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Perceptions of Domestic Violence and Likelihood to Report

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Domestic violence (DV) occurs at similar rates in same-sex relationships and opposite-sex relationships; 44% of lesbian women, 26% of gay men, 35% of heterosexual women, and 29% of heterosexual men experienced DV at some point in their lifetime (NISVS, 2010). Current research on DV reveals that male-on-female violence is perceived as more serious than same-sex DV (Seelau & Seelau, 2005). The purpose of this research is to examine perceptions of same-sex versus opposite-sex DV. Approximately 500 undergraduate and graduate students from a Colorado university responded to an electronic survey in 2016 that asked them to read and rate the seriousness of one of four fictitious scenarios of DV. The hypotheses of the proposed study included: a) the gender of the victim will affect respondents' perceptions of the seriousness of the fictitious scenario; b) the gender of the perpetrator will affect the perceived seriousness of the fictitious scenario; c) the gender of the participant will affect perceived seriousness of the fictitious scenario; and d) the sexual orientation of the participant will affect the perceived seriousness of the fictitious scenario. The findings will educate others on current perceptions of same-sex vs. opposite-sex DV versus current statistics on DV in the US; preliminary evidence suggests that current perceptions may reflect a heteronormative bias toward opposite-sex DV.