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## Gender and Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Literature Review

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### Abstract

The influence of gender on intimate partner violence (IPV) has been predominantly studied in opposite sex relationships. This article presents the results of a systematic literature review in which the aim was to understand how gender may affect not only the violence in same-sex IPV but also, and mostly, each element of the couple and third-party responses. The search was conducted in four electronic databases: *B-on*, *PubMed*, *Sage* and *PsycINFO*. From the analysis of seven articles selected, four major domains were identified in which gender affects these relationships: normalizing violence; difficulty in recognizing violence; difficulty in seeking help; and social isolation. It was concluded that gender, or gender role expectations, cannot be ignored while studying this phenomenon. More than influencing violence *per se*, gender shapes the way each element of the couple perceives their experiences and third-party perceptions (e.g., family, friends, justice system, and victims support services professionals), preventing an adequate social response to this form of violence.

**Keywords:** Intimate partner violence, same-sex partners, gender, gender stereotypes.

### Gênero e Violência na Intimidade entre Pessoas do Mesmo Sexo – Uma Revisão Sistemática da Literatura

### Resumo

A importância do gênero na violência na intimidade (VI) tem sido estudada, maioritariamente, nas relações entre pessoas de sexos diferentes. Este artigo é o resultado de uma revisão sistemática da

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literatura em que se procurou perceber a importância do gênero para a VI entre pessoas do mesmo sexo. Não só na violência em si, mas também e sobretudo nos elementos do casal e na forma como a sociedade responde a este problema. A pesquisa foi feita em quatro bases de dados eletrônicas: B-On, Pub-Med, Sage e PsycInfo. Da análise de sete artigos selecionados, resultaram quatro grandes domínios em que o gênero tem um peso importante nestas relações: normalização da violência; dificuldade em reconhecer a violência; dificuldade em pedir ajuda; e isolamento social. Concluiu-se que o gênero ou as expectativas sociais a si associadas não podem ser ignorados no estudo deste fenômeno. Mais do que influenciar diretamente a violência em si, molda não só a forma como os elementos do casal vivenciam a experiência, mas também as percepções sociais de terceiros (e.g. familiares, amigos/as, profissionais do sistema de justiça e dos serviços de apoio a vítimas), impedindo que haja uma resposta social adequada para este problema.

**Palavras-chave:** Violência na intimidade, pessoas do mesmo sexo, gênero, estereótipos de gênero.

## **Género y Violencia en la Intimidad entre Personas del Mismo Sexo – Una Revisión Sistemática de la Literatura**

### **Resumen**

La importancia del género en la violencia en la intimidad (VI) ha sido estudiada, sobre todo, en las relaciones entre personas de distintos sexos. Este artículo resulta de una revisión sistemática de la literatura en la que buscamos comprender la importancia del género para la VI entre personas del mismo sexo, no solamente en la propia violencia, sino también, y sobre todo, en los elementos de la pareja y en la forma en cómo la sociedad responde a este problema. La búsqueda se hizo en cuatro bases de datos electrónicas: B-On, Pub-Med, Sage y PsycInfo. Del análisis de siete artículos seleccionados surgieron cuatro grandes dominios en los que el género tiene un peso importante en estas relaciones: normalización de la violencia; dificultad en reconocer la violencia; dificultad en pedir ayuda; y aislamiento social. Se concluyó que el género o las expectativas sociales con él relacionadas no pueden ser ignorados en el estudio de este fenómeno. Más que influir directamente a la propia violencia, él moldea no sólo el modo cómo los elementos de la pareja la viven, sino también las percepciones sociales de terceros (ej. familia, amigos/as, profesionales del sistema de justicia y de los servicios de apoyo a víctimas), impidiendo que se produzca una respuesta social adecuada a este problema.

**Palabras clave:** Violencia en la intimidad, personas del mismo sexo, género, estereotipos de género.

Studies on intimate partner violence (IPV), mostly focused on heterosexual couples in which the violence was committed by men, arose in the 1970s with the second wave of the feminist movements (Rodrigues, Nogueira, & Oliveira, 2010; Williams, McKelvey, & Frieze, 2014). Same-sex IPV (SSIPV) has been given less attention (Anderson, 2005; Antunes & Machado, 2005; Brown, 2008; Costa, Machado, & Antunes, 2011; Rodrigues et al., 2010; Santos, 2012), even though research shows that prevalence rates are similar to those of opposite sex IPV (OSIPV) (Finneran & Stephenson,

2013; Kubicek, McNeeley, & Collins, 2015; Messinger, 2017) or even higher (Brown, 2008; Calton, Cattaneo, & Gebhard, 2015; Jacobson, Daire, Abel, & Lambie, 2015). Despite having begun in the 1970s and 1980s, it is only after 1990 that studies about SSIPV gained more strength (Messinger, 2014).

After Antunes and Machado's publication in 2005, there has been an increase in academic interest on this issue in Portugal (e.g., Costa et al., 2011; Rodrigues et al., 2010; Santos, 2012; Santos, 2015). The first study measuring SSIPV prevalence rates (Antunes & Machado,

2005) showed that they are inferior to those of OSIPVs. These results contrast those found by Costa and colleagues (2011), in which SSIPV rates are higher than OSIPV rates, and by Santos and Caridade (2017), in which prevalence rates in SSIPV are alarming (perpetration rates of 92.3% and victimization rates of 91.7%). It is important to point out that there is no consensus in the literature about prevalence rates in SSIPV (Barret & Pierre, 2013). Discrepancies between studies may be due to methodological issues (Barret & Pierre, 2013; Calton et al., 2015), similar to differences in the types and sizes of samples and/or differences in definitions of violence (Antunes & Machado, 2005; Calton et al., 2015; Hester & Donovan, 2009; Messinger, 2014; Santaya & Walters, 2011; Walters, 2011).

The invisibility of SSIPV in occidental societies as well as in the scientific community is the result of several factors. First, because feminist movements were the principal promoters of IPV studies, IPV has been understood as a way for men to subdue women, the result of a social structure based on patriarchy (Antunes & Machado, 2005; Calton et al., 2015). According to Costa and colleagues (2011), most researchers in IPV have not studied SSIPV because this phenomenon calls into question the feminist premise that violence is the result of sexism and unequal gender relations. Antunes and Machado (2005) argue that these abusive relationships are subject to double invisibility: “negative attitudes veiled by society towards homosexuality, combined with the social legitimization of violence within intimate relationships, lead to violent behaviour within homosexual relationships being a socially invisible phenomenon” (p. 184). Last, one reason for the lack of attention on SSIPV in academia compared to OSIPV involves LGB (lesbian, gay, and bisexual) communities’ reluctance to draw attention to this problem, which may jeopardize their struggle for equal rights (Antunes & Machado, 2005; Brown, 2008; Costa et al., 2011; Hester & Donovan, 2009; Messinger, 2017; Rodrigues et al., 2010).

The feminist premise that gender is at the base of OSIPV has been called into question

with the rise of SSIPV studies (Frieze, 2005) as well as studies about OSIPV perpetrated by women (Frieze, 2005; Straus, 2010). According to Straus (2010), there is a gender symmetry in violence perpetrated by men and women that has been denied by the scientific community by calling into question this premise.

Even though gender might not be the general explanation for all types of IPV (Frieze, 2005), we cannot ignore its impact, even within same-sex relationships (Anderson, 2005; Baker, Buick, Kim, Moniz, & Nava, 2012; Nybergh, Enander, & Krantz, 2015).

For West and Zimmerman (1987), more than being an individual or biological characteristic, gender is something that is done in day-to-day social interactions. Daily, men and women act according to what society expects from them, with expectations being different for each. In the authors’ words, “participants in interaction organize their various manifold activities to reflect or express gender, and they are disposed to perceive the behavior of others in a similar light” (p. 127). This performance of gender is a response to and, simultaneously, a reproduction of social expectations and gendered social hierarchies (Miller, 2014). The concept of “doing gender”, coined by West and Zimmerman (1987), became one of the most influential perspectives for understanding the social construction of gender (Miller, 2014).

If gender influences social interactions and the social structure, then we cannot say that IPV is gender neutral because, as with all social interactions, it is influenced by gender in its significance, consequences, and/or motives (Williams et al., 2014). In Butler’s (1990) words, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which “sexed nature” or “a natural sex” is produced and established as “prediscursive”, prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts. (p. 7)

From a systematic literature review about the influence of gender for SSIPV, we propose to answer the following research question: what influence can gender have on abusive intimate

relationships between same-sex couples? We try to answer this question by focusing not only on violence *per se* but also, and mostly, on the characteristics of the couple and the ways in which society responds to this problem.

This study was part of a larger study entitled “Gender and same sex intimate partner violence” in Portugal, and it was delineated to serve as a guide for posterior qualitative study.

## Methodology

### Search Procedures

A search was conducted in four electronic databases, *B-on*, *PubMed*, *Sage*, and *PsycINFO*, utilizing the following combinations of keywords and Boolean operators: (“intimate partner violence” OR “domestic violence”); AND (“same-sex” OR gay OR lesbian) AND (gender OR “gender roles”). This search was also done in Portuguese and Spanish, which found only repeated studies.

The search was conducted in September 2016.

**Inclusion and exclusion criteria.** To guide the studies’ selection, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined:

**Inclusion criteria:** (a) Publications of the last 15 years (2001 to 2016); (b) publications written in Portuguese, English, or Spanish; (c) studies focusing on the influence of gender in same-sex abusive intimate relationships; (d) studies with samples composed of individuals who had been in an abusive relationship with a same-sex partner, regardless of their sexual orientation; and (e) qualitative or mixed (qualitative and quantitative) studies. Because this theme has scarcely been studied and because most of information may come from studies not specifically focused on gender, theoretical studies were also included in this search.

**Exclusion criteria:** (a) Publications prior to 2001; (b) publications not written in Portuguese, English, or Spanish; (c) studies involving children or with samples totally composed of underage adolescents; (d) studies that did not

focus specifically on the influence of gender inSSIPV; (e) studies with samples composed of only transgender or transsexual individuals; (f) studies that included other forms of violence that were not IPV; and g) only quantitative studies.

**Publications’ selection.** From the search, a total of 418 results (118 on *B-on*, 137 on *PubMed*, 161 on *Sage*, and two on *PsycINFO*) were obtained. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the search was conducted in two phases (cf. Figure 1 – Flow chart).

**Phase 1.** An initial selection from the 418 results, based on reading the titles and abstracts, resulted in the exclusion of 366 papers: 176 examined topics not related to the theme being analysed; 137 publications examined OSIPV; 25 publications were about the prevalence, characterization and/or risk factors for SSIPV; 15 were repeated publications; seven studies used samples composed of only adolescents/teenagers; three studies used samples composed of transgender and/or transsexuals; and three studies studied HIV as a risk factor for male SSIPV.

**Phase 2.** Fifty-two resulting articles from phase 1 were thoroughly read and analysed. Forty-five publications were excluded for not fulfilling the inclusion criteria: 23 publications regarded social perceptions; nine publications related to social responses to SSIPV; one publication studied the difficulty of leaving abusive relationships; four publications were excluded due to the sample; four publications discussed other factors that can affect IPV (e.g., race, social economic class, level of education); two were repeated publications; and one publication discussed the impact of minority stress in relationship quality in same-sex relationships.

From this second phase, a total of seven articles were found for analysis of this study. In searching among bibliographical references, the snowballing technique was utilized to find another articles that could be of interest, but none fulfilled the inclusion criteria.

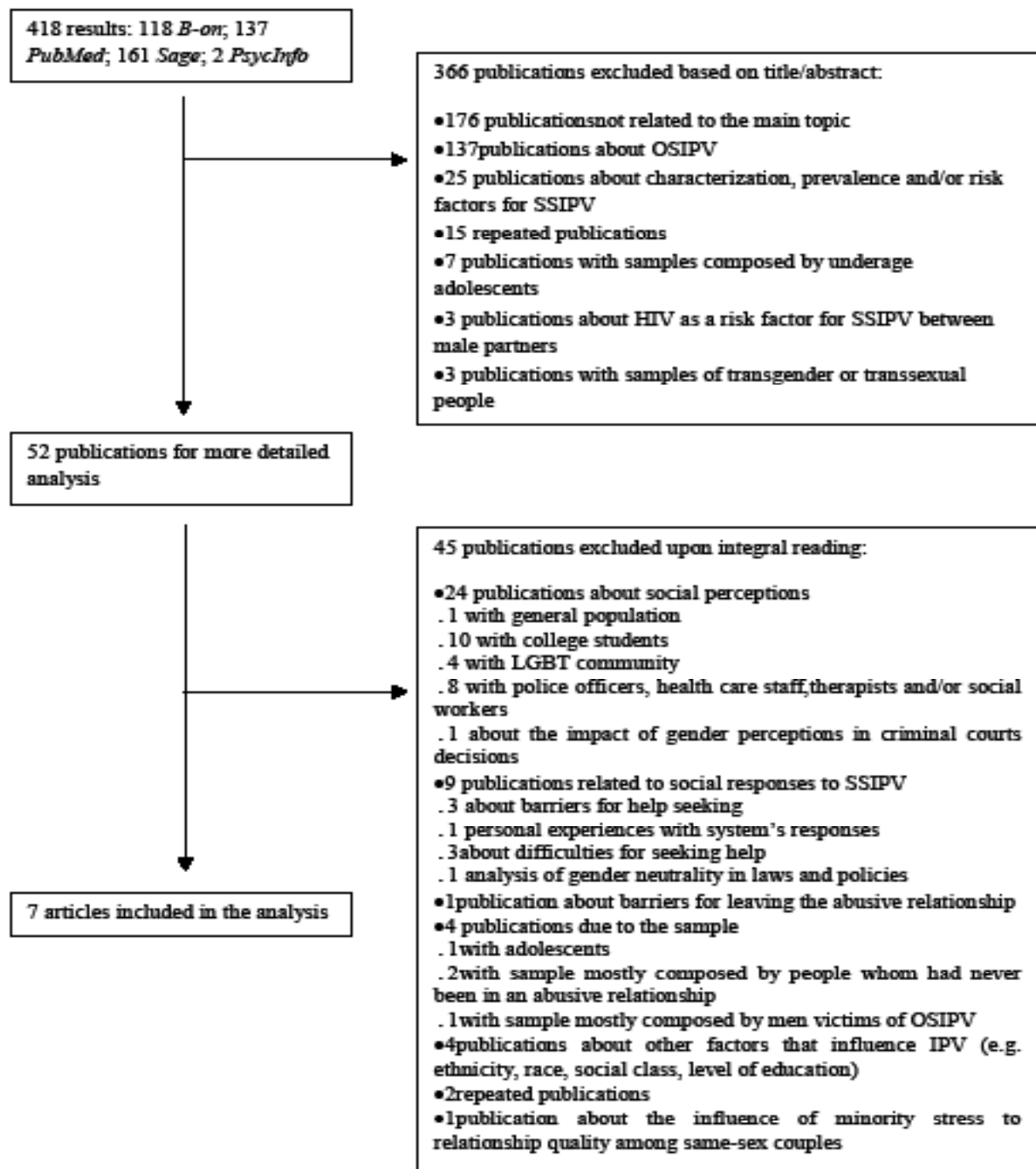


Figure 1. Flow chart – publications' selection.

## Results

Here, we present a descriptive analysis of the seven articles selected. From these articles, the most important data were collected depending on the type of publication: empirical studies ( $n = 4$ ) or literature reviews ( $n = 3$ ).

Data collected from empirical studies included the following: authors; year of publication; countries where the studies were conducted; design of the studies; samples; instruments utilized (cf. Table 1); and most relevant results and conclusions. From the literature reviews, the names of the authors, year

of publication, and most relevant conclusions were collected.

### *Empirical Studies*

From the four studies selected, two were conducted in the United States of America (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Walters, 2011); one was conducted in Santiago, Cuba (Santaya & Walters, 2011), and other was conducted in Vancouver, Canada (Oliffe et al., 2014).

**Design.** All studies are qualitative studies, except for Santaya and Walters (2011), which is mixed. For this study, the authors combined the qualitative and quantitative analysis to identify whether other factors could have been relevant to theSSIPV experienced by the participants (e.g., history of sexual abuse; alcohol consumption) so that they could more precisely understand the influence of gender in those relationships.

**Samples.** Two of the studies have samples composed only of women (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Walters, 2011), and the other two included only men (Oliffe et al., 2014; Santaya & Walters, 2011). Except for Santaya and Walters (2011), whose sample was composed of couples ( $n$  = number of couples), all the studies' samples were constituted by one element of the couple ( $n$  = number of participants). The sample dimension ranged between four people in Walters' (2011) study and 70 people ( $n$  = 35) in Santaya and Walters' (2011) study.

In Hassouneh and Glass's (2008) study, the ages ranged between 15 and 64 years old; in Oliffe and colleagues' (2014) study, between 37 and 64 years old; in Walters' (2011) study, between 35 and 50 years old; and in Santaya and Walters' (2011) study, between 19 and 44 years old.

Regarding the inclusion of other demographic indicators, none of the studies sought results for different ethnic or cultural groups. In three studies, most participants were Caucasian, and in the study conducted in Cuba (Santaya & Walters, 2011), all participants self-identified as *mestizo*<sup>1</sup>. Only Hassouneh and Glass's (2008)

study had a transgender participant. Being just one among 54 participants, according to the authors, the applicability of their study's results is unknown for the transgender community.

**Sampling and recruitment methods.** In Waters' (2011) study, the participants were recruited from a large metropolitan community to participate in interviews. In Santaya and Walters' (2011) study, a sample was generated from men who visited an educational and health promotion centre in Santiago, Cuba, which is acknowledged by the gay community as more accepting of gay men than other public health institutions. During individual consultations, 35 men who expressed interest in participating in the study asked their partners to participate, and all partners agreed. For the other two remaining studies (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Oliffe et al., 2014), the participants were recruited through adverts in flyers and Craigslist<sup>2</sup> and through LGBT organizations.

**Instruments.** Oliffe and colleagues (2014) and Walters (2011) resorted only to in-depth and semi-structured individual interviews. Hassouneh and Glass (2008) resorted to semi-structured individual and group interviews. For their quantitative study, Santaya and Walters (2011) utilized an individual questionnaire containing demographic information and psychological measures to access alcohol consumption, history of childhood abuse, type of perceived abuse within the intimate relationship, social and communication skills, and personality regulation. For the qualitative study, they conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews individually and as a couple.

### *Main results.*

**Gender expectations/myths and normalizing violence.** The common belief that men are, by nature, violent (Oliffe et al., 2014; Santaya & Walters, 2011) and women are not

<sup>1</sup> "A demographic modifier more akin to cultural identity and, within Cuban society, appropriately

less focused on race." (Santaya & Walters, 2011, p. 160)

<sup>2</sup> A website for classified advertisements that also provides local forums for jobs, services, products, and events, among others.

**Table 1**  
**Characterization of the Empirical Studies**

Authors	Country	Type of study	Sample	Recruitment	Instruments
Hassounch & Glass (2008)	U.S.A.	Qualitative	<i>n</i> = 54 women who were or had been in an abusive same-sex relationship. Seven self-identified as offenders. Age – 15 to 64 years old Other characteristics: 10 belonged to racial and/or ethnic minorities; 1 transgender woman	Advertised through LGBT organizations' e-mail list servers; in organizations' activities; in LGBT newspapers and social events; university campuses; craigslist; and domestic violence agencies. <i>Snowball technique</i> .	Semi-structured interviews. One individual and one group interview.
Santaya & Walters (2011)	Cuba (Santiago)	Mixed (qualitative and quantitative)	<i>n</i> = 35 male couples in established romantic relationships that extended past six months that had experienced abuse within the relationship Age – 19 to 44 years old. Within each dyad: M = 4; range 1 to 14 years. Other characteristics: All self-identified as masculine All self-identified as <i>mestizo</i>	Advertised in consultations at an educational and health promotion centre.	<i>Quantitative study</i> : Individual questionnaire <i>Qualitative study</i> : In-depth and semi-structured interviews, one as an individual and one as a couple.
Walters (2011)	U.S.A.	Qualitative	<i>n</i> = 4 lesbian women self-identified asSSIPV survivors Age – 35 to 50 years old Other characteristics: Belonged to the lesbian community for more than 10 years; 3 Caucasian and 1 African-American; Experience of violence: 2 witnessed physical or verbal abuse in their family of origin; 2 experienced child physical and verbal abuse; 2 experienced child sexual abuse	Recruited from a large metropolitan community.	In-depth and semi-structured individual interviews.
Oliffe et al. (2014)	Canada (Vancouver)	Qualitative	<i>n</i> = 14 men who had experiencedSSIPV Age – 37 to 64 years old Sexual orientation: 9 homosexual; 3 bisexual; 1 other Other characteristics: 4 seropositive; 13 have never been married; 10 lived alone; 13 Anglo-Canadian; 10 unemployed	Advertised on <i>Craigslist</i> and flyers distribution at organizations that provide psychological and health support to gay men.	Semi-structured individual interview.



(Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Walters, 2011) may have led these couples to normalize violence in their relationships. On the one hand, men tend to believe that violence in a relationship between two men is not only acceptable but also a way to demonstrate their masculinity (Olliffe et al., 2014; Santaya & Walters, 2011). In Santaya and Walters' (2011) sample, violence is seen as a natural consequence of having been raised as men in a Latin society. These men approach their relationships as a battle for power and self-esteem to prove "who's the man" in that relationship. On the other hand, women tend to normalize violence within their relationships because they believe that violence only occurs if there is a male within a couple (Walters, 2011). Otherwise, they only have heated discussions, or they believe that they are just women being women, which involves being more emotive and/or hysterical and "cat-fighting" (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008) but not truly violent. The myth of lesbian utopia – intimate relationships between two women are more equal since there is no power imbalance, resulting in oppression-free relationships – leads women to normalize the violence experienced (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008).

Santaya and Walters (2011) refer to gender myths/expectations that directly influenced the violence within the couples they interviewed. The first one deals with the myth that men are naturally promiscuous. This belief led, in some cases, to men having extra-conjugal affairs as a way to reaffirm their masculinity. In other cases, they threatened their partners by saying that they would have extra-conjugal affairs as a way to subdue and dominate their partners who, fearful that they would carry out their threats, acceded to their demands, sometimes in their sexual relationship. The second concerns the belief that men must be able to economically provide for their families. Some of these men recognized that they manipulated their partners, acting on their frustration for not being able to provide for the two of them, and the partners threatened to find another man who was able to do so.

**Difficulties for recognizing violence.** Gender expectations/myths also affect the ability to

recognize violence within a same-sex intimate relationship. If women tend to believe that there is no violence between women and see violent behaviours as mere discussions or normal disagreements between couples (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Walters, 2011), men tend to perceive the violence they experience as typical behaviour between men, they do not consider the behaviour to be IPV (Santaya & Walters, 2011).

In Walters' (2011) sample, a woman worked in a women's shelter and, according to the author, her daily contact with women with similar experiences to hers not only did not help her understand that she was also an IPV victim but, in fact, validated her personal belief that women are not violent and that the offenders are always male.

In Hassouneh and Glass' (2008) study, an idea that frequently emerged from the discourses of women that had experienced abuse in their first same-sex relationship or were considerably younger than their partners was that they believed that relationships between two women were supposed to proceed in this way. According to the authors, this acceptance comes from inexperience and lack of knowledge about same-sex relationships.

The most frequent discourse among participants in Olliffe and colleagues' (2014) study was that men must be able to endure physical and emotional pain without showing it. In other words, they have to "man up". For this reason, most of these men were not able to see themselves in a victim's position. Furthermore, some of these men, who sometimes violently responded to a violent attack by their partners, understood their own actions as violent behaviour and not as self-defence. These men believed that both partners were offenders and neither was a victim and that if there is no victim, there cannot be IPV – just the expected violence between men.

**Social isolation.** Gender stereotypes, combined with social heteronormativity and homophobia, increase the risk for IPV among people in same-sex relationships. Society does not just ignore but also stigmatizes these individuals, leading to greater social isolation, which increases the risk for IPV (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008;

Oliffe et al., 2014). It is commonplace for family and friends to not believe these people when they share their experiences of abuse (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Walters, 2011). Sometimes they even consider it amusing or entertaining to see two women “cat fighting” (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008). Oliffe and colleagues (2014) note that the lack of support services also increases feelings of isolation among their participants.

**Barriers for seeking help.** The way in which social support services, law enforcement agencies or victim’s support organizations manage SSIPV cases is indicated in three of the four studies as a barrier for help seeking. According to Walter’s (2011) study, police responses to SSIPV cases vary between urban and rural zones. Police officers tend to have a more positive attitude in urban zones. Hassouneh and Glass (2008) found in their study that one strategy utilized by their sample participants to avoid being arrested was to adopt a victim’s posture. Some participants believed that police officers tend to identify the offender based on gender stereotypes, such as butch-femme stereotypes. These women reported that their partners had adopted a more feminine posture and more passive behaviour to avoid being arrested.

Men perceived support services as being solely for women (Oliffe et al. 2014); on the other hand, lesbian women feel that the shelter environment is heterosexist and homophobic (Walters, 2011). Some IPV victims in these shelters did not want SSIPV victims to be near their children (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008).

Feelings of shame and the fear of being badly treated, not just due to being IPV victims but also due to their sexual orientation, represent obstacles to seeking help (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Oliffe et al., 2014; Walters, 2011).

### *Literature Reviews*

The three theoretical articles selected are literature reviews that focus on gender influence in SSIPV (Anderson, 2005; Baker et al., 2012; Brown, 2008).

According to all authors, gender is not simply being male or female but a social

construct. Beyond being male or female, gender regards what being a man or a woman means from a social perspective in a society that expects different behaviours from each. Society is structured in a gender logic based on heteronormativity and patriarchy, in which opportunities differ for men and women. For Baker and colleagues (2012), all interpersonal relationships, especially intimate relationships and including same-sex relationships, are influenced by gender.

If we live in a heteronormative and patriarchal society that shapes how everyone should behave and with whom one can have an intimate relationship, the first major gender implication for SSIPV is related to the fact that it occurs in relationships that are considered deviant (Baker et al., 2012). In her article, Brown (2008) presents a discussion about similarities and differences between OSIPV and SSIPV and concludes that heterosexism and gender socialization based on gender stereotypes are the main causes of the differences. Same-sex couples live as an oppressed minority in a heterosexist and homophobic society that promotes socialization based on gender stereotypes, which determines who can be a victim and who can be an offender. This situation leads to additional confusion around these abusive relationships, such as the belief that violence is either bidirectional or a form of sadomasochism. Social perceptions about SSIPV are also influenced by myths and gender expectations (Anderson, 2005; Baker et al., 2012; Brown, 2008). For example, Brown (2008) cites Seelau, Seelau, and Poorman’s (2003) study, in which they analysed college students’ perceptions about different scenarios of IPV. They concluded that the victim’s gender in each case had more influence on their answers than did sexual orientation. Violence, when perpetrated against women, was perceived as more serious, more credible, and in greater need of intervention than when perpetrated against men. The participants easily believed that someone was a victim if the person in that scenario was a woman and had greater difficulties believing that a woman could be an offender. In

same-sex couples or opposite sex couples with the man as the victim, the participants believed that there was no need for intervention.

The social belief that violence only occurs among opposite sex couples, with the man being the offender, and the lack of interest in same-sex relationships result in judiciary and social services not being properly prepared to manage IPV forms that do not fit that frame (Anderson, 2005; Baker et al., 2012; Brown, 2008). The precariousness of social response systems, the lack of support from family and friends who are unaware of these relationships or do not accept them, and the fear of being outed<sup>3</sup> lead to higher social isolation among SSIPV victims than OSIPV victims (Anderson, 2005; Baker et al., 2012; Brown, 2008). This social isolation not only hinders violence recognition but also hampers the victim from seeking help. In Brown's (2008) words, "although it is argued that a person may leave the abusive relationship they cannot leave a homophobic society and culture" (p. 459).

All authors of the three articles (Anderson, 2005; Baker et al., 2012; Brown, 2008) argue that even if gender cannot be a general explanation for all types of IPV, it is far from being irrelevant, even in SSIPV. Additionally, they signal the importance of intersectional approaches in which other social identities (e.g., race, religion, socio-economic status, etc.) are analysed alongside gender. For example, different cultures have different perspectives about same-sex relationships, and these differences may influence levels of reported crimes to the police, whether to seek help, stigma and discrimination. The greater the stigma associated with the LGB community is in a given culture, the greater the risk will be for SSIPV (Baker et al., 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Outing is one of the more frequent forms of emotional abuse in same-sex relationships, in which one partner exposes or threatens to expose the other partner's sexual orientation to others (Antunes & Machado, 2005; Messinger, 2014).

## Discussion

All topics that emerged from the analysis of the four empirical studies are corroborated by the three literature reviews. We opted not to refer any of them again except when they had relevant information to add.

The samples of the four empirical studies are dissimilar. Two of them are entirely composed of women (Hassounah & Glass, 2008; Walters, 2011) and two are entirely composed of men (Oliffe et al., 2014; Santaya & Walters, 2011). Among studies with women, there is a disparity in the sizes of the two samples. Among studies with men, beyond the difference in size, one of the samples is composed of individuals who experienced abuse in their relationships (Oliffe et al., 2014) and the other is composed of couples in abusive relationships (Santaya & Walters, 2011). Despite these differences, the results of studies with women are similar, as with the studies with men. Nevertheless, it was possible to find common topics among all four studies. The areas in which gender affects SSIPV are similar for men and women, but in some cases, it affects each differently. For example, women have greater difficulty seeing themselves or their partners as offenders since they believe that only men can be aggressive. On the other hand, men have difficulty seeing themselves or their partners as victims since they believe only women can be victims. They easily see themselves as both being offenders.

As shown by the studies of Oliffe and colleagues (2014) and Santaya and Walters (2011), whose samples were entirely composed of men, gender can, in some cases, be the origin of violent behaviours in same-sex relationships. For instance, men sometimes resort to violent behaviours as a way to reaffirm their masculinity. However, beyond affecting the motives that cause violent behaviours, gender plays an important role in the way each element of the couple addresses that violence and even more so in third-party (e.g., family, friends, social services, judiciary system) perceptions of SSIPV.

Normalizing violence, difficulties in recognizing violence, barriers for help seeking, and social isolation are all issues that affect OSIPV (Anderson, 2005), but in SSIPV, they adopt different forms: SSIPV occurs with people who are part of a minority group that is marginalized and stigmatized for going against social heteronormative and homophobic norms regarding how a couple should be constituted.

### Final Considerations

We knew from the beginning that defining inclusion and exclusion criteria that lead us to studies specifically focused on gender and the dynamic of abusive same-sex relationships would have implications. Predicting that most of the information could come from studies not necessarily focused on gender, we included theoretical articles that could help us mitigate that gap. Nevertheless, it appears important to briefly discuss some topics that were not deeply explored in this literature review.

The first topic involves intersectionality. It is known that gender does not affect IPV alone. Just as the influence of gender on IPV cases varies depending on sexual orientation – which we believe has become clear through the differences between OSIPV and SSIPV – the same happens at the intersection with other social identities, such as, for example, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic level, disability, level of education, etc. Intersectionality is a paradigm that allows us to more accurately understand social inequalities (Creek & Dunn, 2014). According to this paradigm, one's different identities are inseparable. For example, in western societies, a white female victim of SSIPV would find greater barriers to help seeking than a white female victim of OSIPV. However, the barriers are fewer than those faced by a black female victim of SSIPV. Furthermore, each individual identity affects the power dynamic in an intimate relationship in different ways (Brown, 2008).

The other topic that was not deeply discussed in this paper is whether the performativity of gendered stereotypical behaviours by each

partner affects the dynamic of the abusive relationship. Even though there are some brief references to this idea in the studies analysed, none of the studies focus on the issue. According to Antunes and Machado (2005), there tends to be a rejection of traditional (male-female) gender stereotypes in these relationships, and the roles played by each partner are usually based on each individual's personal competencies and interests. Nevertheless, it is possible that power imbalances within a heterosexual relationship can be reproduced in same-sex relationships since heterosexual relationships are the family role model for most gay and lesbian individuals (Antunes & Machado, 2005).

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