Domestic Violence in America
Has Progression Occurred?
Tiffany Soomdat, Christian Orellana
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Introduction
Since the late 1800's, women have been trying to earn the same rights that men have and have been fighting vigorously to do so. The Women's Rights Movement of the 1920's helped play a big role in achieving this cause. Even though women's rights have come a long way since the movement, their rights are still limited, especially when it comes to domestic violence. There have been many changes in the law to protect women against domestic violence, but women still being victimized and the US laws aren’t doing enough to protect them.

Domestic Violence Is...
- Also known as domestic abuse, partner abuse, or intimate partner violence, occurs when intimate partners (husbands and boyfriends) attempt to dominate a wife or girlfriend
- They want to exert control over the victim
- Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional and/or economical

Types of Abuse
- Physical Abuse: being hit, kicked, bitten, choked, burned or kidnapped
- Sexual Abuse: rape and/or sodomy
- Emotional Abuse: insults, humiliation, threats, intimidation, manipulation, isolation.
- Economic Abuse: the control of finances and employment

Domestic Violence in America

Domestic Violence Statistics

**Ethnic Groups**
- Latina women are slightly higher than Anglo women. Some specific Latina groups experience it twice as much as Anglo women.
- African American women are 35-50% higher than Anglo women, and 2.5% higher than women of any other minority group.
- Native Americans are believed to be higher than Anglo women and women of other minority groups, but they are largely underreported.

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transsexual**
- As likely to occur in same sex relationships as in non-LGBT relationships.
- The "masculine" partner will try to gain dominance over the "feminine" partner.
- A study in 2002 showed that gay men under 40 years old and HIV positive had increased risks of getting abused by their partner.

**Victimization Rates**
- 1.9 million women and physically assaulted/harmed annually by their partners
- 50% of children whose mothers are abused are also abused
- On average 3 women are killed by their partners each day in the US
- African American women are more likely to be killed by their partners than any other race

Findings

Victimization Cycles

- Domestic violence involves a pattern of control and domination
- The Cycle of Abuse consists of three stages:
  - Honeymoon: the abuser behaves in a pleasant way, is apologetic, and may deliver promises. The victim starts to believe that the abuse has ended.
  - Tension building: the abuser may become angry and the victim may feel the need to pacify the perpetrator to avoid further abuse.
  - Acting out: the perpetrator abuses the victim physically, psychologically and/or sexually.

Violence Act Against Women
- Introduced to Congress in January, 1993 by Senator Joseph Biden
- 1991: about 4 million women were victims of domestic violence, 20% of those were reported to the police
- Became a law on Sept. 13th, 1996 by Pres. Bill Clinton
- $1.66 billion for rape crisis centers, battered women shelters, additional local police, prosecutors, victim advocates and domestic violence hotlines
- Expanded rape shield laws, created offenses for interstate sexual abuse and allowed victims of gender based crimes to sue those responsible in federal court
- Requires victims to prove the crime was not random and was motivated by conflict based on gender

Religion, Beliefs & Culture

Islam:
- Domestic violence: forced marriages, honor crimes and female genital mutilation
- The threat of marital and family breakdown is difficult to accept and results in many Muslim women reluctant in reporting abuse, unless it becomes severe.
- Muslim religious community view spousal abuse as a product of religious and spiritual decline
- Qur'anic verse that permits a husband to beat his wife

Hinduism:
- Hindu Manusmirti scriptures instruct women to serve even a bad husband as if he were a god
- Violence against the wife and her family is not uncommon if they are unable to provide Dowry, the groom's family desires

Buddhism:
- Male monks possess the highest status, women have become nuns and teachers.

Protestant Christianity:
- Take responsibility for subduing and protecting themselves from men's desires
- St. Paul directed women to submit to their husbands as if to Christ

The United Nations
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- Defined discrimination against women in all aspects of life such as politics, education, employment, and domestic relations.
- Signs must act against trafficking of women
- United States helped draft the treaty, but did not ratify it.
- 2002 the United States was the only industrialized country that did not sign the treaty.

Progression

1857: Massachusetts recognizes the spousal rape exemption, but in 1871 declares wife beating illegal
1960: Feminists movement draw attention to abuses of women and the need for shelters, counseling and social and legal change
1976: The Domestic Violence Act allows a violent partner to be temporarily excluded from access to a civil injunction.
1978: The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence is organized.
1979: The Office on Domestic Violence is established (but closed in 1981 by the Reagan Administration).
1983: In Thurman v. Torrington, a battered woman for the first time wins a judgment for police failure to protect her from a violent husband.
1988: The Victims of Crime Act is amended to require state compensation programs to assist domestic violence victims.
2005: The Violence Against Women Act (1994) is reauthorized to enhance arrests, enforcement of protection orders, and victims' assistance.

References