



Domestic Violence within Same-Sex Partnerships is Increasing

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Introduction

- Domestic violence (DV) affects over six million men and women in the United States with 25%-33% of the incidents occurring in same-sex partnerships (Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013).
- DV is also known as Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and may include hitting, pushing, stalking, coercion, violence, and rape.
- The subject is taboo because it shatters the illusion that women are always the victims and men are always the perpetrators in DV incidents.
- Research shows that 47% of lesbians and 26% of gay men have experienced DV (Banks & Fedwa, 2012; Walters, 2013).
- Same-sex domestic violence (SSDV) creates a higher risk for more complex traumatic experiences due to difficulties in both reporting and finding help and services (Stiels-Shields & Carroll, 2014).
- In addition, lesbians and gay men face more societal and cultural biases against them (Banks & Fedwa, 2012; Blasam & Szymanski, 2005).

- Many victims of SSDV are afraid to seek treatment or do not know where to seek treatment as are heterosexual victims of DV, but homophobic biases create a larger deterrent to same-sex victims reporting DV crimes committed against them.
- Same-sex DV incidents are thought to be largely under reported as are DV incidents in heterosexual partners.

Forensic Implications

- The victim of SSDV experiences DV in the context of both gender bias and bias based on sexual orientation.
- Because of this, a victim in isolation, under another's violent control, may stay with his or her partner for fear of becoming homeless or jobless.
- Many SSDV victims report high levels of discrimination when trying to seek legal services such as the attempt to obtain a Protection from Abuse Order and/or DV services such as counseling, entering a DV shelter, and other DV related therapeutic services (Bornstein, Fawcett, Sullivan, Senturia & Shiu-Thornton, 2006; Stiles-Shields & Carroll, 2015).

INCREASE IN SSDV REPORTS TO LAW ENFORCEMENT



Conclusions

- DV perpetrators and victims can be any gender.
- Same sex domestic violence research is limited in regards to legal rights, policies and discrimination, which are issues that may deter a victim from seeking help or making a report.
- No-one in a DV situation-- same-sex or otherwise-- should be afraid to make a report, seek assistance, leave an abusive relationship, and seek treatment.
- However, many victims may feel helpless and stay in an abusive relationship because there are fewer clear paths that a victim of SSDV can take to receive the assistance that is so desperately needed.

Future Research

- More data is needed to fill gaps in the literature. The nature of SSDV needs to be clearly defined and better understood.
- Relevant research should be used to create better policies and protections for SSDV victims.

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