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Biases in the Macro-System and How They Affect Treatment of LGBT Domestic Violence Victims

Taylor Coombs



Virginia Commonwealth University, UNIV 200, Prof. Bonnie Boaz

Introduction

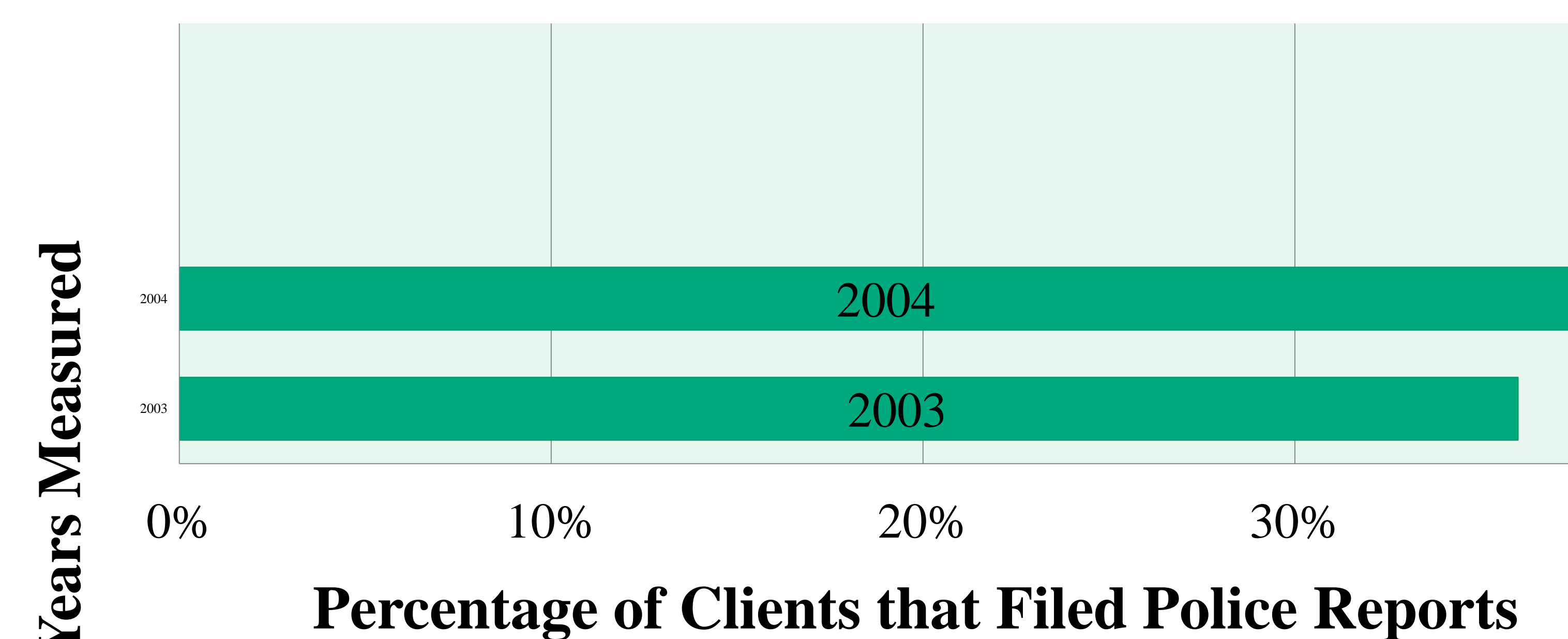
- LGBT domestic violence is not openly spoken about
- Homophobic views of macro-system (counselors, physicians, shelters) keep LGBT victims from receiving proper treatment
- Without educating police officers and macro-system members, biases held against them LGBT victims will prevent the treatment necessary for recovery



Methods

- Examination of scholarship from mental health, public policy, and gender studies for evidence of bias in the professional community and if it affects LGBT victims of abuse
- Journals examined including, but not limited to, the *Journal of Family Violence*, and the *Journal of Lesbian Studies*

Clients of New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project Who Filed Police Reports



Results

- Help outside the LGBT community is not enough for these survivors to recover from their abuse.
- Resources from the general community including macro-system resources are often homophobic, making it difficult for victims to receive proper treatment equal to that of heterosexual victims.
- Stereotypes held of domestic violence victims lead to decreased concern for same-sex relationship abuse victims.
- Some characteristics specific to the LGBT community such as outing can make victims feel isolated and without hope, decreasing the chance that they will report the violence they experience.

Conclusions

- Sensitivity training must be given to not just police officers, but counselors and shelter employees as well.
- A focus on crisis hotline operator training in instances of LGBT domestic violence calls is vital since many victims reach out to somebody they do not know first.
- Training of mental health professionals regarding LGBT clients is vital for correct and unbiased treatment of violence victims.
- The LGBT community must step up to provide items that are necessary to recovery, but not completely available outside LGBT communities.

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Background

- Domestic violence in general did not become acknowledged as a situation requiring police intervention until the 1970s by the American Bar Association
- VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) passed in 1994 and then reinstated in 2000, 2005, and most recently in 2012
- VAWA does have sections meant to provide funding to protect LGBT victims of violence