

Male Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence: A Descriptive Review and Call for Further Research

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of all known publicly available research addressing the extent of men's experiences of same-sex intimate partner violence. Overall, it would seem that intimate partner violence is not just a problem for heterosexual couples. Violence between male same-sex male intimates also occurs at an alarmingly high rate, help is rarely sought from community service providers or police and when it is sought, the 'help' given is not particularly useful. This paper also summarises research outcomes with regard to: patterns of male same-sex partner violence, context within which it occurs, its impact on victims and the reasons why men stay with their violent partners. A challenge is issued to the general social science community and, in particular, the criminological community, to end the relative research 'silence' surrounding the matter of male same-sex intimate partner violence in Australia.

Introduction

The discourses constructed around intimate partner violence in the Australian social sciences and society at large remain gendered and heterosexist. Intimate partner violence is primarily considered a problem for heterosexual women in heteronormative relationships with heterosexual men. As noted by Johnson and Ferraro (2000: 948), "in everyday speech and even in most social science discourse, 'domestic violence' is about

men beating women”. Consider the recent Australian Government Anti-Domestic Violence Initiative urging that, “To Violence Against Women, Australia Says No” (Australian Government, 2007). In this campaign men are always portrayed as the perpetrators and women as the victims. The corollary of this is that other groups experiencing intimate partner violence remain largely invisible. One example is men who experience this violence at the hands of their intimate same-sex partner. The message that is sent to these men from such widespread exclusion on this issue is that their experiences are invalid and that Australia is unconcerned with their victimisation.

In 1996 Lee Vickers asserted that if the issue of same-sex intimate partner violence in Australia was to be effectively addressed, the silence surrounding it would need to be confronted (Vickers, 1996). Same-sex intimate partner violence has recently come ‘out of the closet’ in some Australian jurisdictions. The AIDS Council of New South Wales has been a leader on this front, establishing a Same-Sex Domestic Violence (SSDV) Interagency Working Group in 2001 to bring together non-Government and Government agencies with the aim of creating a collaborative response to the issues surrounding SSDV (Aids Council of New South Wales, 2007). Then in 2004, the AIDS Council of New South Wales took a principle role in launching Australia’s first comprehensive campaign against same-sex intimate partner violence (Aids Council of New South Wales, 2007). While community awareness is being raised in New South Wales, other jurisdictions in Australia are not as vocal and, as far as research is concerned, little has been undertaken with regard to same-sex intimate partner violence, especially in men’s relationships.

Beyond the local community level, the Australian criminological and social science research community has also been silent on this issue. What is known about male same-sex intimate partner violence in Australia is limited to data collected from health workers in New South Wales (see Dwyer, 2004) and to one Australia wide survey of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersexed (GLBTI) people conducted by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (2006). In the former piece of research, details pertaining to male same-sex intimate partner violence are lost by amalgamating research participants' experiences, since the experiences of men and women are combined. In the later study, men self identified as "gay, bisexual, queer, not sure, don't use label" and "other" were surveyed in relation to their experiences of intimate relationship violence. Both prevalence and types of violence (i.e. emotional, physical, sexual, and so on) were measured in addition to whether the violence was reported to police and how helpful their responses were. However, whether the violence reported was perpetrated by a same-sex partner is unclear.

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. First it seeks to provide a systematic review of the research published to date on men's experiences of same-sex intimate partner violence as both perpetrators and victims. The two Australian studies mentioned above are included in this review, along with all published international studies. More specifically, the review includes all original research projects focussed on one or more of the following: a) frequency/prevalence of intimate partner violence in men's same-sex intimate relationships, b) the types of violence perpetrated (i.e. emotional, physical, sexual, and so on), c) patterns of violence (e.g. cycle of violence, mutual combat), d) the social, individual and relational context out of which this violence occurs (e.g. motives of perpetrators, homophobia, histories of childhood abuse), e) impact of this type of

violence, f) reasons victims have for staying and, g) help seeking, responses and perceptions of intimate partner violence in male same-sex relationships. Second, it is hoped that this paper will raise awareness of this issue and subsequently provoke some much needed Australian based social science dialogue and research into this area.

It should be noted that the authors of this paper are not trying to shift the responsibility of doing research into this area onto others. Both authors are currently in the process of designing and undertaking a Queensland based research project exploring men's experiences of same-sex intimate partner violence, and it is anticipated that results from this project will be made available by mid-2008.

As noted briefly above regarding Australian research in this area, the studies reviewed sometimes incorporated 'lesbians' and 'transgendered' persons in addition to 'gay' and 'bisexual' men and women in their research designs. While violence in all relationships regardless of primary sexual orientation or gender is worthy of consideration, the specific concern here is to unpack the experiences of intimate partner violence in male same-sex relationships. The combination of the experiences of different genders and sexual orientations may be problematic, as this can deny the probability of difference among these populations. It specifically negates the possibility that experiences of male-to-male intimate partner violence may be different from other groups by virtue of gender and sexuality. Therefore, what is discussed in this paper is the most accurate information on *male* same-sex intimate partner violence that could be extracted from the research studies. Where required and where possible, the information on *male* same-sex intimate partner violence was disentangled from the more generalised data and dialogue on this issue. If

this could not be achieved, the generalised information (within which the experience of men in same-sex intimate partnerships constituted a part) is presented.

It should also be pointed out that much of the research discussed below utilises the term ‘gay men’ to refer to the group under examination. Other studies have included ‘bisexual men’, ‘men who have sex with men’ and, ‘queer men’ in their sample group. Furthermore, a diverse range of terms are utilised in studies examined to refer to violence between same-sex intimates, e.g. domestic violence, partner abuse. In this paper, the authors have used the term *male same-sex intimate partner violence* when referring ‘in their own voice’ to this issue. When referring to and quoting from particular studies, the terminology utilised by the authors of that research are employed, in order to provide an idea of the specificity of their research findings.

Method

An initial literature search for this project was carried out between the 21st and the 23rd of January 2007. The following search terms were developed to refer to domestic violence, recognising the diversity of terms used by researchers in this field: family violence, intimate partner violence and spousal abuse and domestic violence. Similarly, the following terms were developed to refer to same-sex couples, recognising a similar diversity in terms: gay, homosexual, queer, same-sex, and gay male.

These terms resulted in a number of combinations which were utilised in the search engines of a number of databases, library catalogues, and other internet search engines. The following academic databases were used in these searches: Sociological Abstracts;

ProQuest Social Science Journals; the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) (US-based); Criminal Justice Abstracts; Australian Federal Police Digest (AFPD); Academic Research Library; Australian Public Affairs; Family and Society PLUS; ERIC; Health and Safety Science Abstracts; and Social Services Abstracts.

In total, 26 original research studies concerned at least in part with men's experiences of same-sex intimate partner violence were identified (see table below). The majority of the identified studies were set in the United States ($n=22$) (Farley, 1996; Landolt & Dutton, 1997; Turell, 1999; Cruz & Firestone, 1998; Cruz, 2000; Merrill & Wolfe, 2000; Turell, 2000; Cruz & Peralta, 2001; National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2001; Burke, et.al., 2002; Greenwood, et.al., 2002; McClennen, et.al., 2002; Younglove et.al. 2002; Cruz, 2003; Kuehnle & Sullivan, 2003; Toro-Alfonso & Rodriguez-Madera, 2004; Craft & Serovich, 2005; Heintz & Melendez, 2006; Rodriguez-Madera & Toro-Alfonso, 2005; Seelau & Seelau, 2005; Turell & Cornell-Swanson, 2005; McKenry et.al., 2006). Only six studies considered jurisdictions outside the US, which included: Canada (Stanely, et.al., 2006), United Kingdom (Donovan, et.al., 2006), Puerto Rico (Rodriguez-Madera & Toro-Alfonso, 2005) Venezuela (Burke, et.al., 2002) and two from Australia (Dwyer, 2004; Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2006). All the studies were published over a ten-year period between 1996 and 2006, with the bulk appearing after 1999 ($n=22$).

The majority of studies ($n=22$) were primarily quantitative in nature, utilising self-report surveys or data coded from case files (i.e. clinical case notes, counselling files) and reports made to service providers (e.g. domestic violence telephone help lines) to explore

various aspects of male same-sex intimate partner violence (Farley, 1996; Landolt & Dutton, 1997; Turell, 1999; Merrill & Wolfe, 2000; Turell, 2000; National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2001; Burke, et.al., 2002; Greenwood, et.al., 2002; McClennen, et.al., 2002; Younglove et.al. 2002; Kuehnle & Sullivan, 2003; Dwyer, 2004; Toro-Alfonso & Rodriguez-Madera, 2004; Craft & Serovich, 2005; Rodriguez-Madera & Toro-Alfonso, 2005; Seelau & Seelau, 2005; Heintz & Melendez, 2006; Turell & Cornell-Swanson, 2005; Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2006; Donovan, et.al., 2006; McKenry et.al., 2006; Stanley, et.al., 2006). Six studies had a qualitative component to their exploration, utilising interviews and/or focus groups (Cruz & Firestone, 1998; Cruz, 2000; Cruz & Peralta, 2001; Cruz, 2003; Donovan, et.al., 2006; Stanley, et.al., 2006).

Frequency/Prevalence and Types of Male Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence

Over half the studies reviewed ($n=17$) sought to ascertain the frequency/prevalence of intimate partner violence by surveying men and asking them to report on their experiences as victims and/or perpetrators of violence in same-sex relationships (Landolt & Dutton, 1997; Turell, 1999; Turell, 2000; Merrill & Wolfe, 2000; National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2001; Burke, et.al., 2002; Greenwood, et.al., 2002; McClennen, et.al., 2002; Kuehnle & Sullivan, 2003; Dwyer, 2004; Toro-Alfonso & Rodriguez-Madera, 2004; Craft & Serovich, 2005; Rodriguez-Madera & Toro-Alfonso, 2005; Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2006; Donovan et.al., 2006; Heintz & Melendez, 2006; Stanley, et.al., 2006). Each study provided figures regarding the frequency/prevalence of victimisation and five also provided data on the

frequency/prevalence of perpetration (Landolt & Dutton, 1997; Toro-Alfonso & Rodriguez-Madera, 2004; Craft & Serovich, 2005; Rodriguez-Madera & Toro-Alfonso, 2005; Stanley, et.al., 2006). Similar to intimate partner violence in opposite sex intimate relationships (e.g. Wilt & Olsen, 1996; Bradley, et.al. 2002; Carrington, 2003; Johnson, 2005,) these studies suggest that violence is not uncommon in male same-sex intimate partnerships, that it occurs at a fairly high frequency, with emotional abuse being the most common type of violence. In addition, men who are HIV positive are more likely than those without this status to experience violence (Craft & Serovich, 2005). HIV status may also increase women's experiences of violence in heterosexual relationships (Maman, et.al. 2002).

In terms of *victimisation* experiences, a wide variance in frequencies was evident in the studies reviewed. This reflects differences in:

- a) The types of violent experiences being measured, i.e. overall, emotional, physical, and/or sexual violence.
- b) The sample composition of individual studies, as some studies surveyed general populations selected from the broader gay community, whilst others considered more specific populations within the gay community such as those that reported a HIV positive status.

Some studies reported the overall prevalence of victimisation in same-sex intimate partner violence amongst general samples i.e. the total percentage of participants recruited from the general community who reported experiencing some form of intimate partner violence whether that is emotional, physical and/or sexual (Burke, et.al, 2002;

Australian Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2006; Donovan et.al., 2006;). In their nation-wide survey of the GLBTI community, the Australian Centre in Sex, Health and Society (2006: 51) reported that 27.9 per cent of the men (self identified as either gay, bisexual, queer, not sure, do not use a label, or other) said that they had been in a relationship where a partner abused them. It is not clear from the data whether this abuse was from a same-sex partner. However, given the relationship profile of participants and their sexual self-identification (42.9 per cent of men were currently in a relationship with another man and only 27 men self-identified as heterosexual/straight) it is likely that a significant amount of this abuse was perpetuated by a same-sex partner (Australian Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2006: 19 & 26). In the United Kingdom, another nation-wide survey of the LGBT community undertaken by Donovan et.al. (2006: 7) revealed that 35.2 per cent of men (self identified as gay, bisexual or queer) surveyed reported that they had experienced domestic abuse at some time in a same-sex relationship. In a survey of 72 lesbians and gay men in the United States and Venezuela, (Burke, et.al.2002: 242) statistics revealed that 68 per cent of respondents (men, women and other) reported experiencing some form of domestic violence in a same-sex relationship and men were more likely than women to have experienced violence.

As well as investigating the overall prevalence of violent victimisation, the Australian Centre in Sex, Health and Society (2006: 51), Donovan et.al. (2006: 9-10) and Burke, et.al. (2002: 243) asked their participants to outline the types of abuse or victimisation they experienced. The Australian Centre in Sex, Health and Society (2006: 51) reported the following with regard to the men in their study:

- *Emotional abuse* including: being regularly insulted (62.7%), being isolated from friends/family (48.3%) being monitored or checked up on (43.7%), being deprived of financial independence (20.1%), and being in fear of their lives (17.1%),
- *Physical abuse* including: being hit (47.8%), and being physically injured (36.3%), and
- *Sexual abuse*: namely being forced to have sex (19.6%),

Neither Burke, et.al. (2002: 243) nor Donovan et.al (2006: 9-10) looked specifically at the types of abuse experienced by men in same-sex intimate relationships but instead reported the percentages within each abuse category for all participants (men and women). However, Donovan et.al (2006: 9-10) does note that similar proportions of men and women had been emotionally victimised (77.8 per cent at some time) and physically victimised (40.1 per cent at some time). In addition, 40.5 per cent of all respondents (men and women) reported being sexually abused and, whilst figures were not specified, Donovan et.al. (2006: 10) noted that men were more likely than women to be victimised in this way.

Unlike the three studies discussed above, most other studies investigating the frequency of same-sex intimate partner victimisation in general samples considered specific types of violence, for example the percentage of research participants who reported experiencing emotional violence, physical violence and sexual violence (see Greenwood et.al., 2002; Heintz & Melendez, 2006; McLennan, Summers & Vaughan, 2002; Rodriguez-Madera & Toro-Alfonso, 2005; Turrell, 2000; Turrell, 1999; Toro-Alfonso & Rodriguez-Madera, 2004). Overall, these studies reveal a high incidence of emotional abuse in men's same-sex intimate partnerships, with percentages ranging from 34 to 83 per cent. Whilst lower

than emotional abuse, reports of physical victimisation were also high, with the percentage of men being victimised in this way ranging from 22 to 44 per cent. Sexual abuse was reported by between five and 57 per cent of men in the studies reviewed.

Research that looked at the prevalence of male same-sex intimate partner victimisation in more *specific samples* reported frequencies at the higher end of the scale (Merrill & Wolfe, 2000; McClennen, et.al., 2002; Kuehnle and Sullivan, 2003; Dwyer, 2004; Craft and Serovoich 2005; Stanley, et.al., 2006). Consider the following studies with more specific participant cohorts i.e. involving men with HIV or those who had contacted a domestic violence support service of some kind.

Craft and Serovoich (2005: 785) report that of the HIV positive men participating in their study, 72.5 per cent had experienced psychological aggression from their male intimates, 45.1 per cent were victims of physical assault, and 33.3 per cent had been sexually coerced. In New South Wales Australia, Dwyer (2004: 8) found that amongst a sample of clients from a generalist HIV/AIDS counselling service who reported same-sex domestic violence occurring in their relationships over a two year period, 70 per cent of cases (including both men and women) involved emotional abuse, 59 per cent of cases (including both men and women) involved physical abuse, and five cases (including both men and women) involved sexual assault.

Kuehnle and Sullivan (2003: 92) found that 63.1 per cent of domestic violence incidents reported by gay men to a domestic violence program involved physical assaults. Merrill and Wolfe (2000: 11-15) report that amongst their sample of gay and bisexual men recruited through gay domestic violence programs, 87 per cent reported physical abuse

(severe or recurrent), up to 94 per cent had experienced some form of emotional abuse, nearly 70 per cent some kind of financial abuse (financial abuse is often categorised as emotional abuse) and 73 per cent had been sexually abused.

Similar to the victimisation studies discussed above, research utilising general samples to investigate the frequency/prevalence of domestic violence *perpetration* in male same-sex relationships reported high levels of intimate partner violence, with around 40 per cent of men perpetrating emotional violence against a same-sex intimate, between 24 and 40 per cent perpetuating physical violence, and approximately 16 per cent being sexually violent (Landolt & Dutton, 1997; Toro-Alfonso & Rodriguez-Madera, 2004; Rodriguez-Madera & Toro-Alfonso, 2005). As was the case with victimisation, studies that employed more specific sampling techniques reported higher perpetration frequencies to the general samples (Farley, 1996; Craft & Serovoich, 2006; Stanley et.al., 2006). For example, Craft and Serovoich (2005: 785) report that amongst their sample of gay HIV positive men, 39.2 per cent of participants reported being physically violent toward their partner, 27.5 per cent stated that they had been sexually coercive, and 78.4 per cent indicated that they perpetrated some form of psychological violence.

Patterns of Male Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence

The *Cycle of Violence* is a conceptual tool developed to understand patterns of violence between heterosexual intimate partners. This tool purports that an incident of domestic violence is followed by what is referred to as a ‘honeymoon’ phase, during which there is no violence and the relationship returns to some form of stability, with partners ‘making up’ (often where promises from the perpetrator encourage the victim to believe that the

abuse will end). This stage is followed by a tension-building phase, which comes to a head with another act of violence, at which point the cycle begins again (McClennen, et.al., 2002, 25-26; Merrill and Wolfe 2000, 4). Over a period of time, however, it is suggested that incidents of violence increase in frequency as well as intensity or severity. Within the research reviewed here, four studies examined patterns of male same-sex intimate partner violence, and these strongly suggested that the ‘cycle of violence’ exists within these relationships (Merrill & Wolfe 2000; McClennen, et.al. 2002; National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2001; Stanley et. al 2006).

For example, in McClennan, Summers and Vaughan’s (2002, 32) study of 63 gay men, 60.3 per cent of respondents confirmed this cycle operated in their abusive relationship, with incidents of abuse increasing over the course of the relationship. Merrill and Wolfe (2000, 11) also found that this cycle was evident in the majority of male same-sex abusive relationships they investigated. In this study, 73 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “[a]fter a violent incident, the relationship seemed to return to a ‘honeymoon period’ in which my partner was apologetic, caring, attentive, and romantic” (Merrill and Wolfe 2000, 11).

Whilst violence within male same-sex relationships maybe characterised cyclically, as outlined above, there is also a suggestion in the literature that violent incidents may involve some form of mutual battering. (Merrill & Wolfe 2000, 25; NCAVP 2001, 5-6). In Stanley et al’s (2006, 35) study of 69 gay and bisexual men, respondents reported perpetrating equal levels of violence to their abusive partners. Twenty-seven respondents stated that the violence in their relationship was bidirectional, and that both partners had been physically violent at some point within their relationship. Over the course of the

relationship, 50 per cent of the sample stated that the violence was bidirectional, while 28 per cent reported only being the victim of violence, and 22 per cent reported only perpetrating violence (Stanley et al 2006, 35).

Other research has demonstrated different results. In their survey of 52 gay and bisexual men, Merrill and Wolfe (2000, 11) found that 58 per cent of their respondents agreed that they would act in self-defence against a physical attack from their partner. However, only 17 per cent suggested that the abuse was mutual and that either partner was as likely as the other to initiate it (Merrill and Wolfe 2000, 11).

Context Out of which Male Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence Occurs

Intimate partner violence in same-sex relationships requires a multi-dimensional understanding of the context from which the violence arises. Eleven studies examined these contexts, showing that intimate partner aggression in male same-sex relationships is linked to individual factors, micro-social variables and broader macro-social contexts (Farley, 1996; Landolt & Dutton, 1997; Cruz & Firestone, 1998; Cruz, 2000; Cruz & Peralta, 2001; Greenwood, et.al., 2002; Dwyer, 2004; Toro-Alfonso & Rodriguez-Madera, 2004; Craft & Serovich, 2005; Rodriguez-Madera & Toro-Alfonso, 2005; McKenry et.al., 2006) Discussed in detail below, many of the contextual triggers associated with male same-sex intimate partner violence are also applicable to violence in opposite-sex relationships e.g. masculinity, substance abuse, power, mental ill health, intergenerational abuse (Babcock, et.al., 1993; Simons, et.al., 1995; Coker, et.al., 2000; Romans, et.al., 2000; Stith, 2000; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2005; Johnson, 2005).

However, unique to violence in male same-sex intimate relationships were the influence of HIV and homophobia.

Individual and Micro-Social Contextual Factors

In the research surveyed here, key individual antecedents that were highlighted as providing at least a partial explanation for male same-sex intimate partner violence included: individual psychology, mental ill health, substance abuse and other addictive behaviours, internalised homophobia, HIV status, negative childhood experiences, and relational dynamics.

More specifically in terms of individual psychology the following contributing agents were noted in the literature: attachment, masculinity, self-esteem and assertiveness (Cruz & Firestone, 1998; Landolt & Dutton, 1997; McKenry et.al., 2006; Toro-Alfonso & Rodriguez-Madera, 2004). First, insecure attachment/attachment anxiety is noted to be related to experiences of male same-sex intimate partner violence. Less securely attached men feel that their possession and control of an intimate would be tenuous, and as such are more likely to resort to abuse and violence as a means to ‘keep’ their partners. Second, a strong identification with a masculine gender identity appears to increase men’s tendencies toward aggressive behaviours of control when threatened. More specifically, those with stronger masculine gender identities seem more inclined to use aggression to resolve relationships problems. Third, low self esteem and assertiveness which results in feelings of powerlessness, worthlessness and insecurity can make men more prone to violence.

In addition to the individual psychological elements noted above, Farley (1996) found a tendency toward more serious mental health problems amongst a clinical sample of gay men referred to a perpetrator treatment program; namely high levels of previous psychiatric/mental health treatment (87 per cent), hospitalisation for psychiatric reasons (27 per cent), suicidal feelings/thoughts (33 per cent), and/or homicidal feelings/thoughts (20 per cent).

Substance abuse (drugs and alcohol) and other addictive behaviours (e.g. to food and sex) also appear to be connected with intimate partner violence in male same-sex relationships (see Cruz & Firestone, 1998; Cruz & Peralta, 2001; Dwyer, 2006; McCleenen, et.al., 2002; Toro-Alfonso & Rodriguez-Madera, 2004). For example, in Australia, Dwyer (2006) reported that high levels of alcohol and other drug use were reported by over 50 per cent of the counselling clients of the AIDS Council of NSW who had experienced same-sex intimate partner violence (the majority of which were male). McCleenen, et.al., (2002: 40) found that around two-thirds of survey respondents in their research (63 male self-identified victims of same-sex intimate partner violence) reported that the abusive acts they had experienced “occurred when at least one or two partners were under the influence of substances”. Only 1.6 per cent of incidents took place when only the victim was under the influence, which suggests that the stronger predictor of violence in male same-sex intimate relationships is perpetrator, rather than victim, intoxication. Cruz and Peralta (2001: 166) found that 13 of their 25 gay male study respondents believed that alcohol was a precipitating factor in the violence they had experienced. In these cases violence emerged because a) the alcohol served as a disinhibitor or, b) money was spent on it and/or drugs causing an argument. An additional three respondents believed that

alcohol or drugs were used as a result of the violence providing a way to escape the dysfunctional relationship.

Associated with both lower self-esteem and substance abuse is internalised homophobia; a factor highlighted by some as being related to male same-sex intimate partner violence in terms of both victimisation and perpetration (McKenry et.al., 2006: 241; Cruz & Firestone, 1998). Internalised homophobia refers to the fear or hatred of homosexuality that is carried within the individual against their own homosexual desires. It is the internalisation of broader social attitudes towards men who engage in sexually intimate relations with other men. As noted by Cruz (2000: 79) to be 'a man' in modern western society requires men to be heterosexual, homophobic, and hostile toward men involved in intimate relationships with other men. Men who deviate from this path risk suffering social stigma and at times violent retaliation. Internalised homophobia is considered by some to be a substantial barrier in adjustment to a positive homosexual identity because it can cause immense psychological conflict and trauma within the individual (Allen & Oleson, 1999; Cruz & Firestone, 1998: 162). The self-depreciating messages that result from internalised homophobia can cause depression, despair and other forms of self-destructive behaviour including substance abuse. These can also extend to hostility directed at same-sex intimate partners (Cruz & Firestone, 1998: 162; Williamson, 2000).

As discussed previously, the research indicates that HIV positive gay men are at increased risk of experiencing violence in their same-sex relationships: frequency/prevalence rates within this specific population tend to be higher (Craft & Servoich, 2005; Greenwood et.al., 2002). HIV status has been shown to influence gay men's decision making about staying in abusive relationships (see discussion under the heading *Reasons Why Men Stay*

with their Violent Same-Sex Partners). Sexual coercion involving unsafe sex practices within a sample of HIV positive men was highlighted by Craft and Serovich (2005) as being a particularly insidious and dangerous dynamic of male same-sex partner violence. Over 20 per cent of the HIV positive men in Craft and Serovich's study (2005: 787) reported forcing their partners to have sex without using a condom, and nearly 30 per cent of men reported being forced to have sex without a condom.

Whilst not a specific finding of the research reviewed here, HIV status is highlighted in the general literature via anecdotes as playing a significant part in the manifestation of emotional abuse. For example, male perpetrators may use their HIV positive status to persuade their same-sex partners to remain in an abusive relationship with them, perpetrators may threaten to 'out' the HIV status of victims as a means to maintain power and control over partners, and in some cases it is suggested that abusive partners may withhold medication from their HIV positive partners (see for example, Chan, 2005: 3; Lettelier 1996; Mulroney & Chan, 2005: 5; Richards, et.al., 2003: 12).

Moving beyond individual psychology, mental and physical ill health to micro-social relations, the most prominent theme in the research reviewed is the strong association between negative childhood experiences and male same-sex intimate partner violence. Overall, the research shows that men who are abused or witness abuse during childhood have an increased chance of experiencing same-sex intimate partner violence either as a perpetrator or victim.

For example, in a sample of gay HIV positive men, Craft and Servovich (2005: 784-785) discovered positive correlations between witnessing physical violence from mother to

father during childhood and both perpetrating, and being a victim of, sexual coercion and physical abuse. Being the victim of childhood physical abuse was also positively correlated with, a) perpetrating physical assault and sexual coercion against a male same-sex partner, and b) being the victim of sexual coercion. Men in Farley's (1996) clinical sample of perpetrators further highlight a connection between childhood abuse and violence committed in adulthood. In this case it was found that: 93 per cent of perpetrators had experienced childhood physical abuse, 67 per cent sexual abuse, and 67 per cent psychological abuse. Toro-Alfonso & Rodriguez-Madera (2004: 647-649) also found a positive relationship between childhood abusive experiences (emotional, physical and sexual violence) and physical and emotional violence in their general survey of gay and bisexual men's experiences of violence in intimate same-sex relationships.

Another micro-level contextual factor highlighted in the literature is relational dynamics within male same-sex intimate partnerships. The following relational dynamics appear in the research literature as being associated with male same-sex intimate partner violence: emotional neediness, dependency/independency, jealousy and possessiveness, power imbalances (McClennen, et.al., 2002; Stanley, et.al., 2006). For example, in the qualitative component of Stanley et.al's (2006: 38-39) interviews with 69 men, four relational violence triggers emerged: 1) unmet or threatened emotional needs, 2) incompatible needs for closeness versus autonomy, 3) frustrated desires for commitment and monogamy, and 4) loss of the relationship.

With regard to the first trigger (unmet or threatened emotional needs) 28 per cent of the men in Stanley et.al's (2006: 39) research described a relationship dynamic characterised by one partner being more emotionally invested in the relationship than the other. It was

found that the more emotionally invested partner was more often the initiator of violence against his same-sex intimate.

“Incompatible needs for closeness versus autonomy” were described by 36 per cent of participants as having underpinned the violence experienced (Stanley et. al 2006, 38-40). Violence in these cases tended to occur when one partner withdrew from an argument, whilst the other made requests/demands and engaged more overtly in the interaction. Those in the demanding role seemed to be seeking greater closeness and to be more invested in the relationship. Those in the withdrawing role sought less intimacy and greater separateness and therefore appeared less emotionally involved. As Stanley et. al (2006, 38) states, “[t]ypically, the men in the demanding role felt their attempts to communicate and get their emotional needs met were thwarted by their partners’ unavailability, and when their emotional needs were not met, they reacted violently”.

The theme of “frustrated desires relating to commitment and monogamy” was present in 20 per cent of men’s stories of intimate partner violence in this study. In these cases, men described violent incidents occurring around arguments about actual or perceived infidelity by one person in the partnership (Stanley et.al, 2006: 39). Finally, in 23 per cent of cases, the intimate partner violence occurred for the first time when the relationship was in the process of ending (Stanley et.al, 2006: 39).

In a similar vein to Stanley et.al’s (2006) research, McClennen et.al. (2002, 38) found that jealousy/possessiveness was a moderate predictor of male same-sex intimate partner violence, with 48 per cent of men reporting jealousy as being a problem in their violent relationships. Dependency was also highlighted as being a moderate predictor of the

severity of abuse in male same-sex intimate partnerships, and relational power imbalances between intimate partners also correlated with violence, it was found that perpetrators often reacted aggressively toward partners who earned more money than they did (McClennen, et.al. 2002, 40).

Macro-Social Contextual Factors

Societal homophobia, ideals pertaining to masculinity, and access to social and economic resources are macro-level factors that appear in the research literature as being significant in experiences of intimate partner violence in male same-sex relationships. Both factors contribute to the more micro-social and individual variables discussed above. Without societal homophobia, internalised homophobia would not exist and the relational strains created by living in a homophobic world would not be present in men's intimate relationships with other men. Similarly, individuals and relationships become strained under conditions where there are few economic or social resources upon which to draw (i.e. low socio-economic status), and in a society where a particular form of masculinity is 'held-up' as the 'ideal', men may turn to violence to assure themselves that they are 'real men' (see Messerschmidt, 1993; Messerschmidt, 2000).

Research participants in Cruz's (2000) qualitative investigations of gay male domestic violence were asked to comment on why they thought domestic violence and abuse occur in male same-sex relationships. One of the key themes highlighted was societal homophobia. The men in Cruz's (2000: 77-78) study noted that societal homophobia causes strain in men's relationships, adding an additional pressure that heterosexual couples do not have to 'deal with'. In addition, and as a result of broader homophobia,

many men enter same-sex relationships carrying a lot of ‘emotional baggage’ i.e. the problems they had growing up and coming out, and coming to grips with their homosexuality. The additional strains thrust upon men by societal homophobia create relational situations primed for violence. Furthermore, societal homophobia may bond victims to perpetrators out of some sort of loyalty in the face of a homophobic world (Cruz, 2000: 75).

Cruz (2000: 79) also found that experiences of intimate partner violence in male same-sex relationships might be viewed as a means of achieving, or at least attempting to achieve, hegemonic masculinity. R W Connell (2005) argues that in contemporary western society, hegemonic masculinity emphasises practices toward authority, control, competitive individualism, independence, aggressiveness and the capacity for violence. ‘Gay’ men, just like heterosexual men, live in a society where this particular form of masculinity is ‘held up’ as being ‘the masculinity’ to which all men should strive. Violence and masculinity in our society are intertwined and ‘doing masculinity’ often equates to ‘doing violence’ (physical, emotional or sexual), or at least appearing as though you have the potential to ‘do violence’. Men who choose to have intimate same-sex relationships with other men challenge hegemonic masculinity, and the compulsory heterosexuality that goes with it. This calls into question the manliness of ‘gay’ men both at societal and individual levels (as we have seen with internalised homophobia). ‘Gay’ masculinity is subordinate to heterosexual masculinity and some ‘gay’ men could potentially seek to oppose their subordinate position by utilising intimate partner violence as a resource to achieve hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005: 78).

Finally, in a quantitative analysis of variables associated with intimate partner violence in male same-sex relationships, Greenwood et.al. (2002: 1967) found that the probability of being victimised may be increased in contexts where men have fewer external and internal resources. More specifically, young men and those with low levels of education were more likely than their older more educated counterparts to be victimised in their same-sex intimate relationships. In a study focussed on the perpetration of male same-sex intimate partner violence, McKenry et.al. (2006) found that gay male perpetrators were more likely than non-perpetrators to have low levels of education and low socio-economic status. They conclude that perpetrators experience more feelings of disempowerment than non-perpetrators.

Impact of Male Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence

Only four studies broach the issue of the impact that same-sex intimate partner violence can have on men (Kuehnle & Sullivan, 2003; Donovan, et.al., 2006; Heintz & Melendez, 2006; Stanley et. al 2006). What these studies show is that same-sex intimate partner violence can be detrimental to men's physical and psychological well-being. Namely: it can impede the negotiation of safe sex practices, cause serious physical injuries, and be emotionally distressing.

Donovan, et.al. (2006: 10-11) report from their survey of men and women in same-sex intimate relationships is that: 1) the impact of emotional abuse was generally similar for male and female respondents, although the one impact on men that was significantly different from women was to make them feel loved or wanted, 2) the impact of physical abuse of men and women was generally similar, and 3) the impact of sexual abuse on

men and women was very similar. The authors do not describe what the ‘impacts’ actually are and they do not seek to explain why being victimised makes men feel loved or wanted. The investigation of “intimate partner violence and HIV/STD risk among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals” conducted by Heintz and Melendez (2006), considered the effects of sexual abuse on the negotiation of safe sex. This study only investigated one impact of abuse, namely the effects of sexual abuse on safe-sex negotiation practices in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) relationships. They found that individuals who report being “...forced to have sex with their partner were 10.3 times more likely than those who had not [been forced] to report not using protection because they feared their partner’s response” (Heintz & Melendez, 2006: 203). Kuehnle and Sullivan (2003: 93) found that 3.2 per cent of ‘gay men’ reporting incidents of same-sex intimate partner violence to a domestic violence service stated that their injuries from physical attacks had required hospitalisation. Finally, Stanley et.al’s (2006) interviews with 69 randomly selected Canadian gay and bisexual men revealed that 12 per cent of participants who had experienced same-sex intimate partner violence reported needing “medical attention for their injuries”, and 23 per cent indicated a “strong emotional response to their partners” violence (including “feeling terrified”) (Stanley et. al 2006, 37).

Reasons Why Men Stay with their Violent Same-Sex Partners

Two of the studies reviewed here explored the reasons given by men for staying with their same-sex partners after being violently victimised by them (Merrill and Wolfe, 2000; Cruz, 2003). Most commonly the reasons given for staying related to hope, love, loyalty/commitment, fear, financial dependence, inadequate knowledge regarding same-

sex intimate partner violence, and a lack of societal assistance/support. As a reason for staying, inadequate knowledge regarding same-sex intimate partner violence is obviously only applicable in the same-sex context. However, the other antecedents highlighted are also commonly cited by women choosing to remain with their violent male intimates (e.g. Anderson, et.al. 2003; Strube & Barbour, 2007).

Hope, Love, Loyalty and Commitment

Around 72 per cent (n=52) of the gay/bisexual men surveyed by Merrill and Wolfe (2000: 19) and 16 per cent of respondents in Cruz's study (2003: 6) indicated staying in abusive relationships with same-sex partners, with the hope that their partners would change and the violence would stop. Love and violence can co-exist, and people who are victims of violence at the hands of intimate partners can, and often do, still feel much love for their abuser (Cruz, 2003: 5-6). Victims of intimate partner violence can also frequently feel loved by their abusive partner. Love felt toward an abusive partner was cited as a significant reason for staying in violent same-sex relationships by 14 per cent of gay or bisexual men in Cruz's investigation (2003: 5-6). At the same time, 67 per cent of the men in Merrill and Wolfe's (2000: 19) research said that they had stayed with their violent partner because they "loved them very much", and 37 per cent stayed because they did not think anyone could "love them or want them as much" as their violent intimate.

The priority given to both love and hope in men's decisions to stay in violent intimate relationships may relate to the cyclic nature of the abuse experience (discussed earlier under *Patterns of Male Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence*). Love and hope can be 'kept alive' by the fact that violence in intimate relationships is rarely continuous, and

that between violent episodes abusers may be gentle, loving and apologetic toward their victims (Cruz, 2003: 6).

Closely related to love and hope are feelings of commitment and loyalty to one's partner and the relationship. Seven percent of men in Cruz's (2003: 6) study said that commitment/loyalty was a reason for staying, and 31 per cent of respondents in Merrill and Wolfe's (2000: 19) research reported that honouring their relationship commitment played a major part in their decision to stay. Cruz (2003: 7) suggests that feelings of commitment in same-sex relationships may be exacerbated by the lack of structural support available for those in same-sex relationships. The homophobic nature of our society creates a situation whereby men in same-sex relationships really feel as if their partner is their only source of support. For example, unlike most of the community, their partner accepts their sexuality and this creates a strong relational commitment based on the premise of 'us against them'. Indeed, emotional dependence was another factor noted by Cruz (2003: 7) that underpinned gay and bisexual men's reasons for staying, which was also found to link back to negative societal responses to the victims' sexual orientation. The men in this study came to rely on their abusers in an emotional sense for security; isolation from friends and family due to their homosexuality created a situation in which the men became over-reliant and dependant on their violent partners.

Fear

Fear of being harmed was cited by respondents as a reason to stay in their violent relationships in the studies of both Cruz (2003) and Merrill and Wolfe (2000). Nearly 40 per cent of participants in Merrill and Wolfe's (2000: 19) study stated that they had decided to stay with their abusers because they were afraid he would seriously harm them

or someone close to them if they left. Men in Cruz's (2003: 7) study also indicated that they chose to stay with their abusers because they feared "either escalated violence or death", a fear that was not without substance. As noted by Cruz (2003: 7), "gay victims are not immune to the great lengths to which abusive partners go to get at them". Respondents talked about being stalked, harassed and threatened by abusive partners when they tried to leave. Merrill and Wolfe (2000: 17) were also informed by 45 per cent of their study respondents that their partner's harassment of them after they had left was severe.

In male same-sex intimate relationships characterised by violence, perpetrators may threaten to 'out' their victims (i.e. divulging the victim's sexual orientation to friends, family, and employers), which is something that their victims fear. It has been suggested in the general literature that this fear of 'outing' may 'trap' men into staying with their violent male intimates (see Chan, 2005). The fear of 'outing' victim's sexual status was only considered directly by Donovan, et.al. (2006: 15) and in this case was refuted as playing a significant part the violent experiences of men they interviewed. However, in their report *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Domestic Violence in 2000*, the US-based National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs highlights 'outing' as a "highly specific form of abuse in LGBT communities". This conclusion appears anecdotal, having been gleaned from the experiences of workers who, on a day to day basis, are providing support to the victims of intimate partner violence.

Fear of loneliness was found to play a part in why men stay in abusive same-sex relationships. For example, 33 percent of respondents in Merrill and Wolfe's (2000: 19) study stated that they stayed with their abusive partners because they were afraid of being

alone. Loneliness was also cited by some of the men interviewed by Cruz (2003: 6) who posited that “in effect, to these men, existing in an abusive relationship was better than being a single gay man”. As well as fearing for themselves, some men may also fear what might happen to their partners if they leave. Merrill and Wolfe (2000:19) found that 33 per cent of men feared for their abusive partner’s well-being if they were to exit the relationship.

Fear for oneself and one’s violent same-sex male intimate also plays out in the context of HIV. The research shows that HIV status may be influential in causing men to stay in violent intimate same-sex relationships. Merrill and Wolfe (2000: 18) reported that 60 per cent of the respondents who reported HIV positive status ($n=20$) “indicated that fear of becoming sick and dying had played ‘a major part’ in their decision to remain in an abusive relationship”. Half of the participants indicated that the primary reason for staying with their HIV positive abusive partners was because they did not want to abandon them. Furthermore, 30 per cent of participants who were HIV positive indicated that fear of dating had influenced in their decision to stay with their abusive partners.

Financial Dependence

Being financially dependent on their abuser was highlighted by 18.6 per cent of the 25 gay or bisexual men interviewed by Cruz (2003: 5) as being a key reason for staying with an abusive male partner. These men felt ‘trapped’ in their violent relationships by economic necessity or insecurity. With little financial resources of their own, these men essentially needed their violent partner’s earnings to ‘make ends meet’. As Cruz (2003: 5) explained these men were “victimized by financial inequality within a relationship and

the reality that they [were] often economically dependent on an abusive significant other”.

Inadequate Knowledge Regarding Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence

On average, about half of the gay or bisexual men who participated in Merrill and Wolfe’s (2000: 19) study reported staying with their violent partners because they did not have any knowledge or understanding of same-sex intimate partner violence. More specifically: the men thought that the abusive incidents they had experienced were isolated exceptions and would not reoccur; they did not define what was happening to them as abuse or ‘domestic violence’; and/or they did not understand that there was such a thing as ‘gay domestic violence’. Similarly, naiveté with regard to same-sex intimate partner violence was highlighted as a reason for staying by 16.3 per cent of men interviewed by Cruz (2003: 5). More specifically, this group of research participants stayed in their abusive relationships, at least in part, because they did not know what a positive same-sex intimate relationship looked like: they thought that violence might have just been the norm in ‘gay’ relationships.

Lack of Societal Assistance

Lack of available assistance or societal support to exit abusive relationships was found to be a probable causal factor for remaining with partners in both Merrill and Wolfe’s (2000) and Cruz’s (2003) studies. Cruz (2003: 8) found that some men had been confronted with homophobic and heterosexist attitudes from law enforcement agents and medical personnel when they had sought help. Thirty-three per cent of respondents in

Merrill and Wolfe's (2000: 19) investigation stated that they had stayed in their violent relationships because they "did not know where or how to seek help" and/or "did not believe people would or could help them". The issue of help-seeking is an important one to consider, and research into this area will be discussed below.

Help Seeking, Support and Perceptions

Nine studies sought to ascertain if and where male victims of same-sex intimate partner violence sought help and how useful they then perceived these sources to be (Turell, 1999; Merrill & Wolfe, 2000; Burke et.al., 2002; McClennen, et.al., 2002; Kuehnle & Sullivan, 2003; Dwyer, 2004; Turell & Cornell-Swanson, 2005. Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2006; Donovan, et.al., 2006). An additional two studies measured perceptions of same-sex intimate partner violence amongst police officers and a student sample (Seelau & Seelau, 2005; Younglove, et.al. 2002).

What is clear from this literature is that a significant number of male victims of intimate partner abuse seek help. Turell (1999: 41) for example, reported that 54 per cent of lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgendered people in her study reported seeking support for the abuse suffered at the hands of their violent partners. However, in a later study, Turell and Cornell-Swanson (2005: 79-80) discovered that men were significantly less likely than woman to seek help for relationship abuses and lesbian women were more likely than gay men to seek help.

Merrill and Wolfe (2000: 16) report that all of the respondents in their study sought assistance for the domestic violence from informal support networks i.e. friends and

family. Formal supports, such as counsellors and police were also pursued. The gay and bisexual men in this study attempted to access informal support more frequently than formal assistance; with the source of help most frequently pursued by participants being their friends (85 per cent). In contrast, fewer approached the police (65 per cent), only 27 per cent contacted medical clinics, and virtually none (eight per cent) reached out to emergency shelters for victims of domestic violence. Less than half of the “gay victims of domestic violence” in Kuehnle and Sullivan’s (2003: 92) research (based on self-reported incidents of victimisation made to a community agency) reported the incident to police. Only seven per cent of men who considered they were victims of domestic abuse in Donovan et.al’s (2006: 11) study sought help from the police, with the majority (52.2 per cent) instead seeking assistance from friends. In the only Australian study to assess help-seeking, the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (2006: 52) reported that among their nation-wide sample, only 12 per cent of men who had experienced intimate partner violence (most probably at the hands of a same-sex intimate) reported this to the police.

When more formal sources were accessed by male victims of same-sex intimate partner violence, it tended to be individual counsellors and/or community service organisations who dealt with the needs of the ‘gay and bisexual’ community (e.g. gay men’s domestic violence services) that were approached most frequently. For example, nearly 70 per cent of men in Merrill and Wolfe’s (2000: 16) study sought help from a gay men’s domestic violence program, and 75 per cent sought help from individual counsellors. In addition, 45 per cent of HIV positive respondents sought help from HIV-related agencies (Merrill and Wolfe 2000: 14).

There are a number of reasons why men who are victims of intimate same-sex partner violence may be wary of seeking help from more ‘mainstream’ formal sources of support, including police and medical practitioners. Primarily of course are overarching prejudices associated with homophobia and heterosexism. The criminal justice system, for example, has been described as a heterosexist institution in which homophobia flourishes (Vickers, 1996: 7). In the United States, where the majority of studies on same-sex intimate partner abuse have been conducted, sodomy is still a criminal offence in some states, domestic violence laws exclude same-sex couples, and relations between the police and the male gay/bisexual community are strained by histories of police harassment (Aulivola, 2004). Furthermore, knowledge gained through the lived experiences of gay and/or bisexual men suggests that public agencies (e.g. medical clinics, mainstream domestic violence services) often fail to respond to their needs by either discriminating against those in same-sex relationships or, through a lack of training, are simply unequipped to respond appropriately with an awareness of some of the unique circumstances of the queer community (Donovan, et.al, 2006: 20). In this context it is hardly surprising that men who are victims of same-sex intimate partner violence do not seek help from more formal, ‘mainstream’ sources.

Lack of faith in the ability of the criminal justice system to ‘deal with’ same-sex partner violence was the focus of one research study reviewed for this paper. Burke, et.al. (2002: 250) conducted a survey measuring the attitudes of gay men and lesbians towards intimate partner violence in general and toward the police and courts more specifically. The authors of this study found that 54 per cent of respondents had little confidence in the police, and 42 per cent reported that their distrust of the police would prevent them from reporting an instance of same-sex domestic violence. Furthermore, nearly half of the

respondents either moderately or strongly agreed that their local police department was “biased against homosexuality”. Just over half stated that their lack of confidence in the courts would prevent them from reporting an instance of same-sex domestic violence. In Australia, the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (2006: 52) found that when reports to the police were made by male victims, 33.3 per cent felt that they were not treated with courtesy and respect. In addition, 31.8 per cent felt that in response to their reports of abuse the police had failed to take appropriate action.

Interestingly however, a survey of law enforcement officers’ perceptions of same-sex intimate violence in the United States conducted by Younglove, et.al. (2002: 769) seems “to contradict the common belief held in the gay and lesbian community and in others that homophobia prevents law enforcement officers from responding appropriately to incidents of same-sex domestic violence”. The survey, which sought to ascertain if police officers’ ($n=82$, in one Californian city) perceptions of heterosexual violence differed from the perceptions of same-sex (lesbian and gay) domestic violence, found no significant differences in how police officers perceived a scenario of domestic violence based on the sexual orientation of the involved couple. Whilst the focus of this study was the perceptions of individuals and not actual conduct, the authors of this study suggest that the results give a “reason to be hopeful that homophobia need not deter appropriate law enforcement response to the problem of domestic violence in same-sex couples” (Younglove, et.al. 2002: 760).

In terms of perceived helpfulness, male victims of same-sex domestic violence value most highly the support of friends, counsellors, specific services tailored to the needs of gay and bisexual men and general social service agencies. For example, Merrill and

Wolfe (2000: 17) reported that all the men in their study rated ‘gay men’s domestic violence programs’, HIV related agencies, and other generalised social service agencies, as having been somewhat helpful or extremely helpful. Between 82 and 90 per cent reported that friends (not mutual friends or their partner’s friends), gay and lesbian general agencies, and counsellors had been helpful. In contrast, only 61 per cent stated that the police had been helpful, medical clinics and practitioners did not rate, and other sources were reported as not being helpful at all or to have made things worse (for example battered women’s services).

Research conducted in the United Kingdom by Donovan et.al (2006: 19) also found less than favourable feedback from LGBT persons in their study with regard to the helpfulness of police, general practitioners and generalised domestic abuse agencies. In addition, LGBT specific services and agencies were noted to be equally unhelpful. Donovan et.al (2006: 19) conclude that this reflects the fact that social service providers, including those established for the LGBT community, do not have a coordinated response to same-sex intimate partner violence. It is argued that many of the problems lie in agencies being governed by a model of intimate partner violence that is heterosexual; namely that this type of violence is something that occurs in ‘straight’ relationships against women. In addition, it is often noted that heterosexism and possible homophobia are often exhibited by individual social service providers, which can also have a negative effect on the victims (Donovan et.al., 2006: 20-21).

Whilst no research has been undertaken that investigates social service provider perceptions of male same-sex intimate partner violence, one study reviewed for this paper did attempt to measure public perceptions. Seelau and Seelau (2005) asked a sample of

192 psychology undergraduate students to read scenarios of intimate partner violence varied by victim and perpetrator sex and sexual orientation. They found that intimate partner violence perpetrated against men was considered less serious than that perpetrated against women. Given that in contrast to women, male victimisation was not considered that serious, it is perhaps not surprising to find that the most common dispute resolution recommendation made in cases of male-female violence was to call the police (60.4 per cent). In contrast, over half of respondents recommended that in male-male cases the couple should be just left alone. This research suggests that heterocentric views toward intimate partner violence could exist. It would seem that violence between intimates is only understood and taken seriously when it involves heterosexual men abusing their female intimates.

Conclusions

To date, only two pieces of research on the issue of male same-sex intimate partner violence have been undertaken in Australia (see Dwyer, 2004; Australia Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2006). Dwyer's (2004) research is limited in that it is based on a sample of clients from a generalist counselling service provided to people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS in one Australian jurisdiction. In addition, the experiences of men are lost by combining their understandings with those of women's. Research undertaken by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (2006) is more illuminating. Here, a general nation-wide sample is used, the experiences of men are presented separately from women, the frequency and types of violence experienced are reported, and information regarding reporting to police and responses from police is included. This study suggests that male same-sex intimate partner violence may be

occurring at a fairly high frequency in Australia, that help is rarely sought from the police, and when help is sought, it is not particularly useful.

The above findings are mirrored in the international literature. Overall, it can be said with some confidence that intimate partner violence in male same-sex relationships occurs at a fairly high rate and that responses to it are inadequate. Intimate partner violence, it would seem, is not only a problem for heterosexual women in heterosexual relationships with men, but it is also a problem for men in intimate relationships with other men. However, responding to this issue in Australia requires a more thorough understanding of male same-sex intimate partner violence in the context of this society. In addition to more studies looking at the frequency/prevalence of all types of male intimate partner violence, Australia also needs research exploring: the patterns of men's same-sex intimate partner violence, the individual, micro and macro social contexts out of which it emerges, the impact it has, the reasons victims stay, and further information regarding help seeking, responses to, and perceptions of, this problem. It is time for the issue of male same-sex intimate partner violence in Australia to be rendered visible. It is time for social scientists to 'step up' and break the research silence surrounding this matter, so that the community might eventually also proclaim that "to violence against men, Australia says no!"

Male Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence – A Summary of the Research by Author,
Date, Place, Focus, Methods Used and Samples Utilised

Author, Date & Place	Research Focus	Methods/Sample
Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (2006) – Australia.	Frequency/prevalence and types of violence help seeking and responses.	General Population Survey – victims.
Burke et.al. (2002) - US ,Venezuela	Frequency/prevalence and types of violence help seeking and responses.	General Population Survey – victims.
Craft & Serovich (2005) – US.	Frequency/prevalence and types of violence, context out of which it occurs.	Specific Sample Survey, HIV Positive Men – victims and perpetrators.
Cruz & Firestone (1998) – US.	Types of violence, context out of which it occurs.	Specific sample, interviews men who had experienced same-sex intimate partner violence – victims.
Cruz (2000) – US.	Types of violence, context out of which it occurs.	Specific sample, interviews men who had experienced same-sex intimate partner violence – victims.
Cruz (2003) – US.	Reasons for staying.	Specific sample, interviews men who had experienced same-sex intimate partner violence – victims.
Cruz & Peralta (2001) – US.	Context out of which the violence occurs.	Specific sample, interviews with men who had experienced same-sex intimate partner violence – victims.
Donovan, ET.AL. (2006) – UK.	Frequency/prevalence and types of violence, impact of this violence, help seeking, support and responses.	General sample survey, focus groups, interviews – victims.
Dwyer (2004) – Australia.	Frequency/prevalence and types violence, context out of which it occurs, help seeking and responses.	Specific sample, quantitative study using clients' counselling case-files – victims.
Farley (1996) – US.	Context out of which the violence occurs.	Specific sample, quantitative study of clinical case-files – perpetrators.
Greenwood, G.L., et.al. (2002) – US.	Frequency/prevalence and types of violence, context out of which it occurs.	General sample survey – victims.
Heintz & Melendez (2006) – US.	Frequency/prevalence and types of violence, impact of this violence.	General sample survey – victims.
Kuehnle & Sullivan (2003) – US.	Frequency/prevalence and types of violence, impact of this violence, help seeking, support and responses.	Specific sample, quantitative study of self-reports to assistance program – victims.
Landolt & Dutton (1997) - US.	Frequency/prevalence and types of violence, context out of which it occurs.	General sample survey - victims and perpetrators.

McClennen, ET.AL. (2002) – US.	Frequency/prevalence, types, and patterns of violence, help seeking and support.	Specific sample survey – victims.
Rodriguez-Madera & Toro-Alfonso (2005) - Puerto Rico, US.	Frequency/prevalence and types of violence, context out of which it occurs.	General sample survey - victims and perpetrators.
Merrill & Wolfe (2000) – US.	Frequency/prevalence, types, and patterns of violence, reasons for staying, help seeking and support.	Specific sample survey – self identified victims.
McKenry, et.al. (2006) - US.	Context out of which the violence occurs.	General sample survey – perpetrators.
National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2001, US	Frequency/prevalence, types and patterns of violence.	Specific sample, quantitative data collected from reports made to community-based organisations – victims.
Seelau & Seelau (2005) - US.	Perceptions of the violence.	Specific sample survey – students.
Stanley, et.al., (2006) –Canada.	Frequency/prevalence, types, patterns, context and impact violence.	Specific sample survey and interviews, men who had experienced same-sex intimate partner violence - perpetrators and victims.
Turell (1999) - US.	Frequency/prevalence and types of violence, help seeking and support.	General sample survey –victims.
Turell (2000) - US.	Frequency/prevalence and types of same-sex intimate partner violence	General sample survey – victims.
Turell & Cornell-Swanson (2005) - US.	Help seeking and support	Specific sample survey. Men who had experienced same-sex intimate partner violence – victims.
Toro-Alfonso & Rodriguez-Madera (2004) - US	Frequency/prevalence, types of violence, context out of which it occurs.	General sample survey - perpetrators and victims.
Younglove, et.al. (2002) - US	Perceptions of same-sex intimate partner violence	Specific sample survey – Police Officers perceptions

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