

Julissa O.M.

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Cg x Eg

Digital media

My research was a deep dive into the question of “Why do people kill the ones they love?” Most specifically I focused on within the female LGBTQ community. I chose animation because I believe it is a great way to convey a complex story to an audience because it includes visuals and audio. It was also a great way to challenge myself artistically for I do not have much experience in this medium. I have a wide interest in the genre of psychological media. In the animation I created with Leo Stratton, it shows two female lovers where one partner is eventually killed by the other out of love. I enjoyed creating this animated piece because I find psychological violence entertaining. The human brain is something I love to learn about. It is interesting to see how it works, reacts, and grows. A lot of our inspiration came from psychological animated shows and other artists who have created animated music videos through experimental animation.

Murderous Women in Love



Julissa R.

The Oxbow School

OS46

Writer's Note: Does love have the capability to be dangerous? This paper addresses a deep dive into the mind and actions of those who have killed loved ones. What even lead up to the decision of murdering their loved ones? This paper is a journey of trying to find the answer to this question. We dive in from a real case of a "love murder" into violence of same sex relationships which then leads into the reason people in non-violent relationships kill their partners and how mental disorder can cause or correlate to crime.

I am drawn to this topic of people killing who they love because it is a trope I have seen in the media being portrayed at an enormous rate. What is interesting to me is the mind of these people. What is their definition of love if they end up killing who they love and why do they do it? I want to find out the reasoning behind this. How exactly were these people raised? How were they taught and what did they go through for them to think murdering who they love was morally passable? Or if they ever regret it after doing so? When I was researching this topic, I was able to find a case where a woman murdered her lover. These incidents have happened in real life. This pattern is nothing new to the real world, nor is it a fantasy. It can be on a scale from abuse in romantic relationships, and can also correlate to murder. There are many records of these types of incidents in the Bible, in Greek mythology, or even in Egyptian mythology. These incidents are also in written documents that people have decided to live by. A good example from the Bible is when God told a man to kill his own son. "Then God said, 'take your son, your only son, whom you love- Issac- and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you'" -Genesis 22. In Greek mythology, Zeus descended from Olympia and killed his son Ares for disobeying the law. These are examples of murders against people they love but I would like to focus more on romantic and intimate relationships in which murder occurs. As

a woman who identifies as pansexual I want to learn more about violence in same sex relationships between women. This seems to be something that is not usually researched, and I am curious to learn about something that isn't over played in media or in ancient text. Women are usually seen as the more gentle and caring gender, but this isn't always true. There are two sides to every coin and I believe sharing my research is a great chance to give a new perspective on the moral and definition of what love really is, and how individuality plays a big role in it.

The psychology behind love is a very broad subject since there are so many definitions as to what love really is. Mostly when we think of love our first thoughts are of romantic love, but there is actually an earlier form of love we experience. This love can be experienced from our mothers and fathers or any caregiver. It is shown through nurturance, contact and affectionate actions such as hugging, touching, kissing and holding. Psychologist Robert Sternberg was able to develop a theory known as “the triangular theory of love.” According to this theory love has three components, intimacy, passion and commitment. There are also other types of love that are able to branch out from the triangular theory of love known as empty love, romantic love, compassionate love, fatuous love and consummate love. Falling in love “can activate the reward system, some people compare the initial stage of falling in love as being similar to the high produced by cocaine” (Ralph Ryback M.D.). Being in love has a lot of positive and healthy outcomes. For example, being in love can actually increase dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin in the brain. Most of the things I have presented about love have been technical, so how about we think about the feeling of it more. Love is an amazing and beautiful concept. The thought of doing the best you can for a person or a person being able to brighten your whole day by simply being next to you is crazy. Love is like a liquid that takes the form of any shape like having a love

for food, a sport, or even love for a hobby. I believe love is a powerful thing, though my subject is based on why people kill the ones they love. I'm also curious if love has the ability to be dangerous.

The case of Alice Mitchell is very intriguing to me because it is exactly the type of situation I was hoping to find for my research paper. On January 25, 1892 Alice Mitchell killed Freda Ward because she loved her. This murder shook all of Tennessee because it was the first murderous act to challenge the view of same-sex love, gender roles and behavior, and sexual acts. In the 19th century it was extremely common for middle class white girls to have intimate friendships together. So common that it was seen as normal for girls to confess their love or sleep together. Alice Mitchell and Freda ward were no different to this commonality. These two girls were school friends for years, they would be seen kissing and embarrassing each other, but because of the normalization of intimate friendships between girls it did not arouse any suspicion. Though that didn't last for long, suspicion arose in August 1891 when Freda was caught fully dressed and ready to leave for Memphis in the middle of the night because she and Alice had planned to elope. They already considered themselves engaged to each other. This incident is what caused their separation, Ms. Volkmar (who was Frida's older married sister) no longer allowed them to have any contact with each other.

Back to that day of murder on January 25, 1892, Alice and her friend Lillie went out on an afternoon drive where they coincidentally saw the ward sisters and their friend making their way to the ferry to leave for Gold Dust. Upon seeing them Alice jumped out of the car and ran towards Freda while saying "I'll fix her!" Alice then proceeded to slash Freda across the face with a razor and ran after her towards nearby train tracks where she slit her throat from ear to ear killing Freda.

“Alice at first stated that she killed Freda because she loved her and never wavered from this line” (Lisa J. Lindquist). Even though this was as Alice stated the public found it hard to believe, so instead they made their own theories that catered to the behavior of heterosexual relations. The first yet most common theory is a murder caused by jealousy. Some argued that the reason Alice attacked and murdered Freda was out of revenge because of jealousy over a man or of an insult from Freda to Alice. Another part of this theory was that Alice was jealous over Freda’s looks and took revenge because of comments from Freda’s family on her moral character.

The second theory is no different from the first in that it denies their love for each other by introducing a heterosexual component as an explanation to Freda’s death. There was a belief “that the killing of Miss Ward was not prompted by Miss Mitchell's unnatural love for her as reported, but was the outgrowth of jealousy, there being a man in the case who was loved by both young ladies” (Lisa J. Lindquist). I personally do not see these theories as reliable because during the time of this murder homosexuality was not yet a normal or even known subject. In this time, it was hard for people to believe homosexuality was even possible.

Mostly when I think about violence in same sex relationships I usually feel as though there should’ve been something to start the violence. Like maybe an argument, one of the partners did something wrong, or one of them betrayed the other. But while reading an article about “Intimate partner violence in same sex relationships” by J Child Fam Stud I was able to realize that those actions rarely have something to do with it.

The four main types being physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression. A few other things that play a big role in same sex partner violence are internalized homophobia, degree of outness, stigma consciousness, and experiences of discrimination.

Physical violence is when a partner intentionally uses physical force to cause harm to another. This could look like slapping, pushing, throwing, and even scratching. Sexual violence is a sexual act that was committed without any or full consent from the other partner, this can be induced by being forced to consume alcohol or drugs to penetrate a victim, includes intentional sexual touching. Stalking comes in the form of repeated actions that are not wanted. Actions and contact that cause fear and concern for an individual's safety or the safety of someone else's, This can be seen in unwanted repetition of phone calls, text messages, leaving cards and even flowers. Psychological aggression is when a person harms another mentally or emotionally through verbal and non-verbal communication. Good examples would be humiliation and name calling, limited contact with friends or family, or threats of committing physical and sexual violence. "Lifetime prevalence of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner was 43.8% for lesbian women, 61.1%, for bisexual women, 35%, for heterosexual women, 26% for gay men, 37.3% for bisexual men, and 29% for heterosexual men" (J Child Fam Stud). The main story we tend to always hear is violence between heterosexual couples. At least for me it's the same story on repeat. I was actually very surprised to learn that violence in intimate relationships is actually more common amongst lesbian and bisexual women. What exactly causes this?

We all know there is an obvious difference between heterosexual couples and same sex couples. Members of the LGBTQ+ community are known as minorities, and because they are minorities it can actually cause problems in their same sex relationships. This is known as the "minority stress theory" by Meyer. "Meyer (2003, p. 675) defined minority stress as "the excess stress to which individuals belonging to stigmatized social categories are exposed by effect of their minority social standing." This stress theory highlights how the stress of being a minority adds onto the additional stress of people who are not minorities. The measurements used to test this

theory are the degree of internalized homophobia, outness or closetedness, stigma consciousness, and as well as other stress factors known as experiences of violence, discrimination, and harassment in daily life.

Internalized homophobia as I know it is when a person who identifies as homosexual has yet to unlearn the homophobia they were taught while were being raised. It is hard to rewire your brain on a subject that you believed was correct your whole life. In a more technical sense internalized homophobia is when an individual has negative internalized beliefs or behaviors that can be connected to their homosexuality. Because these feelings are associated with negativity it is common to have violent behavior towards members of the same community. “Individuals with negative feelings about being LGB people might engage in violence toward their own partners” (J Child Fam Stud). I would like to share another quote from this article that I think is very important to my research and to the topic of internalized homophobia being a cause of violence in same sex relationships. “Two studies found that internalized homophobia was related to physical and sexual IPV victimization among lesbian and bisexual women” (J Child Fam Stud).

Outness or closetedness is a term used to determine if an individual is openly part of a sexual minority or not. It has been found that being open or “out” actually has a positive impact on individuals. People who are open have been found to have less psychological stress, good self-esteem, and better emotional states. On the opposite side, being closeted actually has a negative impact on the individual. Being closeted can lead to isolation in a relationship, raised levels of stress in a relationship, less levels of support which can lead to intimate partner violence.

Stigma consciousness is a word used to define how a minority group “expect to be stereotyped by others based on previous experience of discrimination (Pinel 1999)” (J Child Fam Stud). Because of past experiences of discrimination, it is common for people who are facing same-

sex, relationship abuse to stay quiet out of fear of their abusive partner facing justice from a homophobic legal system. Even after facing abuse from their lovers, these individuals are still able to have love in their hearts to try and keep the abuser safe.

I am a person who believes love comes in all shapes and sizes, but of course love can be unhealthy and toxic. Now I'm not saying that being in an unhealthy or toxic relationship is real love but it is something that is very common and that I have seen a lot in the real world and in TV shows, movies, comics and books. Some of the reasons as to why people in non-violent relationships kill their partners is because the killer thought it was out of love.

“The most common reason for intimate partner homicide was jealousy, followed by gain, and then love” (Bellinda Parker, Claire Ferguson). Following this quote from Bellinda Parker and Claire Ferguson's article, “Why some people in non-violent relationships kill their partners” I will now discuss examples of partners killing their lovers through jealousy, gain and then love.

Jealousy is probably one of the best shapeshifters I have ever seen. There can be jealousy over others' success, looks, attention and obviously as we all know, jealousy in love. I would say that jealousy is one of the best motivators of humankind. The most common type of jealousy occurring in relationships, is when a partner feels as though they are going to lose their lover to another person. In Bellinda Parker and Claire Ferguson's studies, they found that in all cases where husbands killed their wives, jealousy was the cause for 40% of these intimate partner homicides. Even though prior abuse is a good warning to these killings, it wasn't the case for all. There were cases where the killer was actually non-violent until the moment of murder.

Gain is the cause for 23% of all intimate partner homicides. Gain homicides include the act of trying to obtain or secure something that is desirable, profitable, or favorable. These cases are when the offender murders their loved one in exchange for something tangible such as money or

property. Opposite from jealousy cases, gain cases are mostly committed by women. Mostly committed for insurance payout or because these women thought they were going to be cut out from a will. Though in these cases there was no abuse from their husbands before the killing. I assume that these women killed their partners because “of entitlement and the need to financially secure themselves” (Bellinda Parker, Claire Ferguson).” Though this is a very serious matter I find it kind of funny because it reminded me of that cliché of women finding a rich man to marry and then killing them for their money. I also think it's funny because I personally have made jokes saying that if I don't succeed in my future, I could always just marry a rich man.

My perception of love is very wholesome, so I couldn't really understand how someone could kill someone they loved without being mentally ill or truly not loving them. After reading this article's section on love I realized that I was wrong. Love homicides only took up 17% of all intimate partner homicides. Most of these acts were committed because a partner wanted to release the suffering of their lover who was in a situation that was seen as worse than death. If this situation were to arise sometimes their loved ones would help and assist them to committing suicide. Another example of a love homicide would be if their partner was gravely sick or suffering from chronic mental and physical illness. The most common way of killing in love homicides was through the use of poison. Through this I have learned that there are ways people can kill who they love that truly seem like love to me. In a way it even seemed bittersweet to me.

I find it very interesting how love, which is sweet and gentle, can be turned into something that can cause harm to others. It's like an unspoken metaphor to the dark side of the moon. It really makes me wonder what else in this world is seen as good but could also potentially be seen as dangerous? At the same time while doing my research, I would get a little freaked out about being in a relationship and consider questions like “what if I become a victim of intimate partner

violence?” or “what if I end up like Freda and my future girlfriend kills me because she loves me?” Upon reflection, I find it kind of funny. There's a bad side to everything. There is a chance of our death in every day we live, yet we are not afraid to go out and experience life. I think it's good to explore even if the answers can be scary because that's really all life is. I was able to learn about subjects I didn't even know were such a problem and now because of it, I can live with a new perspective. In conclusion, I have learned to lean into my curiosity and to go on a little journey every once in a while.

Works Cited

- J. Lindquist, L. (1995). *Images of Alice: Gender, deviancy, and a love murder in Memphis on JSTOR*. Jester.Org. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/3704437>
- Longobardi, & Badenes-Ribera. (2017). Intimate partner violence in same-sex relationships and the role of sexual minority stressors: A systematic review of the past 10 years. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 26(8), 2039–2049. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0734-4>
- M.D., R. R. (2017, February 14). *All about love*. Psychology Today.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-truisms-wellness/201702/all-about-love>
- Parker. (2018, January 1). *Why some people in non-violent relationships kill their partners*. QUT EPrints. <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/115773/>
- The psychology behind love and romance*. (2016, August 23). South University.Edu.
<https://www.southuniversity.edu/news-and-blogs/2016/08/the-psychology-behind-love-and-romance-70700>