

Battered Spouse Syndrome

You asked if a battered syndrome expert exists where the violence involves two lesbians. I think it is unlikely you will find such an expert. Under orthodox feminism it is theoretically impossible because the violence in a male on female relationship exists as part of the patriarchal control pattern of violence against women. There may be abuse between women but it is of a different nature than men against women.

The neo-feminist thinkers such writers as Professor Susan Satel at Yale are rethinking the theory to explain the lack of empirical evidence supporting the theory. For example, one area is the treatment of male offenders. Many programs are modeled on the Duluth Domestic violence treatment models. Oregon has statutorily implemented most of the elements and domestic teams have been organized in all the counties.

Satel explains why the treatment programs produce such poor treatment results nationwide. She examines some of the problems with theory as applied to practice. It is not a reactionary attempt to roll back women's rights to safety but rather the application of basic dialectic principles. The women's movements original idea makers had to construct an ideology that enabled the movement to have direction. The model was a reaction against the clear de jure and de facto male oriented rules in place. This became the thesis for action. The developing model is the antithesis of the mechanistic action of the old theoretical model. The result of the discussions will produce a more helpful synthesis, which in time will become thesis. The pattern will then begin again.

The battered spouse syndrome is similarly being criticized. Abuse is not just political but may be effected by alcoholism, mental disease, or mutual conduct of assault. Opinions may differ on the underlying causes of spousal abuse but some 40 years after the development of theories about abusive behavior no one set of explanations can over all sets of facts. Human relationships must be examined individually. Couples counseling which is discouraged under the Duluth model, and enforced by court orders prohibiting contact, in many cases is effective at resolving violence. Using a set of non-clinical and anecdotal stories to compile a political defense is risky unless that is all you have.

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