



MAY 2010

Letter to the Editor

Boys are being raised differently today

To the editor:

Editor's note – The email was addressed to columnist Gary Gwilliam.

I just read your article which is the subject of lively debate on CELA's listserv. You are either a brave man or a glutton for punishment to tackle such an emotionally charged issue.

For the most part, I happen to agree with you that the surge in numbers of

women attorneys is one, of several factors perhaps leading to fewer trials. In general, I think there is a new paradigm for conflict resolution across the board. I think the A-Bomb and the nuclear arms race started this change (as in Mutually Assured Destruction). Political scientists herald "Soft Power" over "Hard Power". Given the state budget crisis, increasing court congestion and the dramatic rise in the cost of litigating, I think attorneys in general are becoming more practical-minded. I guess I differ from you in seeing this as a bad trend.

I took off seven years to be a full time parent when my daughter, now 10 was born. I worked one day a week at my gym's childwatch, volunteered in the classroom, did babysitting swapping and was in a playgroup with boys and girls. I did notice a difference in the way the girls

and boys played – with boys tending to be more "violent" and girls tending to be more verbal. However, I think expectations regarding this are changing and more parents, teachers and caretakers are making it clear to the boys that their rough play is not acceptable and they need to "talk it out" or "work it out" without resorting to physical fighting. So even the boys are being raised to prefer mediation over trying a case.

Another thing I noticed regarding girls, which I do not recall from my childhood, is how nasty and verbally bullying some girls can be, especially middle school girls. If these verbal bullies grow up to become lawyers, I do not know what that will do to the status of trials. Maybe mediations will get really nasty with lots of inappropriate personal attacks.

– **Marjorie Wallace**, Walnut Creek, CA