**Introduction**

Domestic abuse has always been a dirty little secret that has remained quiet or gone unchallenged until the past few decades. Once attention was brought to the matter many people began to open their closed doors and tried to seek help. Recently however, it has been thrust into the limelight of popular culture in the past several years through celebrity couples’ relationships and their omnipresence in the media. Popular R&B couple Chris Brown and Rihanna seemed like America’s sweethearts until early 2009 when Brown severely brutalized Rihanna, opening up the horrifying secret of abuse in their relationship (MSNBC, 2009). Later that same year, golfer Tiger Woods and supermodel wife Elin Nordegren got into an argument when news of Wood’s infidelity surfaced and which drove Elin to attack him, ironically, with his own golf club (Huffington Post, 2009). While celebrity gossip is always entertaining, there lies a more profound issue here. The fact of the matter is that when Rihanna (a female) was victimized, the whole world felt such strongly agree got into an argument when news of to attack him, ironically, with the scale. For example: “The strongly agree Nordegren scale where his or her beliefs stood (1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree) the husband was a stay home mother. The other two conditions contained non-working outside of the house as a businessman and the wife was a stay-home father. Two conditions contained traditional gender roles where the husband was the abuser/perpetrator and the wife was the victim and two conditions had it set up where the wife was the abuser/perpetrator and the husband was the victim. Two conditions had the scenario in the news article set up where the wife was the abuser/perpetrator and the husband was the victim.

**Methods**

Male and female undergraduate students (N=42) from a small, Midwestern university participated in the study. Participants were asked to carefully read through a short news article, which was altered slightly between the conditions in order to convey the independent variables. The article depicted a story of a repeatedly abusive individual who attacked his/her spouse by bludgeoning the victim in the head with a broom and then the victim falling down the stairs. Afterwards, the subjects were then asked to complete a survey that asked questions regarding severity of the crime that was described in the corresponding news article.

**Design**

These questions were set up on a seven-point Likert scale. For example: “The severity of this crime warrants legal repercussions.” The subject would then indicate on the Likert scale where his or her beliefs stood (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

**Sex of Perpetrator**

Two conditions had the scenario in the news article set up where the husband was the abuser/perpetrator with the wife as the victim and two conditions had it set up where the wife was the abuser/perpetrator and the husband as the victim.

**Gender Roles of Spouses**

Two conditions contained traditional gender roles where the husband was working outside of the house as a businessman and the wife was a stay-at-home mother. The other two conditions contained non-traditional gender roles where the wife was working outside the house as a businesswoman and the husband was a stay-at-home father.

**Results & Discussion**

After looking over the results that have been collected, there are some points that are worth mentioning. The main effect of the “Sex of Perpetrator” appears to be larger than it may actually be because of the condition in which the the wife was a businesswoman and was abusive to her stay-at-home husband. This being said, there is no denying the significance that males were judged more harshly regardless of gender roles. This fits with the hypothesis perfectly. The largest curiosity resides in that fourth condition (in which the female was a businesswoman and abusive). A personal belief is that subjects in this condition were presented with two separate anomalies that defy the average situation in American families – both the female and the breadwinner of the family as well as their being abusive to her husband that they were uncertain of how to feel as no schema exists for this type of situation. Ultimately, one may contend that seeing males in a position of stereotyped weakness (a stay-at-home father) may lead them to lack empathy for his situation given his choice of lifestyle. However, there are many possible explanations and more research must be done to determine anything farther. There were also two limitations within this study. First, the sample size is quite small, which may lead to error. Second, there were only a few males who participated in the study. Gender differences may call for different results if the sample was more representative of both males and females. Ultimately, we must be cautious in making connections between gender roles and domestic violence perceptions, but the results are very interesting to ponder. So far what has been elicited is purely descriptive.

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**Graph 1**

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Roles</th>
<th>Sex of Perpetrator</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5.6429</td>
<td>55328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.1587</td>
<td>60796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-traditional</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5.5974</td>
<td>47302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.3571</td>
<td>60703</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main Effect: Gender Roles  
F(1,38) = 5.96, p<.019

Main Effect: Sex of Perpetrator  
F(1,38) = 24.69, p<.001

*Interaction: Gender Roles and Sex  
F(1,38) = 4.74, p<.036