

THE COMPLEX INTERSECTIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN CALIFORNIA AND
TENNESSEE.

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Abstract

Domestic violence is something that affects 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men. It is a worldwide epidemic. This paper will explore the intersections of religion, politics, and domestic violence within California and Tennessee. Both states are very different in their political alignment and religious histories. California is historically a blue state with strong ties to Catholicism. Tennessee is historically a red state with strong ties to Evangelical and Protestant Christianity. We will explore the works of some authors on domestic violence and its ties to religion and politics. We will also be seeing the methods in which I would take to test for the significance and correlation between domestic violence, religion, and politics. Finally, I will talk about what I suspect to find after running correlation, chi-squared, and linear regression model tests between domestic violence, religion, and politics.

Introduction

Domestic violence is an issue that has affected so many different countries. More than 10 million women and men worldwide are affected by it. The United States has some shockingly high rates. Domestic violence affects $\frac{1}{3}$ of the population of women and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the population of men. Domestic violence as a whole is typically discussed from a singular perspective which is traditionally from the perspective of white female victims. That is not to say that white females are not victims of domestic violence but as I have learned through my service organization, Belles, domestic violence statistics changed based on different things such as race, gender, sexuality, and so much more. The organization has led me to learn that domestic violence is not an issue of just physical violence. Domestic violence can be financial, sexual, emotional, psychological, and so many other forms of abuse. Domestic violence also affects people in many different ways causing people to isolate themselves, become perpetrators of domestic violence, or have post-traumatic stress disorder. My research question directly relates to this being “how do the political and religious differences between California and Tennessee affect the rates of domestic violence in each state?” I will be looking at how politics and religion have shaped the state's social norms toward domestic and interpersonal violence. Furthermore, I will be looking at intersectionality as it pertains to domestic violence.

Background

This topic is something very close to home for me. I have had the opportunity to live in both California and Tennessee and have seen how domestic violence affects each state differently. As mentioned in my introduction, I am a part of the Belles Service Organization on campus. Our main focus as a group is on bringing awareness to domestic violence and uplifting the voices affected by domestic violence. We put together various activities during Domestic

Violence Awareness month to talk about domestic violence issues and bring light to statistics surrounding domestic and interpersonal violence.

In regards to Tennessee and California, California is significantly larger than Tennessee. The population of California is about 40 million people while Tennessee only has 7 million people. That information may seem obvious but due to the rates of people affected by domestic violence in each state, it becomes rather scary. In Tennessee, the percentage of people who have been in domestic violence situations is 40% for women and 32.50% for men. In California, the rate is significantly lower with the domestic violence percentage for women being 34.90% and the percentage for men being 31.10%. Those percentages may not seem high but when you apply the percentage to the number of people in each state, it becomes significantly larger. For Tennessee, 2,800,000 women and 2,443,000 men have been victims of domestic violence. In California, 12,440,000 men and 13,960,000 women have been victims of domestic violence. These are the number of domestic violence situations that have been reported, but only 52% of people who have dealt with domestic violence actually report it (“World Population Review”).

Lots of different reports have been done looking at religion and politics and how that relates to domestic violence. In many of the sources that I have read and researched, there is a strong nexus between the religious and political effects on domestic violence rates. Furthermore, many of the articles look at the correlation between intersectionality and domestic violence. By intersectionality, I mean how things such as your gender, race, or disability affect the way you experience domestic violence and the frequency you experience it at. In one of my sources, I found the conversation between religious abuse and domestic violence. Women who have experienced domestic violence and are involved with religion seem to perceive said abuse from a spiritual perspective. The same article states that women encounter rejection from spiritual

leaders when they go to confront issues of domestic violence in their lives. Women are often encouraged to forgive their partners, pray for them to change, and be told not to “abandon” their families (Bent-Goodley & Fowler). It was also found in a different article that religion is often used as a weapon for abuse. It was found that some abusive people will use religious texts as a way to employ abusive tactics specifically quoting passages about male entitlement and privilege (Elaine).

When looking at intersectionality, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention quotes that there's a difference between how white people are treated for domestic violence in comparison to non-white counterparts (Brignone & Gomez). That same article talks about the differences in experiences with domestic violence and the victimization rates that affect different racial groups. Along the lines of treatment, there was an article written that speaks to the lack of understanding of domestic violence from a social worker's perspective. Historically speaking, social workers were seen as uncaring, uninformed, and unhelpful when it came to battered women cases often blaming the victim for what would happen to them. Furthermore, social workers of the 70s through the 90s did not consider that teenagers could be victims of dating violence. It was not until the early 2000s that we see any laws or writings dealing with domestic violence. As of now, social workers are more informed on the topic and have to learn about it within their training (Danis & Lockhart).

Surprisingly, I was able to find the most information about domestic violence from a political perspective. Domestic violence was tied to injustice, inequality, and the inability of social systems to enforce justice. As the United States pushes for gender equality and the prevention of domestic violence, we also see the rise of people speaking for communities they are not a part of. That idea further perpetuates domestic violence. Something I found incredibly

interesting is that the idea behind domestic violence is against conservative notions. Though we see many conservative individuals committing acts of domestic violence, it traditionally goes against their values. Women are typically seen as fragile and in need of protection from a conservative perspective so to see that many conservative people are committing domestic violence was very interesting.

Methods

As for my methods, I am doing three different things. The first is what I call data collection. I have gone through dozens of studies collecting statistics of men and women affected by domestic violence and further how different religious and political groups see domestic violence. From there, I have found data on different gender identities and races and how domestic violence affects them differently. From that point, I move to my data analysis. What I would be doing is finding a study that looks at domestic violence and running it through a program such as Rstudio. I would take different variables and recode them in a way that would allow me to test them in my next step which is data correlation. This is when things get rather math-heavy. I would be running a chi-squared test and linear regression model test to see if there is a correlation between religion, politics, and domestic violence. From there, I would analyze the data to see if there is a statistically significant relationship between my three variables.

Expected Results

I expect to see a statistically significant relationship between religion, politics, and domestic violence concerning the two different states. As you can see in this paper, there is already data pointing in the direction of a correlation between the three variables. What I am interested to see is how the confounding variables of race will play a role in the relationship

between religion, politics, and domestic violence. I suspect we will see an increase in rates as race is applied to gender variables.

Furthermore, I have spoken about the differences between the two states but have yet to talk about the social norms. Due to the differences in politics and religion, we see different social norms in the two states. The norms not only affect the way people deal with the trauma of domestic violence and the rates of reports.

Conclusion

As a whole, I believe that through the evidence I have collected, I have evidence to support that the religious and political differences between California and Tennessee affect the rates of domestic violence in the two states. I further believe that due to the political and religious differences between the two states I can conclude that the oppressive social norms that have been cultivated in Tennessee can be tied to the higher rates of domestic violence in the state. All the reports I have looked at give direction as to why we see such high rates and how religion and politics are tied to domestic violence. When executing this project, I would be interested in seeing how things such as covid affected the percentage of victims of domestic violence. Finally, I would want to see how covid played a role in people's furthering their faiths and how that in turn affects domestic violence percentages.

Budget

This project would not require a budget. This is a lot of online data collection, the reason being is that I do not find it appropriate to do a field study for a study like this. I feel as if asking people about their experience with domestic violence would be very triggering. The most I would ask for budget-wise is for the time it has taken me to do this research. I have worked

probably between 20-30 hours on this project. With that being said, I would probably ask to be paid the minimum wage so between \$320.80-\$481.20.

Timeline

The timeline for this research is pretty straightforward. For the first couple of weeks or months of this project, it would all be about collecting data and statistics. After doing data collection, I would spend 3-4 weeks finding a study that had the information I was trying to test and running said information through Rstudio. Recoding things in Rstudio alone would probably take about a week to make sure everything was done correctly. From there, I would likely take another week to test for significance to make sure I ran the linear regressions correctly. Finally, I would spend another week or two putting together some sort of cumulative paper that would summarize my findings whether they be significant or not. Even if the data turned out to not be significant, I would still want to highlight the other works that have been done and the place my study would play if it were to be significant.

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