

Intimate Partner Violence and Social Isolation Across the Rural/Urban Divide

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a pervasive social problem that affects victims, families, and communities. Beginning with the acknowledgment of this phenomenon as a social problem, investigations have attempted to answer questions regarding the extent, prevalence, and the possible contributing social and psychological factors that influence this behavior. This study proposes an approach to the problem of IPV based on a unifying concept: social isolation. The authors argue that the utility of the concept of social isolation lies in its ability to encapsulate critical social-structural and social-psychological correlates of IPV. The main objective of the study is to examine the extent to which the role of social isolation in predicting IPV varies by urban/rural context. Measures of key variables were obtained from Waves 1 and 2 of the National Survey of Families and Households and the 1990 census. Results of multivariate analyses indicate that only some measures of social support (isolation) are statistically significant and only for families within rural (nonmetropolitan) counties.

Keywords

rural intimate partner violence, social isolation

Intimate partner violence (IPV) has been a topic of great concern in the academic community over the past few decades (see Fagan & Browne, 1994; Heimer & Lauritsen, 2008; Jasinski & Williams, 1998, for research reviews). Researchers from sociology, criminology, public health, and psychology have been actively involved in research on IPV since the early 1970s. Beginning with the acknowledgment of this phenomenon as a social problem, investigations have attempted to answer questions regarding the extent, prevalence, and the possible contributing social and psychological factors that influence this behavior. Up to this point, researchers have uncovered the complexities of this type of interpersonal violence and brought

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