

## ***Brief Report***

# **Comparing Violence Over the Life Span in Samples of Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Cohabitants**

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Using data from a nationally representative telephone survey that was conducted from November 1995 to May 1996, this study compares lifetime experiences with violent victimization among men and women with a history of same-sex cohabitation and their counterparts with a history of marriage and/or opposite-sex cohabitation only. The study found that respondents who had lived with a same-sex intimate partner were significantly more likely than respondents who had married or lived with an opposite-sex partner only to have been: (a) raped as minors and adults; (b) physically assaulted as children by adult caretakers; and (c) physically assaulted as adults by all types of perpetrators, including intimate partners. The study also confirms previous reports that intimate partner violence is more prevalent among gay male couples than heterosexual couples. However, it contradicts reports that intimate partner violence is more prevalent among lesbian couples than heterosexual couples. Overall study findings suggest that intimate partner violence is perpetrated primarily by men, whether against same-sex or opposite-sex partners.

This article provides results of a study that compares lifetime experiences with violent victimization among men and women who have lived with same-sex intimate partners and men and women who have married or lived with opposite-sex intimate partners only. Specific types of violence considered are forcible rape experienced over the life span by all types of perpetrators; physical assault experienced as a child at the hands of an adult caretaker; and physical assault experienced as an adult by all types of perpetrators, including intimate partners. Information for the study comes from the National Violence Against Women (NVAW) Survey, a national telephone survey on women's and men's experiences with violent victimization that was sponsored jointly by the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.<sup>1</sup>

Few nationally representative surveys have distinguished between homosexual and heterosexual populations with respect to violent victimization, and the result is a paucity of empirical data on how victimization prevalence compares among gay and straight men and women. Although the NVAW Survey was not specifically designed to compare the victimization experiences of homosexuals and heterosexuals—indeed, it did not even query respondents about their sexual orientation—it did gather information about respondents' experiences with same-sex and opposite-sex intimate cohabiting relationships. As such, it provides an opportunity to compare victimization rates among men and women who represent a segment of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual population (i.e., those who have ever lived with a same-sex intimate partner) and men and women who represent a segment of the straight population (i.e., those who have ever been married to or cohabited with an opposite-sex intimate partner, but never a same-sex intimate partner).

For ease of reading, these two groups will be referred to, respectively, as “same-sex cohabitants” and “opposite-sex cohabitants.” It is important to note that because the survey did not query respondents about how they identified their sexual orientation, individuals who self-identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual at the time of the interview, but never lived with a same-sex intimate partner, may be included in the “opposite-sex cohabitant” group. Conversely, individuals who self-identified as straight at the time of the interview, but lived with a same-sex intimate partner at some time in their life, may be included in the “same-sex cohabitant” group.

It is also important to note that the findings presented in this article are descriptive and exploratory, rather than explanatory. Without further research it is difficult to know what the findings mean with respect to either the context or the causes of violence against gays and lesbians. Therefore, this article concludes not with a discussion of what the findings mean, but a discussion of what their implications are for future research.

## **PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON VIOLENCE AGAINST GAYS AND LESBIANS**

Previous studies on violence against gays and lesbians have focused on intimate partner violence, childhood victimization, sexual coercion, or hate-crime violence. Prevalence estimates generated from these studies are limited because they are based on small samples or samples of convenience that neither represent the general population nor the population of gays and lesbians. Moreover, because studies of violence against gays and lesbians vary widely with respect to methods (e.g., differing definitions of violence, time frames for victimization, and sampling procedures), their findings are difficult to compare. And, as Renzetti (1997) points out, it is doubtful that the prevalence of gay and lesbian domestic violence can be accurately estimated as long as the stigma attached to same-sex relationships causes gays and lesbians to hide their sexual identities from others, including researchers. Despite these shortcomings, previous research on violence perpetrated against gays and lesbians provides an important context in which to place the current findings.

### **Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence**

Numerous studies using samples of convenience have focused on intimate partner violence in lesbian relationships (Brand & Kidd, 1986; Coleman, 1991; Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council Survey, 1987; Lie & Gentlewarrier, 1991; Lockhart, White, Causby, & Isaac,

1994; Loulan, 1987; Perry, 1995; Scherzer, 1998; Schilit, Lie, & Montagne, 1990; Waldner-Haugrud, Gratch, & Magruder, 1997). Results from these studies indicate that the prevalence of intimate partner violence in lesbian relationships may be very similar to the prevalence of intimate partner violence in heterosexual relationships. Between 17% and 52% of lesbians in these studies had been abused by a current or former partner. The only study that included a heterosexual comparison group found that 25% of the women in homosexual relationships, compared with 27% of the women in heterosexual relationships, had been physically abused by their intimate partners at some time in the relationship (Brand & Kidd, 1986).

It should be noted that some studies (i.e., Brand & Kidd, 1986; Lie & Gentlewarrior, 1991; Lie, Schlitt, Bush, Montagne, & Reyes, 1991; Renzetti, 1992; Scherzer, 1998; Waldner-Haugrud & Gratch, 1997; Waldner-Haugrud et al., 1997) clearly specified the gender of the perpetrator, while others did not (i.e., Duncan, 1990; Waterman, Dawson, & Bologna, 1989). It is likely that some of the perpetrators identified in these later studies included male partners, even though the studies were ostensibly about lesbian intimate partner violence. (For a discussion of this methodological problem with some previous studies see Waldner-Haugrud and Gratch, 1997.)

Only a handful of studies have examined the prevalence of intimate partner violence among gay men. Again, these studies are based on small, nonrandom samples. Respondents to these studies reported rates of abuse by a same-sex intimate partner that ranged from 17% to 30% (Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council Survey, 1987; Landolt & Dutton, 1995; Waldner-Haugrud et al., 1997). None of these studies included a heterosexual comparison group.

Waldner-Haugrud and Gratch (1997) surveyed a nonrandom sample of 162 gay men and 111 lesbians about their experiences with "sexual coercion" by same-sex intimate partners and found that 3.6% of gay males and 1.6% of lesbians reported having experienced forced penetration by a gay or lesbian partner at some time in their lives. Another study of sexual coercion in same-sex relationships, which relied on a nonrandom sample of 70 gay men and lesbians, reported that 12% of gay men and 31% of lesbians were the victim of at least one incident of forced sex by their current or most recent intimate partner (Waterman et al., 1989). However, the exact wording of the screening questions did not rule out the possibility that the forced sex could have been perpetrated by an opposite-sex intimate partner.

Official statistics on same-sex intimate partner violence are not available. Because the law often limits the definition of intimate partner violence to male-female couples (West, 1998) and because of a general lack of recognition of the issue of gay and lesbian domestic violence, police reports and government reports such as the National Criminal Victimization Survey do not include same-sex intimate partner violence.

### **Childhood Victimization**

Several studies have examined the association between childhood victimization and subsequent involvement in an abusive relationship among lesbians (Coleman, 1991; Kelly & Warshafsky, 1987; Lie et al., 1991; Lockhart et al., 1994; Renzetti, 1992). However, these studies used small, nonrandom samples and none included heterosexuals to allow for a comparison of rates of childhood victimization among lesbian and nonlesbian populations. Lie and colleagues (1991) found that lesbians who had experienced violent victimization in the home as children were significantly more likely to be abused in their intimate relationships as adults, to be abusive in their relationships, or both, when compared with lesbians who

did not experience abuse as children. Likewise, Lockhart and colleagues (1994) found that lesbians who had experienced abuse as children were more likely to experience abuse in their current lesbian relationships.

However, neither Coleman (1991) nor Kelly and Warshafsky (1987) found significant associations for lesbians and gay men between experiencing abuse as children and later being abused or perpetrating abuse in an adult intimate relationship. Renzetti (1992) found that lesbian batterers and victims were as likely to have grown up in nonabusive homes as abusive homes. Rates of lesbians witnessing parental aggression or experiencing aggression in their family of origin range from 33% to 73% (Kelly & Warshafsky, 1987; Lie et al., 1991; Renzetti, 1992). Again, it should be noted that these studies relied on small non-random samples which prevents their findings from being generalized to all lesbians. For example, the 73% childhood victimization figure comes from a study by Renzetti (1992) that involved in-depth interviews with 40 battered lesbians.

The National Lesbian Health Care Survey (Bradford, Ryan, & Rothblum, 1994), which consisted of interviews with 1,925 women, found that 24% of self-identified lesbians had been physically abused while growing up. Rates of childhood sexual abuse for lesbians range from 21% to 38% (Bradford & Ryan, 1988; Lie et al., 1991; Loulan, 1987). One study (Doll et al., 1992) examined rates of childhood sexual abuse for a nonrandom sample of 1,001 gay and bisexual men and found that 19% had been forced to have sexual contact before age 19 with an older or more powerful partner, of whom 94% were male. Again, it should be noted that these studies did not utilize random samples and therefore are not generalizable.

## **Sexual Coercion**

Duncan (1990) surveyed 412 undergraduates and found that students who identified as lesbian and gay were significantly more likely than heterosexual students to report that they had been forced to have sex against their will at some time in their lifetime. Specifically, 31% of lesbians and 12% of gays reported experiencing forced sex, compared with 18% of straight women and 4% of straight men. No information on perpetrator gender, victim-perpetrator relationship, or age of victimization was reported.

## **Hate Crimes**

Data on the frequency with which gay men and women experience hate-crime violence are also limited and more incidents of violence against lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are believed to go unreported than reported (Klinger & Stein, 1996). A total of 1,102 hate crimes based on sexual orientation were reported to the FBI in 1997. This figure constitutes 14% of all bias-motivated offenses reported that year. However, experts agree that FBI data dramatically understate the incidence of hate crimes because not all hate crimes are reported to the police and because not all police departments record or report hate crimes to the FBI (United States Department of Justice, 1998). The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs documented 2,552 antigay crimes in 1998 through their network of 26 community-based organizations across the United States. Of these, only 1,010 were reported to the police (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, 1999).

In a 1993 survey of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals in urban areas, 28% reported they had been assaulted or physically abused during the previous 12 months due to their sexual orientation and 50% reported they had been harassed (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, 1993). Based on another study conducted by the National Gay and Lesbian

Task Force, which gathered data on a nonrandom sample of 1,420 self-identified homosexual men and 654 self-identified homosexual women in eight cities, Berrill (1990) found that 19% of the respondents reported having been punched, hit, kicked or beaten on at least one occasion because of their sexual orientation. According to Berrill, other victimization surveys have found that between 9% to 38% of homosexuals have been victims of some type of hate crime during their lifetime, with gay men experiencing higher rates of physical violence than lesbians. In a more recent survey of 157 lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, 41% reported being the target of physical assaults, verbal harassment, threats, and vandalism of their property as a result of their sexual orientation (Herek, Gillis, Cogan, & Glunt, 1997).

## STUDY METHODOLOGY<sup>2</sup>

### Overview of the NVAW Survey

The NVAW Survey was conducted during November 1995-May 1996. The national sample was drawn by random-digit-dialing (RDD) from households with a telephone in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The sample was administered by U.S. Census region. Within each region a simple, random sample of working residential "hundreds banks" of phone numbers was drawn. (A hundreds bank is the first eight digits of any 10-digit telephone number.) A randomly generated two-digit number was appended to each randomly selected hundreds bank to produce the full 10-digit, random-digit number. Separate banks of numbers were generated for male and female respondents. When a residential household was contacted, eligible adults in each household were identified. In homes with multiple eligibles, the most-recent-birthday method was used to systematically select the designated respondent.

A total of 8,000 women and 8,000 men 18 years of age and older were interviewed using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system. Only female interviewers were used to interview women. For male respondents, half of the interviews were conducted by female interviewers and half by males. A Spanish language translation was administered by bilingual interviewers for Spanish-speaking respondents. The household participation rate was 72% for females, and 69% for males.

### Measures

**Relationship History.** Respondents were asked a series of questions about their intimate partner relationships, including whether they were currently married, separated, divorced, widowed or single; whether they were currently living with or had ever lived with an opposite-sex intimate partner; and whether they were currently living with or had ever lived with a same-sex intimate partner.

**Victimization Screening Questions.** Respondents were asked a series of behaviorally specific questions to determine whether they were ever the victim of a completed or attempted forcible rape. Included were questions about forced vaginal, anal, and oral sex. Respondents were also presented a modified version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) to determine whether they had ever experienced a physical assault as a child by an adult caretaker or a physical assault as an adult by any type of perpetrator.

**Victim-Perpetrator Relationship.** Respondents disclosing victimization were asked whether their perpetrator was a stranger, acquaintance, relative, spouse, ex-spouse, male/

female cohabiting partner, ex-male/female cohabiting partner, date or boyfriend/girlfriend, or ex-date or ex-boyfriend/girlfriend. Perpetrators who were current or former: spouses, or same-sex or opposite-sex cohabiting partners were defined as intimate partners for this study.

### **Generation of Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Cohabitant Subsamples**

Overall, 0.8% of all men surveyed ( $N = 65$ ) and 1.0% of all women surveyed ( $N = 79$ ) reported that they had lived with a same-sex partner "as a couple" at some time in their lives. These respondents were categorized as same-sex cohabitants for purposes of the study. Further analysis revealed that 0.4% of all men surveyed and 0.4% of all women surveyed were cohabiting with a same-sex intimate partner at the time of the survey. Based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates of the number of men and women in the country, an estimated 390,992 U.S. men and 402,788 U.S. women are living with a same-sex intimate partner at any given time in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

The authors know of no previous study that has assessed the prevalence of same-sex cohabiting relationships among men and women in the United States. However, several studies have examined the prevalence of homosexual behavior (Analyse des Comportements Sexuels en France [ACSF] Investigators, 1992; Billy, Tanfer, Grady, & Klepinger, 1993; Johnson, Wadsworth, Wellings, Bradshau, & Field, 1992; Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michels, 1994; Rogers & Turner, 1991). These studies indicate that between 4.1% and 10% of men and 2.6% and 4.1% of women have had at least one same-sex sexual experience in their lifetime. Two national sexuality surveys indicate that approximately 10% of the population identifies their sexual orientation as gay or lesbian (Gebhard, 1997; Janus & Janus, 1993). Compared with these estimates, the NVAW Survey estimates that 0.8% of all U.S. men and 1.0% of all U.S. women have ever lived with a same-sex intimate partner, and 0.4% of U.S. men and 0.4% of U.S. women are living with a same-sex intimate partner at any given time seem reasonable.

Among survey respondents, 86% of the men ( $N = 6,891$ ) and 90% of the women ( $N = 7,222$ ) had married or lived with an opposite-sex intimate partner at some time in their lives, but never a same-sex intimate partner. A randomly selected subsample of 300 of these men and 300 of these women was generated to provide a group with which to compare the victimization experiences of men and women who reported ever living with a same-sex intimate partner.

Select demographic characteristics of men and women in the two groups were compared to determine whether same-sex cohabitants differed significantly from opposite-sex cohabitants in ways that might influence rates of victimization. Although the respective samples differed significantly on some demographic variables, they did not differ in ways that would consistently predict higher levels of violence for same-sex cohabitants. For example, same-sex cohabiting women tended to be younger than opposite-sex cohabiting women, a factor that may predispose them to higher rates of victimization. However, same-sex cohabiting women also tended to have more education, more full-time employment, and somewhat higher incomes, factors that are inversely associated with victimization (see Table 1).

### **Analytic Techniques**

Data were analyzed using the program SPSS Base 7.0 for Windows software. Lambda was used to measure the degree of association between nominal-level independent and dependent variables and the chi-square statistic was used to test for statistically significant differences between male and female same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants ( $p$ -value  $\leq .05$ ). Any estimate that was based on five or fewer responses was deemed unreliable and was not tested for statistically significant differences and not presented in the tables.

**TABLE 1. Demographic Characteristics of Men and Women With Histories of Same-Sex Versus Opposite-Sex Cohabitation**

	Men (%)		Women (%)	
	Same-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 65)	Opposite-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 300)	Same-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 79)	Opposite-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 300)
Average age <sup>b</sup>	40.5	45.8	40.1	46.0
Percent employed full-time <sup>a, b</sup>	82.3	76.3	68.9	47.4
Percent college graduates <sup>b</sup>	47.7	30.1	43.0	22.5
Percent White <sup>b</sup>	76.6	81.6	91.0	82.5
Annual income of more than \$15,000 <sup>a, b</sup>	83.6	78.6	68.2	58.2

<sup>a</sup>Differences between male same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants are statistically significant:  $X^2$ ,  $p$ -value  $\leq .05$ . <sup>b</sup>Differences between female same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants are statistically significant:  $X^2$ ,  $p$ -value  $\leq .05$ .

**TABLE 2. Prevalence of Rape and Type of Perpetrator Among Men and Women With Histories of Same-Sex Versus Opposite-Sex Cohabitation**

	Men (%)		Women (%)	
	Same-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 65)	Opposite-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 300)	Same-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 79)	Opposite-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 300)
Percent raped:				
In lifetime <sup>a</sup>	26.2	— <sup>b</sup>	35.4	16.7
Before 18 <sup>a</sup>	15.4	— <sup>b</sup>	16.5	8.7
Since 18 <sup>a</sup>	10.8	— <sup>b</sup>	25.3	10.3
Distribution of victims by type of perpetrator <sup>c</sup>	( <i>n</i> = 17)	( <i>n</i> = 5)	( <i>n</i> = 28)	( <i>n</i> = 50)
Intimate partner	— <sup>b</sup>	— <sup>b</sup>	42.9	48.0
Relative	— <sup>b</sup>	— <sup>b</sup>	25.0	16.0
Acquaintance	41.2	— <sup>b</sup>	28.6	22.0
Stranger	35.3	— <sup>b</sup>	— <sup>b</sup>	28.0

<sup>a</sup>Differences between female same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants are statistically significant:  $X^2$ ,  $p$ -value  $\leq .05$ . <sup>b</sup>The number of victims is insufficient to reliably calculate estimates. <sup>c</sup>Percentages

## STUDY RESULTS

### Forcible Rape

The study found that same-sex cohabitating women were nearly twice as likely as opposite-sex cohabitating women to report being forcibly raped as a minor (16.5% versus 8.7%) and they were nearly three times more likely to report being forcibly raped as an adult (25.3% and 10.3%) (see Table 2). The study also found that 15.4% of same-sex cohabiting men were raped as a minor, while 10.8% of these respondents were raped as an adult (see Table 2). (The number of opposite-sex cohabiting men who were raped was insufficient to reliably calculate rape victimization estimates.)

In general, same-sex cohabiting men tended to be raped by strangers and acquaintances, while same-sex cohabiting women tended to be raped by intimate partners (see Table 2). The study also found that the vast majority of rape victims—regardless of gender or

cohabitation history—were raped by men. It is unclear from the survey data in what context same-sex cohabitants were raped or whether the context in which they were raped differs from the context in which opposite-sex cohabitants were raped.

### Physical Assault As a Child by an Adult Caretaker

Same-sex cohabitants were also significantly more likely to report being physically assaulted as a child by an adult caretaker than were opposite-sex cohabitants. Among men, 70.8% of the same-sex cohabitants compared with 50.3% of the opposite-sex cohabitants reported such violence. Among women the comparable figures are 59.5% and 35.7%, respectively (see Table 3).

The physical abuse experienced by same-sex cohabitants as children at the hands of adult caretakers was also more severe. For example, 20% of the same-sex cohabiting men reported that an adult caretaker beat them up when they were a child, compared with 4.7% of the opposite-sex cohabiting men. Similarly, 17.7% of the same-sex cohabiting women, but only 4.3% of the opposite-sex cohabiting women, reported that they were beat up as a child by an adult caretaker (see Table 3).

### Physical Assault As an Adult

The higher levels of physical assault experienced during childhood by same-sex cohabitants continued once they reached adulthood. While nearly two-thirds (64.6%) of the same-sex cohabiting men reported being physically assaulted as an adult, less than half (47%) of the opposite-sex cohabiting males did so. Similarly, over half (53.2%) of the same-sex cohabiting women reported being physically assaulted as an adult compared to less than a third (29.7%) of the opposite-sex cohabiting women (see Table 4).

**TABLE 3. Prevalence of Physical Assault As a Child by an Adult Caretaker Among Men and Women With Histories of Same-Sex Versus Opposite-Sex Cohabitation**

	Men (%)		Women (%)	
	Same-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 65)	Opposite-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 300)	Same-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 79)	Opposite-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 300)
Physical assault by parent or caretaker <sup>a, b</sup>	70.8	50.3	59.5	35.7
Throw something at you that could hurt you <sup>a, b</sup>	13.8	5.3	11.4	3.7
Push, grab, or shove you <sup>a, b</sup>	42.2	24.7	32.9	11.7
Pull your hair <sup>a, b</sup>	30.8	11.0	19.2	11.0
Slap or hit you <sup>a, b</sup>	64.6	41.5	51.9	30.1
Kick, bite, choke, or attempt to drown you <sup>a, b</sup>	10.8	4.3	10.1	2.0
Hit you with some object <sup>a, b</sup>	40.0	23.0	34.2	14.0
Beat you up <sup>a, b</sup>	20.0	4.7	17.7	4.3
Threaten/use a gun or knife <sup>a, b</sup>	10.8	2.0	8.9	2.0

<sup>a</sup>Differences between male same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants are statistically significant:  $X^2$ ,  $p$ -value  $\leq .05$ . <sup>b</sup>Differences between female same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants are statistically significant:  $X^2$ ,  $p$ -value  $\leq .05$ .

The study found that both same-sex and opposite-sex cohabiting men were most frequently assaulted by strangers. In comparison, both same-sex and opposite-sex cohabiting women were most frequently assaulted by intimates (see Table 4).

### Experiences With Intimate Partner Violence

The study found that same-sex cohabitants reported significantly more intimate partner violence than did opposite-sex cohabitants. For example, 23.1% of same-sex cohabiting men said they were raped and/or physically assaulted by a spouse or cohabiting partner at some time in their lives, compared with 7.7% of opposite-sex cohabiting men. And 39.2% of same-sex cohabiting women said they experienced such violence, compared with 20.3% of opposite-sex cohabiting women (see Table 5).

It is important to note, however, that same-sex cohabiting women were more than twice as likely to report being victimized by male intimate partners than by female intimate partners. For example, 30.4% of same-sex cohabiting women reported being raped and/or physically assaulted by a male intimate partner, while only 11.4% said they were raped and/or physically assaulted by a female intimate partner. The same pattern holds when only physical assaults are considered: 26.6% of the same-sex cohabiting women said they were physically assaulted at some time in their lives by a male intimate partner, while only 11.4% said they were physically assaulted at some time in their lives by a female intimate partner (see Table 5).

The study also found that same-sex cohabiting women reported less violence by their female partners than did opposite-sex cohabiting women by their male partners: While 11.4% of same-sex cohabiting women reported being raped and/or physically assaulted by a female intimate partner at some time in their lives, fully 20.3% of opposite-sex cohabiting women reported such violence by a male intimate partner (see Table 5). Thus, according to information generated by the NVAW Survey, women are far more likely to be assaulted by male intimate partners than by female intimate partners, regardless of their sexual orientation.

**TABLE 4. Prevalence of Physical Assault As an Adult and Type of Perpetrator Among Men and Women With Histories of Same-Sex Versus Opposite-Sex Cohabitation**

	Men (%)		Women (%)	
	Same-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 65)	Opposite-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 300)	Same-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 79)	Opposite-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 300)
Percent physically assaulted as an adult <sup>a, b</sup>	64.6	47.0	53.2	29.7
Distribution of victims by type of perpetrator <sup>c</sup>	( <i>n</i> = 42)	( <i>N</i> = 141)	( <i>n</i> = 42)	( <i>n</i> = 89)
Intimate partner <sup>a</sup>	35.7	17.0	76.2	74.2
Relative (as an adult)	— <sup>d</sup>	— <sup>d</sup>	— <sup>d</sup>	12.4
Acquaintance	— <sup>d</sup>	30.5	14.3	9.0
Stranger	42.9	56.7	14.3	10.1

<sup>a</sup>Differences between male same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants are statistically significant:  $X^2$ ,  $p$ -value  $\leq .05$ . <sup>b</sup>Differences between female same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants are statistically significant:  $X^2$ ,  $p$ -value  $\leq .05$ . <sup>c</sup>Percentages may exceed 100% because some victims had multiple perpetrators. <sup>d</sup>The number of victims is insufficient to reliably calculate estimates.

**TABLE 5. Prevalence of Intimate Partner Rape and Physical Assault Among Men and Women With Histories of Same-Sex Versus Opposite-Sex Cohabitation**

	Men (%)		Women (%)	
	Same-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 65)	Opposite-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 300)	Same-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 79)	Opposite-Sex Cohabitation ( <i>n</i> = 300)
Raped by:				
Male partner <sup>b</sup>	— <sup>c</sup>	NA	11.4	4.3
Female partner	— <sup>c</sup>	— <sup>c</sup>	— <sup>c</sup>	NA
Male and/or female partner <sup>b</sup>	— <sup>c</sup>	— <sup>c</sup>	11.4	4.3
Physically assaulted by:				
Male partner	13.8	NA	26.6	18.3
Female partner <sup>a, b</sup>	10.8	7.7	11.4	NA
Male and/or female partner <sup>a, b</sup>	21.5	7.7	35.4	18.3
Raped and/or physically assaulted by:				
Male partner <sup>b</sup>	15.4	NA	30.4	20.3
Female partner	10.8	7.7	11.4	NA
Male and/or female partner <sup>a, b</sup>	23.1	7.7	39.2	20.3

<sup>a</sup>Differences between male same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants are statistically significant:  $X^2$ ,  $p$ -value  $\leq .05$ . <sup>b</sup>Differences between female same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants are statistically significant:  $X^2$ ,  $p$ -value  $\leq .05$ . <sup>c</sup>The number of victims is insufficient to reliably calculate estimates.

The pattern of intimate partner violence is somewhat different for men. Like their female counterparts, same-sex cohabiting men were more likely to report being victimized by a male partner than by a female partner: Specifically, 15.4% of same-sex cohabiting men reported being raped and/or physically assaulted by a male partner, while 10.8% reported such violence by a female intimate partner. Moreover, same-sex cohabiting men were twice as likely to report being raped and/or physically assaulted by a male partner than were opposite-sex cohabiting men to report being raped and/or physically assaulted by a female partner (15.4% and 7.7%, respectively). These findings suggest that violence is more prevalent among same-sex male couples than either same-sex female couples or heterosexual couples.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study uses data from a large national survey to compare the prevalence of different forms of violent victimization in a sample of men and women with a history of same-sex cohabiting relationships and a sample of men and women with a history of opposite-sex cohabiting relationships only. It is important to reiterate that the study findings do not include all survey respondents who self-identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual or all respondents who ever had a same-gender sexual experience. Rather, the findings pertain only to men and women who have cohabited with same-sex intimate partners versus those who have cohabited with or been married to opposite-sex intimate partners only. It is noteworthy that about half of the men and women with same-sex cohabiting relationships also had a history of opposite-sex cohabiting relationships. The survey did not query them about how they would label their sexual orientation.

Despite these limitations, the survey does yield consistent evidence that men and women who have a history of same-sex cohabitation experience significantly more violence than men and women who have no history of same-sex cohabitation. Specifically, men and women with a history of same-sex cohabitation were significantly more likely to report that they were: forcibly raped as minors and as adults; physically assaulted as children by adult caretakers; and physically assaulted as adults by all types of perpetrators, including intimate partners. These findings lead to a number of questions that merit further study:

- Why are a disproportionate number of men and women with a history of same-sex cohabiting relationships raped before the age of 18? Are child and adolescent males with same-sex preferences especially vulnerable to male pedophiles? Do girls who are raped as minors have difficulties relating to males and therefore turn to same-sex relationships? Or are girls with same-sex preferences at greater risk of being raped because they are defined as deviant and therefore deserving of victimization?
- What factors explain the disproportionate amount of physical assault experienced in childhood by men and women with a history of same-sex cohabiting relationships? Are parents who are physically violent toward children who ultimately live with same-sex partners responding in a violent manner to what they perceive as inappropriate sexual interests, behaviors or identifications by their children and adolescents?
- Why are men and women with a history of same-sex cohabiting relationships at greater risk of violence as adults? The extent to which hate crimes account for the higher victimization rates among those with a history of same-sex cohabitation deserves further research. Also, to what extent does homophobia play a role in violence perpetrated against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals by their opposite-sex intimate partners?
- Is it true that men in same-sex relationships experience more violence by their partners than do men in opposite-sex relationships? Findings from the survey, which need to be replicated or refuted by further research, indicate that 15.4% of the men with same-sex partners reported being raped and/or physically assaulted by a male partner, while only 7.7% of men with opposite-sex cohabiting partners reported such violence by a female partner.
- Is it true that women in same-sex relationships experience less partner violence than women in opposite-sex relationships? Findings from the survey show that 11.4% of the women with same-sex partners reported rape and/or physical assault by a female partner, while 20.3% of women with opposite-sex partners reported such violence by a male partner. These findings show a lower rate of intimate partner violence among lesbians than previous studies which employed smaller nonrandom samples.
- Are women with same-sex and opposite-sex intimate partners at even greater risk of violence from male partners than are women with only opposite-sex intimate partners? Findings from the survey demonstrate this pattern, but cannot explain why this may be the case.
- Why are all women, including women with histories of same-sex cohabitation, at such high risk for violence from male intimate partners? An analysis of violence prevalence by victim-perpetrator relationship shows that men are most likely to be victimized by strangers, while women are most likely to be victimized by male intimate partners, regardless of whether they have a history of same-sex relationships.

In summary, findings from the present study indicate that violence against men and women with a history of same-sex cohabitation is much more prevalent than violence against men and women with a history of opposite-sex cohabitation only. This violence begins in childhood and seems to continue throughout the lifespan. These findings need to be replicated and the underlying explanations need to be identified in order for society to develop adequate responses to violence against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>This research was funded by the National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention under NIJ Grant Number 93-IJ-CX-0012. The opinions and conclusions expressed in this document are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the funding agencies.

<sup>2</sup>A technical report describing the survey methods in more detail is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, forthcoming 1999.

<sup>3</sup>According to Census estimates there were 92,748,000 men and 100,697,000 women 18 years of age and older residing in the United States in 1995, the year the survey sample was generated, see Westrogan, S. I., *Projection of the population of states by age, sex, and race: 1988 to 2010*, Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, p. 25-1017, 1988.

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