences between substantiated and unsubstantiated claims of family violence in child custody disputes. It is expected that factors such as high alcohol or drug use, low employability, antisocial behaviours and mental health issues will be more prevalent in the perpetrators of the substantiated family violence group compared to the perpetrators in the unsubstantiated family violence group.

It is also expected that the unsubstantiated family violence group will be more similar to a group where no family violence was alleged than to a group where family violence was substantiated in terms of a range individual and group characteristics known to be associated with family violence. For instance, the victims in the unsubstantiated family violence group will show similar adjustment levels and employment history to the no family violence group compared to the victims in the family violence group.



## **Method**

### **Design**

This study used a data mining procedure to create a checklist to obtain information about the variables associated with family violence. The independent, between subjects, variable were child custody cases with three levels of family violence: substantiated family violence, unsubstantiated family violence and no family violence. The dependent variables were identified characteristics related to parental functioning, relationship history, abuse/violence history, child functioning, and the nature of allegations made.

### **Participants**

Participant information was derived from de-identified archived family assessment material. Cases relating to a total of 75 children involved in custody disputes in the Family Court of Australia or the Federal Magistrates' Court were included in this study. Information in each case file included affidavits; referral information; any police reports; interview material; report by the court appointed single expert including transcripts of interviews and recommendations made from the final assessment.

All cases were referred by the Family Court to a court-appointed Single Expert Psychologist. These cases were considered to represent the high conflict Family Court child custody cases where a Single Expert is allocated to assist the courts in resolving child custody disputes. The process of appointing a Single Expert supports the method of unbiased allocation of cases. Appointments are made by the Independent Children's Lawyer (ICL) who is appointed using a rotating list of

available senior legal counsel. The ICLs then recommend to the Court the appointment of a psychologist based on recognition of experience and expertise, and availability.

Cases were allocated to one of three groups; substantiated family violence, unsubstantiated family violence and no family violence. Substantiated family violence cases were allocated based on two or more of the following identifiers. These were police reports of witnessed family violence, court findings of perpetrated family violence, medical evidence of victim's physical injury, and other's report of witnessed family violence. The unsubstantiated family violence group were associated with an allegation of family violence without any identifiers present and the no family violence group had no allegations and no identifiers present.

## **Materials**

A checklist was developed by the investigator to determine the validity of family violence allegations. The checklist was based on an extensive literature review of family violence and family violence allegations and included a number of risk assessment tools. The checklist included items identified by the literature and factors identified by assessment tools such as the Historical, Clinical and Risk Management – 20 (HCR-20; Webster et al., 1997), the Psychopathy Checklist (PCL; Hare, 2003), Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA; Kropp, Hart et al., 1999), the Abusive Behaviour Inventory (Shepard & Campbell, 1992), the Composite Abuse Scale (CAS; Hegarty, Sheehan, & Schonfeld, 1999), and the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PWMI; Tolman, 1989). Characteristics of the checklist included information relating to the mother, father, and child/children, such as general family

and personal history, behavioural, social and environmental factors. This checklist is appended.

## **Procedure**

The checklist based on the literature and current risk assessment tools was developed. Initially, the checklist was a list of variables identified by previous research examining factors related to the likelihood of family violence. Definitions for each of the identified items were developed to assist with data collection. A process of a reliability check was conducted to determine if the definitions consistently allowed for the identification of the presence of the relevant factors. The checklist was then applied by two investigators on two cases and a check of inter-rater reliability was made. Modifications were made to the checklist and the definitions to improve the quality of data collection. Data collection continued after full agreement was achieved.

De-identified case files were read and the checklist was used to identify the presence or absence of the identified factors. The published questionnaires were applied to the information provided in the case files. The ratings of the questionnaires were based on the extent and frequency the participant reported the item had occurred in the participants' interview material and affidavit reports. Factors such as 'happy home' and 'clean home' were again based on participants' assessment interview and affidavits and reports made by other family members or witnesses. Some cases did not have all the information outlined in the checklist to successfully complete subcategories in the checklist; these items were considered to be missing data. Cases were then allocated to substantiated, unsubstantiated or no family violence, after the

case had been reviewed with the checklist. This study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Tasmania on 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2010.

## **Results**

### **Group Allocation**

It was determined that of the 75 individual cases, there were 34 cases where family violence was considered to be proven (FV), 29 cases where family violence was alleged but unsubstantiated (uFV), and 12 cases where no family violence was alleged (nFV). The alleged perpetrator of the family violence was determined for those cases where family violence was alleged. This information is contained in Table 1. There were no significant deviations from expected frequencies,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=63) = 5.3,  $p>.05$ .

*Table 1. The percentage of alleged perpetrators in the two family violence groups.*

| Alleged perpetrator | uFV  | FV   |
|---------------------|------|------|
| Mother              | 10.3 | 5.9  |
| Father              | 86.2 | 70.6 |
| Both parents        | 3.4  | 23.5 |

### Application Information

Information was collected that identified the nature of the application to the Family Court or Federal Magistrates' Court. This information is contained in Table

2. There were no deviations from expected frequencies in relation to the applicant,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 6.7,  $p>.05$ .

There was a significant result with regard to the timing of the application,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 15.7,  $p<.004$ . The applications in the uFV group were more likely than expected to be made after an extended period of attempted co-parenting whereas the applications in the FV group were more likely to be lodged immediately after separation and were less likely than expected to be made after an extended period of co-parenting.

There was a significant result in relation to the history of the application,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 10.5,  $p<.05$ . Other applications were more likely than expected to have been made within a two year period for the nFV group. For the FV group, more of these applications than expected were the first applications for these cases.

*Table 2. The percentage of cases in each group in relation to the application information variables.*

| Variable               | Level                 | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|------------------------|-----------------------|------|------|------|
| Applicant              | Mother                | 33.3 | 13.8 | 11.8 |
|                        | Father                | 66.7 | 86.2 | 79.4 |
|                        | Other                 | 0.0  | 0.0  | 8.8  |
| Timing of application  | Immediately           | 0.0  | 10.3 | 29.4 |
|                        | Co-parenting attempt  | 75.0 | 34.5 | 52.9 |
|                        | Extended co-parenting | 25.0 | 55.2 | 17.6 |
| History of application | First application     | 33.3 | 69.0 | 82.4 |
|                        | Another within 2 yrs  | 58.3 | 24.1 | 14.7 |
|                        | Others over 2 yrs +   | 8.3  | 6.9  | 2.9  |

### Information Relating to the Child

The mean ages of the children who were the focus of these cases significantly differed between groups,  $F(2,72) = 4.8$ ,  $MSE = 61.5$ ,  $p < .05$ . For the nFV group the children had a mean age of 4.3 years ( $s = 2.0$ ), for the uFV group 8.1 years ( $s = 3.9$ ) and for the FV group 6.9 years ( $s = 3.6$ ). The children in the nFV group were significantly younger than in the two family violence groups.

The groups did not differ with regard to the sex distribution of the children,  $\chi^2$  ( $df=2$ ,  $N=75$ ) = 5.9,  $p=.052$ . When considering the groups, 75% of the children in the nFV group were female, 34.5% of the uFV group, and 52.9% of the FV group.

The current living arrangements of the children are presented in Table 3. No statistical calculation was possible because of the distribution of the cases. Also in Table 3 is the proposed change in living arrangements outlined in the application. Again, no statistical calculation was possible.

*Table 3. The percentage of cases in each group with regard to current living arrangement and proposed living arrangement.*

| Variable | Level                         | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|----------|-------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Current  | With mother, daytime father   | 33.3 | 34.5 | 32.4 |
|          | With mother, overnight father | 25.0 | 20.7 | 8.8  |
|          | With mother, no time father   | 25.0 | 27.6 | 23.5 |
|          | With father, daytime mother   | 16.7 | 0.0  | 5.9  |
|          | With father, overnight mother | 0.0  | 3.4  | 2.9  |
|          | With father, no time mother   | 0.0  | 6.9  | 14.7 |
|          | With other family member      | 0.0  | 0.0  | 11.8 |
|          | Equal shared care             | 0.0  | 6.9  | 0.0  |
| Proposed | With mother, daytime father   | 0.0  | 0.0  | 5.9  |
|          | With mother, overnight father | 16.7 | 13.8 | 5.9  |
|          | With mother, no time father   | 0.0  | 6.9  | 0.0  |
|          | With father, daytime mother   | 25.0 | 3.4  | 2.9  |
|          | With father, overnight mother | 16.7 | 10.3 | 8.8  |
|          | With father, no time mother   | 0.0  | 0.0  | 17.6 |
|          | Equal shared care             | 25.0 | 58.6 | 29.4 |
|          | Relocation                    | 16.7 | 6.9  | 17.6 |
|          | Other                         | 0.0  | 0.0  | 11.7 |

There were no significant results in relation to the distribution of children who had siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 4.3,  $p > .05$ . For the nFV group, 83.3% had siblings, with 100% of the uFV group and 91.2% of the FV group also having siblings. When consideration is given to those children with siblings, the mean number of full, half and step siblings for each group are presented in Table 4.

There were no significant group differences in relation to full siblings,  $F(2,66) = 2.1$ ,  $MSE = 3.8$ ,  $p > .05$ , paternal half siblings,  $F(2,72) = 2.1$ ,  $MSE = 1.7$ ,  $p > .05$ , and maternal step siblings,  $F(2,72) = 2.8$ ,  $MSE = 1.7$ ,  $p > .05$ . There were significant groups differences for the number of maternal half siblings,  $F(2,72) = 4.1$ ,  $MSE = 3.3$ ,  $p < .05$ , with the nFV group having more maternal half siblings than the other two groups, and paternal step siblings,  $F(2,72) = 3.9$ ,  $MSE = 3.0$ ,  $p < .05$ , with the uFV group having more paternal step siblings than the FV group.

Table 4. The mean number of full, half and step siblings and standard deviations for the cases in each group.

| Siblings           | nFV |     | uFV |     | FV  |     |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                    | M   | s   | M   | s   | M   | s   |
| Full siblings      | 0.7 | 0.5 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| Maternal half sibs | 1.2 | 1.4 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| Paternal half sibs | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 1.2 |
| Maternal step sibs | 0.7 | 1.0 | 0.3 | 1.0 | 0.1 | 2.0 |
| Paternal step sibs | 0.4 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 0.4 |

The nature of the relationships with siblings was considered. This information is presented in Table 5. When consideration is given to the living arrangements of the siblings, there were no significant deviations from expected frequencies for full siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=54) = 3.1,  $p>.05$ , paternal half siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=26) = 3.3,  $p>.05$ , and maternal step siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=8) = 2.7,  $p>.05$ . Significant results were evident for maternal half siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=28) = 10.4,  $p<.05$ , with more maternal half siblings than expected living with others for the nFV group; and paternal step siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=19) = 7.5,  $p<.05$ , with more paternal step siblings than expected living with the child and fewer than expected living with their other parent for the FV group.

When the child's position in the sibling group was examined, it was evident that there were no significant deviations from expected frequencies for full siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N= 55) = 1.5,  $p>.05$ , maternal half siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=28) = 6.3,  $p>.05$ , paternal half siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=26) = 2.0,  $p>.05$ , and maternal step siblings (no calculation possible). There was a significant deviation from expected for the paternal step siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=19) = 13.2,  $p<.05$ . In this case, more of the target children in these cases had paternal step siblings both older and younger than them.



When examining the relationship of the child with siblings, there were no significant deviations from expected only for the maternal step siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=8) = 2.7,  $p>.05$ , and the paternal step siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=19) = 3.6,  $p>.05$ . There was a significant result for full siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=55) = 17.2,  $p<.002$ , with more of the nFV than expected having no relationship with full siblings, maternal half siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=28) = 15.3,  $p<.004$ , with more of the nFV group than expected having no relationship with maternal half siblings and more than expected of the FV group having a close relationship, and paternal half siblings,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=26) = 18.5,  $p<.001$ , with more of the nFV group having a close relationship, more of the uFV group than expected having a distant relationship, and more of the FV group than expected having no relationship.

Table 5. The percentage of each group in relation to the nature of relationship with siblings variables.

| Variable           | Level            | Sib group     | nFV   | uFV   | FV    |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Living arrangement | With child       | Full          | 83.3  | 69.6  | 72.0  |
|                    | With othr parent |               | 16.7  | 30.4  | 20.0  |
|                    | With other       |               | 0.0   | 0.0   | 8.0   |
|                    | With child       | Maternal half | 50.0  | 85.7  | 53.3  |
|                    | With othr parent |               | 16.7  | 14.3  | 46.7  |
|                    | With other       |               | 33.3  | 0.0   | 0.0   |
|                    | With child       | Paternal half | 0.0   | 27.3  | 30.8  |
|                    | With othr parent |               | 100.0 | 72.7  | 53.8  |
|                    | With other       |               | 0.0   | 0.0   | 15.4  |
|                    | With child       | Maternal step | 50.0  | 0.0   | 0.0   |
|                    | With othr parent |               | 50.0  | 100.0 | 100.0 |
|                    | With other       |               | 0.0   | 0.0   | 0.0   |
|                    | With child       | Paternal step | 0.0   | 10.0  | 66.7  |
|                    | With othr parent |               | 100.0 | 90.0  | 33.3  |
|                    | With other       |               | 0.0   | 0.0   | 0.0   |

|              |               |               |       |       |       |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Position     | Child younger | Full          | 50.0  | 41.7  | 44.0  |
|              | Child older   |               | 50.0  | 41.7  | 36.0  |
|              | Child middle  |               | 0.0   | 16.7  | 20.0  |
|              | Child younger | Maternal half | 16.7  | 28.6  | 6.7   |
|              | Child older   |               | 50.0  | 71.4  | 86.7  |
|              | Child middle  |               | 33.3  | 0.0   | 6.7   |
|              | Child younger | Paternal half | 0.0   | 27.3  | 30.8  |
|              | Child older   |               | 100.0 | 72.7  | 61.5  |
|              | Child middle  |               | 0.0   | 0.0   | 7.7   |
|              | Child younger | Maternal step | 0.0   | 0.0   | 0.0   |
|              | Child older   |               | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
|              | Child middle  |               | 0.0   | 0.0   | 0.0   |
|              | Child younger | Paternal step | 0.0   | 40.0  | 16.7  |
|              | Child older   |               | 33.3  | 60.0  | 83.3  |
|              | Child middle  |               | 66.7  | 0.0   | 0.0   |
| Relationship | Close         | Full          | 66.7  | 91.7  | 92.0  |
|              | Distant       |               | 0.0   | 8.3   | 8.0   |
|              | None          |               | 33.3  | 0.0   | 0.0   |
|              | Close         | Maternal half | 50.0  | 85.7  | 100.0 |
|              | Distant       |               | 0.0   | 14.3  | 0.0   |
|              | None          |               | 50.0  | 0.0   | 0.0   |
|              | Close         | Paternal half | 100.0 | 36.4  | 7.7   |
|              | Distant       |               | 0.0   | 63.6  | 23.1  |
|              | None          |               | 0.0   | 0.0   | 69.2  |
|              | Close         | Maternal step | 50.0  | 100.0 | 100.0 |
|              | Distant       |               | 25.0  | 0.0   | 0.0   |
|              | None          |               | 25.0  | 0.0   | 0.0   |
|              | Close         | Paternal step | 33.3  | 30.0  | 66.7  |
|              | Distant       |               | 0.0   | 10.0  | 16.7  |
|              | None          |               | 66.7  | 60.0  | 16.7  |

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### Information About the Mothers

Examination was made of the age groups of the mothers in each of the groups. There were no significant deviations from expected in relation to the mothers' age group,  $\chi^2$  (df=6, N=75) = 11.5,  $p>.05$ . This information is presented in Table 6.

*Table 6. The percentage of each group in each mothers' age group category.*

| Age group   | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| <25 years   | 41.7 | 6.9  | 11.8 |
| 25-34 years | 33.3 | 27.6 | 41.2 |
| 35-44 years | 25.0 | 55.2 | 41.2 |
| 45+ years   | 0.0  | 10.3 | 5.9  |

Consideration was given to mothers' highest educational achievement. This information is presented in Table 7. No calculation of this data was possible.

*Table 7. The percentage of each group in each educational level category.*

| Education level               | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Incomplete high school        | 33.3 | 34.5 | 23.5 |
| Completed grade 10            | 33.3 | 17.2 | 26.5 |
| Commenced college             | 16.7 | 0.0  | 2.9  |
| Completed college             | 0.0  | 10.3 | 5.9  |
| Commenced university degree   | 0.0  | 6.9  | 11.8 |
| Completed university degree   | 8.3  | 31.0 | 5.9  |
| Commenced trade qualification | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  |
| Completed trade qualification | 8.3  | 0.0  | 20.6 |
| Other                         | 0.0  | 0.0  | 2.9  |

Examination was made of employment, socioeconomic status and financial status variables. The percentages of each group in each of these categories are presented in Table 8. There were no deviations from expected frequencies for

employment status,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 7.5,  $p>.05$ , employment history,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 8.2,  $p>.05$ , SES,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 6.9,  $p>.05$ , financial self-sufficiency,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 3.5,  $p>.05$ , and being an adequate provider,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 3.7,  $p>.05$ . When consideration was given to the consistency of child support, a significant result was obtained,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 19.3,  $p<.0001$ . In this case, child support was less consistent in the FV group.

Table 8. The percentage of each group in the categories relating to employment, SES and financial status.

| Variable                    | Level                   | nFV   | uFV  | FV   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------|------|------|
| Employment status           | Not employed            | 66.7  | 34.5 | 61.8 |
|                             | Currently employed      | 25.0  | 62.1 | 32.4 |
|                             | Employed in last year   | 8.3   | 3.4  | 5.9  |
| Employment history          | Consistent employment   | 16.7  | 41.4 | 17.6 |
|                             | Inconsistent employment | 50.0  | 51.7 | 64.7 |
|                             | Never employed          | 33.3  | 6.9  | 17.6 |
| SES                         | Low                     | 66.7  | 51.7 | 58.8 |
|                             | Middle                  | 33.3  | 34.5 | 41.2 |
|                             | High                    | 0.0   | 13.8 | 0.0  |
| Financially self-sufficient | Yes                     | 50.0  | 79.3 | 67.6 |
| Adequate Provider           | Yes                     | 50.0  | 79.3 | 73.5 |
| Consistent child support    | Yes                     | 100.0 | 96.6 | 55.9 |

Consideration was given to the mothers' relationship histories. This information is presented in Table 9. No significant results were obtained in relation to the experience of previous significant relationships,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 5.9,  $p=.052$ , previous marriage,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 2.6,  $p>.05$ , a previous abusive

relationship,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 5.2,  $p>.05$ , and a history of short, unstable relationships,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 3.4,  $p>.05$ . There was a significant result for the experience of more than three significant relationships,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 6.9,  $p<.05$ . Fewer of the uFV group than expected had three or more previous significant relationships.

Table 9. The percentage of each group in the categories relating to relationship history.

| Variable                              | Level | nFV   | uFV  | FV   |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|
| Previous significant relationship     | Yes   | 100.0 | 65.5 | 79.4 |
| More than 3 significant relationships | Yes   | 25.0  | 0.0  | 17.6 |
| Previously married                    | Yes   | 16.7  | 27.6 | 11.8 |
| Previous abusive relationship         | Yes   | 41.7  | 10.3 | 20.6 |
| Short, unstable relationships         | Yes   | 50.0  | 24.1 | 23.5 |

Examination was made of the nature of the family environment offered by the mother. This information is contained in Table 10. There were no significant deviations from expected frequencies for isolation from community,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 0.4,  $p>.05$ , physical home environment,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 4.2,  $p>.05$ , and home fit for habitation,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 1.7,  $p>.05$ .

There was a significant result for the cleanliness of the house,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 10.0,  $p<.007$ . More of the uFV group than expected had a clean house. A significant result was obtained for the atmosphere in the home,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 7.5,  $p<.05$ . In this case, more of the FV mothers than expected currently had a happy home environment. In relation to the parenting strategy used, fewer of the nFV

group than expected and more of the FV group than expected used an authoritative parenting style,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 11.1,  $p<.05$ . In terms of punishment style adopted by these mothers, fewer of the nFV group and more of the FV group than expected used an appropriate punishment style, and more of the nFV group than expected used physical punishment,  $\chi^2$  (df=8, N=75) = 23.9,  $p<.003$ .

Table 10. The percentage of each group in the categories relating to family environment.

| Variable                  | Level                       | nFV   | uFV  | FV   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|------|------|
| Community isolation       | Low                         | 100.0 | 96.9 | 97.1 |
|                           | Medium                      | 0.0   | 3.4  | 2.9  |
|                           | High                        | 0.0   | 0.0  | 0.0  |
| Physical home environment | Stable accommodation        | 83.3  | 93.1 | 73.5 |
|                           | Multiple moves              | 16.7  | 6.9  | 26.5 |
|                           | Staying with family/friends | 0.0   | 0.0  | 0.0  |
|                           | Other                       | 0.0   | 0.0  | 0.0  |
| Clean home                | Yes                         | 50.0  | 93.1 | 67.6 |
| Habitable                 | Yes                         | 100.0 | 93.1 | 88.2 |
| Atmosphere                | Happy                       | 8.3   | 24.1 | 47.1 |
|                           | Stressful                   | 91.7  | 75.9 | 52.9 |
| Parenting                 | Authoritative               | 8.3   | 44.8 | 61.8 |
|                           | Violent                     | 33.3  | 13.8 | 8.8  |
|                           | Few rules                   | 58.3  | 41.4 | 29.4 |
| Punishment                | Appropriate                 | 8.3   | 41.4 | 61.8 |
|                           | Authoritarian               | 0.0   | 3.4  | 0.0  |
|                           | Physical punishment         | 33.3  | 6.9  | 0.0  |
|                           | Punitive                    | 0.0   | 13.8 | 11.8 |
|                           | Failure to discipline       | 58.3  | 34.5 | 26.5 |

### Information About the Fathers

Examination was made of the age groups of the fathers in each of the groups. It was evident that more of the uFV group than expected and fewer of the nFV group than expected were aged 45 years or older,  $\chi^2$  (df=6, N=75) = 13.6,  $p < .05$ . This information is presented in Table 11.

*Table 11. The percentage of each group in each fathers' age group category.*

| Age group   | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| <25 years   | 8.3  | 6.9  | 5.9  |
| 25-34 years | 50.0 | 13.8 | 26.5 |
| 35-44 years | 41.7 | 34.5 | 50.0 |
| 45+ years   | 0.0  | 44.8 | 17.6 |

Consideration was given to fathers' highest educational achievement. This information is presented in Table 12. There were no significant deviations from expected frequencies,  $\chi^2$  (df=14, N=75) = 12.3,  $p > .05$ .

*Table 12. The percentage of each group in each educational level category.*

| Education level               | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Incomplete high school        | 16.7 | 10.3 | 11.8 |
| Completed grade 10            | 25.0 | 27.6 | 29.4 |
| Commenced college             | 0.0  | 0.0  | 2.9  |
| Completed college             | 8.3  | 10.3 | 2.9  |
| Commenced university degree   | 0.0  | 10.3 | 0.0  |
| Completed university degree   | 25.0 | 20.7 | 23.5 |
| Commenced trade qualification | 8.3  | 0.0  | 14.7 |
| Completed trade qualification | 16.7 | 20.7 | 14.7 |

Examination was made of employment, socioeconomic status and financial status variables. The percentages of each group in each of these categories are presented in Table 13. There were no deviations from expected frequencies for employment status,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 4.0,  $p>.05$ , and SES,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 5.6,  $p>.05$ . A significant result was obtained for employment history,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 13.5,  $p<.009$ , with the uFV group being more likely than expected to have been consistently employed in contrast to the FV group that was demonstrated to be less likely than expected to be consistently employed. When examination was made of financial self-sufficiency, it was apparent that the uFV group were more likely than expected and the FV group less likely than expected to be financially self-sufficient,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 15.5,  $p<.0004$ . Further, the uFV group were more likely to be adequate providers whereas the FV group were more likely than expected not to be adequate providers,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 19.0,  $p<.0001$ . When consideration was given to the consistency of child support, a significant result was obtained,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 6.6,  $p<.05$ . In this case, child support was less consistent in the FV group and more consistently paid than expected in the uFV group.



*Table 13. The percentage of each group in the categories relating to employment, SES and financial status.*

| Variable                    | Level                   | nFV   | uFV   | FV   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------|-------|------|
| Employment status           | Not employed            | 25.0  | 27.6  | 41.2 |
|                             | Currently employed      | 58.3  | 58.6  | 55.9 |
|                             | Employed in last year   | 16.7  | 13.8  | 2.9  |
| Employment history          | Consistent employment   | 75.0  | 86.2  | 44.1 |
|                             | Inconsistent employment | 25.0  | 13.8  | 50.0 |
|                             | Never employed          | 0.0   | 0.0   | 5.9  |
| SES                         | Low                     | 58.3  | 24.1  | 44.1 |
|                             | Middle                  | 41.7  | 65.5  | 50.0 |
|                             | High                    | 0.0   | 10.3  | 5.9  |
| Financially self-sufficient | Yes                     | 100.0 | 100.0 | 67.6 |
| Adequate Provider           | Yes                     | 100.0 | 100.0 | 61.8 |
| Consistent child support    | Yes                     | 66.7  | 89.7  | 61.8 |

Consideration was given to the fathers' relationship histories. This information is presented in Table 14. No significant results were obtained in relation to the experience of more than three previous significant relationships,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 5.3,  $p>.05$ , previous marriage,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 1.7,  $p>.05$ , and a history of short, unstable relationships,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 2.5,  $p>.05$ . There was a significant result for the experience of previous significant relationships,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 12.7,  $p<.002$ . More of the nFV group than expected did not have a previous significant relationship and more of the FV group than expected did have a history of such a relationship or relationships. There was a significant result for a previous abusive relationship,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 6.5,  $p<.05$ . In this case, more of

the FV group then expected had been involved in an abusive relationship in the past although the overall number was small.

*Table 14. The percentage of each group in the categories relating to relationship history.*

| Variable                              | Level | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|---------------------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Previous significant relationship     | Yes   | 58.3 | 89.7 | 97.1 |
| More than 3 significant relationships | Yes   | 8.3  | 0.0  | 0.0  |
| Previously married                    | Yes   | 16.7 | 34.5 | 23.5 |
| Previous abusive relationship         | Yes   | 0.0  | 0.0  | 14.7 |
| Short, unstable relationships         | Yes   | 0.0  | 0.0  | 5.9  |

Examination was made of the nature of the family environment offered by the father. This information is contained in Table 15. There was a significant result for isolation from the community,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 12.3,  $p < .05$ , with the uFV group being more likely than expected to have only low levels of isolation from the community whereas the FV group were more likely than expected to have a moderate level of isolation.

When consideration was given to the physical environment of the home, the uFV group were more likely than expected and the FV group less likely than expected to have stable accommodation,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 12.8,  $p < .05$ . The uFV group were more likely than expected to have a clean house whereas more of the FV group than expected did not have a clean house,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 12.3,  $p < .003$ . Further, more of the uFV group and fewer of the FV group than expected had a home fit for habitation,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 10.8,  $p < .005$ .

A significant result was obtained for the atmosphere in the home,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 31.9,  $p < .0001$ . In this case, more of the FV group than expected had a stressful home environment whereas more of the nFV and uFV groups than expected had a happy home,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 31.9,  $p < .0001$ . In relation to the parenting strategy used, more of the uFV group than expected used authoritative parenting strategies and fewer than expected used violent strategies. Also, more of the FV group than expected used violence methods and fewer than expected used authoritative strategies,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 20.0,  $p < .0005$ . Also, in terms of the punishment style adopted by these fathers, no calculation was possible, although the FV group showed more diversity of punishment strategy including the use of physical punishment and punitive punishment strategies.

*Table 15. The percentage of each group in the categories relating to family environment.*

| Variable                  | Level                       | nFV   | uFV   | FV   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|------|
| Community isolation       | Low                         | 100.0 | 100.0 | 73.5 |
|                           | Medium                      | 0.0   | 0.0   | 23.5 |
|                           | High                        | 0.0   | 0.0   | 2.9  |
| Physical home environment | Stable accommodation        | 100.0 | 96.6  | 67.6 |
|                           | Multiple moves              | 0.0   | 0.0   | 17.6 |
|                           | Staying with family/friends | 0.0   | 3.4   | 14.7 |
| Clean home                | Yes                         | 100.0 | 100.0 | 73.5 |
| Habitable                 | Yes                         | 100.0 | 100.0 | 76.5 |
| Atmosphere                | Happy                       | 91.7  | 89.7  | 26.5 |
|                           | Stressful                   | 8.3   | 10.3  | 73.5 |
| Parenting                 | Authoritative               | 100.0 | 93.1  | 52.9 |
|                           | Violent                     | 0.0   | 0.0   | 32.4 |
|                           | Few rules                   | 0.0   | 6.9   | 14.7 |
| Punishment                | Appropriate                 | 100.0 | 89.7  | 32.4 |
|                           | Authoritarian               | 0.0   | 0.0   | 0.0  |
|                           | Physical punishment         | 0.0   | 0.0   | 26.5 |
|                           | Punitive                    | 0.0   | 3.4   | 26.5 |
|                           | Failure to discipline       | 0.0   | 6.9   | 14.7 |

### Nature of Parental Relationship

Information about the relationship histories of the groups was considered.

These data are presented in Table 16. There was no significant result in relation to the relationship starting soon after meeting,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 0.6,  $p>.05$ . There were no deviations from expected for beginning to cohabit within 6 months of the start of the relationship,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 5.8,  $p=.054$ . There was a significant result in relation to having the first child within 12 months of the start of the

relationship,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 6.6,  $p<.05$ . In this case, the uFV group were less likely than expected to have had their first child early in the relationship.

Table 16. The percentage of each group in the categories relating to relationship history.

| Variable                     | Level | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|------------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Early onset after meeting    | Yes   | 75.0 | 79.3 | 70.6 |
| Cohabitation within 6 months | Yes   | 91.7 | 65.5 | 52.9 |
| First child within 12 months | Yes   | 66.7 | 31.0 | 58.8 |

Consideration was given to the stability of the relationship. This information is presented in Table 17. There were no deviations from expected frequencies in relation to the level of animosity during the relationship,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 3.1,  $p>.05$ , the level of animosity during the breakdown of the relationship,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=73) = 3.1,  $p>.05$ , or the level of animosity after the relationship,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=73) = 1.3,  $p>.05$ . There was a significant result for the stability of the relationship,  $\chi^2$  (df=4, N=75) = 29.4,  $p<.0001$ . More of the nFV group than expected had short term relationships and fewer than expected had stable, long term relationships. More of the uFV group than expected had stable, long term relationships and fewer than expected had unstable, long term relationships. More of the FV group than expected had unstable, long term relationships.

*Table 17. The percentage of each group in the categories relating to relationship stability.*

| Variable                   | Level               | nFV   | uFV   | FV    |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Relationship stability     | Long term, stable   | 16.7  | 79.3  | 41.2  |
|                            | Long term, unstable | 58.3  | 20.7  | 58.8  |
|                            | Short term          | 25.0  | 0.0   | 0.0   |
| Animosity during           | Low                 | 58.3  | 48.3  | 32.4  |
|                            | High                | 41.7  | 51.7  | 67.6  |
| Animosity at separation    | Low                 | 0.0   | 6.9   | 0.0   |
|                            | High                | 100.0 | 93.1  | 100.0 |
| Animosity after separation | Low                 | 0.0   | 0.0   | 3.1   |
|                            | High                | 100.0 | 100.0 | 96.9  |

Consideration was given to the nature of the alleged family violence and its consequences in the two family violence groups. This information is presented in Table 18. The alleged experience of physical violence,  $\chi^2$  (df=1, N=63) = 0.1,  $p>.05$ , or sexual abuse,  $\chi^2$  (df=1, N=63) = 0.1,  $p>.05$ , did not distinguish the groups. The groups were distinguished on the basis of the experience of emotional abuse,  $\chi^2$  (df=1, N=63) = 8.4,  $p<.004$ .

The groups also were distinguished on the basis of the physical consequences of the alleged violence. Fewer of the uFV group and more of the FV group than statistically expected reported having sustained physical injury as a result of family violence,  $\chi^2$  (df=1, N=63) = 5.4,  $p<.05$ . The same pattern is evident for having sought medical attention as a result of physical violence. That is, fewer of the uFV group than expected and more of the FV group than expected reported having sought medical attention,  $\chi^2$  (df=1, N=63) = 5.2,  $p<.05$ .

Although no statistic could be calculated in relation to the legal consequences of family violence, it is evident that for the majority of cases in the uFV group there were no legal consequences. Both groups reported FVOs although the magnitude of the proportion of the FV group was greater. Also, it would appear that the proportion of the FV group who received a prison sentence was greater for the FV group.

Consideration was given to the response of the alleged perpetrator. There were no significant results,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=63) = 5.7, p=.059. The majority of both groups denied family violence.

Table 18. The percentage of the two family violence groups in the categories relating to family violence.

| Variable                | Category          | Level                 | uFV  | FV   |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------|------|
| Type of abuse           | Physical          | Yes                   | 89.7 | 88.2 |
|                         | Emotional         | Yes                   | 51.7 | 85.3 |
|                         | Sexual            | Yes                   | 17.2 | 20.6 |
| Physical consequences   | Physical injury   | Yes                   | 10.3 | 35.3 |
|                         | Medical attention | Yes                   | 3.4  | 23.5 |
| Legal consequences      |                   | None                  | 65.5 | 9.1  |
|                         |                   | Police intervention   | 0.0  | 0.0  |
|                         |                   | Family violence order | 27.6 | 54.5 |
|                         |                   | Remanded in custody   | 0.0  | 9.1  |
|                         |                   | Court attendance      | 0.0  | 0.0  |
|                         |                   | Conviction            | 0.0  | 3.0  |
|                         |                   | Prison sentence       | 6.9  | 24.2 |
| Response of perpetrator |                   | Agreement in full     | 0.0  | 17.6 |
|                         |                   | Agreement in part     | 17.2 | 14.7 |
|                         |                   | Denial                | 82.8 | 67.6 |

Consideration was given to whether the parties had formed other relationships since separation. These results are presented in Table 19. There were no significant

deviations from expected frequencies in relation to the mothers,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 1.9,  $p>.05$ , or the fathers,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 1.6,  $p>.05$ .

*Table 19. The percentage of each group who had re-partnered since separation.*

| Variable            | Level | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|---------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Mother re-partnered | Yes   | 58.3 | 51.7 | 38.2 |
| Father re-partnered | Yes   | 50.0 | 44.8 | 32.4 |

Finally, examination was made of whether a previous involvement in Family Court custody disputes. This information is presented in Table 20. There was no significant result in relation to father's past involvement,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 5.3,  $p>.05$ . In relation to mother's past involvement, more of the nFV group than expected and fewer of the uFV group than expected had been involved in a past child custody dispute,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 11.2,  $p<.004$ .

*Table 20. The percentage of each group relating to involvement in previous child custody disputes.*

| Variable             | Level | nFV  | uFV | FV   |
|----------------------|-------|------|-----|------|
| Mother's involvement | Yes   | 33.3 | 0.0 | 8.8  |
| Father's involvement | Yes   | 16.7 | 6.9 | 29.4 |

### **Child's History of Violence and Abuse**

The frequency of cases of abuse and the nature of that abuse were examined. This information is presented in Table 21. There were no deviations from expected



frequencies for the proportion of alleged victims of child abuse,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 1.5,  $p>.05$ , whether a notification had been made to Child Protection Services,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 1.1,  $p>.05$ , the experience of physical abuse,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=59) = 1.6,  $p>.05$ , the experience of sexual abuse,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, 66) = 6.0,  $p=.0507$ , the experience of emotional abuse,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, 66) = 4.5,  $p>.05$ , and the experience of neglect,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=66) = 1.0,  $p>.05$ .

Table 21. The percentage of each group relating to the child abuse categories.

| Variable                      | Level | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Alleged victim                | Yes   | 75.0 | 89.7 | 85.3 |
| Child protection notification | Yes   | 60.0 | 58.6 | 70.6 |
| Physical abuse                | Yes   | 44.4 | 50.0 | 64.3 |
| Sexual abuse                  | Yes   | 55.6 | 15.4 | 22.6 |
| Emotional abuse               | Yes   | 33.3 | 46.2 | 67.7 |
| Neglect                       | Yes   | 44.4 | 57.7 | 45.2 |

Consideration was given to the substantiation of the child abuse. This information is presented in Table 22. There were no deviations from expected frequencies for medical examination,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=63) = 1.3,  $p>.05$ , statement by the child  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=63) = 3.8,  $p>.05$ , Tasmania police,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=63) = 2.9,  $p>.05$ , and court finding,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=63) = 0.3,  $p>.05$ . There was a significant result for substantiation by Child Protection Services,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=63) = 16.7,  $p<.0002$ . Fewer of the uFV group than expected and more of the FV group than expected had abuse substantiated by Child Protection.

Table 22. The percentage of each group relating to the substantiation of child abuse.

| Variable                         | Level | nFV  | uFV | FV   |
|----------------------------------|-------|------|-----|------|
| Child protection services        | Yes   | 33.3 | 7.7 | 60.7 |
| Medical examination of the child | Yes   | 0.0  | 0.0 | 3.6  |
| Statement by the child           | Yes   | 0.0  | 7.7 | 21.4 |
| Tasmania police                  | Yes   | 0.0  | 3.8 | 14.3 |
| Court finding                    | Yes   | 0.0  | 3.8 | 3.6  |

Child’s Adjustment

Information was obtained about the psychological adjustment of the children. This information is contained in Table 23. There were no significant deviations from expected frequencies for psychological disturbance,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 4.3,  $p>.05$ , sleep disturbance,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 3.1,  $p>.05$ , or behaviours problems,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 1.9,  $p>.05$ .

Table 23. The percentage of each group relating to the child adjustment categories.

| Variable                  | Level | nFV | uFV  | FV   |
|---------------------------|-------|-----|------|------|
| Psychological disturbance | Yes   | 8.3 | 24.1 | 38.2 |
| Sleep disturbance         | Yes   | 8.3 | 20.7 | 32.4 |
| Behaviour problems        | Yes   | 8.3 | 27.6 | 26.5 |

**Mother’s History of Violence and Abuse**

Information was identified about the mothers’ history of violence and abuse. This information is presented in Table 24. There were no deviations from expected frequencies for previous threats of violence made,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 0.4,  $p>.05$ , and violence committed,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 3.5,  $p>.05$ . There was a significant result for childhood abuse,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 11.6,  $p<.003$ . More of the nFV group than expected reported a history of childhood abuse. In addition, fewer of the nFV group and more of the FV group than expected had received threats of violence in the past,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 14.5,  $p<.0007$ .

*Table 24. The percentage of each group relating to mother’s history of violence and abuse.*

| Variable                  | Level | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|---------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Childhood violence/abuse  | Yes   | 75.0 | 34.5 | 20.6 |
| Previous threats received | Yes   | 0.0  | 24.1 | 55.9 |
| Previous threats made     | Yes   | 0.0  | 3.4  | 2.9  |
| Committed act of violence | Yes   | 66.7 | 55.2 | 38.2 |

**Mother’s Psychological Functioning**

A range of information was obtained about mothers’ psychological functioning. This information is presented in Table 25. There were no significant deviations from expected frequencies for current substance abuse,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 0.5,  $p>.05$ , past substance abuse,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 6.0,  $p=.0505$ , trauma history,  $\chi^2$

(df=2, N=75) = 4.7,  $p>.05$ ; and other psychological problems,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 4.6,  $p>.05$ . There were significant results for psychological maladjustment,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 11.8,  $p<.003$ , with fewer of the nFV group and more of the FV group reporting psychological maladjustment. Further, fewer of the mothers in the FV group reported a criminal history,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 6.9,  $p<.05$ .

Table 25. The percentage of each group relating to mother's psychological functioning.

| Variable                         | Level | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|----------------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Current substance abuse          | Yes   | 16.7 | 24.1 | 17.6 |
| Past substance abuse             | Yes   | 75.0 | 37.9 | 61.8 |
| Psychological maladjustment      | Yes   | 16.7 | 55.2 | 73.5 |
| Trauma history (ex. Child abuse) | Yes   | 16.7 | 44.8 | 52.9 |
| Other psychological problems     | Yes   | 41.7 | 44.8 | 20.6 |
| Criminal history                 | Yes   | 33.3 | 27.6 | 5.9  |

The means and standard deviations from the range of psychological tests and instruments are presented in Table 26. There were no significant group differences for SARA scores,  $F(2,71) = 1.4$ ,  $MSE = 40.3$ ,  $p>.05$  or the HCR-20,  $F(2,71) = 1.3$ ,  $MSE = 49.2$ ,  $p>.05$ . There were significant group differences for the PMWI dominance/isolation scale,  $F(2,71) = 11.5$ ,  $MSE = 3165.5$ ,  $p<.0001$ , the PMWI emotional/verbal scale,  $F(2,71) = 39.3$ ,  $MSE = 3172.6$ ,  $p<.0001$ , the PMWI total score,  $F(2,71) = 28.1$ ,  $MSE = 24374.1$ ,  $p<.0001$ , the ABI psychological abuse scale,  $F(2,71) = 16.1$ ,  $MSE = 1440.7$ ,  $p<.0001$ , the ABI physical abuse scale,  $F(2,71) = 10.5$ ,  $MSE = 816.4$ ,  $p<.0001$ , and the PCL-R,  $F(2,71) = 18.9$ ,  $MSE = 579.6$ ,  $p<.0001$ . In each case except for the PCL-R, the FV group scored higher than the nFV and

uFV groups. In the case of the PCL-R, the FV group obtained a lower score than did the other two groups.

*Table 26. The mean scores and standard deviations for the mothers in each group for each of the psychological tests/instruments.*

| Test  | Subscale            | nFV  |     | uFV  |      | FV    |      |
|-------|---------------------|------|-----|------|------|-------|------|
|       |                     | M    | S   | M    | S    | M     | S    |
| PMWI  | Dominance/isolation | 29.9 | 4.4 | 29.7 | 4.5  | 48.4  | 24.2 |
|       | Emotional/verbal    | 21.7 | 2.7 | 24.4 | 4.1  | 43.7  | 13.9 |
|       | Total               | 66.9 | 8.5 | 70.0 | 10.1 | 120.7 | 42.5 |
| ABI   | Psychological abuse | 19.3 | 3.2 | 20.9 | 2.7  | 33.0  | 13.7 |
|       | Physical abuse      | 13.9 | 1.7 | 17.7 | 4.1  | 25.7  | 12.5 |
| SARA  |                     | 7.0  | 5.0 | 4.6  | 3.5  | 6.5   | 6.6  |
| PCL-R |                     | 13.9 | 4.6 | 10.9 | 4.6  | 4.5   | 5.9  |
| HCR20 |                     | 12.6 | 4.3 | 9.9  | 4.2  | 9.3   | 3.2  |

### **Father's History of Violence and Abuse**

Information was identified about the fathers' history of violence and abuse.

This information is presented in Table 27. There was a significant result for childhood abuse,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 10.1,  $p < .007$ . More of the fathers in the FV group than expected reported a history of childhood abuse. More of the nFV group than expected and fewer of the FV group than expected reported having received threats of violence in the past,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 11.2,  $p < .004$ . More of the FV group had made threats of violence in the past whereas more of the nFV and uFV groups had not done so,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 15.7,  $p < .0004$ . More of the FV group

and fewer of the nFV group than expected had committed an act of violence in the past,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 27.2,  $p<.0001$ .

Table 27. The percentage of each group relating to father’s history of violence and abuse.

| Variable                  | Level | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|---------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Childhood violence/abuse  | Yes   | 0.0  | 6.9  | 32.4 |
| Previous threats received | Yes   | 41.7 | 27.6 | 2.9  |
| Previous threats made     | Yes   | 0.0  | 13.8 | 50.0 |
| Committed act of violence | Yes   | 16.7 | 72.4 | 94.1 |

Father’s Psychological Functioning

A range of information was obtained about fathers’ psychological functioning. This information is presented in Table 28. There were no significant deviations from expected frequencies for trauma history,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 5.7,  $p=.056$ , and criminal history,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 2.9,  $p>.05$ . There was a significant result for current substance abuse,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 10.9,  $p<.005$ , with more of the FV group than expected reporting current substance use problems. Further, fewer of the fathers in the nFV group than expected reported a substance abuse history,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 10.4,  $p<.006$ . When consideration was given to psychological maladjustment, more of the fathers in the FV group than expected experienced problems of psychological maladjustment,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75) = 15.1,  $p<.0005$ . Further, more of the fathers in the FV group than expected experienced other psychological problems,  $\chi^2$  (df=2, N=75)

= 15.4,  $p < .0005$ . Table 28. The percentage of each group relating to father's psychological functioning.

| Variable                         | Level | nFV  | uFV  | FV   |
|----------------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Current substance abuse          | Yes   | 0.0  | 13.8 | 41.2 |
| Past substance abuse             | Yes   | 16.7 | 65.5 | 67.6 |
| Psychological maladjustment      | Yes   | 25.0 | 10.3 | 55.9 |
| Trauma history (ex. Child abuse) | Yes   | 0.0  | 10.3 | 26.5 |
| Other psychological problems     | Yes   | 33.3 | 13.8 | 61.8 |
| Criminal history                 | Yes   | 25.0 | 41.4 | 52.9 |

The means and standard deviations from the range of psychological tests and instruments are presented in Table 29. There were no significant group differences for the PMWI dominance/isolation subscale,  $F(2,71) = 1.8$ ,  $MSE = 18.9$ ,  $p > .05$ , the PMWI emotional/verbal subscale,  $F(2,71) = 0.4$ ,  $MSE = 12.8$ ,  $p > .05$ , the PMWI total score,  $F(2,71) = 0.8$ ,  $MSE = 61.6$ ,  $p > .05$ , and the ABI psychological subscale,  $F(2,71) = 0.4$ ,  $MSE = 3.2$ ,  $p > .05$ . There was a significant result for the ABI physical subscale,  $F(2,71) = 4.8$ ,  $MSE = 92.7$ ,  $p < .05$ , with the nFV group obtaining a lower score than the uFV and FV groups. Also, there were significant results for the SARA,  $F(2,72) = 45.2$ ,  $MSE = 952.1$ ,  $p < .0001$ , the PCL-R,  $F(2,72) = 30.8$ ,  $MSE = 1076.1$ ,  $p < .0001$ , and the HCR-20,  $F(2,72) = 37.9$ ,  $MSE = 1002.0$ ,  $p < .0001$ . In each case, the FV group obtained a higher score than did the nFV and uFV groups.

*Table 29. The mean scores and standard deviations for the fathers in each group for each of the psychological tests/instruments.*

| Test  | Subscale            | nFV  |     | uFV  |     | FV   |     |
|-------|---------------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
|       |                     | M    | S   | M    | S   | M    | S   |
| PMWI  | Dominance/isolation | 28.5 | 3.1 | 28.2 | 3.3 | 26.8 | 3.3 |
|       | Emotional/verbal    | 24.5 | 5.5 | 24.7 | 4.6 | 25.8 | 6.2 |
|       | Total               | 66.5 | 9.7 | 70.2 | 7.6 | 69.6 | 9.9 |
| ABI   | Psychological abuse | 20.0 | 4.0 | 19.8 | 2.7 | 19.3 | 2.4 |
|       | Physical abuse      | 13.0 | 6.0 | 16.6 | 4.7 | 17.6 | 4.9 |
| SARA  |                     | 1.8  | 1.5 | 3.9  | 2.2 | 13.3 | 6.4 |
| PCL-R |                     | 0.8  | 1.5 | 1.0  | 1.2 | 11.7 | 8.6 |
| HCR20 |                     | 2.4  | 2.3 | 5.0  | 3.3 | 14.5 | 6.8 |

### Summary of Results

A number of distinguishing characteristics stood out among the data, one of which was the timing of the application. The uFV group was more likely to make an application after an extended period of co-parenting whereas the FV group was more likely to make an application immediately after separation.

When examining the mothers' characteristics, the family environment showed significant group differences. For instance, the FV group was more likely to have a happy home environment. In addition, fewer mothers in the nFV group and more mothers in the FV group used an authoritative parenting style. In terms of discipline, more of the FV group used an appropriate punishment style and more of the nFV group used physical punishment.



Information relating to the fathers' indicated the most group differences. Demographically, the fathers in the nFV group were younger than the fathers in the uFV group. Overall the uFV group appeared to function better than the FV group. The uFV group fathers were more likely to be employed, financially self sufficient, adequate providers and were more consistent with child support payments compared to their FV group counterparts. The uFV group fathers were also less isolated and more likely to have stable accommodation, a clean house, have a home fit for habitation, used more authoritative parenting strategies and fewer violent discipline methods. Also, the nFV and uFV groups were more likely to have a happy home environment compared to the FV group who were more likely to have a stressful home environment.

The parental relationship factors showed that more of the nFV group had short term relationships and fewer had stable, long term relationships. More of the uFV group had stable, long term relationships and more of the FV group had unstable, long term relationships.

In relation to the nature of the alleged family violence, no group differences were found between the two family violence groups except for the experience of emotional abuse. More of the FV group alleged emotional abuse and fewer of the uFV group alleged emotional abuse. Another distinguishing factor was the physical consequence of the alleged physical injury. Fewer of the uFV group and more of the FV group reported having sustained physical injury as a result of family violence. The same pattern is seen for seeking medical attention as a result of physical violence.

Another distinguishing factor was the child's history of violence and abuse, fewer of the uFV group and more of the FV group had abuse substantiated by Child

Protection. In relation to mothers' history of violence and abuse, more of the nFV group reported a history of childhood abuse and fewer of the nFV group and more of the FV group had received threats of violence in the past.

Mothers' psychological functioning showed that fewer of the nFV group and more of the FV group reported psychological maladjustment. In relation to psychological test results, there were significant group differences on all the tests except for the SARA and HCR-20 in that for each test more of the FV group scored higher than the nFV and uFV group. Also, the FV group obtained lower scores on the PCL-R than the nFV and uFV groups.

Fathers' history of violence and abuse showed that more of the FV group reported current substance use problems and fewer of the nFV group reported a substance use history. More of the FV group experienced psychological maladjustment and more of this group experienced psychological problems. Of the psychological tests used, there were group differences. The nFV group obtained a lower score than the uFV and FV groups on the ABI physical subscale. There were also group differences on the SARA, PCL-R, and the HCR-20. The FV group obtained higher scores for each test compared to the nFV and uFV groups.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of the study was to determine the factors that distinguished substantiated and unsubstantiated family violence allegations in child custody disputes before the Family Court of Australia. To this end, the pattern of variables that distinguished cases of substantiated family violence, unsubstantiated family violence and no family violence were examined. It was expected that the

unsubstantiated family violence cases would be more similar to the no family violence cases on the basis of their defining characteristics. The results indicated that the uFV group could be distinguished from both the nFV and FV groups. Before considering the overall pattern of distinguishing features between the family violence groups, the individual significant results will be discussed.

### **Group Allocation**

It was interesting that the proportion of alleged family violence cases in this study was high. This is consistent with the literature that indicates that high conflict families involved in child custody disputes have an increased rate of family violence allegations (Bow & Boxer, 2003). It is certainly the case that family violence allegations can make the resolution of cases problematic. The fact that earlier resolution of these cases could not be achieved resulted in the appointment of a Single Expert by the Family Court or the Federal Magistrates' Court.

When examining the two family violence groups, it was evident that the majority of alleged perpetrators were fathers. This did not distinguish the groups. It has been well established that men generally are more likely to be perpetrators of family violence than women (Ellis & Stuckless, 2006; Johnston et al., 2005; Mitchell, 2011) and the current results are consistent with this view. The emerging picture, then, is of mothers alleging family violence by fathers.

### **Applicant Information**

Interestingly, the majority of the applicants in all groups were the fathers. It would appear from examination of the current living arrangements of the children

that the children involved in these cases largely were residing with their mothers. The application to the courts for variation of this arrangement would be likely to have been driven by dissatisfaction on the part of the fathers with the amount of time they were being allowed to spend with their children. It could be argued that, in genuine cases of family violence, the mothers had acted protectively in limiting the time the children spent with their fathers. However, it also must be recognised that mothers tend to adopt the view that they are the person who should determine the children's custody arrangements. Indeed, this stance is consistent with the notion of mothers adopting the role of 'gate keepers' in relation to their children. It is evident that this occurs both pre- and post-separation (Austin, 2012).

It is worthy of note that the timing of application to the courts by the FV group was generally immediately after the separation. It is likely that the presence of a history of family violence would have resulted in mothers opting to protect their children by limiting the time the child spent with the father, demanding supervision of that time, or refusing to facilitate time spent between the father and child. It is interesting that rather than making an application to the courts to protect the children (Austin, 2000), mothers were acting on their own decisions about what is in the best interests of their children. This seems to have left the fathers with the need to apply to the Family Court to seek permission to spend time with their children. This application is made despite a substantiated history of family violence which would be considered in any decision making process by the Court. However, it should be recognised that there is an overall tendency among family violence offenders to deny or downplay the seriousness of offending behaviour (Dutton, 2006).

In contrast to the FV group, the timing of the applications made by the fathers in the uFV group was more likely than expected after an extended period of

co-parenting. If the applications were made by the mothers, it might be argued that the late application was triggered by ongoing violence between parties taking place post-separation. Certainly, violence after separation has been reported (Kaspiew et al., 2009). However, it is the fathers who predominantly make the applications and the cases of family violence could not be substantiated. It must be considered, then, that the late application reflects an attempt by the applicants to resolve ongoing problems with the nature of the co-parenting relationship outside of any allegation of violence. Indeed, a proposition could be made that the unsubstantiated allegations of family violence may be made in an attempt by the respondent mothers to have the challenge to their custody arrangements resolve in their favour.

The immediate application to the court made by the FV group post-separation may reflect recognition that it may require court intervention to establish a routine of time spent with the children for the applicants because of the history of family violence. If the respondent parent is acting protectively and restricting time spent with the violent parent, the FV applicant may see little option but to seek an order from the court. However, it is also worth considering that the application to the Court is an attempt by the violent applicant to re-establish control over the respondent parent who was the victim of the family violence. Mastery or dominance over a partner victim of family violence is a recognised concept (e.g., Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Malik & Lindahl, 1998; Rouse, 1990). Termination of a relationship can signal a change in the power balance between two individuals. A desire to re-establish the former dominant-submissive relationship would not be unexpected.

The fact that the FV group immediately lodged an application with the court in relation to child custody is consistent with this application being the first. In

contrast, the nFV group were more likely to make other applications within two years of the initial application. It would appear that the members of this group have turned to the Family Court to resolve parenting disputes. With a failure to resolve differences and experiencing dissatisfaction with orders made by the court, subsequent applications are made.

### **Information Relating to the Child**

It is interesting that the children in the nFV group are younger than the children in the other two groups, especially the children in the uFV group. The age of the children involved may influence the strategy chosen to support the applicants' and respondents' desired outcomes of child custody litigation. For example, it may be the case that children of the mothers in the nFV group are considered by the respondent mothers to be too young to be separated from them. Misuse or misinterpretation of attachment theory and a historical tendency to believe young children cannot be separated from their primary carer mothers (Lee, Borelli, & West, 2011; Main, Hesse, & Hesse, 2011) means that an alternative strategy, such as claiming family violence when it did not occur, becomes an unnecessary strategy.

Of course, there has been a move towards greater recognition of the role of fathers in the lives of young children (Kelly & Lamb, 2000). However, there were very few cases where the current living arrangement was shared care/equal shared care. Interestingly, it was the uFV group that had the greatest proportion of applicants seeking shared care as an outcome of the litigation. It may be that when the mother's previously held position of custodial parent is threatened, false allegations of family violence are used as a strategy to ensure continuity of the

current care arrangement. This has been recognised as a strategy used in child custody disputes (Austin, 2012).

It is worthy of note that, in Australia, equal shared care is considered to be contraindicated in cases of high conflict between parents. Although based on insufficient evidence to support the notion and despite international data supporting the value of shared care parenting for the children involved (e.g., Berger, Brown, Joung, Melli, & Wimer, 2008), it continues to be the case that equal shared care is not considered in such cases.

This stance has a potentially interesting effect that might explain results from the current study. In particular, it was indicated that the nFV group of mothers were more often women who had children in serial relationships, at least in relation to the proportion of cases in the other two groups. With these children in the mothers' care or old enough to live separately from their parents, it may be the case that there is an expectation that it will again be recognised that the children involved in these cases should remain in the primary care of the mothers, as has previously occurred with maternal half siblings.

The presence of paternal step-siblings in the lives of the children involved in the current cases indicates that the fathers have formed new relationships with women with children. Children from past relationships were not recorded as step-siblings because those children were not involved in an ongoing relationship between their parents. It is interesting then, that allegations of family violence are being made in conjunction with indication of functional or seemingly functional family environments for the uFV fathers. It was evident that the fathers in the FV group were not involved in current relationships that introduced new children into the home environment, at least not at the same rate as for the uFV group. It is

apparent that these paternal step-siblings are living with the target children in these cases. That is, these children reside with their mothers who are now in a relationship with the fathers in the uFV group.

It is interesting to note that the claims of family violence in the uFV group have come after the development of the new relationships with the father and at a time when a new family unit has been established. The claims also have been made after an extended period of attempted co-parenting. It may be worth considering that it is the establishment of this family unit that has resulted in dissatisfaction with the current arrangement and either the withholding of the children by the respondent mothers, or a greater desire to involve his own children in his new family by the applicant fathers. Certainly, the establishment of another relationship can act as a trigger for parental alienation of the re-partnered parent (Warshak, 2000).

When consideration was given to paternal half-siblings, the nature of the relationship with the targeted child differed as a function of group. It is interesting to note that the closeness of the relationship between the paternal half-siblings and the targeted children deteriorated with increased indication of family violence. For instance, the closest relationships with paternal half-siblings were experienced by the children in the nFV group. More cases than expected in the uFV group had a distant relationship and more cases than expected in the FV group had no relationship with paternal half-siblings.

For the FV group, this result is not surprising. In the case of children from previous relationships, it may be apparent that protective mothers are keeping their children from spending time with their violent fathers. The result of this would be that there would be little opportunity for the targeted children to meet, know and spend time with paternal half-siblings.



The reason for the greater than expected proportion of the uFV group having distant relationships between the targeted child and paternal half-siblings is less clearly evident. Undoubtedly, there have been ongoing difficulties with parental relationships post-separation. Ongoing attempts to co-parent have not resulted in a resolution of the problems for these people. The relationship distance between paternal half-siblings may be a reflection of events that have occurred post-separation. With mothers being reluctant to allow the targeted children to spend time with their fathers, the opportunities for ongoing relationships between siblings would be limited, even if a close relationship existed prior to separation.

### **Information About the Mothers**

It may be the case that characteristics of the mother influence allegations of family violence being made. An examination of these characteristics was made.

Although the majority of the mothers in the nFV and FV groups were not employed, the majority of the uFV group mothers were employed. The young age of the children in the nFV group may make it more likely that the mothers would not be employed. It is worthy of note that women who experience family violence have a greater likelihood of being unemployed (Lindhorst, Oxford, & Gillmore, 2007). Also, increased maternal employment has been related to decreased reports of family violence (Gibson-Davis, Magnuson, Gennetian, & Duncan, 2005). Therefore, the uFV group of mothers' employment trend seems to be contrary to expected if family violence had occurred whereas the employment problems experienced by the FV group are in keeping with the current literature.

Child support payments were less likely to be received by the FV group of mothers. It would appear that if family violence is associated with particular

negative attitudes, then that would extend to a commitment to pay child support as a parental responsibility. It has been reported that in cases involved in mediation as part of the process of child custody litigation, family violence offenders were more likely than non-offenders to have defaulted on child support payments (Tishler, Bartholomae, Katz, & Landry-Meyer, 2004).

It was evident that the uFV group of mothers had more stable relationships with limited movement from relationship to relationship. It has been reported that women in previously violent relationships are at an increased risk of developing a cycle of leaving and entering violent relationships (Hage, 2006). However, it is worthy of note that although the uFV group demonstrated greater relationship stability, a strong pattern of relationship brevity was not evident for the FV group. Nevertheless, long term relationships were unstable for the FV group.

There is some indication that the functioning in the home of the uFV mothers is adequate. For example, this group of mothers had a greater than expected tendency to have a clean home. However, it is worthy of note that the home environments of the mothers in the FV group were happy. It may be the case that these mothers commit themselves to providing a happy home post-separation because of the negative, family violence-related events that occurred in their homes prior to separation. For the other groups, the residual problems associated with the breakdown of a relationship and the animosity it generates has affected the home environment and caused it to be a more stressful environment.

Similarly, in relation to parenting style, the mothers in the nFV group were less likely and the mothers in the FV group more likely to use authoritative parenting styles post-separation. With an authoritative parenting being a desirable parenting style (Monaghan, Horn, Alvarez, Cogen, & Streisand, 2012; Suldo, & Huebner,

2004), the mothers in the FV group may be attempting to provide stability and consistency for their children to balance their earlier experience associated with being in a violent home. The mothers in the nFV group may be experiencing issues, other than violence, related to the breakdown of the marital relationship that would make it difficult for them to cope well. Deficiencies in coping have been related to greater difficulties in adopting appropriate parenting strategies (Compas et al., 2010).

Similarly, in relation to punishment style, fewer nFV group mothers and more FV group mothers used an appropriate parenting style. Again, this may be related to the FV group mothers attempting to offer their children stability and security to make up for the instability when the children were exposed to family violence. It was interesting that the nFV group was the one with a greater proportion of mothers than expected using physical punishment strategies to manage their children's behaviour. Any inhibition in relation to the use of physical punishment or sensitisation may be absent for this group because of an absence of a history of family violence in the children's homes.

### **Information About the Fathers**

The majority of the fathers in the uFV group and more than statistically expected were aged 45 years of older. This is likely to be a reflection of the fact that the relationships for this group were longer term before the relationship broke down.

There was a pattern of results for the FV group that indicated the fathers were functioning to an inadequate degree in particular life domains. For example, they had a poorer work history, were less likely than expected to be financially self-sufficient, were less likely to be adequate providers and were less consistent in relation to child support payments. A relationship between family violence and

unemployment has been established in the literature (Lindhorst et al., 2007). Other problems may flow on from the employment difficulties experienced by this group.

Interestingly, the opposite was the case for the uFV group. As a group, these fathers were more likely than expected to have met their responsibilities in relation to providing for their children through a pattern of consistent employment and financial stability.

When relationship history was considered, there was indication that there was a greater proportion of the nFV group than expected who had not experienced a previous significant relationship whereas the FV group were more likely to have had significant relationships in the past. This is likely to be a reflection of the younger age of the nFV group offering less opportunity for more than one significant relationship to have been experienced. The pattern of multiple relationships for a family violence offender is not surprising, particularly as there was an increased likelihood of a past abusive relationship for these fathers. However, it is acknowledged that the actual number of fathers in the FV group acknowledging a past abusive relationship is small. Of course, a willingness to disclose such information may have been negatively influenced by the demands of the situation in which the current interview took place. Reference to collateral information may offer an indication of an even greater proportion of past abusive relationships for this group.

The uFV fathers seemed to be more integrated into their community than were the FV fathers. It is interesting to note that the FV fathers were more likely than expected to have a moderate level of isolation from their community. Isolation is a feature of abusive relationships, with abusive men choosing to isolate themselves and their families from contact with the broader community, family and friends.

This allows the abuser to have greater control over partners and children (Roberts et al., 1998). This pattern was not evident for the uFV fathers so it may be a distinguishing characteristic of the two groups.

There was an emerging pattern in the results of the FV group fathers demonstrating problems of stability. Certainly, they were less likely than expected to have stable accommodation, were less likely to keep their home clean and more likely to have a home that was not fit for habitation. These features were apparent despite a desire by these fathers to have their children in their care, at least for part of the time. It is questioned whether these fathers have the insight to understand that these variables might be important for contribution to an indication of capacity to parent.

Interestingly, the same pattern was not evident for the uFV group. These fathers were more likely than expected to have stable accommodation and to have a clean home. The responsibilities in this regard seem to be more apparent for this group of fathers, distinguishing them from the FV group.

The atmosphere in the home was different for the FV group than the two other groups. Both the nFV and uFV group fathers were more likely than expected to provide a happy home environment. This was not the case for the FV group fathers who were more likely than expected to have a stressful home environment. Not only does this variable distinguish the FV from the uFV group, it also distinguishes the FV fathers from the FV mothers. As previously stated, a conclusion could be reached that the mothers in the FV group offered their children a happy home environment in an effort to counteract the previously stressful home environment the children would have endured when exposed to family violence. It would appear that the FV fathers continued to exist in a stressful atmosphere,

suggesting that it is the behaviour of the fathers that would be contributing to this feature of the home.

Although the FV mothers could alter the atmosphere in the home to better meet their children's needs, it would appear that the FV fathers could not do this. However, this was not the case for the uFV fathers who were able to provide a happy home. With both the uFV mothers and fathers offering a happy home environment, it is likely that this is a reflection of a general tendency to provide this type of home that existed prior to the relationship breakdown.

There were contrasts in the ways in which uFV and FV fathers parented their children. The uFV group had a greater tendency to use authoritative parenting strategies and were less likely to use violent parenting behaviours. The FV group fathers demonstrated the opposite tendencies with a greater than expected likelihood of demonstrating violent parenting behaviours and a reduced tendency to use authoritative parenting. It would appear that the FV fathers' relationship violence tended to extend to the way in which they managed the parenting of their children, at least to some degree.

Further, the FV group showed little consistency in the type of punishment strategies used in managing their children's behaviour, including the use of physical punishment and punitive punishment strategies. This picture of inconsistent punishment strategies was not evident for the nFV or the uFV groups. Although it is worth noting that not all fathers in the FV group chose aggressive parenting or punishment strategies, there were some in this group whose aggressive behaviour, in general, influenced the way in which they managed their children's behaviour.

### **Nature of Parental Relationship**

It was not particularly surprising that the majority of the people involved in these cases began their relationships soon after meeting or, indeed, that they began cohabiting within 6 months of the start of the relationship. Certainly, there seemed to be an emerging picture of people in the nFV group moving rapidly through the early stages of the relationship with the relationship then failing to survive. This was also the group with the greatest proportion who had a child within the first 12 months of the relationship. It could be argued that the pregnancy may have progressed the relationship at a faster rate than it naturally would have developed and the failure of the relationship was a function of the speed of the development.

It was interesting that the uFV group were less likely than expected to have a child within the first 12 months of the relationship. This fits with a picture of the uFV group having a more stable relationship and demonstrating greater relationship and parenting responsibility. Indeed, the most stable relationships were those experienced by the uFV group and this variable distinguished them from the FV group. Although the FV group had longer term relationships than those experienced by the nFV group, it was evident that the nature of these relationships was characterised by instability for the FV group. The link between family violence and relationship destabilisation is not unexpected. However, the same pattern would be expected in the uFV group if the claims of family violence were accurate. Certainly, it would be difficult to conceive of ongoing relationship stability in the presence of family violence.

Despite similar claims of physical and sexual violence, it was the emotional component of abuse that tended to be missing from the claims made by the uFV group. It is well established that emotional abuse typically is present in cases of

physical violence in violent families (Carvalho et al., 2011; Neilson, 2004).

Certainly, family violence is characterised by behaviours that are consistent with dominance and control and these features are consistent with a pattern of emotional abuse.

Although the majority did not report physical injury as a result of physical abuse, reports of physical injury were most evident for the FV group. It would be expected that the FV group would demonstrate the greatest degree of physical injury as a result of family violence. However, it is accepted that family violence can occur in the absence of significant physical injury (Coker et al., 2002).

There were also more people who reported being physically injured than there were people who reported seeking medical treatment for their injuries. The failure to seek medical assistance may indicate minor injury although it is recognised that failure to seek medical help for injuries sustained during family violence episodes can be influenced by factors other than the severity of the injury (Brookoff, O'Brien, Cook, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). For example, fear of retribution from the perpetrator, embarrassment or the deliberate isolation of the injured victim may influence help seeking behaviour.

The severity of legal consequences did not statistically identify the two family violence groups despite the majority of the uFV having no legal consequence of the alleged family violence. Half of the FV group and less than one third of the uFV group had family violence orders (FVOs) put in place. It is worth noting that the enactment of the Family Violence Act in 2004 resulted in the adoption of a prosecution stance incorporating both family violence and breaches of FVOs, made FVOs readily available, and made it possible for FVOs to be sought by people other than the victims, such as the police (in the form of police family violence orders



[PFVOs]). Therefore, it is possible that FVOs can exist in the absence of substantiation of the allegation, especially if the alleged perpetrator did not dispute the allegation, and there are reasons other than guilt why such a dispute would not occur. Further, it then becomes possible for a person who did not engage in any family violence act to be charged with a breach of an order and be remanded or imprisoned on the basis of that breach. The interesting point is that although about a quarter of the FV group had received a prison sentence as a result of family violence, very few of the uFV group had received a similar sanction.

The majority of the alleged perpetrators of both family violence groups denied their involvement in family violence. A denial, in itself, would offer little in terms of a means of distinguishing genuine from non-genuine cases of family violence. There is strong motivation to deny family violence both for the rightly accused and the wrongly accused. In a custody dispute, the most common course of action would be to deny family violence allegations (Dutton, 2006) because of the ramifications in terms of the desired outcomes of the child custody dispute if family violence was proven.

If a pattern of unstable relationship behaviour and a pattern of family violence was evident, it was questioned whether a history of previous Family Court applications would also be apparent. This was not demonstrated in relation to the fathers in this sample. However, in relation to the mothers, the nFV group were more likely than expected and the uFV group less likely than expected to have such a history. For the uFV group, this supports the notion of stability of relationships indicated previously. For the nFV group, this result is in keeping with the general picture of the mothers in this group having children in serial relationships. It is not surprising, then, that previous experiences in family law would be reported.

### **Child's History of Violence and Abuse**

The overall proportion of children in all three groups who were allegedly abused was high. This finding seems consistent with the literature on child custody disputes indicating that Family Court cases seem to have a high rate of partner and child abuse allegations (Johnson et al., 2005; Moloney et al., 2007). However, the lack of differences between groups seems inconsistent with the literature supporting a link between family violence and child abuse (Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl, & Moylan, 2008). It is also interesting that a history of child protection notifications did not distinguish the groups, especially as notifications to Child Protection Services can occur in cases where a child is exposed to family violence but in the absence of any direct attack on the child. Of course, it has been recognised that rates of notifications to child protection services can be high, especially in relation to high conflict families (Trocme & Bala, 2005).

The groups also were not distinguished on the basis of the type of child abuse that had been alleged. Given the high rates of alleging child abuse in all groups, this result is not surprising.

### **Child's Adjustment**

It is recognised that family violence can have a detrimental effect on children in relation to their functioning (Maughan & Cicchetti, 2002; McDonald, Jouriles, Tart, & Minze, 2009). It was interesting, then, that adjustment variables did not distinguish the groups. It has also been recognised that family separation and parental divorce can have a negative psychological effect on children (Plotkin, 2011; Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). However, when the actual proportion of each group demonstrating psychological disturbance is considered, the number is reasonably

low. It could be argued, in this case, that the children had demonstrated a reasonably resilient response to the family difficulties to which they had been exposed (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

### **Mother's History of Violence and Abuse**

The mothers' history of child abuse and violence were considered. It was the mothers in the nFV group who were more likely than expected to have a history of child abuse. The emerging picture of this group of mothers having children in serial, short term relationships may be consistent with this childhood experience. For example, Colman and Widom (2004), examining childhood abuse and neglect and adult intimate relationships, reported that childhood abuse and neglect were related to higher rates of cohabitation, leaving relationships and divorce than occurred in the absence of such childhood experiences. Further, women who experienced childhood abuse and neglect were less likely than those without this history to view their intimate relationships positively and to be sexually faithful.

When the history of violence was considered, fewer mothers in the nFV group and more mothers in the FV group received threats of violence in the past. Clearly, this variable was likely to distinguish those mothers who had been exposed to family violence from those who had no such experiences. The fact that the uFV group could not be differentiated from the FV group on the basis of this variable was a reflection of the claims made by the uFV group. In the presence of an allegation of past violence directed towards these mothers but in the absence of substantiation of these claims, a history of past threats of violence would be recorded.

### **Mother's Psychological Functioning**

Examination was made of the psychological functioning of the mothers in the three groups. More of the FV group than expected and fewer of the nFV group than expected presented as psychologically maladjusted. The greater proportion of the FV mothers presenting as psychologically maladjusted is consistent with the reported negative psychological consequences of exposure to family violence (Clements & Ogle, 2007).

It is interesting that the psychological maladjustment of this group is greater than the nFV group despite the nFV group having the greater history of child abuse and neglect. The potential psychological influences of child abuse on adult functioning also are well documented (e.g., Kamsner & McCabe, 2000). It should be recalled that the proportion of the nFV mothers who reported a child abuse history was high. Therefore, it might be expected that the psychological adjustment of this group should be poorer than appears to be the case.

However, two factors need to be considered. Firstly, although reported rates of trauma responses to abuse during childhood may vary as a function of sample and definition of abuse, in general, it is expected that the majority of people who have been exposed to a potentially traumatic experience, such as child abuse, will not develop long term negative psychological effects (Hepp et al., 2006). Certainly, it is the case that not all people exposed to child abuse will experience negative psychological effects (e.g., Wright, Fopma-Loy, & Fischer, 2005). Secondly, the differential rates of psychological maladjustment in the two groups may reflect recency of experience. The experience of family violence during an adult intimate relationship may have a more salient effect because it occurred in the recent past.

It was not surprising that the FV group of mothers scored higher on the measures relating to family violence and abuse than did the other two groups. Both the PMWI and the ABI are designed to measure family violence experiences in victims. What is interesting is the fact that the uFV group could not be differentiated from the nFV group on the basis of specific experiences of abusive behaviours but could be distinguished from the FV group on this basis. It would appear, then, that although the uFV group made general allegations of family violence, the specific components of those allegations could not be identified. That this, these mothers were unable to provide sufficient details about the alleged events that were in keeping with what is known about intimate partner violence.

The FV group of mothers obtained a lower score on the PCL-R than did the other two groups. It is worthy of note that none of the groups obtained scores that approached the cut-off for the presence of psychopathy. Although there is debate about whether or not the assessment of psychopathy should reflect a categorical approach, it does seem to be the case that people can demonstrate some characteristics that are consistent with psychopathic traits without those characteristics being severe enough to be labelled psychopathic in nature (Coid & Yang, 2008). With these psychopathic traits being associated with a lack of empathy for others (Brook & Kosson, 2013), it can be understood why the FV mothers would not demonstrate such traits. Their own experiences may make them more sensitive to distress in others.

### **Father's History of Violence and Abuse**

In contrast to the mothers in this study, it was the fathers from the FV group who were more likely than expected to have a history of childhood abuse. It may be

the case that abused boys become abusive men. Murrell, Christoff and Henning (2007) and Whitfield, Anda, Dube and Felitti (2003) both conducted studies on exposure to violence during childhood and risk of family violence in adulthood. They found that the severity of family violence offences was related to the severity of childhood exposure to violence. Exposure was defined as both witnessing family violence and being abused as a child.

The intergenerational transmission of violence and abuse is well understood (Black et al., 2010). There may be a genetic contribution to this transmission or it may reflect modelling of inappropriate behaviour. In either or both cases, it is evident that abused children can become abusive adults. It is interesting that this relationship appears not to be strongly apparent for the uFV group.

The FV fathers were more likely than statistically expected to have made threats of violence than either the uFV or nFV groups. These fathers also were more likely and the nFV group less likely to have committed an act of violence in the past. It is evident that the FV group of fathers are the most aggressive. Interestingly, the uFV fathers are not demonstrating the same characteristics.

### **Father's Psychological Functioning**

When the psychological functioning of the fathers in this study was considered, it was apparent that the FV fathers were more psychologically maladjusted than expected, both in terms of diagnosed conditions and other psychological problems such as anger management difficulties. Perpetration of family violence and psychological maladjustment has been reported as co-occurring (Anderson, 2002). Also, more of the FV group than expected had current substance use problems. This is consistent with the literature supporting a strong link between

substance use and family violence (Campbell et al., 2003; Holt et al., 2008; Stuart et al., 2008). Bearing in mind that the FV fathers also had a strong history of childhood abuse, a connection has been established between childhood abuse and substance use (Simpson & Miller, 2002). There is also a reported connection between childhood abuse, substance use and family violence (Campbell et al., 2003; Kropp et al., 2000). This pattern of maladjustment was not evident in the same way for the uFV fathers.

A variety of psychological instruments were applied to these cases, with the focus of some of these instruments being on the experience of the victim (PWMI, ABI) and some on the perpetrator of violence (SARA, HCR-20). As the fathers in the FV group were generally the identified perpetrators, it is not surprising that the FV fathers obtained significantly higher scores on the SARA and the HCR-20. These results were in contrast to the results obtained for the mothers where the FV mothers obtained higher scores on the victim-focused instruments.

It is recognised that the HCR-20 is an instrument used to guide clinical judgment. However, it is also generally the case that a higher score reflects greater violence risk. The difference between the score obtained for the FV group and the scores obtained by the other groups was considerable, indicating that only the FV fathers, as a group, demonstrated any real risk of violent behaviour in the future.

It was noted that the uFV and FV fathers scored higher than the nFV fathers on the ABI physical subscale. There has been recognition of the bi-directionality of family violence in some cases (Bow & Boxer, 2003; Nowinski & Bowen, 2012). Certainly, in the current study, claims of family violence by both members of partnerships were reported in some cases.

Finally, it was evident that the FV fathers demonstrated stronger psychopathic tendencies than did the nFV and the uFV fathers. In the way, the FV

fathers demonstrated a disregard for the wellbeing of others and the greatest tendency of the fathers in this study to be self-focused. There has been a recognised association between psychopathy and the perpetration of violence (Walsh, Swogger, Walsh, & Kosson, 2007).

### **Distinguishing Substantiated and Unsubstantiated Family Violence Groups**

There were a number of variables that were related to each of the family violence groups individually. These variables are presented in Table 30. In particular, there were a range of variables that identified the FV group. The majority of these variables related to the parents. There were no child-related variables that identified the FV group.

The mothers in the FV group were suffering as a consequence of their exposure to family violence but were attempting to offer their children a better home environment and better parenting post-separation. The uFV mothers seemed to have a stable relationship history.

The fathers in the FV group were identified by their more pervasive aggressive and violent behaviour that may have stemmed from earlier childhood experiences. Their current psychological adjustment was poor. The only variable that identified the uFV fathers was that they were more likely than expected to be older although the actual proportion of fathers aged 45 years or older was small.



Table 30. The characteristics specific to the FV and uFV groups.

| Category              | uFV                                                                                | FV                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mother                | Keeps home clean<br>Fewer than 3 relationships<br>Less prior family law experience | Less receipt of child support<br>Current happy home<br>Authoritative parenting<br>Appropriate punishment<br>Past receipt of violent threats<br>Psychologically maladjusted<br>No criminal history                                                              |
| Father                | Older                                                                              | Previous significant relationship<br>Previous abusive relationship<br>Childhood history of abuse<br>Less receipt of violence threats<br>Past acts of violence<br>Current substance use problems<br>Psychological maladjustment<br>Other psychological problems |
| Parental relationship | First child after 12 months                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

There was a range of variables that distinguished the uFV and FV groups. These variables are presented in Table 31. The majority of these variables related to the mothers and the fathers in these cases. Some parental relationship variables also distinguished the groups. There was little information about the children that distinguished the groups apart from child abuse being more likely to be substantiated by child protection services in the FV group and less likely in the uFV group.

The variables relating to the mothers that distinguished the FV group from the uFV group related to the nature of the abuse experienced in the context of family violence. In addition to more experience of physical abuse, the components of emotional abuse were also more evident for the FV group mothers. Interestingly, the FV mothers had fewer psychopathic traits indicating greater empathy.

The variables that distinguished the FV fathers from the uFV fathers fell into broad categories. Firstly, there were variables that indicated degree of responsibility in terms of meeting life needs or the needs of the family. Secondly, there were variables that represented the violence threat to partners and children. Thirdly, psychopathic traits distinguished the groups with the FV fathers demonstrating strong traits and, therefore, less empathic connection with others.

*Table 31. Variables that differentiate the uFV and FV groups.*

| Category              | uFV                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | FV                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mother                | Less dominance/isolation abuse<br>Less emotional/verbal abuse<br>Less psychological abuse<br>Less physical abuse<br>More psychopathic traits                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | More dominance/isolation abuse<br>More emotional/verbal abuse<br>More psychological abuse<br>More physical abuse<br>Fewer psychopathic traits                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Father                | Good employment history<br>Financially self-sufficient<br>Adequate provider<br>Pay child support<br>Not isolated in community<br>Stable accommodation<br>Clean home<br>Home fit for habitation<br>Happy home environment<br>Authoritative parenting<br>No past threats of violence<br>Lower spousal assault risk<br>Few psychopathic traits<br>Low violence risk | Poor employment history<br>Not financially self-sufficient<br>Not adequate provider<br>Does not pay child support<br>Moderate isolation in community<br>No stable accommodation<br>Home not clean<br>Home not fit for habitation<br>Stressful home environment<br>Violent parenting<br>Made past threats of violence<br>Higher spousal assault risk<br>More psychopathic traits<br>Higher violence risk |
| Child                 | Abuse claims not substantiated                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Abuse claims substantiated                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Parental relationship | Stable, long term<br>Less emotional abuse<br>Less victim physical injury<br>Less medical treatment sought                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Unstable, long term<br>More emotional abuse<br>More victim physical injury<br>More medical treatment sought                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

**Limitations**

A limitation of this study was the small sample size. Generalisation of the findings should be made with caution. Also, the data was collected from archival high conflict cases; this made it difficult to fill in any missing information. Examination of more cases from a broader range of sources would be desirable.

**Future Directions**

It would seem prudent to develop a model of family violence in child custody disputes that could account for both genuine and fabricated claims of family violence. It would then be necessary to test this model against cases to determine whether it could accurately identify the nature of the family violence allegations. Verification of the utility of the model could lead to its use in child custody evaluations.

**Conclusion**

This study has revealed that distinctive factors exist between the uFV and FV groups. The results show that it is worth examining the mothers' and fathers' factors individually to assist in ascertaining the validity of family violence claims. Although future research is required, the identified distinguishing factors may be a useful guide for single experts to differentiate between substantiated and unsubstantiated allegations of family violence in child custody evaluations.

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APPENDIX

**FAMILY VIOLENCE CHECKLIST****GENERAL INFORMATION**

Case code:

Name of Applicant:

Relationship of applicant to child:

Name of respondent:

Relationship of respondent to child:

Name of others involved in proceedings:

Relationship of other to child:

**Application Information****A1. Timing of application**

- ☐ Immediately/soon after relationship breakdown
- ☐ After a period of attempted co-parenting
- ☐ After an extended period of attempted co-parenting

**A2. History of applications**

- ☐ First application
- ☐ Other applications within two years
- ☐ Other applications for longer than two years

**CHILD**

Name of Child:

C1. Age of Child:

C2. Sex of child ☐ Female ☐ Male

C3. Current Living Arrangements:

- ☐ With mother, spend daytime with father
- ☐ With mother, spend overnights with father
- ☐ With mother, no time with father
- ☐ With father, spends daytime with mother
- ☐ With father, spends overnight with mother
- ☐ With father, no time with mother
- ☐ With other family member
- ☐ In foster care

C3a. *If in foster care,*

- ☐ Single placement
- ☐ Multiple placement, number of times:
- ☐ Other, specify

C3b. *If spends time with mother*

(i) Is this time supervised?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(ii) *If Yes, is supervision provided by*

- ☐ Contact centre
- ☐ Family member
- ☐ Other, please specify:

C3c. *If spends time with father*

(i) Is this time supervised?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(ii) *If Yes, is supervision provided by*

- ☐ Contact centre
- ☐ Family Member
- ☐ Other please specify:

C4. Purpose of application to

- ☐ Live with mother, spend daytime with father
- ☐ With mother, spend overnights with father
- ☐ With mother, no time with father
- ☐ With father, spends daytime with mother
- ☐ With father, spends overnight with mother
- ☐ With father, no time with mother
- ☐ Equal shared care
- ☐ Relocation
- ☐ With other family member
- ☐ In foster care
- ☐ Other, specify

## C5. Sibling relationships

Only child?

☐ Yes☐ No

If no, specify

C5a. Full siblings, how many?

☐ Live with child☐ Live with non-custodial parent☐ Younger than child☐ Older than child☐ Close relationship with child☐ Distant relationship with child☐ No relationship with child

C5b. Maternal half siblings, how many?

☐ Live with child☐ Live with non-custodial parent☐ Younger than child☐ Older than child☐ Close relationship with child☐ Distant relationship with child☐ No relationship with child

C5c. Paternal half siblings, how many?

- ☐ Live with child
- ☐ Live with non-custodial parent
  
- ☐ Younger than child
- ☐ Older than child
  
- ☐ Close relationship with child
- ☐ Distant relationship with child
- ☐ No relationship with child

C5d. Maternal step siblings, how many?

- ☐ Live with child
- ☐ Live with non-custodial parent
  
- ☐ Younger than child
- ☐ Older than child
  
- ☐ Close relationship with child
- ☐ Distant relationship with child
- ☐ No relationship with child

C5e. Paternal step siblings, how many?

- ☐ Live with child
- ☐ Live with non-custodial parent
  
- ☐ Younger than child
- ☐ Older than child
  
- ☐ Close relationship with child
- ☐ Distant relationship with child
- ☐ No relationship with child

**MOTHER**

M1. Ethnicity:

M2. Age group:

- ☐ Less than 25 years
- ☐ 25-34 years
- ☐ 35-44 years
- ☐ 45+ years

M3. Highest Education Level Achieved:

- ☐ Did not complete high school
- ☐ Completed grade 10
- ☐ Commenced college
- ☐ Completed college
- ☐ University degree undertaken
- ☐ University degree completed
- ☐ Trade qualification undertaken
- ☐ Trade qualification completed
- ☐ Other:

M4. Employment History (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Currently employed
- ☐ Was employed in last 12 months
- ☐ Consistent employment history
- ☐ Inconsistent employment history
- ☐ Never employed

M5. Socioeconomic status

- ☐ Low
- ☐ Medium
- ☐ High

M6. Financial status

- ☐ Financially self-sufficient
- ☐ Adequate provider
- ☐ Consistent child support

## M7. Relationship history

- ☐ Previous significant relationship(s)
- ☐ More than three significant relationships
- ☐ Previously married
- ☐ Previous abusive relationship(s)
- ☐ History of unstable/short relationships (< 6 months)

## M8. Neighbourhood SES

- ☐ Low
- ☐ Medium
- ☐ High

## M9. Ease of access to health care in neighbourhood

- ☐ Easily accessed
- ☐ Moderately able to access
- ☐ Difficult to obtain
- ☐ Unavailable

## M10. Level of isolation from wider community

- ☐ Low
- ☐ Medium
- ☐ High

Family Environment

## M11. Physical environment at home

- ☐ Stable accommodation
- ☐ Multiple moves
- ☐ Staying with family/friends
- ☐ Other, specify:

## M12. Condition of home

- ☐ Clean
- ☐ Fit for habitation
- ☐ Overcrowded



## M13. Family life

- ☐ Happy
- ☐ Stressful
- ☐ Authoritative
- ☐ Violent
- ☐ Few rules/regulation

## M14. Punishment style

- ☐ Appropriate
- ☐ Authoritative
- ☐ Physical punishment
- ☐ Punitive other than smacking
- ☐ Failure to discipline

**FATHER**

## F1. Ethnicity:

## F2. Age group:

- ☐ Less than 25 years
- ☐ 25-34 years
- ☐ 35-44 years
- ☐ 45+ years

## F3. Highest Education Level Achieved:

- ☐ Did not complete high school
- ☐ Completed grade 10
- ☐ Commenced college
- ☐ Completed college
- ☐ University degree undertaken
- ☐ University degree completed
- ☐ Trade qualification undertaken
- ☐ Trade qualification completed
- ☐ Other:

## F4. Employment History (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Currently employed
- ☐ Was employed in last 12 months
- ☐ Consistent employment history
- ☐ Inconsistent employment history
- ☐ Never employed

## F5. Socioeconomic status

- ☐ Low
- ☐ Medium
- ☐ High

## F6. Financial status

- ☐ Financially self-sufficient
- ☐ Adequate provider
- ☐ Consistent child support

## F7. Relationship history

- ☐ Previous significant relationship(s)
- ☐ More than three significant relationships
- ☐ Previously married
- ☐ Previous abusive relationship(s)
- ☐ History of unstable/short relationships (< 6 months)

## F8. Neighbourhood SES

- ☐ Low
- ☐ Medium
- ☐ High

## F9. Ease of access to health care in neighbourhood

- ☐ Easily accessed
- ☐ Moderately able to access
- ☐ Difficult to obtain
- ☐ Unavailable

## F10. Level of isolation from wider community

- ☐ Low
- ☐ Medium
- ☐ High

Family Environment

## F11. Physical environment at home

- ☐ Stable accommodation
- ☐ Multiple moves
- ☐ Staying with family/friends
- ☐ Other, specify:

## F12. Condition of home

- ☐ Clean
- ☐ Fit for habitation
- ☐ Overcrowded

## F13. Family life

- ☐ Happy
- ☐ Stressful
- ☐ Authoritative
- ☐ Violent
- ☐ Few rules/regulation

## F14. Punishment style

- ☐ Appropriate
- ☐ Authoritative
- ☐ Physical punishment
- ☐ Punitive other than smacking
- ☐ Failure to discipline

**PARENTAL RELATIONSHIP HISTORY**

PR1. Relationship history (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Relationship started shortly after meeting
- ☐ Began co-habiting shortly after starting relationship (< 6 months)
- ☐ Had first child shortly after starting relationship (< 12 months)

PR2. Stability of relationship

- ☐ Long term, stable with instability towards end
- ☐ Long term instability
- ☐ Short term

PR3. Level of animosity during relationship

- From Mother
- ☐ Low
  - ☐ Med
  - ☐ High

- From Father
- ☐ Low
  - ☐ Med
  - ☐ High

PR4. Level of animosity during breakdown of relationship

- From Mother
- ☐ Low
  - ☐ Med
  - ☐ High

- From Father
- ☐ Low
  - ☐ Med
  - ☐ High

## PR5. Level of animosity after relationship

From Mother      ☐ Low  
                         ☐ Med  
                         ☐ High

From Father      ☐ Low  
                         ☐ Med  
                         ☐ High

Violence history

## PR6. History of violence in parents' relationship

☐ Yes  
☐ No

*PR6a. If yes, who was the perpetrator*

☐ Mother  
☐ Father  
☐ Both parents

## PR7. Type of abuse in relationship

☐ Physical  
☐ Emotional  
☐ Sexual

## PR8. Physical consequences

☐ Physical injury  
☐ Medical attention sought

## PR9. Legal consequences

☐ Police intervention  
☐ Family violence order(s)  
☐ Remanded in custody  
☐ Court attendance  
☐ Conviction  
☐ Prison sentence

## PR10. Response of alleged perpetrator

- ☐ Agreement, in full
- ☐ Agreement, in part
- ☐ Denial

Re-Partnering

## PR11. Mother re-partnered

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

PR11a. *If yes, specify*

- ☐ Supportive of children's needs
- ☐ Somewhat supportive of children's needs
- ☐ Unsupportive of children's needs

## PR12. Father re-partnered

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

PR12a. *If yes, specify*

- ☐ Supportive of children's needs
- ☐ Somewhat supportive of children's needs
- ☐ Unsupportive of children's needs

History of Family Court involvement in relation to other relationships

## PR13. Mother

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

## PR14. Father

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

PR15. Were accusations of abuse made in relation to those other matters?

PR15a. Mother

☐ Yes

☐ No

PR15b. ☐ Mother accuser, substantiated?

☐ Mother accused, Substantiated?

PR15c. Father

☐ Yes

☐ No

PR15d. ☐ Father accuser, Substantiated?

☐ Father accused, Substantiated?

### **HISTORY OF VIOLENCE/ABUSE – CHILD**

#### Alleged Abuse

CHV1. Abuse present?

Child(ren) ☐ Yes

☐ No

CHV2. Notifications to department made in the past?

☐ Yes

☐

No

*If yes, Nature of abuse?*

CHV2a. ☐ Physical abuse

☐ Physical punishment

☐ Physical assault

☐ Other:

CHV2b. Alleged perpetrator of physical abuse

☐ Mother

☐ Father

☐ Both parents

☐ Step mother

☐ Step father

☐ Full siblings

☐ Half siblings

☐ Step siblings

☐ Other:

## CHV2c. Accuser

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Other:

CHV3. ☐ Sexual abuse

- ☐ Non-contact abuse
- ☐ Touching
- ☐ Masturbation
- ☐ Oral sex
- ☐ Intercourse
- ☐ Anal intercourse
- ☐ Penetration with object

## CHV3a. Alleged perpetrator of sexual abuse

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Both parents
- ☐ Step mother
- ☐ Step father
- ☐ Full siblings
- ☐ Half siblings
- ☐ Step siblings
- ☐ Other:

## CHV3b. Accuser

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Other:

CHV4. ☐ Emotional/Psychological abuse

- ☐ Shouting
- ☐ Criticism
- ☐ Isolation
- ☐ Threats
- ☐ Humiliation
- ☐ Other:



## CHV4a. Alleged perpetrator of emotional/psychological abuse

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Both parents
- ☐ Step mother
- ☐ Step father
- ☐ Full siblings
- ☐ Half siblings
- ☐ Step siblings
- ☐ Other:

## CHV4b. Accuser

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Other:

CHV5. ☐ Neglect

- ☐ Nutrition
- ☐ Medical
- ☐ Stable housing
- ☐ Educational
- ☐ Stimulating environment
- ☐ Leaving child alone at home
- ☐ Not providing adequate care

## CHV5a. Alleged perpetrator of neglect

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Both parents
- ☐ Step mother
- ☐ Step father
- ☐ Full siblings
- ☐ Half siblings
- ☐ Step siblings
- ☐ Other:

## CHV5b. Accuser

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Other:

## CHV6. Substantiation of allegation

- ☐ None
- ☐ Child Protective Services
- ☐ Medical examination of child
- ☐ Statement by child victim
- ☐ Tasmania Police
- ☐ Criminal Court Finding

## CHV7. Support for allegation for other sources

- ☐ Sexual assault support services
- ☐ Domestic violence services
- ☐ General Practitioner
- ☐ Family members
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Other:

Other victims in the family

## CHV8. Number of alleged victims in the family:

## CHV8a. Spread of abuse

- ☐ Only child
- ☐ One child of sibling group
- ☐ More than one child of sibling group
- ☐ All children in sibling group

## CHV8b. Placement of victims in family

- ☐ Only child
- ☐ All children
- ☐ Oldest/older children
- ☐ Middle/middle group
- ☐ Youngest/younger group

- CHV8c. Age of victims
- ☐ 0-2 years
  - ☐ 3-5 years
  - ☐ 6-8 years
  - ☐ 9-12 years
  - ☐ 13 + years

History of abuse other than the targeted child

CHV9. Previous allegation of abuse

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

CHV9a. *If yes*, perpetrator of the abuse

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Both parents
- ☐ Step mother
- ☐ Step father
- ☐ Full siblings
- ☐ Half siblings
- ☐ Step siblings
- ☐ Other:

CHV10. Type of abuse

- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Psychological/Emotional
- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Neglect

CHV11. Substantiation of allegation of previous abuse

- ☐ None
- ☐ Child Protective Services
- ☐ Medical examination of child
- ☐ Statement by child victim
- ☐ Tasmania Police
- ☐ Criminal Court Finding

Child's adjustment

CHV12. History of psychological disturbance

☐ Yes☐ NoCHV12a. *If yes*, Nature of psychological disorder☐ Anxiety☐ Mood☐ PTSD☐ Conduct Disorder☐ Learning disability☐ Autism Spectrum☐ ADHD☐ Other:

CHV13. Sleep/bedtime problems

☐ Yes☐ NoCHV13a. *If yes*,☐ Bed wetting/soiling☐ Nightmares/night terrors☐ Sleep walking☐ Refusal to sleep in own bed☐ Insomnia☐ Other:

## CHV14. General mood/behaviour problems

☐ Yes☐ NoCHV14a. *If yes*☐ Anger or aggression☐ Withdrawal/social isolation☐ Antisocial/conduct☐ School refusal☐ Running away☐ Age inappropriate friendships

## CHV15. Sexualised behaviours

☐ Yes☐ No*If yes, Please Specify:*

## CHV16. Problematic behaviour at school

☐ Yes☐ NoCHV16a. *If yes, Please specify type of behaviour:*☐ Hungry at school☐ No breakfast☐ No lunch☐ Excessive number of sick days☐ Chronic truancy☐ Academic underachievement☐ Unstable friendships☐ Withdrawn from peers/teachers☐ Behaviour problems☐ Sleepy☐ Other:

## CHV17. Child's substance use

☐ Yes☐ No

CHV17a. *If yes, What substance?*

- ☐ Alcohol
- ☐ Drugs
- ☐ Cannabis
- ☐ Opiates
- ☐ Amphetamines
- ☐ Ecstasy
- ☐ Prescription (illicitly taken)
- ☐ Over the counter
- ☐ Other:

CHV18. Criminal Behaviour

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

CHV18a. *If yes, describe behaviour*

- ☐ Stealing
- ☐ Shoplifting
- ☐ Damage to property
- ☐ Assault
- ☐ Substance use
- ☐ Sexual assault
- ☐ Other:

CHV19. Outcome of Criminal Behaviours

- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ No sanction
- ☐ Community Correction
- ☐ Detention

CHV20. History of Medical Problems

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

CHV21. Presence of other stable adult relationships with child

☐ Yes

☐ No

CHV21a. *If yes, nature of relationship with child*

☐ Maternal grandmother

☐ Maternal grandfather

☐ Paternal grandmother

☐ Paternal grandfather

☐ Other maternal family member

☐ Other paternal family member

☐ Other:

CHV21b. If this person/are these people, supportive of the abuse/family violence claim

☐ Mostly supportive

☐ Unsure

☐ Mostly unsupported

### **HISTORY OF VIOLENCE/ABUSE - MOTHER**

MHV1. Childhood violence/abuse history

☐ Yes

☐ No

MHV1a. *If yes, type(s) abuse*

☐ Physical

☐ Neglect

☐ Emotional/psychological

☐ Sexual

MHV2. Nature of exposure

☐ Direct victim

☐ Indirect victim

## MHV3. Perpetrator of abuse

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Mother's partner
- ☐ Father's partner
- ☐ Other, specify:

MHV4. Previous threats of violence received ☐ Yes☐ NoMHV4a. *If yes, type of threat*

- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Psychological
- ☐ Economic
- ☐ Social

MHV5. Made previous threats of violence ☐ Yes☐ NoMHV5a. *If yes, type of threat*

- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Psychological
- ☐ Economic
- ☐ Social



MHV6. Committed violent acts in the past ☐ Yes ☐ No

*If yes, MHV6a. How often?*

☐ 1-2 acts ☐ 3 or more acts

MHV6b. Did the victim(s) require hospitalisation/medical attention?

☐ Yes ☐ No

MHV6c. Type of violent act

- ☐ General violence
- ☐ Spousal directed violence
- ☐ Child directed violence
- ☐ Other, specify:

MHV6d. If Spousal/Child directed, type of domestic violence (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Psychological
- ☐ Economical
- ☐ Social

MHV7. Use of weapons and/or credible threats of death in the past

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

MHV8. Past violation of IVOs

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

MHV9. Extreme minimisation or denial of spousal assault history

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

MHV10. Attitudes that support or condone spousal assault

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

MHV11. Age of first violent act ☐ < 20 ☐ between 20-39 ☐ > 40

MHV12. Consequence of violent behaviour

- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ Police intervention
- ☐ Remanded in custody
- ☐ Court attendance
- ☐ Family Violence Order
- ☐ Conviction
- ☐ Prison sentence

### Substance Use

MHV13. Current Substance use/abuse

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

MHV13a. *If yes, specify*

- ☐ Alcohol
- ☐ Cannabis
- ☐ Opiates
- ☐ Amphetamines
- ☐ Ecstasy
- ☐ Abuse of prescription medication
- ☐ Abuse of over the counter medication
- ☐ Other:

## MHV14. Substance use history

☐ Yes☐ NoMHV14a. *If yes, specify*☐ Alcohol☐ Cannabis☐ Opiates☐ Amphetamines☐ Ecstasy☐ Abuse of prescription medication☐ Abuse of over the counter medication☐ Other:Psychological functioning

## MHV15. History of psychological maladjustment

☐ Yes☐ NoMHV15a. *If yes, specify*☐ Drug related☐ Personality disorder, specify:☐ Anxiety☐ Depression☐ PTSD☐ Bipolar Disorder☐ Schizophrenia☐ Learning disability☐ Intellectual disability☐ Other:

MHV16. Trauma history (childhood abuse exempt)

☐ Yes

☐ No

MHV16a. *If yes, specify*

☐ Rape

☐ Physical assault

☐ Domestic violence

☐ Death of a child

☐ Death of a partner

☐ Other traumatic event, specify:

MHV17. Other psychological problems

☐ Yes

☐ No

MHV17a. *If yes, specify,*

☐ Gambling

☐ Self-harm

☐ Suicide attempt

☐ Anger management

☐ Other:

MHV18. Criminal History

☐ Yes

☐ No

MHV18a. *If yes, specify*

☐ Crimes against property

☐ Crimes against person

☐ Crimes against children

☐ Drug related

☐ Traffic offences

☐ Sex offences

☐ Prostitution

☐ Family violence order

☐ Other:

MHV19. History of imprisonment

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

MHV19a. *If yes, specify*

MHV19b. Number of imprisonments:

MHV19c. Longest duration:

- MHV19d.    ☐ Remand only
- ☐ Breach of FVO
- ☐ Other:

MHV20. Relationship with extended family

- ☐ Close relationships with own extended family
- ☐ Close relationships with ex-partner’s family
- ☐ No relationship with extended family

MHV21. Employment problems

- ☐ Possible/Less serious employment problems
- ☐ Definite/serious employment problems
- ☐ No Employment problems

*If No or Possible Employment problems, Current occupation? How long in current occupation? And value on Occupation Scale?*

MHV21a. Current Occupation

\_\_\_\_\_

MHV21b. Years & months

\_\_\_\_\_

MHV21c. Occupation Scale Value

\_\_\_\_\_

MHV22. Major mental illness

- ☐ No major mental illness
- ☐ Possible/less serious major mental illness
- ☐ Definite/severe major mental illness

MHV23. Psychopathy

- ☐ Non psychopathic
- ☐ Possible/less serious psychopathy
- ☐ Definite/serious psychopathy

MHV24. Early Maladjustment

- ☐ Present
- ☐ Not Present

If Present,

- a) *Maladjustment in:*

|                                    |                               |                                   |                                 |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School    | <input type="checkbox"/> Mild | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Mild | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home      | <input type="checkbox"/> Mild | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe |
- b) *Severity:*

|                               |                                   |                                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mild | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mild | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mild | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe |

c) *If at home:*

- ☐ Witnessed abuse (abuse of parent)
- ☐ Experienced abuse (childhood abuse)

MHV25. Personality Disorder

- ☐ No Personality disorder
- ☐ Personality disorder symptoms
- ☐ Diagnosed Personality disorder

MHV26. Prior supervision failure

- ☐ No supervision failure(s)
- ☐ Less serious supervision failure(s)
- ☐ Serious supervision failure(s)

**Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (mPMWI)**

*This questionnaire asks about actions you may have experienced in your relationship with your partner. Answer each item as carefully as you can by circling each one as follows:*

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Occasionally
- 4 = Frequently
- 5 = Very frequently
- N/A = Not applicable

In the past six months:

| 1  | My partner put down my physical appearance                                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|-------|
| 2  | My partner insulted me or shamed me in front of others                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 3  | My partner treated me like I was stupid.                                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 4  | My partner was insensitive to my feelings.                                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 5  | My partner told me I couldn't manage or take care of myself without him                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 6  | My partner put down my care of the children.                                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 7  | My partner criticized the way I took care of the house                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 8  | My partner said something to spite me.                                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 9  | My partner brought up something from the past                                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 10 | My partner called me names.                                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 11 | My partner swore at me                                                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 12 | My partner yelled and screamed at me                                                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 13 | My partner treated me like an inferior                                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 14 | My partner sulked or refused to talk about a problem                                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 15 | My partner stomped out of the house or yard during a disagreement                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 16 | My partner gave me the silent treatment or acted like I wasn't there                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 17 | My partner withheld affection from me                                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 18 | My partner did not let me talk about my feelings                                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 19 | My partner was insensitive to my sexual needs and desires                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 20 | My partner demanded obedience to his whims                                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 21 | My partner became upset if dinner, housework, or laundry was not done when he thought it should be | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 22 | My partner acted like I was his personal servant                                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 23 | My partner did not do a fair share of the household tasks                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 24 | My partner did not do a fair share of childcare                                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 25 | My partner ordered me around                                                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 26 | My partner monitored my time and made me account for my whereabouts                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |
| 27 | My partner was stingy in giving me money to                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 N/A |

|    |                                                                                                |   |   |   |   |   |     |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
|    | run our home                                                                                   |   |   |   |   |   |     |
| 28 | My partner acted irresponsibly with our financial resources                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 29 | My partner did not contribute enough to supporting our family                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 30 | My partner used our money or made important financial decisions without talking to me about it | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 31 | My partner kept me from getting medical care that I needed.                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 32 | My partner was jealous or suspicious of my friends                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 33 | My partner was jealous of other men                                                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 34 | My partner did not want me to go to school or do other self-improvement activities             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 35 | My partner did not want me to socialize with my female friends                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 36 | My partner accused me of having an affair with another man                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 37 | My partner demanded that I stay home and take care of the children                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 38 | My partner tried to keep me from seeing or talking to my family                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 39 | My partner interfered in my relationships with other family members                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 40 | My partner tried to keep me from doing things to help myself                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 41 | My partner restricted my use of the car                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 42 | My partner restricted my use of the telephone                                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 43 | My partner did not allow me to leave the house                                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 44 | My partner did not allow me to work                                                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 45 | My partner told me my feelings were irrational or crazy                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 46 | My partner blamed me for his problems                                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 47 | My partner tried to turn my family against me                                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 48 | My partner blamed me for causing his violent behaviour                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 49 | My partner tried to make me feel crazy                                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 50 | My partner's moods changed radically                                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 51 | My partner blamed me when he was upset                                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 52 | My partner tried to convince me I was crazy                                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 53 | My partner threatened to hurt himself if I left                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 54 | My partner threatened to hurt himself if I didn't do what he wanted me to do                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 55 | My partner threatened to have an affair                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 56 | My partner threatened to leave the relationship                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 57 | My partner threatened to take our children away from me                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 58 | My partner threatened to commit me to an institution                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |



**Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (mPMWI)  
Scoring**

Items are grouped into two subscales.

The 26-item Dominance/Isolation subscale consists of items:

1, 5, 7, 21, 22, 25-28, 30-36, 38-44, 47, 52, and 55.

The 23-item Emotional/Verbal subscale consists of items:

2-4, 8-20, 45, 46, and 48.

Point values given in response to each item are summed to create total subscale scores. Higher scores are indicative of more maltreatment.

**mPMWI Dominance/Isolation Score: \_\_\_\_\_**

**mPMWI Emotional/Verbal Score: \_\_\_\_\_**

**mPMWI Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_**

### Abusive Behaviour Inventory (mABI)

*Here is a list of behaviours that many women report have been used by their partners or former partners. We would like you to estimate how often these behaviours occurred during the past six months.*

*CIRCLE a number for each of the items to show your closest estimate of how often it happened in your relationship with your partner or former partner during the past six months.*

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Occasionally
- 4 = Frequently
- 5 = Very frequently

|     |                                                                                                                                              |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  | Called you a name and/or criticized you                                                                                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2.  | Tried to keep you from doing something you wanted to do (e.g., going out with friends, going to meetings).                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  | Gave you angry stares or looks.                                                                                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  | Prevented you from having money for your own use                                                                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  | Ended a discussion with you and made the decision himself.                                                                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  | Threatened to hit or throw something at you.                                                                                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  | Pushed, grabbed, or shoved you                                                                                                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  | Put down your family and friends.                                                                                                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  | Accused you of paying too much attention to someone or something else                                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | Put you on an allowance                                                                                                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | Used your children to threaten you (e.g., told you that you would lose custody, said he would leave town with the children).                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | Became very upset with you because dinner, housework, or laundry was not ready when he wanted it or done the way he thought it should be.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | Said things to scare you (e.g., told you something "bad would happen, threatened to commit suicide).                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. | Slapped, hit, or punched you.                                                                                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. | Made you do something humiliating or degrading (e.g., begging for forgiveness, having to ask his permission to use the car or do something). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. | Checked up on you (e.g., listened to your phone calls, checked the mileage on your car, called you repeatedly at work).                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. | Drove recklessly when you were in the car.                                                                                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. | Pressured you to have sex in a way that you                                                                                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

|     |                                                                |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
|     | didn't like or want.                                           |   |   |   |   |   |
| 19. | Refused to do housework or childcare.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. | Threatened you with a knife, gun, or other weapon.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. | Spanked you.                                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. | Told you that you were a bad parent                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. | Stopped you or tried to stop you from going to work or school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. | Threw, hit, kicked, or smashed something                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. | Kicked you.                                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. | Physically forced you to have sex                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. | Threw you around.                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. | Physically attacked the sexual parts of your body              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. | Choked or strangled you                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. | Used a knife, gun, or other weapon against you                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Abusive Behaviour Inventory Scoring**

Psychological abuse items:

1-5, 8-13, 15-17, 19, 22 and 23

*The mean score of these items is computed by summing the values of the items and dividing by the applicable number of items. Higher scores are indicative of greater psychological abuse.*

Physical abuse items:

6, 7, 14, 18, 20, 21, 24-30

*The mean score of these items is computed by summing the values of the items and dividing by the applicable number of items. Higher scores are indicative of greater psychological abuse.*

**mABI Psychological Abuse score: \_\_\_\_\_**

**mABI Physical Abuse score: \_\_\_\_\_**

SARA (mSARA)

|     | GENERAL VIOLENCE RISK FACTORS                             | Critical (3) | Present (2) | Possible (1) | Absent (0) |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
|     | <i>Spousal Assault History</i>                            |              |             |              |            |
| 1.  | Past physical assault                                     | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 2.  | Past sexual assault/sexual jealousy                       | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 3.  | Past use of weapons and/or credible threats of death      | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 4.  | Recent escalation in frequency or severity of assault     | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 5.  | Past violation of "no contact" orders                     | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 6.  | Extreme minimisation or denial of spousal assault history | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 7.  | Attitudes that support or condone spousal assault         | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
|     | <i>Alleged/Most Recent Offense</i>                        |              |             |              |            |
| 8.  | Severe and/or sexual assault                              | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 9.  | Use of weapons and/or credible threats of death           | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 10. | Violation of "no contact" order                           | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
|     | <i>Other considerations</i>                               |              |             |              |            |
| A   |                                                           |              |             |              |            |
| B   |                                                           |              |             |              |            |
| C   |                                                           |              |             |              |            |
|     |                                                           |              | Total A1:   | Total B1:    |            |

|     |                                                                          |   |           |           |   |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|---|
|     | SPOUSAL ABUSE SPECIFIC RISK FACTORS                                      |   |           |           |   |
|     | <i>Criminal History</i>                                                  |   |           |           |   |
| 11. | Past assault of family members                                           | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 12. | Past assault of strangers or acquaintances                               | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 13. | Past violation of conditional release or community supervision           | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
|     | <i>Psychosocial Adjustment</i>                                           |   |           |           |   |
| 14. | Recent relationship problems                                             | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 15. | Recent employment problems                                               | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 16. | Victim of and/or witness to family violence as a child or adolescent     | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 17. | Recent substance abuse/dependence                                        | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 18. | Recent suicidal or homicidal ideation/intent                             | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 19. | Recent psychotic and/or manic symptoms                                   | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 20. | Personality disorder with anger, impulsivity, or behavioural instability | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
|     |                                                                          |   | Total A2: | Total B2: |   |

**Scoring the SARA for Mother**

A1 \_\_\_\_ + A2 \_\_\_\_ = **Factors Present** \_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_ + B1 \_\_\_\_ + B2 \_\_\_\_ = **Total Score** \_\_\_\_

**\*\*Presence of ≥ 8 risk factors or a total score > 19 is high risk of IPV**

**Psychopathy Checklist (mPCL)**

|    |                                   |   |   |   |
|----|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1  | Glibness/superficial charm        | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 2  | Grandiosity                       | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 3  | Pathological lying                | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 4  | Conning/manipulation              | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 5  | Lack of remorse/guilt             | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 6  | Shallow affect                    | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 7  | Callous/lack of empathy           | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 8  | Failure to accept responsibility  | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 9  | Many marital relationships        | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 10 | Need for stimulation              | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 11 | Parasitic lifestyle               | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 12 | Poor behavioural controls         | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 13 | Early behaviour problems          | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 14 | Lack of long term plans           | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 15 | Impulsivity                       | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 16 | Irresponsibility                  | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 17 | Juvenile delinquency              | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 18 | Revocation of conditional release | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 19 | Criminal versatility              | 0 | 1 | 2 |

**Psychopathy Total score: \_\_\_\_\_**

**HCR (mHCR)**  
**HCR-20 HISTORICAL ITEMS**

|     |                                     |   |   |   |
|-----|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| H1  | Previous violence                   | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H2  | Young age at first violent incident | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H3  | Relationship instability            | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H4  | Employment problems                 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H5  | Substance use problems              | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H6  | Major mental illness                | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H7  | Psychopathy                         | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H8  | Early maladjustment                 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H9  | Personality disorder                | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H10 | Prior supervision failure           | 0 | 1 | 2 |

**HCR-20 CLINICAL ITEMS**

|    |                                         |   |   |   |
|----|-----------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| C1 | Lack of insight                         | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| C2 | Negative attitudes                      | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| C3 | Active symptoms of major mental illness | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| C4 | Impulsivity                             | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| C5 | Unresponsive to treatment               | 0 | 1 | 2 |

**HCR-20 RISK MANAGEMENT ITEMS**

|    |                                          |   |   |   |
|----|------------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| R1 | Plans lack feasibility                   | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| R2 | Exposure to destabilisers                | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| R3 | Lack of personal support                 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| R4 | Non compliance with remediation attempts | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| R5 | Stress                                   | 0 | 1 | 2 |

**Risk of Reoffending - Mother**

|        |       |                    |
|--------|-------|--------------------|
|        | Score | Estimation of risk |
| Mother |       |                    |

\*Estimation of risk is Low, Medium or High

**HISTORY OF VIOLENCE/ABUSE - FATHER**

FHV1. Childhood violence/abuse history

☐ Yes☐ NoFHV1a. *If yes, type(s) abuse*☐ Physical☐ Neglect☐ Emotional/psychological☐ Sexual

FHV2. Nature of exposure

☐ Direct victim☐ Indirect victim

FHV3. Perpetrator of abuse

☐ Mother☐ Father☐ Mother's partner☐ Father's partner☐ Other, specify:FHV4. Previous threats of violence received ☐ Yes☐ NoFHV4a. *If yes, type of threat*☐ Physical☐ Sexual☐ Psychological☐ Economical☐ Social



FHV5. Made previous threats of violence ☐ Yes ☐ No

FHV5a. *If yes, type of threat*

- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Psychological
- ☐ Economical
- ☐ Social

FHV6. Committed violent acts in the past ☐ Yes ☐ No

*If yes,*

FHV6a. How often?

- ☐ 1-2 acts ☐ 3 or more acts

FHV6b. Did the victim(s) require hospitalisation/medical attention?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

FHV6c. Type of violent act

- ☐ General violence
- ☐ Spousal directed violence
- ☐ Child directed violence
- ☐ Other, specify:

FHV6d. If Spousal/Child directed, type of domestic violence (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Psychological
- ☐ Economic
- ☐ Social

FHV7. Use of weapons and/or credible threats of death in the past

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

## FHV8. Past violation of IVOs

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

## FHV9. Extreme minimisation or denial of spousal assault history

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

## FHV10. Attitudes that support or condone spousal assault

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

FHV11. Age of first violent act    ☐ < 20    ☐ between 20-39    ☐ > 40

## FHV12. Consequence of violent behaviour

- ☐ Police intervention
- ☐ Remanded in custody
- ☐ Court attendance
- ☐ Family Violence Order
- ☐ Conviction
- ☐ Prison sentence

Substance Use

FHV13. Current Substance use/abuse

☐ Yes☐ NoFHV13a. *If yes, specify*☐ Alcohol☐ Cannabis☐ Opiates☐ Amphetamines☐ Ecstasy☐ Abuse of prescription medication☐ Abuse of over the counter medication☐ Other:

FHV14. Substance use history

☐ Yes☐ NoFHV14a. *If yes, specify*☐ Alcohol☐ Cannabis☐ Opiates☐ Amphetamines☐ Ecstasy☐ Abuse of prescription medication☐ Abuse of over the counter medication☐ Other:

Psychological functioning

FHV15. History of psychological maladjustment

☐ Yes☐ NoFHV15a. *If yes, specify*☐ Drug related☐ Personality disorder, specify:☐ Anxiety☐ Depression☐ PTSD☐ Bipolar Disorder☐ Schizophrenia☐ Learning disability☐ Intellectual disability☐ Other:

FHV16. Trauma history (childhood abuse exempt)

☐ Yes☐ NoFHV16a. *If yes, specify*☐ Rape☐ Physical assault☐ Domestic violence☐ Death of a child☐ Death of a partner☐ Other traumatic event, specify:

## FHV17. Other psychological problems

☐ Yes☐ NoFHV17c. *If yes, specify,*☐ Gambling☐ Self-harm☐ Suicidal ideation☐ Suicide attempt☐ Anger management☐ Other:

## FHV18. Criminal History

☐ Yes☐ NoFHV18a. *If yes, specify*☐ Crimes against property☐ Crimes against person☐ Crimes against children☐ Drug related☐ Traffic offences☐ Sex offences☐ Prostitution☐ Family violence order (FVO)☐ Other:

## FHV19. History of imprisonment

☐ Yes☐ No*If yes, specify*

## FHV19a. Number of imprisonments:

## FHV19b. Longest duration:

FHV19c. ☐ Remand only☐ Breach of FVO☐ Other:

## FHV20. Relationship with extended family

- ☐ Close relationships with own extended family
- ☐ Close relationships with ex-partner's family
- ☐ No relationship with extended family

## FHV21. Employment problems

- ☐ Possible/Less serious employment problems
- ☐ Definite/serious employment problems
- ☐ No Employment problems

*If No or Possible Employment problems, Current occupation? How long in current occupation? And value on Occupation Scale?*

## FHV21a. Current Occupation

---

## FHV21b. Years &amp; months

---

## FHV21c. Occupation Scale Value

---

## FHV22. Major mental illness

- ☐ No major mental illness
- ☐ Possible/less serious major mental illness
- ☐ Definite/severe major mental illness

## FHV23. Psychopathy

- ☐ Non psychopathic
- ☐ Possible/less serious psychopathy
- ☐ Definite/serious psychopathy

FHV24. Early Maladjustment

- ☐ Present
- ☐ Not Present

If Present,

a) *Maladjustment in:*

- |                                    |                               |                                   |                                 |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School    | <input type="checkbox"/> Mild | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Mild | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home      | <input type="checkbox"/> Mild | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe |

b) *Severity:*

c) *If at home:*

- ☐ Witnessed abuse (abuse of parent)
- ☐ Experienced abuse (childhood abuse)

FHV25. Personality Disorder

- ☐ No Personality disorder
- ☐ Personality disorder symptoms
- ☐ Diagnosed Personality disorder

FHV26. Prior supervision failure

- ☐ No supervision failure(s)
- ☐ Less serious supervision failure(s)
- ☐ Serious supervision failure(s)

**Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (fPMWI)**

*This questionnaire asks about actions you may have experienced in your relationship with your partner. Answer each item as carefully as you can by circling each one as follows:*

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Occasionally
- 4 = Frequently
- 5 = Very frequently
- N/A = Not applicable

In the past six months:

| 1  | My partner put down my physical appearance                                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 2  | My partner insulted me or shamed me in front of others                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 3  | My partner treated me like I was stupid.                                                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 4  | My partner was insensitive to my feelings.                                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 5  | My partner told me I couldn't manage or take care of myself without her                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 6  | My partner put down my care of the children.                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 7  | My partner criticized the way I took care of the house                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 8  | My partner said something to spite me.                                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 9  | My partner brought up something from the past                                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 10 | My partner called me names.                                                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 11 | My partner swore at me                                                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 12 | My partner yelled and screamed at me                                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 13 | My partner treated me like an inferior                                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 14 | My partner sulked or refused to talk about a problem                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 15 | My partner stomped out of the house or yard during a disagreement                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 16 | My partner gave me the silent treatment or acted like I wasn't there                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 17 | My partner withheld affection from me                                                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 18 | My partner did not let me talk about my feelings                                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 19 | My partner was insensitive to my sexual needs and desires                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 20 | My partner demanded obedience to her whims                                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 21 | My partner became upset if dinner, housework, or laundry was not done when she thought it should be | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 22 | My partner acted like I was her personal servant                                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 23 | My partner did not do a fair share of the household tasks                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 24 | My partner did not do a fair share of childcare                                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 25 | My partner ordered me around                                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 26 | My partner monitored my time and made me account for my whereabouts                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 27 | My partner was stingy in giving me money to                                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |



|    |                                                                                                |   |   |   |   |   |     |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
|    | run our home                                                                                   |   |   |   |   |   |     |
| 28 | My partner acted irresponsibly with our financial resources                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 29 | My partner did not contribute enough to supporting our family                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 30 | My partner used our money or made important financial decisions without talking to me about it | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 31 | My partner kept me from getting medical care that I needed.                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 32 | My partner was jealous or suspicious of my friends                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 33 | My partner was jealous of other women                                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 34 | My partner did not want me to go to school or do other self-improvement activities             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 35 | My partner did not want me to socialize with my male friends                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 36 | My partner accused me of having an affair with another woman                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 37 | My partner demanded that I stay home and take care of the children                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 38 | My partner tried to keep me from seeing or talking to my family                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 39 | My partner interfered in my relationships with other family members                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 40 | My partner tried to keep me from doing things to help myself                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 41 | My partner restricted my use of the car                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 42 | My partner restricted my use of the telephone                                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 43 | My partner did not allow me to leave the house                                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 44 | My partner did not allow me to work                                                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 45 | My partner told me my feelings were irrational or crazy                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 46 | My partner blamed me for her problems                                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 47 | My partner tried to turn my family against me                                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 48 | My partner blamed me for causing her violent behaviour                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 49 | My partner tried to make me feel crazy                                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 50 | My partner's moods changed radically                                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 51 | My partner blamed me when she was upset                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 52 | My partner tried to convince me I was crazy                                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 53 | My partner threatened to hurt herself if I left                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 54 | My partner threatened to hurt herself if I didn't do what she wanted me to do                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 55 | My partner threatened to have an affair                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 56 | My partner threatened to leave the relationship                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 57 | My partner threatened to take our children away from me                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |
| 58 | My partner threatened to commit me to an institution                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | N/A |

**Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (fPMWI)  
Scoring**

Items are grouped into two subscales.

The 26-item Dominance/Isolation subscale consists of items:

1, 5, 7, 21, 22, 25-28, 30-36, 38-44, 47, 52, and 55.

The 23-item Emotional/Verbal subscale consists of items:

2-4, 8-20, 45, 46, and 48.

Point values given in response to each item are summed to create total subscale scores. Higher scores are indicative of more maltreatment.

**fPMWI Dominance/Isolation Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**fPMWI Emotional/Verbal Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**fPMWI Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Abusive Behaviour Inventory (fABI)**

*Here is a list of behaviours that many women report have been used by their partners or former partners. We would like you to estimate how often these behaviours occurred during the past six months.*

*CIRCLE a number for each of the items to show your closest estimate of how often it happened in your relationship with your partner or former partner during the past six months.*

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Occasionally
- 4 = Frequently
- 5 = Very frequently

|     |                                                                                                                                              |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  | Called you a name and/or criticized you                                                                                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2.  | Tried to keep you from doing something you wanted to do (e.g., going out with friends, going to meetings).                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  | Gave you angry stares or looks.                                                                                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  | Prevented you from having money for your own use                                                                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  | Ended a discussion with you and made the decision herself.                                                                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  | Threatened to hit or throw something at you.                                                                                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  | Pushed, grabbed, or shoved you                                                                                                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  | Put down your family and friends.                                                                                                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  | Accused you of paying too much attention to someone or something else                                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | Put you on an allowance                                                                                                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | Used your children to threaten you (e.g., told you that you would lose custody, said she would leave town with the children).                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | Became very upset with you because dinner, housework, or laundry was not ready when she wanted it or done the way she thought it should be.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | Said things to scare you (e.g., told you something "bad would happen, threatened to commit suicide).                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. | Slapped, hit, or punched you.                                                                                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. | Made you do something humiliating or degrading (e.g., begging for forgiveness, having to ask her permission to use the car or do something). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. | Checked up on you (e.g., listened to your phone calls, checked the mileage on your car, called you repeatedly at work).                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. | Drove recklessly when you were in the car.                                                                                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. | Pressured you to have sex in a way that you                                                                                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

|     |                                                                |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
|     | didn't like or want.                                           |   |   |   |   |   |
| 19. | Refused to do housework or childcare.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. | Threatened you with a knife, gun, or other weapon.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. | Spanked you.                                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. | Told you that you were a bad parent                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. | Stopped you or tried to stop you from going to work or school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. | Threw, hit, kicked, or smashed something                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. | Kicked you.                                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. | Physically forced you to have sex                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. | Threw you around.                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. | Physically attacked the sexual parts of your body              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. | Choked or strangled you                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. | Used a knife, gun, or other weapon against you                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Abusive Behaviour Inventory Scoring

Psychological abuse items:

1- 5, 8-13, 15- 17, 19, 22 and 23

*The mean score of these items is computed by summing the values of the items and dividing by the applicable number of items. Higher scores are indicative of greater psychological abuse.*

Physical abuse items:

6, 7, 14, 18, 20, 21, 24-30

*The mean score of these items is computed by summing the values of the items and dividing by the applicable number of items. Higher scores are indicative of greater psychological abuse.*

**fABI Psychological Abuse score: \_\_\_\_\_**

**fABI Physical Abuse score: \_\_\_\_\_**

SARA (fSARA)

|     | GENERAL VIOLENCE RISK FACTORS                             | Critical (3) | Present (2) | Possible (1) | Absent (0) |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
|     | <i>Spousal Assault History</i>                            |              |             |              |            |
| 1.  | Past physical assault                                     | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 2.  | Past sexual assault/sexual jealousy                       | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 3.  | Past use of weapons and/or credible threats of death      | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 4.  | Recent escalation in frequency or severity of assault     | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 5.  | Past violation of "no contact" orders                     | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 6.  | Extreme minimisation or denial of spousal assault history | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 7.  | Attitudes that support or condone spousal assault         | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
|     | <i>Alleged/Most Recent Offense</i>                        |              |             |              |            |
| 8.  | Severe and/or sexual assault                              | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 9.  | Use of weapons and/or credible threats of death           | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
| 10. | Violation of "no contact" order                           | 3            | 2           | 1            | 0          |
|     | <i>Other considerations</i>                               |              |             |              |            |
| A   |                                                           |              |             |              |            |
| B   |                                                           |              |             |              |            |
| C   |                                                           |              |             |              |            |
|     |                                                           |              | Total A1:   | Total B1:    |            |

|     |                                                                          |   |           |           |   |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|---|
|     | SPOUSAL ABUSE SPECIFIC RISK FACTORS                                      |   |           |           |   |
|     | <i>Criminal History</i>                                                  |   |           |           |   |
| 11. | Past assault of family members                                           | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 12. | Past assault of strangers or acquaintances                               | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 13. | Past violation of conditional release or community supervision           | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
|     | <i>Psychosocial Adjustment</i>                                           |   |           |           |   |
| 14. | Recent relationship problems                                             | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 15. | Recent employment problems                                               | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 16. | Victim of and/or witness to family violence as a child or adolescent     | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 17. | Recent substance abuse/dependence                                        | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 18. | Recent suicidal or homicidal ideation/intent                             | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 19. | Recent psychotic and/or manic symptoms                                   | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
| 20. | Personality disorder with anger, impulsivity, or behavioural instability | 3 | 2         | 1         | 0 |
|     |                                                                          |   | Total A2: | Total B2: |   |

**Scoring the SARA for Father**

A1 \_\_\_\_ + A2 \_\_\_\_ = **Factors Present** \_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_ + B1 \_\_\_\_ + B2 \_\_\_\_ = **Total Score** \_\_\_\_

**\*\*Presence of ≥ 8 risk factors or a total score > 19 is high risk of IPV**

**Psychopathy Checklist (fPCL)**

|    |                                   |   |   |   |
|----|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1  | Glibness/superficial charm        | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 2  | Grandiosity                       | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 3  | Pathological lying                | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 4  | Conning/manipulation              | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 5  | Lack of remorse/guilt             | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 6  | Shallow affect                    | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 7  | Callous/lack of empathy           | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 8  | Failure to accept responsibility  | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 9  | Many marital relationships        | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 10 | Need for stimulation              | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 11 | Parasitic lifestyle               | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 12 | Poor behavioural controls         | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 13 | Early behaviour problems          | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 14 | Lack of long term plans           | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 15 | Impulsivity                       | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 16 | Irresponsibility                  | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 17 | Juvenile delinquency              | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 18 | Revocation of conditional release | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 19 | Criminal versatility              | 0 | 1 | 2 |

**Psychopathy Total score: \_\_\_\_\_**

**HCR (fHCR)**  
HCR-20 HISTORICAL ITEMS

|     |                                     |   |   |   |
|-----|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| H1  | Previous violence                   | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H2  | Young age at first violent incident | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H3  | Relationship instability            | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H4  | Employment problems                 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H5  | Substance use problems              | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H6  | Major mental illness                | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H7  | Psychopathy                         | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H8  | Early maladjustment                 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H9  | Personality disorder                | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| H10 | Prior supervision failure           | 0 | 1 | 2 |

HCR-20 CLINICAL ITEMS

|    |                                         |   |   |   |
|----|-----------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| C1 | Lack of insight                         | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| C2 | Negative attitudes                      | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| C3 | Active symptoms of major mental illness | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| C4 | Impulsivity                             | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| C5 | Unresponsive to treatment               | 0 | 1 | 2 |

HCR-20 RISK MANAGEMENT ITEMS

|    |                                          |   |   |   |
|----|------------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| R1 | Plans lack feasibility                   | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| R2 | Exposure to destabilisers                | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| R3 | Lack of personal support                 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| R4 | Non compliance with remediation attempts | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| R5 | Stress                                   | 0 | 1 | 2 |

**Risk of Reoffending - Father**

|        | Score | Estimation of risk |
|--------|-------|--------------------|
| Father |       |                    |

\*Estimation of risk is Low, Medium or High



**CURRENT VIOLENCE-RELATED ITEMS - Mother**

MCV1. Current partner violence

☐ Yes

☐ No

MCV1a(i). *If yes, Type of violence*

☐ Physical

☐ Neglect

☐ Emotional/psychological

☐ Sexual

MCV1a. Consequence of violence

☐ Physical injury caused

☐ Medical attention required

☐ Police intervention

☐ Remanded in custody

☐ Court attendance

☐ Conviction

☐ Prison sentence

☐ Other, specify:

MCV2. Current violence against children

☐ Yes

☐ No

MCV2a(i). *If yes, Type of violence*

☐ Physical

☐ Neglect

☐ Emotional/psychological

☐ Sexual

## MCV2a. Consequence of violence

- ☐ Physical injury caused
- ☐ Medical attention required
- ☐ Police intervention
- ☐ Remanded in custody
- ☐ Court attendance
- ☐ Conviction
- ☐ Prison sentence
- ☐ Other, specify:

## MCV3. Current violence against others

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

MCV3a. *If yes, who was the violence against*

- ☐ Family members
- ☐ Friends/acquaintances
- ☐ Strangers

## MCV3a(i). Type of violence

- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Emotional/psychological
- ☐ Sexual

## MCV3b. Consequence of violence

- ☐ Physical injury caused
- ☐ Medical attention required
- ☐ Police intervention
- ☐ Remanded in custody
- ☐ Court attendance
- ☐ Conviction
- ☐ Prison sentence
- ☐ Other, specify:

## MCV4. Recent escalation in frequency or severity of assault

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold

☐ Present

MCV5. Most recent offence:

☐ No criminal history → Skip MCV6 – MCV9

MCV6. Most recent offence severe and/or sexual assault

☐ Absent

☐ Sub-threshold

☐ Present

MCV7. Most recent offence use of weapons and/or credible threats of death

☐ Absent

☐ Sub-threshold

☐ Present

MCV8. Most recent offence violation of IVO

☐ Absent

☐ Sub-threshold

☐ Present

MCV9. Current Substance use/abuse ←

☐ Yes

☐ No

MCV10. *If yes, specify*

☐ Alcohol

☐ Cannabis

☐ Opiates

☐ Amphetamines

☐ Ecstasy

☐ Abuse of prescription medication

☐ Abuse of over the counter medication

☐ Other:

**CURRENT VIOLENCE-RELATED ITEMS - Father**

FCV1. Current partner violence

☐ Yes

☐ No

FCV1a(i). *If yes, Type of violence*

☐ Physical

☐ Neglect

☐ Emotional/psychological

☐ Sexual

FCV1a. Consequence of violence

☐ Physical injury caused

☐ Medical attention required

☐ Police intervention

☐ Remanded in custody

☐ Court attendance

☐ Conviction

☐ Prison sentence

☐ Other, specify:

FCV2. Current violence against children

☐ Yes

☐ No

FCV2a(i). *If yes, Type of violence*

☐ Physical

☐ Neglect

☐ Emotional/psychological

☐ Sexual

## FCV2a. Consequence of violence

- ☐ Physical injury caused
- ☐ Medical attention required
- ☐ Police intervention
- ☐ Remanded in custody
- ☐ Court attendance
- ☐ Conviction
- ☐ Prison sentence
- ☐ Other, specify:

## FCV3. Current violence against others

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

FCV3a. *If yes, who was the violence against*

- ☐ Family members
- ☐ Friends/acquaintances
- ☐ Strangers

FCV3a(i). *If yes, Type of violence*

- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Neglect
- ☐ Emotional/psychological
- ☐ Sexual

## FCV3b. Consequence of violence

- ☐ Physical injury caused
- ☐ Medical attention required
- ☐ Police intervention
- ☐ Remanded in custody
- ☐ Court attendance
- ☐ Conviction
- ☐ Prison sentence
- ☐ Other, specify:

FCV4. Recent escalation in frequency or severity of assault

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

FCV5. Most recent offence:

- ☐ No criminal history → Skip FCV6 – FCV9

FCV6. Most recent offence severe and/or sexual assault

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

FCV7. Most recent offence use of weapons and/or credible threats of death

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

FCV8. Most recent offence violation of IVO

- ☐ Absent
- ☐ Sub-threshold
- ☐ Present

FCV9. Current Substance use/abuse ←

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

FCV10. *If yes, specify*

- ☐ Alcohol
- ☐ Cannabis
- ☐ Opiates
- ☐ Amphetamines
- ☐ Ecstasy
- ☐ Abuse of prescription medication
- ☐ Abuse of over the counter medication
- ☐ Other:

**Other FV variables**

FV1. Confidence in truthfulness of FV claim

- ☐ High Confidence
- ☐ Low Confidence
- ☐ No Confidence