



Naming the Unmentionable

Lesbian Domestic Violence

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Abstract

Violence in intimate lesbian relationships is a hidden phenomenon. The gendered language and analysis of domestic violence put forward in much mainstream literature has effectively obscured the possibility of same sex violence. This has subsequently silenced survivors, making difficult the development of a specific analysis of this phenomenon.

The aim of this thesis is to develop a more comprehensive understanding of power, violence and the oppression of women within lesbian relationships. Six self identified survivors of abusive lesbian relationships were interviewed and their stories interpreted in an attempt to analyse the reasons for the silencing of this phenomenon within lesbian communities. This was done by way of describing participants beliefs in relation to the context in which domestic violence occurs and their beliefs about the nature of lesbian relationships.

Results from this thesis suggest lesbians are rendered silent about their experience of abuse in their intimate relationships by way of an acceptance of the dominant feminist gendered analysis of domestic violence and a belief in the egalitarian nature of lesbian partnerships.

I have attempted to document and interpret the experiences of the women in this study in a way that is meaningful to them and to those who seek knowledge and understanding about this phenomenon.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any other university or tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Jan Thompson

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