

# AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

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A Report on Gay Male Domestic Violence and Abuse  
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## § INTRODUCTION

*“The voice on the tape was desperate and pleading. ‘I’m on 25<sup>th</sup> and State, and there is this young man. He’s buck-naked. He has been beaten up... He is really hurt... He needs some help.’ So went a taped conversation on May 27 between a neighbor of confessed serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer and the Milwaukee 911 emergency service. The neighbor repeatedly told 911 operators and police that she had seen a young boy, bleeding and incoherent, on the street near Dahmer’s apartment. Police investigated, but after questioning Dahmer in his home, they dismissed the incident as a domestic dispute between adult homosexuals. ‘Intoxicated Asian, naked male.’ One was recorded saying, amid laughter, ‘was returned to his sober boyfriend.’ Shortly after, the police left [and] Konerak Sinthasomphone, a 14 year old Laotian boy, became victim number 13.”*

– *Newsweek, August 12, 1991*

Konerak was not the victim of a gay male domestic dispute but the victim of a serial killer. Yet his death and the laughing ‘dismissal’ of his abuse remains as a chilling reminder of the social, political, judicial and personal nescience of gay male domestic violence. Not limited to heterosexual society, gay and lesbian communities themselves also resist recognizing the realities of this issue.

Currently Toronto has only one service provider with the specific mandate to assist victims of gay male domestic violence,<sup>1</sup> while no services for batterers exist. Unlike programs for heterosexuals, no emergency services for same-sex victims of domestic violence are available. No hot lines, no shelters, no support groups, no advocacy. This void is primarily due to the exclusion of gays and lesbians from traditional domestic violence services, the invisibility of gay and lesbian relationships, the denial or minimization of violence within these relationships, the gay community’s struggles against existing stigmatization through ‘normalization’ and the impact of heterosexism on domestic violence laws, programs and funding.

While no empirical findings regarding gay and bisexual men have been published and only a few works primarily theoretical or anecdotal in nature are offered by American authors, estimates are

that approximately 25% to 33% of lesbians and gay men are in domestic violence or abusive relationships (Brand, 1986; Bologna, 1987; Renzetti, 1988; Gardner, 1989; Renzetti, 1989; Coleman, 1991; Lie, 1991; Kelly & Warshafsky, 1987; Island & Letellier, 1991; Lundy, 1993; Merrill, 1996). These researchers concur the incidence of battering gay male couples is *approximately one in every three to four couples*. Only AIDS and substance abuse effect more gay men.

It should be clear from the start that my focus on gay male domestic abuse does not suggest lesbian domestic violence does not occur, nor is it due to a lack interest. Lesbian domestic abuse is very real, and significantly surpasses gay male violence in both literature and services. Studies of lesbian abuse perhaps remain too few and far between, but they outweigh gay male studies a thousand fold. Womens service providers and support groups offer lesbians greater options in domestic violence circumstances (albeit sometimes with difficulty). It is my sincere hope that more women, particularly lesbians, will pursue exploration of lesbian domestic violence. For now I shall leave this subject and attempt to fill the enormous void in of gay male domestic violence and abuse studies.

Considering the difficulty in establishing a sample within an invisible population we must also leave any discussions of prevalence of gay male domestic violence and abuse for a later date. At the moment we must conclude that incidents of gay male domestic violence are not infrequent and likely are under-reported due to the lack of adequate reporting mechanisms. As Renzetti points out in her pioneering study of lesbian abuse, initial concerns must be exploratory in nature.<sup>2</sup> Exploration hopefully will help to equip us theoretically, anecdotally, and qualitatively with a working definition and some understanding of the fundamental nature – if not underlying nuances of gay

male domestic violence. Although we may hear our politicians proclaim “[*gay male domestic violence*] is not a big problem,”<sup>3</sup> we must ignore such ignorance and accept the estimates of experts that *a gay man is battered by his lover ever 90 seconds*<sup>4</sup> while seeking to erect a foundation for future remediation through constructive thought, efforts and actions.

This study seeks to explore the patterns, forms, frequency and impact of domestic violence and abuse on battered gay and bisexual men as well as their help-seeking behaviors and reasons for remaining in abusive relationships. It is perhaps best considered as a ‘hand-book’ for victims, perpetrators, service providers and the community at large – a first step in the long task of assisting to resolve this issue and establishing appropriate community services. Specifically I seek here the answers to three primary questions: (1) What are the forms of violence and abuse battered that gay and bisexual men are exposed to and where do they perceive help to be found? (2) What are the unique factors and issues in gay male domestic partner abuse? and (3) based on these answers, how effective is our community service response? Theoretical perspectives will be explored and excoriate domestic violence for what it is: a genderless and systemic exertion of illegitimate power and coercive control by one partner over the other. Gender attributions will be seen to beguile a richer understanding of intra-family violence dynamics while impeding solutions and services to same-sex partners. Comparative analysis will be conducted to Merrill’s exploration of gay male domestic violence and the closet which our gay and lesbian community shrouds domestic violence will be cracked open a bit to cast some light on the fears and *silence which lay within this darkness*.

## § METHODOLOGY

The goal of this research prompted the methodologies of survey and in-depth interviews to be employed (combined with extensive literary review) in so far as the essential nature was to qualitatively explore the occurrence of gay male domestic violence and abuse. In particular, the causal factors, experiences, correlations and unique qualities are focused upon. Lacking any published empirical and concluding existing standardized inventories to be heterosexist or gender biased (consequently inadequately measuring some of the specific behaviors to be investigated); Merrill's (1996) survey of gay male domestic violence victimization conducted in the United States was replicated for comparative purposes and a second shorter survey constructed for exploratory ones.

Survey research was selected for its efficiency in exploring a large number of variables given time and resource constraints and for its generalizability and reliability (Babbie, 1992). As this methodology is low in its validity and descriptive analysis (potentially only capturing the essence of some aspects of all the emotional issues superficially) in-depth interviews of respondents and service providers were also conducted to add qualitative experiences.

The instrument itself collected data on 234 variables (Appendix A). A total of eighteen pages, the survey took an average of 30 to 45 minutes to complete. Numerous open-ended sections were integrated with Likert scale and multiple-choice questions. Surveys were distributed to service providers and through solicitation in the shorter (second) survey. This shortened version (Appendix B) was conducted through publication in Toronto's gay and lesbian biweekly and contained

selected portions of the longer survey including one open-ended question and a space to comment or indicate interest in participation in in-depth interviews and/or the in-depth survey. Both surveys began with several multiple-choice questions regarding the length and situation of the relationship. This was followed by a section questioning physical, emotional, financial and sexual abuse experiences, behaviors and frequencies. Help-seeking behaviors were then explored followed by demographics including questions on economic status, education, ethnicity, age, HIV status, and sexual orientation).

Of the 32 surveys returned, 21 were from self-identified “victims”. Of these twenty-one, 16 indicated interest in participating in a more in-depth survey, 62.5% of whom (10) completed and returned same. The response rate was impressive given the length of the survey and its sensitive topic. Respondents were telephoned and explained the nature of the in-depth survey and its length. Those who agreed to involvement were then asked to consider participation in an in-depth interview.

Participants were advised prior to participation in in-depth interviews and in-depth surveys of the complete confidentiality of their responses. Subjects were provided a letter explaining the nature of the study and insuring them of confidentiality. The letter also included a release form for the subjects’ signature. A series of predetermined questions were then posed (Appendix C) and interviews taped (although the subjects were advised at their indication the tape could be stopped) and transcribed at a later date. Following the interview subjects were asked if they wished to receive any additional information – including a list of possible readings, this work upon its conclusion, or a list of community resources and services.

Sociological database searches were conducted to obtain the few scholarly articles that exist on gay and lesbian domestic violence. Extensive internet and library searches also were conducted to garner anecdotal and personal incidents in current and past issues of newspapers and popular magazines. Dozens of interviews with service providers offered professional perspectives.

This study faced the unreliability of nonrandom sampling due to the sensitivity of this issue and the impossibility of establishing a sampling frame for homosexuals. As Miller (1996) suggests, methodological problems have not yet been resolved due to the infancy of the issue of gay male domestic violence.<sup>5</sup> Convenience sampling was consequently used and limits the generalizability of the findings - yet the experiences of the victims do provide a foundation for future empirical studies. The study's limitations will now be discussed in detail.

## § LIMITATIONS

Due to the limited number of returned responses and non-random sampling methodology the findings of this work are not generalizable beyond the sample. The survey must be seen only as exploratory and representative of those who participated. Over-representation of various cohorts (white European males, urban gay males, those who read Xtra, etc) and under-representation of others (bisexuals, Asians, those who do not read Xtra) has likely occurred. Since self-identification as a "domestic violence" victim was the only criteria for inclusion or exclusion, respondents who perhaps did not experience abuse as operationalized (in the following section) may have participated in the survey - while those who did experience such abuse may have due to their own evaluation or lack of awareness of the issue, declined participation. Furthermore batterers are notorious for impersonating victims and potentially created false exclusion.

'Social desirability' may have also effected respondents answers - potentially tailored to please the researcher or to some perceived image of acceptability - particularly in the in-depth interviews (Babbie, 1992). The study (in using this self-reported data) may also be unreliable since experiences are not corroborated by other sources however, even if the victims have had distorted perceptions about their experiences, it is apparent that valuable information has come from their experiences and their survival.

In so far as instrumentation, the survey attempted to match as closely as possible Merrill's (1996) work to facilitate comparison. As a result Merrill's Likert scales did not adequately capture several variables including socio-economic status, age, and to a lesser extent educational issues. The broad ranges and the use of a scale itself precluded certain analysis. For example, the effects of age variance were impossible - a man of 26 was grouped with a man of 35 (a difference of nine years) while a 36 year-old fell into a separate category though only one year apart.

The survey also excluded measurement of several important variables including self-defensive behaviors, relationship satisfaction, secondary victimization and past (inter-generational) abuse experiences. Although the in-depth interviews did attempt to address some of these limitations qualitatively, generalization remains impossible due to the small number conducted. Finally resource constraints such as time and money were very limiting and it is hoped that future professional and funded research will be forthcoming.

## § DEFINITIONS

*[domestic abuse] is when someone tries to take your dignity away...*

*- Interview*

One cannot attempt to understand or ameliorate domestic violence and abuse without defining it. Particularly in the case of same-sex domestic violence all too often service providers and our judicial system fumble in conceptualization while perpetrators cry mutual abuse and victims seek non-existent support. Before exploring the subject of gay male domestic violence further we must consider what it is we are looking for.

In the simplest of terms domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors used to coerce, dominate or isolate within a relationship whereby one partner seeks enhanced power and control over the other. It is a systemic and cyclical pattern with one partner in power and the other in fear. Central is the motivation of control which creates an overriding dynamic of oppression and retaliation for resistance. Hart (1986) indicates that behaviors - as violent as they may be - are *not* considered domestic violence unless they result in the enhanced control of the perpetrator.<sup>6</sup> Her consideration of time in the relationship<sup>7</sup> is refined by Leeder (1988) and Renzetti (1992) who add the concept of context.<sup>8</sup> Merrill considers the contextual *relevance* of behavior by discussing effects upon the victim<sup>9</sup> and Lundy (1993) introduces the idea of *unwanted* force and abuse.<sup>10</sup> Central to all of these works is the concept of *power* and *control*. In the last decade our models have evolved from older gender-based theories to newer power-related ones that consider context, relevance, culture and time cycles. I wish here to propose the following CCC model to articulate three criteria which must (in totality) be present to categorize behavior as domestic violence or abuse. Anything short of validation by all three should lead to alternative conclusions and response.

**(A) VIOLENT AND ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR IS CONTEXTUAL:**

*Domestic violent and abusive behaviors are not isolated incidents or result of unusual couple circumstances but a systemic on-going process by one member of the couple to control and dominate the other member resulting in imbalance to the couple's equilibrium of power.*

Criteria (A) states that domestic violent and abusive behavior is a systemic set of various behaviors typically including more than one forms (see pages 12-14) which, seen in *the context of their manifestation* are motivated by issues of control and domination.

**(B) VIOLENT AND ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR IS SEEN ACROSS A CONTINUUM:**

*Domestic violent and abusive behaviors, seen across a continuum of possible behaviors relating to socio-cultural reference of the couple, falls outside the boundaries that at least one member of the couple accepts as a normative response.*

Criteria (B) indicates the need for cultural<sup>11</sup> and personal reference, i.e. in consideration of the continuum of all possible behaviors which could manifest or be considered a response to a particular situation (acknowledging cultural and personal norms), the abuser's behavior falls outside the norms of at least one member of the couple.

**(C) VIOLENT AND ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR HAS A CYCLIC QUALITY:**

*Domestic violent and abusive behaviors traverse time cyclically - manifestations followed by honeymoon periods, followed by manifestations, etc - accumulating a histrionic dysfunctionality with resulting escalation or descalation in frequency and/or severity of the behaviors.*

Criteria (C) articulates that the level (qualitatively and quantitatively) of the set of systemic abusive behaviors are inconsistent over time. Various forms of abuse or violence are intermingled with other moments of love and kindness. Over months or years as these cycles coil themselves around the couple's dynamics, the accumulated emotional load becomes motivation for increased abuse (escalation), or for assistance from outside the couple or breakup of the couple (descalation).

Thus, to be succinct we may operationalize domestic violence and abuse as an *unwanted systemic set of ongoing behaviors which falls outside normative boundaries and spirals multi-directionally over time around issues of control and power with the intention of enhancing the perpetrator's power at the expense of the victim*. With this as our lens let us explore specific behaviors and forms of abuse and violence.

## YOU MAY BE A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC ABUSE IF:

- You are frightened or feel responsible of your partner's temper or behavior
- You are compliant because you are afraid of being punished verbally or physically by your partner
- You make decisions according to what your partner wants or how your partner will react
- You censor your reactions and opinions to avoid hurting your partner's feelings or causing conflict
- You have been kicked, hit, shoved or had things thrown at you or around you
- You have been called names, degraded or humiliated privately or publicly
- You are unjustly accused of having affairs or blame for things which are not your fault
- You have been threatened of being "outed" if you do not comply with partner's demands
- You have been prevented from getting/maintaining a job, participating in control of mutual resources or restricted access to your money
- You have been forced to have sex or caused pain sexually without your consent

Four specific forms of abuse dominate domestic violence literature - emotional, physical, financial and sexual while two others - intellectual and spiritual are ignored. Additionally, imposed social isolation (occasionally examined in terms of emotional abuse) is best considered itself as an independent form given the frequency and impact with which it strikes. The following section briefly defines each of these seven forms and typical behaviors.

## PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical violence is (only) battering if it results in enhancing the control or increasing the perceived power of the batterer over the recipient. If the victim is fearful of the perpetrator, if he modifies his behavior in response to the assault or potential assault(s), or if he intentionally maintains a particular behavioral repertoire in the effort to avoid violence - despite his preference not to do so - he is battered. Physical abuse, framed in this context can be defined as any forceful physical behavior that intentionally or accidentally causes bodily harm or property destruction and includes the following:

- hitting, beating, choking, pushing, slapping, kicking, pulling hair, biting or burning
- holding partner down or preventing partner from leaving
- throwing objects
- locking partner out of house
- abandoning partner in a dangerous place
- refusal to get partner help or medical attention
- forced use of substances or depriving of medication
- denying or interfering with partner meeting basic physical needs (eating and sleeping)
- driving recklessly to intimidate
- smashing, damaging, stealing, or selling partner's possessions
- use of a weapon against partner (hammer, knife, gun, etc.)

## SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual domestic abuse is any nonconsensual sexual act or behavior motivated by power and control. It is not simply forced contact but also contact which demeans or humiliates the victim and instigates feelings of shame and exposure – particularly in regards to body, sexual performance, or sexuality. The following are common examples of sexual abuse:

- demeaning remarks about partner's body, clothing, or appearance
- minimization of partner's sexual needs
- berating partner about his sexual history
- demeaning remarks about the partner being too feminine
- forcing sex or sexual acting on partner without consent
- using force or roughness that is not consensual including forced sex (rape)
- refusing to comply with partner's requests for safe sex

## EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is present in almost all domestic violent and abusive relationships and can have injurious consequences to the victim - eroding self-esteem, confidence, hopefulness, and most importantly sense of self. Typically emotional abuse includes ridicule, intimidation, coercion and verbal harassment. Perpetrators attempt to bolster their own self-esteem through the instillation of insecurities in their partners. If, in a verbal exchange no negotiation is possible or enacted, a form(s) of emotional abuse has likely occurred. Behaviors include:

- name-calling and use of abusive language to partner
- constant criticizing or humiliation or disproportionate anger or yelling to intimidate
- irrational blaming of partner
- withholding displays of affection
- obsessive jealousy and accusations
- instillation in partner 'nothing he does will ever be good enough'
- use of intimate knowledge to generate vulnerability

## IMPOSED SOCIAL ISOLATION

Imposed social isolation occurs with such frequency in domestic abuse that it deserves independent discussion. Partners are robbed of contact with other people, usually including family, friends, children and other loved ones and creates a social deprivation which often causes the victim to be more reliant on the abuser while simultaneously preventing him from seeking support or successfully leaving the relationship. The following behaviors are the more commonly used to impose social isolation:

- blame of partner's friends or family for the couple's relationship problems
- monitoring phone calls, mail, or visits
- demanding an accounting of partner's daily activities
- insulting, threatening, or assaulting partner's friends or family; driving them away
- forcing partner to choose between the couple relationship and loved ones
- creating public scenes or disturbances when the partner is out with others
- stalking partner and other forms of surveillance

## FINANCIAL ABUSE

Financial abuse is the prevention of one partner in accessing his own or mutual material resources such that he is deprived of economic autonomy (in the context of the CCC model).

Common examples of financial abuse include:

- forbidding partner to work
- harassing partner at work by creating scenes, excessive phone calls, or creating conflict with co-workers, supervisors and/or clients; jeopardizing his/her job
- forcing partner to miss work through threats, injuries, or substances
- control of shared resources including bank accounts and common property
- demanding partner to sign over paychecks or denying access to mutual funds
- demanding partner to account for all money he spent
- coercing partner to pay for all expenses, including rent, food, and utilities
- refusing to work yet contributing to expenses
- damaging of property that is necessary for partner's job or functioning, including automobile, financial records, computer etc.

## INTELLECTUAL ABUSE

Intellectual abuse is often a strong weapon used by the perpetrator and is perhaps best considered as the use of words and thoughts to manipulate, control or dominate a partner including:

- lying in order to confuse
- telling tales and false stories or playing mind games
- telling partner he doesn't know what he is talking about
- manipulating partner with words and ideas
- telling partner he is stupid or crazy

## SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Spiritual abuse is the suffocation of spirit or spiritual expression (of the partner or partnership) or the diminution of a person's essential character or characteristics, including the following behaviors:

- denial of spiritual expression
- manipulating partner by withholding love or unity, or granting it conditionally
- name-calling (fag, nigger, etc)
- expressions of prejudice
- could-shouldering partner
- having affairs with others and flaunting them with the intention of instilling insecurity

## § LITERARY REVIEW

The history of domestic violence in social thought and literature has had considerable focus in the role of gender. Proliferate heterosexual works include numerous studies (Babcock, et al. 1993; Arias, et al. 1989; Strauss, & Gelles, 1986) comparing abuse rates by gender and occurrence of aggression by male and female partners (McNeely & Robinson-Simpson, 1987). Others have measured female violence in terms of self-defense (Saunders, 1988), inherent male "aggressive tendencies" (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974) or biologically based gender differences (Parsons, 1980). What are decidedly absent are non-genderized discussions including the reasons why men are abusing men.

Renzetti (1992), Merrill (1996) and several others have begun to change this hegemonic vacancy. They have, respectively, conducted two break-through studies on lesbian and gay male domestic violence. Renzetti stresses the need for a theory that recognizes the interconnected set of variables<sup>12</sup> while Merrill strives for integrated analyses of power and psychological learning theory. This shall be this study's conceptual approach - an integrated framework of multi-dimensional theory.

Currently, the domestic violence field consists of what are essentially two theoretical perspectives: the sociological and the psychological. The sociological perspective (or family violence perspective) considers domestic violence and abuse in terms of the effects of *externalities*, hypothesizing domestic violence as distinct in both causation and manifestation from other forms of violence (Shields, 1988). Four primary models are dominant: intergenerational theory, family dynamics, socio-political (feminist) theory, and family systems theory.

Psychological perspectives find causation of domestic violence *internally* in psychological and/or biological factors, which culminate in violence, both in the home *and* outside the home (Fagan, 1987; Kruttschnitt, 1987). Core models include psychopathological theory, socio-cultural theory, and power resources theory and biological theory. Each of these theories shall now be examined.

## § SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE THEORIES

### INTERGENERATIONAL THEORY

- EXPERIENCING ABUSE AS CHILD CORRELATES TO ADULT EXPERIENCE

By far the most studied if not the most logical hypothesis in the field of domestic violence is intergenerational transmission. Intergeneration theory employs social learning theory to propose that witnessing or experiencing abuse as a child within one's family of origin leads to increased risk of domestic violence as an adult in one's family of choice (Rosenbaum, 1981; Edleson, 1985; Caesar, 1988; Dutton, 1988; Brendtro, 1989; Murphy, 1993; O'Leary, 1994, Shields, 1988; Coleman, 1994).

In one pioneering study children who witnessed their parents physically attack one another were three times more likely to become violent toward their adult partners than children of non-violent households (Straus et al.,1980). Hotaling (1986) and Marshall (1990) found *witnessing* of abuse as a child correlated to *perpetration* as an adult. Coleman (1996) argues children in such circumstances are more likely to incorporate violence as a coping mechanism in their future relationships. Yet, as insightful as these findings may be, intergenerational transmission fails to fully account for all the correlations and variables at play and, as many warn, *in itself* presupposes the exoneration of batterers.<sup>13</sup>

## FAMILY DYNAMICS THEORY

- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE A RESULT OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP INTERACTION

Family dynamics theory looks at domestic violence as *the result of the interaction* within intimate relationships (Shields, 1988). Incorporating four elements: level of marital discord, sequential escalation of actions in interpersonal interaction, resulting frustration from relationship participation, and the bonding that is by-product of relationship trauma; family dynamics theory draws a correlation between the *quality* of relationship interaction and the *quantity* of violence and abuse which develops over time.<sup>14</sup>

Family Dynamics theory also interconnects marital dissatisfaction and violence with codependency - as the relationship becomes longer in duration the intermittent violence is seen to result in increased attachment - due to the coexistence of intermittent violence with intermittent kindness and lovingness, so called “honeymoon” periods (Walker, 1979; Island, 1991; Dutton, 1993).

## SOCIOPOLITICAL (FEMINIST) THEORY

- PRIMARILY GENDER ORIENTED THEORY FINDING SOCIAL SANCTIONS OF MALE VIOLENCE IN PATRIARCHIAL SEATS OF PRIVILEGE & POWER AND BATTERING AS A POLITICAL ACT REINFORCING MALE DOMINANCE

*I've known [domestic violence] exists for eight years, and I have people in my office crying their eyes out. What am I supposed to say to them: 'Down with the patriarchy?'*

- Counselor

Until recently sociopolitical theory has dominated domestic violence approach and response with the unfortunate result of contributing to the invisibility of same-sex domestic violence or tailoring of gay relationships to fit dominant paradigms of male/female sex role socialization. For example

early sociopolitical theorists such as Martin (1976) claimed battering occurred in same-sex relationships because lesbians and gay men acted out masculine and feminine (butch/femme) roles. More recent and inspired authors such as Miller have attempted to update socio-political theory by a focus on its cornerstone issues of power and privilege.

In its most basic form sociopolitical theory posits the responsibility of violence in the sector(s) of society having power and control. For socio-political oriented theorists, male domination and privilege is socially sanctioned abuse which manifests in the home while concurrently manifesting in society through systemic neglect of female victims and lack of resources.

Although socio-political (or feminist) theory has vastly contributed to our understanding of the effects of power and privilege it has also failed to consider domestic violence actuation by other causes - particularly the psychological – for fear of exonerating male violence.<sup>15</sup> Anchored in patriarchy, this theory has perpetuated reductionist models while inadequately capturing the complexity and variety of factors which contribute to violent behavior. Dutton, refuting this hegemonic perspective, argues the only politic at work is the one within the couple itself<sup>16</sup> and points to the inherent problem in feminist analysis of same-sex abuse:

*“When feminists ask ‘Why do men beat their wives?’ their answer will necessarily exaggerate differences between males and females and minimize differences among males. The categories of study are framed by the question.”*

*(Dutton, 1996, p. 143)*

Indeed this hegemonic reductionist ‘genderization’ has prevented acknowledgement and response to same-sex domestic violence and abuse by narrowing the lens from which we view the issue, a conclusion shared by an abundant number of theorists.

Coleman argues feminist theory overlooks the importance and variety of personality variables and fails to sufficiently explore domestic violence;<sup>17</sup> Yllo and Straus find rather than patriarchy per se, the breakdown of norms and masculinity as causation to domestic violence;<sup>18</sup> and Sorenson and Telles (1991)<sup>19</sup> dispute the model through cross-cultural analysis supported by American studies from Steinmetz (1977-1978), Straus & Gelles (1986) and Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz (1980).

Recent feminist theorists such as Miller have attempted to expand the narrow lens of socio-political domestic violence theory. Arguing patriarchy may not be casual yet gender must be considered as one explanatory variable, Miller considers patriarchy in terms of its historical impact on power and privilege.<sup>20</sup> Campbell considers psychological factors may predict individual incidents of domestic abuse; while cultural, political, and economic factors lead to increases in frequency and severity.<sup>21</sup>

In one interesting Toronto study, Smith (1990) tested the effects of patriarchy by asking 604 Toronto women to guess their male partners' responses to a series of questions about patriarchal beliefs, correlating these to socioeconomic factors and the CTS<sup>22</sup> measure of wife assault. The responses described a very non-patriarchal group of males, the majority disagreeing with patriarchal statements in all cases (with the exception of one). Although this seems to reinforce the notion that our patriarchal cultural has a weak effect upon individual men's ideologies, Smith falls short of making this conclusion. Perhaps how sociopolitical theory best contributes in the field of domestic violence is in understandings of how our social system, beliefs and politics facilitate and perpetuate abuse, in terms of social stress, isolation, socioeconomic status, rigidly defined roles and the imbalance of power.

## FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS THE RESULT OF PERCEIVED OR REAL IMBALANCES WITHIN THE FAMILY'S RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS RANKING

Reiterating the role of power and control in domestic violence, family systems theory finds domestic violence the consequence of imbalances within family resource distribution, exchange and status - regardless of gender (Shields, 1988). Several studies have found those with less economic power, decision making power or communication skills to be more likely to be physically abusive to their partners (Jurik, 1990; Levinson, 1989).

Other family systems theorists such as Coleman (1996) suggest that our social hierarchical structures and value systems create the predominant model for intimate relationships as one of domination and subordination. Furthermore she considers that power may be a deeply acute issue within same-sex couples. Typically burdened with backgrounds of homophobia, homophobia and heterosexism, and resultant senses of discrimination, social isolation, and lack of social resources or support, Coleman sees gays and lesbians frequently developing issues of self-esteem, internalized homophobia, and feelings of powerlessness, inferiority or helplessness. Dominance and control issues may then emerge in the couple as one means to cope with these feelings.

## § PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE THEORIES

### PSYCHOPATHOLOGICAL THEORY

- SOCIAL SKILL DEFICIENCIES WITH NEGATIVE EMOTIONS, FEARS & ANXIETY AND LINKS WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Dominant in the psychological domestic violence perspective is psychopathological theory which joins individual psychosis to domestic violence perpetration. Risk indicators for personality disorders/psychosis include depression, anxiety, somatic complaints, fears of abandonment, excessive anger, and hostility (Leeder, 1988; Maiuro, 1988; Coleman, 1994; O'Leary, 1994; Pan, 1994). Aggression is linked impulsively and the need to defend oneself, feelings of inadequacy, and addiction (Hamberger, 1986; Hastings, 1988; Flournoy, 1991); as well as social skill deficiencies including inadequate responses to rejection, jealousy and poor communication skills are also frequently cited. Two or three personality disorders are most frequently considered in what Hamberger & Hastings (1988) call 'treatment-resistant' abuser personalities: borderline and narcissistic.<sup>23</sup>

BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER (BPO) originates in early childhood (as most disorders) and occurs when the process of the child gradually separating and developing an independent self (separation-individuation) is thwarted by either an emotionally unavailable or an overly enmeshed primary care-giver. Frustration and aggression evolves as the child develops splitting of good and bad representations (or aspects) of self and objects rather than integrating them to create a whole self. This fragile BPO personality fragments under stressful conditions causing BPO individuals to seek increased dependency in their adult partnerships due to fears of abandonment, a lack of a clear sense of self, poor boundaries, lack of impulse control, core self-esteem issues, inability to self-soothe and need for immediate gratification (Goldstein, 1990).

Many of these characteristics are found in batterers. In attempts to avoid real or perceived abandonment, these individuals frequently seek merger with their partner who they expect should maintain both the perpetrator's ego integrity and euphoria. The batterer's fragile self-cohesion fragments over the slightest issue: signs of partner attempts at separation (from the merger of personalities) or forms of independence can cause intensified fears of abandonment while resulting in rage and violence. BPO individuals also engage in manipulative behavior in an attempt to control their partners and ward off fragmentation. Elise (1986) notes that in the case of same-sex couples the differentiation of egos is reduced and causes partners to become even more intrapsychically merged. Some theorists also suggest internalized homophobia may lead to feelings of shame, powerlessness or self-hatred, then projected onto the partner ('bad object') who is thus perceived to be threatening and needs to be controlled or destroyed.

NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER finds individuals fuse self and object representations to create an omnipotent and grandiose unit (Freed, 1984; Masterson, 1981). In this distorted reality the individual is narcissistically invested in himself and unable to tolerate the real world or the needs of others. Underneath this illusionary and perfected grandiosity lies aggression, emptiness, punitiveness, harshness, humiliation, shame, depression, and victimization (Freed, 1984). Aggression is aimed at achieving perfection, power, acceptance, beauty and the avoidance of depression. Narcissistics attempt to force others to assist accomplishing their goals and failing so they are either devalued or not tolerated. Narcissistic individuals typically display grandiosity, hypersensitivity to criticism, lack of empathy, blame of others, feelings of envy and fragile self-esteem. This fragile self-esteem is maintained through dependence on the admiration or merger with idealized (or mirrored) self-objects (Rosen, 1991). Kohut (1972) suggests that the loss of control over the mirroring self-object (or its unavailability) results in an intense rage - differing from normal aggression in that any means will be used to right a wrong, undo a hurt, or obtain revenge. Coleman (1996) notes that the use of mirroring or idealizing may be heightened in same-sex relationships as partners are more similar which, combined with intensified potentials for jealousy and envy, may result in increased threats to the narcissistic's self-esteem.

## SOCIO-CULTURAL THEORY

- VIOLENCE REFLECTS SOCIO-CULTURAL NORMS AND PERCEIVED TOLERANCE OF LINKS BETWEEN MASCULINITY AND VIOLENCE

Socio-cultural theory views all violence (including domestic violence) as a reflection of socio-cultural norms where masculinity becomes synonymous with violence. This differs from feminist theory as 'masculine' violence is perpetrated in a variety of settings and due to a variety of motivations - not necessarily to control women or intimate partners. Studies suggest that this form of

'masculine' expression as a protest to perceptions (or fears) of being feminine or an attempt to over-exaggerate masculinity in validation of one's maleness due to the femininity surrounding primary care givers (Steinmetz, 1974; Hotaling, 1986, Goode, 1971, Franklin, 1988). A strong indicator of socio-cultural domestic violence theory at play is the perpetrator's perceptions of social acceptance for violence and/or lower consequences for abuse (Carmody, 1987).

However many men convicted of wife assault do not believe that what they did was acceptable (Dutton, 1986; Dutton & Hemphill, 1992). They experience guilt, denial or minimization of the violence - trying to exculpate themselves in the manner of one whose actions are unacceptable to oneself. Socio-cultural theory also fails to account for these perceptions, for lesbian violence and in, as Dutton points out, elucidating the behavior of non-violent men.

*"If social license determines violent behavior, we would expect a majority of men to be violent, but only a minority actually are."*

*(Dutton, 1996, p. 134)*

## POWER RESOURCES THEORY

- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SEEN AS RECOMPENSE FOR LACK OF EXTERNAL POWER RESOURCES INCLUDING AGE, EDUCATION, INCOME AND SOCIAL RESPECT & EXPERTISE

Power resources theory extends the core sociopolitical concepts of power and privilege into a genderless and more individual model of power distribution. Partner imbalances such as age, physical power or stature, income, employment, education and social skills are issues that extend into the dynamics of the couple and potentially instigate abuse or violence.

*"We don't argue about money because she pays all the bills. I don't have to worry about it, do I? I don't see the bills so I don't worry about them, so it's a cop out on my part. I let her worry about them... I'm giving her all the responsibility and she enjoys it apparently, it gives her a sense of power. It's beautiful"*

*(Interview - Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983)*

Studies suggest significant *perceived* variations in power and its distribution are risk-markers for violence or abuse (Hotaling, 1986; Hastings, 1988; Marshall, 1990; Coleman, 1994; Pan, 1994). Revolving around money, knowledge or social respect and class issues (Steinmetz, 1974; Renzetti, 1996), domestic violence here follows from the conflict associated with discrepancies in both partners status and *access* to power (Kendel & Lesser, 1972; Smith 1977; McDonald, 1979; 1980). Interpersonal skills, expertise and competence (McDonald, 1979; Babcock, 1993) and introspection, analytical and communicative skills<sup>24</sup> (Dutton, 1996) are the resources most often discussed.

Power resources theory sees use of abuse and violence as the effort to regain power and control for these perceived imbalances. Potentially this relates in terms of gender (to socio-political theory) in the sense that due to cultural and historic parameters men perceive their rights or privileges more intensely. For instance, in an article titled “Take Control of Your Home Life: Winning strategies for becoming king of your own universe” a popular men’s magazine describes the cultural stereotype:

*“When you consider all the crazy, cockamamie reasons men have for doing all the crazy cockamamie things they do, you walk right past money, shrug off power and go right to the heart of it all: control. Control is everything... ..Because the more control a man has over his life, the happier he is... Our various daily miseries out there ...are usually traceable to lack of control”*

*(Men’s Health, December 1996)*

However it should be stressed that it is not necessarily a *shift* in control or resources (perceived or real) which is most needed. In extending issues of power, distribution and control into domestic violence, power resource theory does so *by bypassing conceptualization of conflict negotiation*. It is only when such conflict in the domestic arena is not *negotiated* that violence erupts. Partners may bypass the negotiation stage if they are more conscious of their own needs than of their partner’s rights. Should issues not be *directly* and *specifically* confronted then the lack of

agreement regarding the *real* issues can lead to a lack of concessions and the couple's concentration on individual power balances while erupting in violence.

## BIOLOGICAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

- BIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS RELATED TO VIOLENCE

Although few studies have indicated biological or physiological links to domestic violence, one that has persisted relates early head injuries to greater risks of domestic violence perpetration. The results of the few studies undertaken have been contradictory and less than convincing however (Rosenbaum, 1994; Warnken, 1994), and few other biological factors have been consistently explored and considered.

## § MULTIDIMENSIONAL INTEGRATED THEORIES

Several social theorists have begun to integrate all of these theoretical perspectives to create a multidimensionality that embraces a broader spectrum of factors and widen the lens through which we view the phenomenon of domestic violence. Merrill considers the deployment of *both* feminist and psychological theory as contributive rather than contradictory<sup>25</sup> arguing domestic violence “*must be understood as both a social and a psychological phenomenon and must be examined under both lenses simultaneously in order to be completely understood*” (Merrill, 1996, p.12).

Miller ventures that although victims share similar experiences many factors also operate on an *individual* level.<sup>26</sup> Letellier sees integrated theories to afford both superior conceptualization and response to victims and their unique individual situations.<sup>27</sup> Dutton (1988) strongly argues that no *single* theory of domestic assault sufficiently elucidates the available data. He proposes a nested ecological theory examining interactive effects of the broader culture (macrosystem), subculture (exosystem), family (microsystem), and individual characteristics (ontogeny) thus incorporating the sociological, the psychological and partnership interaction.

*“Broad macrosystem features cannot strongly predict the thoughts or actions of individuals ‘nested’ under the system. Moderating variables from the exosystem, from the microsystem, and from the individuals’ own developmental history are necessary to complete the predictive picture.”*

*(Dutton, 1996, p.131)*

Zemsky (1990) considers sociological or psychological processes of abuse as not necessarily leading to enactment unless *opportunity* also exists. One must be able to “get away with it.” Sexism, racism, classism, anti-Semitism, ageism, and homophobia are thus potential (cultural) oppressions

that may facilitate battering. The empowerment of privilege to some comes at the expense of privilege to others - allowing opportunity while systemically supporting domestic abuse.

Ascription to a pluralistic paradigm that incorporates both sociological and psychological factors does seem to be required. Perhaps domestic violence and abuse should be seen at the end of rainbow of possibilities. Selecting from a pallet of developmental, biological and social coloration, the individual perpetrator's motivations and actions guide his brushstrokes in painting his canvas of abuse.

We must however, remember that none of our models *causes* the perpetrator to *strike*. Zemsky in stressing opportunity forwards the fact that abusive people can make (or learn to make) alternative choices - and must be seen as solely responsible for their violence. Each day may provide the opportunity for domestic violence yet it also provides the opportunity *not* to be violent. In spite of our army of elaborate theoretical models we must recognize that the behavior a perpetrator chooses is, regardless of gender, perceived power, or psychological disorder, ultimately and in the end his own personal choice and responsibility.<sup>28</sup>

## § FINDINGS

Thirty-two of the short version (Xtra) surveys were returned and analyzed using Excel and D-Base 5.5 programs. Twenty-one of these (66%) were from individuals in abusive relationships (Table 1). Although the purpose of the survey was not to measure prevalence this figure seems high. One explanation may be the wording of survey's title ("*Survey on Gay Male Domestic Violence And Abuse*") which perhaps led to the participation of victims at the exclusion non-victims.

**Table 1**

<b>Experience of Abuse and/or Violence</b>	<b>% of Respondents (N=32)</b>
Experienced Abuse of Violence	66
Experience No abuse or violence	34

**Table 2: Respondent and Partner Sexual Orientation and Experience of Domestic Violence and Abuse**

<b>Respondent &amp; Partner Sexual Orientation and Experience of Abuse</b>	<b>Partners Identifying as "Gay Male" (N=27)</b>	<b>One Partner Not Identifying as "Gay Male" (N=5)</b>
Experienced Form(s) of Abuse	78	100
Experienced No Abuse	22	0

The thirty-two surveys were also analyzed in terms of three potential variables: sexual orientation identification, employment and education. As indicated in Table 2, non-gay identification of one partner was found to correlate to substantially higher abuse or violence rates - as did unemployment seen in Table 3. Meanwhile, degree of education seemed to have little effect in abuse rates (55% of college educated partnerships experienced abuse, 45% did not) nor did educational variance between partners (Table 4). It is strongly stressed however, that these findings do not accurately generalize effects beyond the sample of this survey.

**Table 3: Respondent and Partner Employment and Experience of Domestic Violence and Abuse**

<b>Respondent &amp; Partner Employment and Experience of Abuse</b>	<b>Both Partners Employed (N=22)</b>	<b>One or Both Partners Not Employed (N=10)</b>
Experienced Form(s) of Abuse	54	90
Experienced No Abuse	46	10

**Table 4: Respondent and Partner Education and Experience of Domestic Violence and Abuse**

<b>Respondent &amp; Partner Education and Experience of Abuse</b>	<b>Partners With Similar Level of Education (N=21)</b>	<b>Partners With Different Level of Education (N=11)</b>
Experienced Form(s) of Abuse	76	73
Experienced No Abuse	24	27

Of the 21 surveys where partners experienced domestic violence or abuse, demographic analysis found the typical profile of a gay white male between 25 and 35 with some college education earning approximately \$30,000 to \$40,000 who had left his relationship. Ninety percent of respondents indicated their sexual orientation as gay males while the remainder (10%) as bisexuals. The profile is fairly similar to Merrill's work with the exception ethnicity - likely due to under-representation of various groups in the study.

In terms of ethnicity, 62% of respondents identified as English speaking white (European descent) males, 10% as French speaking white (European descent) males, 5% as Native Canadians, 5% as African-Canadians, and 18% as mixed. There were no respondents who indicated they were Asian. A small portion (10%) of respondents were under the age of 25 while the majority (62%) were between the ages of 25 and 35, 24% between 35 and 50, and 4% over 51. A large portion (57%) earned less than \$36,000 (with an even split in each category: 19% under \$15,000, 19% between \$15,001 and \$25,000, and 19% between \$25,001 and \$35,000). Thirty-three percent of respondents earned between \$ 35,001 and \$ 50,000, while 10% earned over \$

50,000. The majority of respondents had some either some college education or a bachelor's degree (52%), while 33% had a high school diploma or less and 15% some post graduate work or degree. Only 15% of respondents identified themselves as HIV+ however this rate increased to 29% when the status of both partners was considered. All respondents lived in the GTA with the exception of two (living in other urban areas) and none of the respondents were parents (Table 5).

**Table 5: Respondent Demographic Characteristics**

<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>	<b>% of Respondents (N=21)</b>	<b>% of Merrill Respondents (N=52)</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>		
Gay Male	90	96
Bisexual Male	10	4
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
English White Canadian/American	62	29
French White Canadian	10	0
Native Canadian/American	5	4
African Canadian/American	5	29
Other	18	38
<b>Age</b>		
Under 25	10	8
25-35	62	54
36-50	24	35
Over 51	4	3
<b>Annual Income (not adjusted)</b>		
Less than \$ 15,000	19	23
\$ 15,000 - \$ 25,000	19	21
\$ 25,001 - \$ 35,000	19	29
\$ 35,001- \$ 50,000	33	12
Over \$ 50,000	10	10
<b>Highest Level of Completed Education</b>		
Some High School/ or diploma	33	44
Some College/ or Bachelor's Degree	52	46
Some Graduate/or Degree	15	10
<b>HIV Status of Respondents</b>		
HIV-negative Respondents	81	50
HIV-positive Respondents	15	38
HIV Status Unknown	4	12
<b>HIV Status of Couple</b>		
Neither Member HIV+	57	N/A
One Member HIV+	24	N/A
Both Members HIV+	5	N/A
HIV Status Unknown	14	N/A

Emotional abuse was by far the most prevalent form of abuse experienced and as indicated in the interviews usually the first to manifest. Comparable to Merrill's results all respondents experienced emotional abuse. Perpetrator's "lying in order to confuse" was the most prevalent behavior at 80% (Merrill did not differentiate intellectual forms of abuse), followed by criticizing appearance (70%) and agreeing to monogamy yet cheating (60%). Physical violence occurred in 76% of respondents with restraining or blocking exit (70%), hitting with fists or open hands (60%) and pushing and shoving (60%) at the top of the list. Financial abuse occurred slightly less than in Merrill's study, perhaps due to the fact that in general respondents in this study had higher average earnings (even with adjustments for exchange). Lastly and in the most significant variation from Merrill, was indication that sexual abuse occurred far less frequently. Expecting sex on command was one of the few indices found (70%). A summary of these results is seen in Table 6.

**Table 6: Forms of Abuse Experienced by Respondents**

Type of Abuse Experienced in Respondents Reporting Abuse	% of Respondents (N=21)	% of Merrill Study Respondents (N=52)
Emotional	95	100
Physical	76	87
Financial	67	90
Sexual	38	73

Table 7 measures abuse form by respondents indications of frequency. Emotional abuse was almost always "frequently" employed (76%), financial abuse more polarized as "never" (33%) or "frequently" (39%), physical abuse as "rare" in frequency most of the time (43%) while as mentioned sexual abuse primarily "never" occurred in the majority of respondents (62%).

**Table 7: Forms of Abuse Frequency**

Abuse Frequency in Respondents Reporting Abuse (N=21)	Experienced Physical Abuse	Experienced Emotional Abuse	Experienced Sexual Abuse	Experienced Financial Abuse
Never	24	5	62	33
Rarely	43	5	24	14
Sometimes	29	14	5	14
Frequently	4	76	9	39

Merrill found 54% of his respondents reporting the first incident of violence between the fourth and twelfth months of their relationship<sup>29</sup> compared to 63% of the in-depth respondents in this survey. The mean for first physical violence incident of these same partnerships was during the 14<sup>th</sup> month. As Table 8 indicates, 66% of the respondent's relationships *lasted* between two and ten years while Table 9, analyzing abuse forms against relationship duration, illustrates the quantitative pattern of emotional-physical-financial-sexual not changing significantly over time yet diminishing slightly overall as the relationship 'matures'.

**Table 8: Length of Commitment of Respondent's Relationships**

Length of Commitment of Respondent Relationships	% of Respondents (N=21)	% of Merrill Respondents (N=52)
Relationships of less than two years	34	54
Relationships of two – five years	33	27
Relationships of five – ten years	33	19
Shared household together	67	77

**Table 9: Forms of Abuse Present and Length of Relationship**

Presence of Forms of Abuse and Length of Relationship	Under 2 Years (N=7)	2 – 5 Years (N=7)	Over 5 Years (N=7)
Physical Abuse	86	71	71
Emotional Abuse	100	100	86
Financial Abuse	71	86	43
Sexual Abuse	57	29	29

Table 10 shows the majority of respondents did experience honeymoon periods (63%), a figure slightly less frequently than Merrill's respondents (73%). Issues of substance abuse were equally split between those who found links between the perpetrator's use of substances and physical violence (50%) and those who did not (50%), contradicting some studies.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly none of the respondents were 'neutral' on the issue. Respondents were far less clear when it came

to their *own* use of substances where the majority indicating they were “neutral” on the subject (56%). For the most part respondents did not agree to mutual abuse nor consider themselves perpetrators (81%), closely resembling Merrill’s results (83%). Although more respondents stated they did not physically defend themselves (44%) to those who did (31%), a significantly high neutral opinion (25%) may indicate uncertainties of what constitutes ‘self-defense’ and (considering similar ‘neutrality’ in the victims’ responses to their own substance use) to a confusion in their conceptualization of their own roles in the violence.

**Table 10: Mutual Combat and Substance Abuse Opinions of Respondents**

<b>Respondents Experiencing Physical Abuse or Violence Responses to Questions of Mutual Combat and Substance Abuse (N=16)</b>	<b>Strongly or Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Strongly or Somewhat Disagree</b>
Experienced Honeymoon Periods	63	12	25
Partner’s Abusive behavior linked to Alcohol or Drugs	50	0	50
Own Use of Alcohol and/or Drugs	35	56	9
Would Actively Defend Self	31	25	44
Abuse was Mutual	81	6	13

Tables 11 - 14 examine issues of HIV status, employment, ethnicity and education. The effects of HIV status seem relatively negligent to forms of abuse experienced with the exception of sexual abuse - which was experienced substantially less in couples where one or more members were HIV+ (Table 11). Overall employment found 57% of all couples fully employed and 43% where one or more were unemployed. A further examination of *which* partner was unemployed proved most interesting (Table 12). In 78% of abusive partnerships where one partner was out of work, it was the perpetrator who was unemployed. This statistic when combined with the 11% of partnerships where both partners were out of work effectively means that *the perpetrator in 89% of abusive couples was unemployed*. Underemployment, part-time employment and effects of income disparities were not analyzed.

**Table 11: HIV Status and Forms of Abuse Experienced**

<b>Respondents &amp; Partners HIV Status and Forms of Abuse or Violence Experienced</b>	<b>% of HIV- Respondents (N=15)</b>	<b>% of HIV+ Respondents (N=6)</b>
Experienced Physical Abuse	66	67
Experienced Emotional Abuse	73	83
Experienced Sexual Abuse	33	16
Experienced Financial Abuse	53	50

**Table 12: Unemployment Comparison of Partners**

<b>Victim &amp; Perpetrator Unemployment Comparison</b>	<b>Experienced Form(s) of Abuse (N=21)</b>
Victim Unemployed	11
Perpetrator Unemployed	78
Both Partners Unemployed	11

In Table 13 the ethnic identification of partners is considered in relation to forms of abuse experienced where notable differences are found in forms of financial abuse (35% variance) and sexual abuse (15% variance) among differently ethnically identified partnerships. The most notable variation in correlation of education and forms of abuse used (Table 14) was physical (42% variance) and sexual (21% variance) in partnerships of different levels of education. These findings match Harms (1996) analysis of education and ethnic variance.<sup>31</sup> A multi-variant analysis considering employment, education and ethnic variations was not done although future studies may prove most interesting in this regard.

**Table 13: Ethnic Identification of Partners and Forms of Abuse Experienced**

<b>Respondents &amp; Partners Ethnic Identification and Forms of Abuse or Violence Experienced</b>	<b>% of Respondents with Same Ethnic Identification (N=7)</b>	<b>% of Respondents with Different Ethnic Identification (N=14)</b>
Experienced Physical Abuse	86	71
Experienced Emotional Abuse	100	93
Experienced Sexual Abuse	29	44
Experienced Financial Abuse	44	79

**Table 14: Education and Forms of Abuse Experienced**

<b>Respondents &amp; Partners Education and Forms of Abuse or Violence Experienced</b>	<b>% of Respondents with Similar Education (N=13)</b>	<b>% of Respondents with Different Education (N=8)</b>
Experienced Physical Abuse	92	50
Experienced Emotional Abuse	92	100
Experienced Sexual Abuse	46	25
Experienced Financial Abuse	69	63

Slightly less than one-half (48%) of those in this study sought help as seen in Table 15 (note: the comparison of the two studies of no due to different sampling methods), a statistic which is fairly alarming. If we are to accept that one in every four gay men in a partnership is experiencing domestic violence this means one in eight will do so without assistance. The most frequently sought were individual counselors (100%), victim's friends (80%) and gay men's domestic violence program (70%), concurrent with Merrill's study (Table 16). Least frequently sources were (Table 17) the perpetrator's family (0%), neighbors (0%), and battered women's services (0%).

**Table 15: Experience of Abuse and Help-Seeking Behavior**

<b>Respondents Who Experienced Abuse and/or Violence Help-Seeking Behavior</b>	<b>% of Respondents (N=21)</b>
Respondents who sought help	48
Respondents who did not seek help	52

**Table 16: Sources of Help Sought**

<b>Sources of Help Most Frequently Sought or Considered by Respondents Who Sought Help</b>	<b>% of In-Depth Survey Respondents (N=10)</b>	<b>% of Merrill Study (N=52)</b>
Individual Counselor	100	75
Their friends	80	85
Gay men's domestic violence program	70	67
Couple's counselor	60	27
Medical Clinic or Personnel	40	27
Police	50	65
Other Social Service Agency	40	60
Their Family	30	60
Mutual Friends	30	60
HIV related Agency	30	19

**Table 17: Sources of Help Not Sought**

Sources of Help Least Frequently Sought by Respondents Who Sought Help	% of In-Depth Survey Respondents (N=10)	% of Merrill Study (N = 52)
His Family	0	33
Neighbors	0	37
Battered Women's Service	0	10
Employer	0	50
Support of Self-Help Group	10	42
Religious Advisor	10	21
Attorney	10	25
Emergency Shelter	20	8
Gay/Lesbian General Agency	30	31
His Friends	30	42

Findings suggest that perpetrator use of violent or abuse tactics increases with age (Table 18), though an analysis of age *differences* between the partners would likely be more informative (unfortunately due the design of the survey instrument this was not possible to analyze). Other studies, notably Harms (1996) found age *variation* between partners to correlate to increase violence<sup>32</sup> yet income, employment or other factors associated to age could be the dependent variable. Also notable in Table 18 is sexual abuse seemingly replaced after age 35 by increased financial and emotional abuse, possibly perhaps reflecting changes in the partnerships' power basis.

**Table 18: Age and Forms and Frequency of Abuse Experienced**

Perpetrator's Age and Forms of Abuse Experienced	Experienced Physical Abuse "Sometimes" or "Frequently" (N=7)	Experienced Emotional Abuse "Sometimes" or "Frequently" (N=19)	Experienced Sexual Abuse "Sometimes" or "Frequently" (N=3)	Experienced Financial Abuse "Sometimes" or "Frequently" (N=11)
25 or Under	0	11	0	9
26-35	43	37	67	36
Over 35	57	53	33	55

The majority of respondents (60%) had made between one and three attempts to leave their abusive partner. The most frequent reasons for remaining included love (80%) (illustrating similarity to heterosexual relationships, Gelles and Straus, 1988), belief things could be worked out (80%),

things would change (70%), and not recognizing the incidents as a recurring pattern (70%); all similar to Merrill's findings (Table 19).

**Table 19: Reasons for Remaining**

<b>Respondents' Reasons for Remaining Which Had Played "A Major Part"</b>	<b>% of In-Depth Survey Respondents (N=10)</b>	<b>% of Merrill Study (N=52)</b>
I loved him very much.	80	67
I believed somehow we could work it out.	80	65
I believed there was something I could do to help or change him.	70	75
I thought of the abusive incidents as isolated exceptions, not a recurring pattern.	70	56
HIV Issues	50	
I didn't think that what was happening was abuse or domestic violence.	60	50

In sharp contrast to Merrill's findings however were respondents reasons for remaining which played no part are all. Seemingly far more oriented to our community's lack of external support services, 80% did not believe people would or could help. Although this may reflect the differences in methodology between the two studies, more likely it illustrates the very real lack of services and outreach in Toronto (Table 20).

**Table 20: Reasons for Remaining Playing No Part At All**

<b>Respondents' Reasons for Remaining Which Had Played "No Part At All"</b>	<b>% of In-Depth Survey Respondents (N=10)</b>	<b>% of Merrill Study (N=52)</b>
I tried to leave but he always found me and convinced me to return	80	37
I did not believe people would or could help me.	80	35
I believed we should stay together for the sake of our families and friends	70	73
I actively sought assistance but did not receive it.	70	60
I was abused as a child and came to expect abuse as a part of love.	70	65
I lacked the financial resources to leave.	60	56

Open-ended comments also proved interesting. When asked why gay male domestic violence and abuse exists, societal attitudes, homophobia and lack of role models (indicating externalities) were the most frequent response (33%). Self-esteem issues were also frequent (28%), as were intergenerational reasons (24%), seen in Table 21.

**Table 21: Respondents Attributions of the Origins of Gay Male Abuse**

<b>Respondents Attributions on Why Gay Male Domestic Violence Exists in Open-ended Comments</b>	<b>% of Respondents (N=21)</b>
Societal Attitudes of Gays/Internalized Homophobia/Lack of Role Models	33
Low Self Esteem	28
Intergeneration reasons	24
Power and Control Needs	19
Substance Abuse	14
Jealousy & possessiveness	14

One final note, only one of the twenty-one respondents indicated his violence had ended not due to *his* actions, but due to his perpetrators. Sadly enough, the reason was suicide.

## § DISCUSSION: MYTHS, BATTERERS, VICTIMS & 'HONEYMOONS'

### MYTHS

Several myths permeate our social thought on same-sex domestic violence. First and foremost is that men are perpetrators and not victims. Even in heterosexual domestic violence men are victims in at least five percents of all cases (Pagelow, 1984, 1992). A second myth is that domestic violence is limited to, or more common in, heterosexual couples. The vast majority of experts state that same-sex domestic violence occurs to the same extent or more frequently than does opposite-sex domestic violence: on average one in every four couples. A third fallacy, built on the first two, is that perpetrators are larger or stronger. Batterers come in all sizes, shapes, gender and orientations. Thoughts to the contrary serve only to misguide and undermine the real issues.

Suggestions that it is easier for same-sex victims to leave their relationship are built upon equally false assumptions. Gay relationships are no easier to leave than any others, and contain as much love and commitment – if not more. Lesbians and gay men who are alienated from their families of origin can place greater value on their families of choice making their partnership more meaningful than a 'lawful' marriage. This "us-against-the-world" quality was expressed in one interview where the victim stated:

*"One reason I remained for that year and half was because my family and I don't really talk. His parents were well established and they were nice to me. I think... I think that he was my family, and so were his parents. I don't know, I guess I felt accepted. "*

*- Interview*

This commitment is also seen in the survey findings of the number one reason (80% of all subjects) for remaining in the relationship: *"I loved him very much."*

## BATTERERS

Much of the research done on heterosexual batterers can be transposed into a gay male batterer profile of a psychologically rigid and unstable man self-absorbed to the degree that empathy and reciprocity are impossible (Hastings and Hamberger, 1988). This also often includes low self-esteem and inadequacy/inferiority issues (Prince and Arias, 1994) as supported in the survey's findings. For lesbian and gay perpetrators such issues can combine with internalized feelings of self-hate and internalized homophobia (Byrne, 1996) whereby power becomes central in re-establishing self-concepts and nothing can stop their quest for control.

*"I was followed around the apartment and I was harassed. If I went into the bathroom, he went into the bathroom. If I went into the bedroom and locked the door, he open the door and came in after me. Just would not get out of my face. It progressed to being spat at, then he went to kick me in the balls, but I caught his knee before he could get up that far, then I was pushed down the stairs, um, and then he threatened to kill my cat. And at that point I left. I came back the next morning and moved out the day after."*

- Interview

Batterers display *"a terrifying ingenuity in their selection of abusive tactics, frequently tailoring the abuse to the specific vulnerabilities of their partners"* (Renzetti, 1992, p. 115). As one victim put it *"...when you know somebody for a long time, for a lot of years, then you know them like a clock and you take the things that would hurt them the worst and crank it out, just really pump the hell out of it."* Either premeditatedly or impulsively, batterers display a wide continuum of behaviors<sup>33</sup> and manage to strike out where and when it counts the most.

*"In more than 90% of all homicides which occur as a result of domestic violence, police have previously attended the residence for domestic violence disputes. In more than 50% of all domestic violence homicides, police have previously attended five or more times for domestic violence disputes."*

(Metropolitan Toronto Police, 1993, p. 4)

While the studies indicate that batterers consistently re-perpetrate in future relationships (see 'Stay or Leave') they remain an "elusive population," rarely presenting themselves for treatment.<sup>34</sup>

## VICTIMS

*“If I look back at that point in my life, I was trying basically to stumble through life, seeking answers from this person that I thought was my better half, and not getting those answers, which caused me to cling to him more... ..I guess because I was in a relationship, and I was in a relationship with who I thought was the right person... ..I guess I was trying to get answers about what I was meant to do in life – or – I am doing the right thing? You know what it was... I was seeking acceptance, or trying to get acceptance from him, and never got it. And because I was aware that I never got the acceptance it only made me want it more... Now I know it only comes from yourself and no one else.”*

- Interview

Results suggest that battered gay and bisexual victims also suffer patterns, forms and frequencies of abuse and violence similar to heterosexual victims. Tendencies toward over-responsibility and feelings of responsibility are projected on their perpetrator’s emotional state. As Island and Letellier point out *“If the batterer is depressed or angry, the victim believes he is the cause.”* (Island & Letellier, 1991, p. 88). The fact that 70% of respondents indicated *they* thought they could help illustrates this mind-set.

*“We had agreed to share a space. I was in therapy, and I was finally aware through therapy that... ..that it was not my fault. And I confronted him. ‘Why do you do this?’ ‘Why do you make me feel worthless?’ ‘Why do you criticize everything I do?’ And the response I got from him was ‘Well... ..you accept it.’ And that was the biggest red light that went off in my head. Then I knew... ..he knows what he is doing.”*

- Interview

Domestic violence victims become preoccupied with this responsibility while their own independence erodes. Helplessness and vulnerability begin to replace feelings of confidence and self-esteem while those more severely victimized become hypervigilant; modifying their behaviors and ‘walking on eggshells’ in terror of how the batterer’s mood may change.<sup>35</sup>

The American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-III-R) states most domestic violence victims react with post-traumatic stress disorders - including withdrawal, acquiescence, and extreme passivity - while being unconditionally supportive to the batterer in order

to prevent further abuse. When a victim focuses on his batterer's mood he winds up neglecting his own personal responsibilities and the control he had over his own life - illustrating the tendency to move from perceived helplessness to acting in a truly helpless manner.

Walker (1979) suggests victims suffer from "learned helplessness" evolving from the transposition of responsibility and from the effects of secondary victimization (to be discussed shortly). At the first signs of violence in the relationship the victim may indeed attempt to resist or find help, yet as his efforts are impaired or retaliated against, futility is gradually accepted. Renzetti makes a powerful point regarding the victim's need to move from '*perceived helplessness*' to '*perceived hopefulness*'.

## 'HONEYMOONS'

All too often the only '*perceived hopefulness*' of a victim is found in honeymoon periods. It has been suggested the cycle of violence completes itself slowly in the beginning of the relationship. Periods of violence or abuse are followed by longer periods of tenderness or love – as found by the 63% of respondents. Several months or even years go by with only a few acute battering incidents, making each incident to seem isolated and unrelated. Yet over time the frequency and the severity of the violence tends to escalate and the cycle begins to spiral. There is less time between acute battering incidents and previous 'honeymoon' spaces of months turn into weeks or days (or disappear completely) while the intensity of violence increases.

Walker (1979) found three phases in the domestic violence and abuse cycle – tension building phase (increases in tension and conflict), violent incident phase (battering), and the honeymoon phase - where promises for change and expression of love took place. She successfully argues the

quick transition into these periods of love (and the lag in time since the last violent incident) causes denial in both victims and perpetrators. As the cycle accelerates increases in both occurrence and severity see the denial fade into hope and into hopelessness (or termination of the relationship).<sup>36</sup> At the point when the cycle starts to spiral victims often seek help - as denial turns into realization.

One final note on honeymoons. *If* domestic violent and abusive relationships can be salvaged, efforts to begin to do so may be most opportunistic just prior to honeymoon periods. After the eruption of violence and the ensuing suffering and awareness (or at least lack of denial) there is a point where both partners are faced with a choice. A choice they know (at least within) which they each face: going around the violent and abuse cycle again or getting off. Perhaps it is here where change may be possible and where counseling or other forms of assistance can potentially be of value. This is not to say that victims should stay with their perpetrators, but only to suggest that the evaluation of the relationship is perhaps most fortuitous at the bridge between violence and honeymoon periods.

## § DISCUSSION: THE AFTERMATH

- STAY OR LEAVE?
- REPORTING
- HELPING
- HEALING

### STAY OR LEAVE?

*"I had tried to leave several times, and he would usually end up by threatening harm to himself, like he would hold a knife to his wrist to make me stay... ..I did"*

- Interview

There is no easy way to end abuse or to leave a relationship. Contrary to popular thought (or lack of it) gay victims do have strong senses of love and bonding in their relationships. They may see the perpetrator as two people – one intelligent, sexy, loving and caring; the other cruel, violent, and dangerous. Acknowledging you are a victim means ending the duality with which you see your lover. At this point a victim is able with help to leave his batterer for good.

*"I don't think I would have gone to a program. At the time, I wouldn't have wanted to classify it that way. Like I wouldn't have wanted to admit to myself **that** was the problem. Cause if I did, then I would have - well I guess I did - blame myself for staying - like you know if I knew it was abuse why would I stay? You don't want to think that this is me you want to think like it is someone else."*

- Interview

It is often at the time of leaving or after leaving that victims of domestic violence are in the most danger. Coercion, intimidation, threats and stalking increase at the time the batterer perceives potentiality or actuality of separation. At this point violence is seven times more dangerous than the worst episode withstood by the victim. Once the silence ends, the batterer has nothing to lose in attacking her/his partner and is far more likely or willing to risk legal or social consequences. Escalation of the victim's personal risk ensues.

*“The worse incident we ever had? It was about a year after we broke up... I was in a bar with some friends and my boyfriend now, and he came up and started yelling at me. I told him I didn’t want to talk about it and to leave but he wouldn’t so I walked away. About an hour later he just came up behind me and he hit me about five times and knocked me down. I was told that then he left the bar, but I wasn’t aware of anything. Later I pressed charges and he had to appear in court and we now have a peace bond.”*

– Interview

Forty-four percent of the in-depth survey respondents reports they ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that after leaving their abusive (ex-) partners, they were *“significantly more afraid of him and what he might do to me or people and things I cared about.”* Only 12% disagreed, while the rest responded neutrally. Prior to leaving an abusive relationship a safety plan should be devised which includes access to joint monies, a place to go, someone to call upon 24 hours a day (preferably unknown to the batterer) and someone to contact for professional support and assistance. If possible peace-bonds or restraining orders should be put into place. Although these are no guarantees of safety they do provide recourse and hopefully cause the batterer to think twice.

After leaving an abusive partner, many victims find that guilt surfaces - either for staying with him so long or for leaving him to fend for himself. The shame and self-blame associated with this guilt can be overwhelming and painfully slow to pass. Friends and family whose support so desperately needed may be found not only to be non-supportive but also angry, indignant, compassionless, or blaming.

Nevertheless, the tapes the batter recorded in the victims head must be changed. After being told a thousand times that you never do anything right victims have been conditioned to doubt themselves and their decisions and now have to take responsibility – supported or not. Victims must consider as well their legal recourses and avenues for personal healing.

## REPORTING: THE POLICE AND THE COURTS

Given the rocky history between the police and the gay and lesbian community, many may be reluctant to identify themselves as victims in a gay relationship. Lundy (1993) found cultural and institutional homophobia isolates victims from the support they need to leave - including from police, attorneys and the courts.<sup>37</sup>

One in-depth study indicated that only 9%-20% of all cases of same-sex violence were reported to the police (Saltzman, 1990) although many others find this as the most effective means to prevent further abuse (Jaffe, Wolfe, Telford and Austin, 1986; Stith, 1990). Perhaps recent protocol and outreach (discussed shortly) which the Metropolitan Toronto Police has instituted is already making a difference - 64% of survey respondents did state willingness to seek help from the police.

Initial stages of domestic abuse do not necessarily rise to a level permitting police intervention are frequently victims of domestic violence initiate legal action only after first having sought other forms of support. Renzetti (1992) found prior to seeking legal action respondents passed through denial and then into validation of their abusive experiences with the help of community service providers or friends. All too often however these attempts at intervention are met with denial or apathy.

*“He was drinking and he called me said he had slit his wrists, and there were marks on his wrists but he was ... just smashing up his apartment - smashed a hole in his wall, and was breaking all his dishes. I was trying to control him, and the more I did the more out of control he got. I called some help line and they said you could always call an ambulance. So I did that and they came and he acted all normal and pretended nothing was wrong, and they said they couldn’t take him, unless he was willing to go. So he had to sign a waiver form to say he was all right. I followed [the attendants] out and said I didn’t know what to do, and they said the only other thing you can do is call the police and have him arrested.”*

*- Interview*

If police or legal intervention happens only after substantial harm has been inflicted, even if the patterns of abuse have long before been established. Once the victim finally presses charges (*if he presses charges*), the court unfortunately may respond less harshly to what appears to be a “first offense” rather than understanding this as the culmination of a long chain of abuse. From the earliest point possible victims should consider reporting and documenting all injuries, destruction of property, and any threats to some authority. This type of chronicle will offer police and courts evidence to lay appropriate charges.

The Metropolitan Toronto Police receive approximately three to four domestic violence calls every hour of every day (heterosexual and homosexual). *Every ten days a person is killed in Ontario as a result of domestic violence.* Domestic calls are the second or third most deadly of all police calls.<sup>38</sup> As a result of such appalling statistics the police have initiated protocol to better address domestic violence and the needs of victims. Although limited by our legal system and the Attorney General’s gender-based legal code, the police implemented a set of policies which address same-sex violence.<sup>39</sup>

*“However, it is important to emphasize that the problem of domestic violence is not limited or restricted by marital status, sexual orientation or gender*

*(Metropolitan Toronto Police, 1993, p. 1)*

The force defines domestic violence as any ‘physical, sexual, or psychological harm’ by a ‘family member’ including assault, sexual assault, threatening behaviors, harassment, intimidation, and interference with personal liberty (forcible confinement). Family members include persons who ‘are not married, but are currently in a family-type relationship’ and ‘are not married, but were formerly in a family-type relationship’ and specifically includes ‘same-sex couples’.<sup>40</sup> A ‘domestic incident’ is any incident between ‘family members’ where (even if no criminal offense

has occurred) the police have been called to the scene. Police protocol for these 'domestics' call for officers consider cries for help, visible weapons, signs that a struggle has occurred, eye witness accounts, and if the victim remains in the home in assessment of the situation. If criminal charges are laid, the accused must remain in police custody until a bail hearing is held at which time a peace bond may be applied.

One way to reach survivors and abusers which has been tried in several cities with varying degrees of success and which has been used in Toronto for several years, is simple instruction/resource cards handed out by law enforcement officials. The cards (in English only) clearly spell out resources (only heterosexual) that are available to help break the cycle of abuse. Officers are instructed to initiate follow-up calls and inquire if the victim requires assistance. This type of follow-up can make a huge difference to the victim – just by letting them know someone cares.

Unfortunately when it comes to the courts same-sex domestic violence victims have less support. For instance in cases involving severe violence when batterers counter with 'mutual abuse', both victim and abuser are put into the *same* cell prior to court hearing. Victims can be re-assaulted. Laws remain discriminatory against gays and lesbians and contain only opposite sex language. The courts do not require judicial officers to undertake same-sex domestic violence training (unlike the police) and some areas in the United States. By all indications the courts are unresponsive to same-sex domestic violence and show little awareness of its intricacies.<sup>41</sup> Lacking information, programs and a legal framework to adequately prosecute same-sex cases, all too frequently issuing (unwarranted) mutual restraining orders (providing another weapon in the perpetrator's arsenal), they seem more as a barrier rather than a bridge to victim safety and healing.

## HELPING

In some cases the use of social services may be tantamount to “coming out” and as such a major life decision. Almost half of the victims in the survey did not seek help (48%). Denial, shock, social isolation, self-blame and hope of change all impinge upon a victims actions at this time. Some victims, although perceiving their families as supportive, may be reluctant to risk losing that support by acknowledging the abuse within the relationship. Although 100% of respondents who sought help were willing to seek support from their friends, only 36% indicated a willingness to turn to their families. This may also be indication of victim’s fears of secondary victimization.

Studies have found nurses and doctors fail to pursue strong indications of battering, diagnosing medical injuries yet ignoring signals of domestic violence - while finding the victims evasiveness as discrediting and rarely questioning or acknowledge domestic violence (Kurz, 1990; Kaufman, 1980; Greany, 1984; Blair, 1986; Flitcraft, 1991; Newman, 1993). Unfortunately, victims are frequently seeking support from medical services (63% in this study). Service providers are encouraged to establish protocol, perhaps using hate crime victimization as a foundation. Outside intervention galvanized with sensitive intake personnel can go a long way in reducing secondary victimization and accelerating healing.

Visibility of domestic violence within the closed system of the gay and lesbian community is another factor in how the victim will be assisted. Male victims must be made aware of services through campaigns and outreach. Short (1996) found adequate community representation and the perception of services as being oriented to gay males to be the two most significant factors in successful programs. Almost one quarter of respondents indicated they did not know there was a

domestic violence program for gay males in Toronto yet 92% were willing to seek support from one. One of the first and most important points for all of us to remember in dealing with survivors of domestic violence is that we should not replace the batterer's control with our own attempts to influence and control the victim actions or decisions. Yet service providers must also be cautious that in the aftermath of abuse insistence on "independence" may become a repetition of the isolation tactics used by the abuser and reinforcement of abuser's message that "no one will help you". The context of help must be not be one of incompetence nor dependence, but one of community caring and supportiveness.

## HEALING

Initially a victim faces three challenges in the healing process. The first is to find some resolution to the end of the relationship. Second is to address the aftereffects of the abuse they experienced. Thirdly is to maintain some form of safety planning, dependent on the degree of abuse that may still be present. Once these three issues are resolved the victim can begin to deal with his emotional load and healing can begin.

There are many emotions victims may experience at the end of an abusive relationship: extreme relief, grief and loss, happiness, sadness, loneliness, freedom, exhilaration, gratefulness for survival, emptiness, self-doubt (was leaving the best idea, was the abuse really that bad...), awkwardness with others and introversion. Victims have reported "mood swings" - experiencing several of these emotions simultaneously or within the course of a day. Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder occur. Victims report dreams or nightmares about the relationship or abuse, rage, isolation, numbness, changes in eating or sleeping, inability to trust, paranoia, hyper-vigilance, and fear.

Yet another stage in the healing process is a sudden explosion of emotions and awareness, a return of memory about the relationship, a growing awareness of the presence of domestic violence at large (which may increase the fear and paranoia). The victim will experience positive physical changes reflecting the emergence of a new identity (changes in weight, manner of dress, hairstyle) while decreases in PTSD symptoms occur and new independence develops.

*“Three years have passed since I secretly planned my escape from this person [name deleted]. There are times even to this day, when I still fear him. There has been no contact with him although he did harass my family once I moved out but I have not spoken with him. The first six months after I left I was in hiding, always looking over my shoulder, questioning everything. I spent the next year retrieving my identity – a lot of work considering when I was with him I could not make the decision on what to wear without consulting him – this always resulted in a put down.*

*I have been rediscovering myself since this phase of my life and now I know who I am. I did lose friends through all of this simply because they could not understand the whole concept, but since I lost some friends I simply made room for some truly wonderful (new) friends to take their space. I ran into him last spring on the street, I said nothing, did not even look at him. He called me ‘trash.’*

*He’s obviously still trying to regain control.”*

*– Interview*

Batterers must also face their own agenda. Perpetrators who recognize the need for change must surrender weapons, move out, obey the law, concentrate on themselves and practice self-care. There may also be a parallel recovery from substance abuse – requiring the elimination of the substance and the examination of issues and beliefs to prevent relapse.

## § DISCUSSION: THE UNIQUE QUALITIES

- COMMUNITY SILENCE
- GHETTO LIFESTYLES & GAY ROLE MODELS
- SUBSTANCE ABUSE
- MUTUAL COMBAT
- SOCIALIZATION PROCESSES
- JEALOUSY & CODEPENDANCY
- SECONDARY VICTIMIZATION
- HOMOPHOBIA, INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA & OUTING
- HIV
- LACK OF SERVICES

### COMMUNITY SILENCE

When the Anti-Violence Project in New York launched its first campaign in the form of a poster showing a mans hand and the caption *“If your lesbian or gay partner is using one of these to hurt you, We have one to help you.”* (Photo 1), intake of calls jumped from 15 to 91 in the first month.<sup>42</sup> Paradoxically the AVP also received numerous calls from members of the gay community expressing outrage. These callers were concerned that public “airing of our dirty laundry” would provide mainstream with more ammunition to pathologize and marginalize gay and lesbian relationships - a position apparently shared by gay community leaders.<sup>43</sup> Gay domestic violence was, and is, as Newsweek describes, “taboo” to the community.<sup>44</sup>

#### **Photo 1. New York Anti-Violence Program’s Subway Poster**



Because of the oppression experienced by homosexuals throughout history, gay and lesbian communities *"fear that the general public will associate partner abuse with homosexuality and will see the problem as the homosexuality rather than the aggressive behavior"* (Kelly & Warshafsky, 1987, p.1). Some experts do agree that if gay relationships are seen as less than perfect that assimilation and civil rights become more difficult (Walber, 1989; Brownworth, 1993) while others suggest gay men resist tarnishing their own images of gay relationships as utopic and void of societal influence (Walber, 1989; Letellier, 1994).

*"the gay relationship is almost the political cell of the gay liberation movement; it is viewed as the unification of the sexual and the emotional.. (and) politically stands in defiance of the heterosexual marriages, as if to proclaim, 'Anything you can do I can do better'... That two men who have sex together can also love each other has come to symbolize the ultimate detoxification of homosexuality and justifies the addition of the gay relationship to the pantheon of human achievements."*

*(De Cecco, 1987, pp.2-3)*

If De Cecco is correct in his analysis then potentially the gay and lesbian community does indeed face serious obstacles in opening the domestic violence closet door. Yet as Merrill points out the focus on attacks from outside the community is the nemesis of same-sex violence<sup>45</sup> and, as Island and Letellier point out, *"... one very important reason why it is so hard to find out how many gay men are battered by their mates is that the gay community would rather not know"* (Island & Letellier, 1991).

Gay male victims are indeed the least supported socially<sup>46</sup> and indicate in the survey responses feelings of isolation and lack of support from their own communities. The fact that gays and lesbians are more likely to be victims of domestic violence than hate crimes<sup>47</sup> is extraordinary - do our clear ideas of violence and abuse and the discourse which surrounds violence blur and fade when the violence is moved off the street and into the home?

The closeting of gay and lesbian domestic violence does create a non-confrontational community preoccupied with image-management and denial while providing perpetrators 'free season'. Victims encounter denial or minimization of their experiences and find "*considerable difficulty establishing themselves as legitimate victims in the eyes of their friends... [who] strongly resisted labeling them 'victims' and their experiences 'battering'*" (Renzetti, 1992, p. 105). All too often the community's response to public displays of partner violence (such as occurs in gay bars) is "Out of here you two ...*take it home.*"

As long as the community remains in denial batterers will exploit their victims using the myths of mutual battering and fears of re-victimization. This community's denial permits the gay batterer to exercise what is in essence a homophobic control, convincing the victim he is not be legally or socially entitled to protection or assistance while politically suffocating the community itself from services and funding in a shroud of silence.

## GHETTO LIFESTYLES AND GAY ROLE MODELS

Besides community denial several other factors in gay lifestyles impact on domestic violence and abuse. Bar or club socialization may lead to increased risk to violence and abuse (substance abuse aside). Correlations between bar frequency and third party sex have been observed leading to increases in jealousy and domestic violence.<sup>48</sup> Reverend Brent Hawkes of the Metropolitan Community Church states: "*the problem is the bar scene... ...it is not a healthy place for couples to make the center of their social life.*" Hawkes feels most gay males want long-term monogamous relations, but are willing to accept variations in order to simply to have a relationship.

*“J came to the interview alone. His partner had checked into a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center two days earlier. They have been together thirteen years of their lives. J was fed up with the relationship and wanted to end it. When asked about the sex, alcohol and drugs, J said that most of their physical fights had to do with the syndrome of bars, drunkenness, and bringing home other men. They had been robbed, assaulted, and threatened by these men, and frequently wound up abusing each other. J noted that they had live in suburban Toronto until a year and a half ago, at which time not only had they moved into the Ghetto (Church-Wellesley Area), but these fights became intense: ‘the relationship stagnated and got progressively more abusive.’ J said he missed his garden and wanted very badly ‘to move back out’...”*

*- Interview*

Another factor is lack of role models. Given the cultural and socialization vacuum within which gay liaisons evolve, marital roles are substantially self-invented, trail-and-error enterprises. The lack of healthy role models in same-sex relationships allows abusers to convince their partners that their (abusive) behavior is normal. The victim is led to believe any problem he has with this behavior is a reflection of *his* lack of experience or understanding of gay relationships. Respondents’ most frequently cited reasons in the open-ended survey question on gay male domestic violence origin centered on lack of role models and social homophobic issues. Lacking positive and visible role models, support and advice, victims are indeed left defenseless.

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE

*“I think the drinking amplified everything else that was going on in his life.”*

*– Interview*

Having determined power and abuse as central issues in domestic violence and abuse we must end blame on substances. We must see alcohol and/or drug use as *contributory* rather than *causative* - acknowledging that exertions of power, attempts to control, and violent and abusive behaviors are all typically prevalent when partners are sober. The fact is batterers come drugged and drunk, and they come sober and serious.

Fifty percent of respondents indicated they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” their partners’ behavior was linked to his excessive substance abuse. This is substantiated by many heterosexual studies finding the prevalence of perpetrator substance abuse between 52% and 85% (Roy, 1977; Appleton, 1980, Labell, 1979; Fojtik, 1978; Gayford, 1975). In one study of lesbian abuse, 64% of lesbian victims “reported that their partner used alcohol or drugs during or prior to incidents of battering” (Schilit, R, & Lie, G., 1990, p. 58). Yet this study also found victims were abusing substances to the same extent and that *“abusive acts committed against respondents by their partners significantly correlated with the frequency of the respondents’ (victims’) drinking”* (Schilit, R. & Lei, G., 1990, pp. 59-60). The conclusion of the study is that substance abuse and battering are concurrent phenomenon.

Substance abuse is likely a mask for feelings of powerlessness and dependency - one that easily covers the true issues at hand. Diamond and Wilsnack (1978) cite lesbians using substances in order to overcome feelings of dependency motivated by beliefs they were more powerful and assertive on substances (and whereby acting out these beliefs abusively). Frieze & Schafer (1984) found alcohol a facilitator insofar as perpetrators acted on their beliefs about the “disinhibiting effects” of alcohol and then engaged in behaviors they otherwise may be hesitant about. Renzetti (1992) concludes victims use the ‘rational’ of substance abuse as a logical and socially accepted rational for the irrational behavior of their partners. The enormous volume of research on batters shows increased alcohol and drug abuse is in fact correlated to feelings of powerlessness, dependency, and lower self-esteem (Leeder, 1988; Lobel, 1986; Schilit & Lie, 1990; Renzetti 1988, 1992; Dutton, 1994; Hart, Dutton & Newlove, 1993, etc) yet consistently fails to conclude substance abuse in itself as responsible.

## MUTUAL COMBAT

Cries of mutual abuse forward false assumptions that characterize the couple's behavior in reciprocally violent terms - each partner becomes both perpetrator and victim. A "two-way street" myth develops (also common in heterosexual battering relationships), one that is particularly invidious for same-sex couples in that it builds upon general social misconceptions that violence between two men or two women is by its very nature "just fighting," actively initiated by both parties.

Moreover as abused lesbians and gay men tend more often to use physical force as defense against their batterers than heterosexual victims, gay men may accept friends, family or social assertions that this self-defensive fighting constitutes abuse, that the victim is the aggressor, and that help or consideration is not warranted. By employing such misconceptions along side of the self-doubt of the victim, batterers can and do label their victims as 'mutually abusive' and unload responsibility for their own actions. In another variation of this two-way street myth, the batterer claims to be the actual victim by exploiting his sameness in gender and size. All of these weapons effectively alienate the real victim from sources of assistance while reinforcing guilt and self-doubt, and allowing the abusive relationship to continue without challenge to the perpetrator.

*"I remember one night after I found out that he had gotten a credit card in my name without me knowing, I was so frustrated trying to sort out his mind games, that I refused to sleep in the same bed with him, so I said I was going to sleep in the living room on the couch. And, um, when I was lying there we were yelling, and I told him to leave me alone, I had to sleep, I was working the next morning... ..we had a big huge coffee table which was encased in wood, and it was quite big, and he threw it on top of me. The glass when it hit me broke into pieces... I was in shock, because I couldn't believe what happened. My hands were cut and bleeding. Um... but he broke down crying because he could not believe what he did, and he almost... all of a sudden... it was almost like... ..like he was able to turn tables around. It was almost like he was the victim."*

- Interview

Literature, theory and research confirm domestic violence is rarely “mutual battering”. There is almost always a primary victim and a primary aggressor – a power hungry insecure individual systemically oppressing his partner. It is of the utmost importance to examine the continuous and cumulative patterns of domination and subordination interwoven throughout all aspects of the relationship and to bear in mind the perpetration of the first strike is not indication enough as the victim may be attempting to prevent another attack he sees on the way. We must cautiously also remember that, albeit infrequent, the power base can shift in all relationships.

Also of critical importance in exploration of ‘mutual combat’ is the victim’s own perception of responsibility. As seen in this study, victims indicate confusion in issues of their responsibility. Should self-defensive measures have been taken these may at a later date be seen as equal in abuse or without distinction to battering. As Renzetti’s study pointed out same-sex victims are far more likely to see themselves responsible for battering due to size or socialization.<sup>49</sup> These attributions are compounded by the very essence of gay relationships which, in setting out to be more egalitarian than their heterosexual counterparts, can cause victims to feel a parity that leads to inappropriate accountability.<sup>50</sup>

*“We were in the kitchen. And we had a little dog when we first got together. We got a poodle. I was arguing with him, and we had a phone in the kitchen, and um, I remember he ripped the phone out of the wall and threw it on the floor. And our poodle was underneath the kitchen table, shaking because of the volume of – the tone of our voices. And I remember the receiver hitting the floor and flying up and hitting her on the head. And I was so furious. I was so furious. I immediately got him – grabbed him with my hands by the shirt, and pushed him up against the wall. I guess in a way, just more of less, reassuring myself that if I blocked him he couldn’t do anything else. The dog was suffering from his actions. That was enough – no more. His back dented the wall. I was furious. I don’t know – is this mutual abuse?”*

*- Interview*

Although neither this nor Merrill’s survey included a series of questions regarding the self-defensive behaviors of victims it is likely that the more same-sex victims act self-defensively the less they will consider their victimization, a transference supported by gay and male socialization processes.

## SOCIALIZATION PROCESSES

In an attempt to survive, many young gay men are taught to cover feelings of hurt, fear and anger. Some become enablers within their families, others become rebellious. As they enter their primary relationships many bring histories of being secretive, private, isolative or withdrawn. Frequently they identify themselves as people who avoid confrontation "at all costs" - having difficulty in expressions of hurt, fear or anger while believing such expressions may result in being abandoned, violated or outed.

The first response of a gay male victim might be to keep things secret. Something they have learned to do quite well as children and adolescents. Such secrecy can be even more complicated if the underlying issue of oppression is not acknowledged. Much of what professionals see are common responses to perceived discrimination and oppression. Psychologist Nancy Hammond has noted that the battered lesbian and gay man *"is faced with far greater loneliness"* as a victim than is a battered heterosexual woman. Homosexuality in itself tends to increase one's distance from larger society and resources, an isolation which may increase the victim's emotional dependence on the batterer while making separation more difficult. As unsupportive as gay communities are to domestic violence victims, this dependence is likely more acute for those who are distanced from their communities (geographically or otherwise), as they may conclude their partners, however abusive, are the only ones who will understand and accept their sexuality. Rural-urban studies may prove interesting in this respect.

We must also ultimately face questions of gender itself. If our socialization process makes it easier to perpetrate violence or abuse to a victim of the same sex,<sup>51</sup> is a man hitting a man the

easiest perpetration of all? Certainly male socialization seldom includes language or awareness of male oppression within a domestic setting. Letellier (1996) suggests *“battered gay and bisexual men are often unable to see themselves as victims simply because they are men”* (Letellier, 1996, p. 7) while Lew (1988) reminds us that culturally men are not provided the room to be seen as a victim (similarly to male incest survivors). Conceptualization of victimization is perhaps inconsistent with the male identity, too often victims are told to go back home and *“be a man.”*

Evans (1990) found high levels of physical harm or injury had to be present for men to feel self-approval for their emotional or psychic reaction to trauma. Men seem to trivialize milder forms of abuse and violence such as fear, depression or anxiety; while in some cases they even fail to acknowledge their more serious physical wounds as the effects of domestic violence. In a recent article on one gay victim’s experience, his social worker was quoted as saying *“After being assaulted with a lead pipe and almost killed... this man was still able to seriously ask the question, ‘Well do you really think that was domestic violence?’”*<sup>52</sup>

Island and Letellier do find victims likely to consider male aggression and violence as innate and without healthy role models to contradict these attributions, to remain with their abusive partners.<sup>53</sup> Merrill agrees victim and societal perceptions of abuse are colored by gender.<sup>54</sup> Male socialization to competition may also be a factor in aggression and abuse, particularly should the partnerships have codependent personality merger occurring and lifestyles opportunistic to issues of jealousy.

## JELOUSY AND CODEPENDANCY

Several studies have indicated higher levels of abuse are associated with jealousy, and codependency, most thoroughly explored in same-sex relationships by Renzetti (1992). In the case of two gay men (or two lesbians) codependency can evolve into social fusion – the ability and desire of one partner to share all of the social activities with the other. Some researchers believe the dialectic between partner autonomy and independence in lesbian and gay couples is associated with increased violence, for instance in Renzetti's study perpetrator dependency increased logarithmically with victims attempts at autonomy, resulting in increased abuse.

Gay men and lesbians may insulate themselves by nurturing their relationships as relatively closed systems (Krestan & Bepko, 1980); the byproduct of sociocultural factors and similarities in gender and upbringing. Such an insulative bond may however foster co-dependency and erode or blend self-esteem through suffocation of individuation and resultant loss of sense of self. Jealousy and possessiveness can develop as a consequence – the merger of the partner generating intense fears of abandonment. Renzetti's study found the single most casual factor in lesbian domestic violence to be jealousy and possessiveness.<sup>55</sup>

## SECONDARY VICTIMIZATION

Secondary victimization is the term used when helping professionals and service providers are inadequately prepared to intervene in a domestic violence situation, uninformed about lesbian and gay domestic violence, or when the responses are prejudicial or apathetic. Victims of domestic violence who are invalidated, not taken seriously, not given information or increased safety; who are blamed for the abuse or violence or who are treated in other ways lacking equanimity and empathy have experienced secondary victimization.

Homophobia and mutual abuse are the two most frequent forms of re-victimization. Homophobic secondary victimization is found in the lack of services for gay males by community denial, homophobic police response and legal barriers to assistance. Mutual abuse myths evolve into secondary victimization if the perpetrator is not held accountable for his abusive or violent actions. Service providers, family, friends or communities who deny acknowledgment of domestic violence or accept mutual abuse conceptualization are, in essence, colluding with the abuser.

*“At the time that I sought advice I went to the 519 Center where I was offered by the counselor to have my abusive lover’s legs broken. Not the support I was looking for.”<sup>1</sup>*

*- Survey Comment*

Gays and lesbian victims are often beaten by their lovers and then re-victimized by the state; sometimes stating they did not complain about the abuse because the thought of being victimized by their lover was less frightening than being victimized by the system. The more closeted we are on same-sex domestic violence and abuse the longer social homophobia and lack of knowledge will lead to their homophobic re-victimization.

## HOMOPHOBIA, INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA & OUTING

*“If I go home and pop my lover in the mouth – and I know she doesn’t want to be outed or no one will believe her – it’s more likely that I’m going get away with it.”*

*- Battered Lesbian*

Homophobia or homo-prejudice is a unique factor in same-sex domestic violence. Gay victims who are cut off from social support can find feelings of stigmatization and low self-worth reinforced. Batters manipulate this through threats of outing the victim, invalidation of victim experiences and, as in the case above, simply by using the victim’s underlying fears of re-victimization.

Some studies have found that victims of anti-gay hate crimes make the association between victimization and homosexuality (Garnets, Herek, & Levy, 1992), similarly acts of battering can reinforce the victims feelings that as a homosexual he is an acceptable target for abuse or violence (Herek, 1990). Homosexual socialization patterns leave a mark of oppression and self-doubt on many gay men and lesbians.

*“Compound the insidious effects of homophobia with the virtual absence of healthy gay relationship role models, the stage has been set for a group of men who tolerate violence from their own partners.”*

*(Letellier, 1996, p. 10)*

Several theorists have suggested that internalized homophobia manifesting in self-hate is motivational to a batterer’s behavior. Given core issues of power and control, indeed identification to stigmatization and histories of oppression may well factor in. The single more prevalent reason that survey respondents cited for the existence of gay male domestic violence and abuse was to the proclivity of homophobic socialization and lack of healthy role models in effecting abusive patterns within their partnerships (33%). An sharp weapon in the batter’s arsenal of terror, homophobia is all the more piercing when compounded by HIV issues.

## HIV

*“He wanted my to move in with him. And I said I would. But before I moved in I had went to have an AIDS test done. And two weeks after I moved in I got the result back and they came back positive. So I told him – I am positive. And um, he said it’s ok, we are going to get through this together. I said ok... ...I think that in the back of my head, that whenever I confronted him was... ...that we were in this together, we are going to survive, we’re survivors... and that me feel that I was going to survive. So I stayed...”*

*- Interview*

Relationships where one partner or more is HIV+ experience significant additional pressures.

An HIV+ victim may perceive his batterer as a ‘life-raft’ – someone who is willing (or states

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<sup>1</sup> This incident occurred in 1993, prior to the start of the 519’s victim assistance program working with domestic violence issues

willingness) to assist throughout traumas and illness the victim foresees facing. If the victim has AIDS, his physical or emotional needs likely will override the battering experiences and pain. If either partner receives the news of their HIV+ status during the time that they are together this often life-shattering experience may over-shadow the reality of abuse. HIV- victims may remain with their HIV+ batters out of senses of guilt or obligation.

Also intertwined with HIV are concerns for financial dependence, health insurance and confusion over the origin of behaviors. If the victim is not 'out' at work the batterer's threats and the victim's perceptions of the consequence of reporting his violence may induce fears of job loss or termination of health insurance. Should either partner be taking large amounts of medication, abusive or violent behavior can be attributed to dementia or drugs or the emotional effects of dealing with HIV itself.

The gay community has experienced an enormous loss during the last decade and many individuals have lost many loved ones. This loss may cause feelings of absence or a lack of the continuity (of love, friends, and life) which may lead a victim to remain in his relationship (particularly if the relationship is several years in length) out of basic human needs for a sense of historical thread or continuity in life.

Merrill's study found HIV+ respondents remaining with their abusive partners due to fears of death, fears of dying alone or illness, although result in this work were inconclusive.<sup>57</sup> In the end, HIV must be seen as a factor that dramatically complicates the lives of battered gay and bisexual men and potentially restricts a victim's perceptions (if not realities) of alternatives to abuse.

## LACK OF SERVICES

*"I know there is a lot of people out there in the same situation and I didn't know of a gay men's domestic support group... I wish I had of if it did exist – but if one does exist I would like to be involved because there is still issues that I am dealing with... I am still afraid to see the person, periodically I do catch myself sort of you know - (peers around and over his shoulder), I am still wondering, wondering what the next confrontation is going to be like..."*

- Interview

In the United States, the first service provider for gay male domestic violence and abuse was formed in Seattle in 1981. The first conference on same-sex was held two years later in 1983 under the auspices of the NCADV and by 1986 both New York City and San Francisco had begun full-time service programs for same-sex domestic violence and abuse. Today there are approximately a dozen of these programs; one here in Toronto and the rest in the United States. Our program and most of the American programs have yet to offer a complete range of services, the greatest absence being that of emergency shelter arrangements.

Given the fact that most victim services are built on gender paradigms designed to serve women and that gay domestic violence information and provider outreach is scarce (or completely absent) we must conclude gay and lesbian victims currently have more difficulty accessing assistance than battered heterosexual women. Further, given the lack of programs available and the few guidelines with which victims and batterers have to evaluate services, those that do find providers may simply assume their services to be appropriate.

A provider who avoids definition or lacks an overall understanding of gay male domestic violence and abuse must be questioned. All too frequently programs are expanded without adequate assessment of the unique issues at play in gay male violence. Networking with other providers to

pool information and knowledge and end the duplication of services is one powerful means to increase the effectiveness of community services.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, service providers must recognize the need to campaign to raise community awareness and the desperate need to advertise their services. In 1996 the Anti-Violence Project in New York city assisted 227 gay male domestic violence victims and San Francisco's Community United Against Violence assisted 277. Toronto, with a similar (or larger) population of gay men, but no outreach, assisted only 19. As found in New York's subway campaign, advertising of services and outreach is an excellent means to reach victims and increase community awareness. Victims face enormous barriers in seeking help - the lack of knowledge of their existence should not be one of them.

## § CONCLUSION

When I was eight or nine I would set out after a rainstorm on my bike and head towards the end of the rainbow and that magical pot of gold. I didn't care that no matter how fast I pedaled I never seemed to get there. It was just the sheer excitement of thinking I was going somewhere, somewhere magical, that kept me going. I felt the same way ten years later when I came out of my closet. The gay community in Toronto felt magical, like the end of the rainbow, everything sparkling and colorful. After years of trying to be some body or some boy I finally felt like *someone* with the fantastic difference was this time I wasn't trying to be anyone except myself.

Now looking back things have changed. The gay community no longer seems to have that sparkle. Oddly, these days I feel more comfortable to 'just be me' in my heterosexual neighborhood than I do at the corner of Church and Wellesley – there is the sense of a lot less pressure and judgment. The community is no longer waving its rainbow colored flag to symbolize the 'embracement' of difference, but more of allegiance. Membership demanding a certain uniform - and uniformity of perfection - without which ostracism is certain.

At some point we lost our sense of acceptance or perhaps our compassion has been drained by HIV and AIDS. Whatever it is, it is unfortunate. Throughout the eight months of this work I heard time and time again the tortured voices of young men, abused by their 'brothers' and then beaten by their community – a community in denial and compassionless in acknowledgement of the fact of same sex partner abuse and violence. The bruised battered bodies and psyches of these men sought yet did not find the pot of gold that community support can be. The rainbow flaunting its hues of pink and purple somehow insidiously covered the all too real shades of black and blue.

Same-sex domestic violence is a critical social issue. As long as we stop ourselves from facing the realities of our intra-community violence we remain tied to a homophobic oppression and silence that we ourselves have created. We are responsible for dealing with the violence that occurs from outside as much as we are responsible for the dealing with the violence that occurs from within. It is as imperative - if not more so - that we recognize the need to end the abuse that occurs in our own relationships and to provide service to both victims and perpetrators. What hate crime is worse than hating and hurting ourselves?

There are many causes of gay male domestic violence and many effects. There are unique factors at play and those that mirror our heterosexual counterparts. Certainly a multi-disciplinary theoretical approach to gay male domestic violence provides us with a framework to consider the unique elements and their effects. Outing, HIV, community silence, secondary victimization, jealousy, codependency, homophobia and the lack of services and outreach are what must be recognized, considered and overcome.

Perhaps as gay men we are more affluent, better educated and in better physical shape than our straight brothers. Perhaps too these days we can strut our slick and cultured uniformity proudly down any main street - yet all too often we do so with our backs to the beatings and abuse which is going on in our own backyards. It is time to turn around and question what we have accomplished and what we need to accomplish next, call it a realignment of priorities or recognition of reality. Name it what you wish, but name it. The gay community in just a decade or two has pedaled fast and gone many places, some of them magical, some not; and that pot of gold remains just as elusive.

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## § ENDNOTES

1. The 519 Community Center was at the time of this writing the only service provider specifically providing services to gay male domestic violence victims, although several other providers are working on developing programs. The program, established in 1992, is currently 'piggy-backed' with lesbian domestic violence victimization and gay/lesbian hate crime violence services - having few resources, only one part-time staff member, and no funding for the advertisement of its services. Nineteen victims were assisted in 1996.
2. Renzetti discusses the problems associated with establishing prevalence of same-sex partner abuse at length, while indicating that exploratory studies are extremely valuable: "Studies of homosexual partner abuse have had to utilize nonrandom, self-selected samples. Therefore they are not true prevalence studies. It is doubtful that researchers will ever be able to measure accurately the prevalence of homosexual partner abuse... ...[exploratory] studies values lies in the fact that they clearly demonstrate that lesbian and gay men not infrequently aggress against their intimate partners in ways that are physical and emotionally abusive and sometimes violent." (Renzetti, 1992, p. 19)
3. This statement was made by one of our leading municipal politicians in interview.
4. (Michael Szymnanki, in *Genre Magazine*, Fall 1991)
5. "Obtaining accurate incidence estimates for gay and lesbian battering is difficult, particularly given the double "taboo" of being a domestic violence victim as well as a homosexual. Sample limitations also increase the unreliability of estimates, including nonrandomness, self-selected samples (snowball, convenience, referrals through newspaper recruitment or fliers, contracts with therapists), and samples that over-represent white, well-educated, and middle- and upper-class respondents. Additionally, research on lesbian relationship violence (and gay male violence) is in its infancy, and as Coleman points out in her literature review, methodological problems have not yet been resolved."(Miller, 1996, p. 195)
6. Hart clearly states that physical acts of violence are not domestic abuse (or battering) unless framed contextually: "...physical violence is not battering unless it results in the enhanced control of the batterer over the recipient, that the frequency of the acts of violence may not be conclusive... ...the severity of violence may also not be determinative. Even when the violence is repeated and a pattern evolves between the intimates, this violence is not battering unless the effect of the violent conduct is to render the perpetrator more powerful and controlling in relation to the recipient." (Hart 1986, cited in Short, 1996, p.2)
7. Hart indicates the concept of time – past, present and future, remarking "... battering is the pattern of intimidation, coercion, terrorism, or violence, the sum of all past acts of violence and the promises of future violence, that achieves enhanced power and control for the perpetrator over her partner." (Hart, 1986, p. 173, 174)
8. Renzetti discussed Leeder's analysis of battering and the function of time: "In her analysis of lesbian battering, Leeder (1988) distinguished three types of abusive lesbian relationships: situational battering, chronic battering, and emotional or psychological batters. Leeder defines the situational battering relationships as one in which abuse occurs once or twice as a result of some situational event that throws the couple into crisis. Once is crisis is resolved, the abuse never recurs. Significantly, my research found this type of abusive relationship to be relatively rare. Only 8% of the participants in my study had been involved in abusive relationships that might be classified as situational because they had experienced only one or two

abusive incidents. Predominant in my study were women who had been involved in what Leeder (1988) call chronic battering and emotional battering relationships. Leeder describes the chronic battering relationship as one in which physical abuse occurs 'two or more times, demonstrating increasing destructive behavior. The violence escalates over time and, in many cases, actually leads to life-threatening situations' (p. 87). The emotional battering relationship is more difficult to define precisely, but Leeder maintains that it shares the same characteristics as the chronic battering relationship except the abuse is verbal or psychological rather than physical." (Renzetti, 1992, p. 20)

9. "It is critical to consider the frequency and context of behaviors and their psychological effects, not simply the presence of physical injuries, property damage, or financial loss when determining what behaviors constitute the phenomenon of battering."(Merrill, 1996, p. 3)

10. "[domestic violence is] any unwanted physical force, psychological abuse, material or property damage inflicted on one man by another" (Lundy, 1993, p. 275)

11. In one of the few cross-cultural domestic violence studies, Torres (1991) found that Anglo-American women perceived a broader spectrum of behavior as abusive and had less tolerant attitudes toward wife abuse than Mexican American women. Torres concludes self-definition of domestic violence is not a valid measurement of domestic violence across cultures as interpretation of behaviors that constitute domestic violence differ.

12. Renzetti strongly and clearly demands an integrated theory which includes multiple variables: "I argue instead that what is needed is a theory that recognizes gender as well as sexual orientation, race, class, and age as interconnected organizing variables in domestic violence perpetration, victimization, and institutionalized response."(Renzetti, 1996, p. 219)

13. The intergenerational transmission hypothesis has common-sense appeal; the importance of role models in the socialization process is well known. Nevertheless, it is flawed by various weaknesses, not the least of which is that it exonerates batterers..." (Renzetti, 1992, p. 72)

14. By linking risks of severe aggression to marital distress in couples (O'Leary, 1994, Pan, 1994), verbal argument frequency and religious incompatibility (Hotaling, 1986), and frustration within the familial roles with amounts of violence (Steinmetz, 1974), family dynamics theorists suggest couples who are both physically aggressive and reciprocate hostility are more likely to develop abusive relationships over time (Burman, 1993).

15. Dutton (and others) find "...[the] feminist view implicates patriarchy as the major cause of wife assault rather than an inducement that interacts with other causes... ..This emphasis on the cultural is reflected in the feminist distrust of psychological causes of male violence (Goldner, Penn, Sheinberg & Walker, 1990) as potentially 'exonerative' of male violence and by lack of empirical studies of putative interactive causes conducted within a feminist perspective. Indeed, much feminist analysis (Bograd, 1988) argues that an emphasis on psychopathology in explaining wife assault is misguided because wife assault results from 'normal psychological and behavioral patterns of most men' and that 'trait theories tend to excuse the abusive man through reference to alcohol abuse or poor childhood histories'" (Dutton, DPA, pp. 127-128)

16. "If there is a politic at work, it exists primarily in the microsystem [couple] of the dyad. "(Dutton, 1996, p. 137)

17. Coleman in her studies of lesbian battering accepts generalized notions of power and privilege, dominance and subordination while refuting overt gender focus in feminist theory: "There has been a tendency within the domestic violence movement to focus on patriarchal values and sociocultural institutions while excluding the importance of personality variables. Although women, as well as men, internalize an ideology of domination and subordination, gender-based sociopolitical theories of domestic violence cannot adequately explain why lesbian battering occurs at rates comparable to that of heterosexual battering." (Coleman, DPA, p. 97)

18. In an empirical test of patriarchal norms on assaultiveness, Yllo and Straus (1990) conducted a quantitative analysis, assessing the latter with the CTS and the former with the (U.S.) state-by-state economic, educational, political, and legal indicators of the structural inequality of women. Their findings were a curvilinear (U-shaped) relationship between structural indicators and wife assault rates, with the lowest and highest status of women states having the highest rates of severe wife assault - while structural indicators and patriarchal norms had a correlation of near zero. Patriarchal norms were related to wife assault in the states with the most male-dominant norms had double the wife assault rate of states with more egalitarian norms. Yllo and Straus explain this data through argument that high violence rates in states where the status of women is highest were caused by a breakdown of patriarchal norms and males resorting to violence to bolster threatened masculinity.

19. If feminist theory finds violence a dependant variable to patriarchy, one would anticipate higher violence toward women in stronger patriarchal cultures. This is not supported by several cross-cultural studies including one from Sorenson and Telles (1991) who found in a Mexican-born Hispanic sample (n=705), wife assault rates were about half that reported by a sample (n=1,149) of non-Hispanic whites - despite Hispanic cultures being generally more patriarchal than American culture.

20. Miller while acknowledging single (gender) feminist attributions are insufficient, reminds Dutton and us to consider pluralism within socio-political theory: "(Dutton) makes the same mistake by lumping together and castigating all feminist research as if there is only one kind of feminism (ignoring the different philosophies and goals of liberal, socialist, marxist, radical and postmodern feminisms). In fact, much of the recent compelling feminist scholarship on domestic violence steers clear of blaming patriarchy as the sole or direct casual factor, while maintaining that gender remains a crucial key explanatory variable. Rather, patriarchy provides a historical and contemporary foundation to assist in explaining the pervasive and enduring quality of (white, middle-and-upper class, heterosexual) male privilege and power that has created and defined our systems of laws, courts and law enforcement as well as other social institutions and interactions(Farr, 1988; Hoff, 1991, Smart, 1989)."(Miller, 1996, p. 191)

21. Source not provided.

22. Looking primarily at heterosexual couples and the way in which they handle conflicts within the family unit, Strauss (1979) developed a strategy for measuring the conflicts within the couple called the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS). The CTS measures use of reasoning, verbal aggression, and violence within the dyad. Strauss argues that in a family conflict of interest within a family one member may attempt to seek out his or her "personal agenda" with whatever tactics are necessary to resolve the conflict. When this is denied hostility develops which may turn into violence." (Strauss, 1979, p.75)

23. Hamberger and Hastings (1986) in a study of male perpetrator profiles which used the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI), identified three primary personality traits: asocial/borderline, narcissistic/antisocial, and dependent/compulsive with an emphasis on the first two. In their discussion of domestic violence abusers they state: "the psychopathology of abusers can best be viewed as that of a

disordered personality - as a deeply ingrained, highly treatment-resistant, and often perplexing set of behaviors." (Hamberger & Hastings, 1988, p 769)

24. "For a man, sociopolitical comparisons with women or with a woman are irrelevant. What is experienced, especially in intimate relationships, is the power advantage women appear to have in their ability to introspect, analyze, and describe feelings and process. Transference from early relationships in which a female (mother) had apparently unlimited power still affects male assessments of power in adult relationships." (Dutton & Ryan, 1992 as cited in Dutton, 1996, pp. 136-137)

25. "Feminist theory and psychological theory are not necessarily mutually exclusive; one does not have to negate the other, and in fact, if synthesized and placed together, they can enhance our vision" (Merrill, 1996, p.5)

26. "Even unidimensional portraits of battered women themselves are being challenged; although most battered women share similar battering experiences, their interpretations, reactions and actions to the violence are further shaped by their own diverse cultural racial, ethnic, class and sexual orientation experiences and expectations (Miller, 1989; Rasche, 1991)." (Miller, 1996, p. 194)

27. "The integrated theories of battering that combine an analysis of the social context in which domestic violence occurs with the psychological characteristics of the individual perpetrator are inclusive of same-sex battering. Such theories account for victims and batterers of either gender and they allow for the inclusion of the social context of homophobia and heterosexism in which same-sex battering occurs. Although there are similarities between battered men and women, under this more inclusive theoretical model, battered gay and bisexual men do not have to be examined as mere versions of battered women. Instead, they can be understood as men who have similar experience of being battered, but who conceptualize and respond to violence against them differently from battered women. Battered gay and bisexual men also face an array of different problems in their attempts to escape from their violent partners." (Letellier, 1996, p. 7)

28. Island and Letellier sum up theoretical preoccupation: "All [theories] are important influences. Socialization theory (some men pick up the worst that society offers); developmental theory (some men fail to acquire necessary skills needed to live nonviolently); communication theory (some gay men have not learned how to communicate effectively about their feelings and thoughts); personality theory (some gay men have developed an unfortunate, maladaptive set of personality characteristics); and sociopolitical theory (gay men can embody the outcomes of a patriarchal society as readily as heterosexual men) suggest that a combination of all of these forces operate in the development of abusive gay men. None of these forces, however, causes an individual gay man to commit specific acts of domestic violence. Gay male batterers have ample opportunity everyday to escape the bonds of their proclivity to violence. What they once learned they can and must unlearn. Domestic violence is always a choice." (Island & Letellier, 1991, p. 68)

29. "In accordance with Walker's (1979) cycle theory of violence, 77% of respondents reported no incidents of physical violence in the first three months of their relationship. First incidents of physical abuse occurred between three and six months for 31% of respondents, between six months and one year for 23%, and sometime after the first year for the remaining 23%. Moreover, 73% of respondents reported they "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the following statement: "After a violent incident, the relationship seemed to return to a "honeymoon period" in which my partner was apologetic, caring, attentive, and romantic." (Merrill, 1996, p. 40)

30. Harms in his study of gay domestic violence services found substance abuse correlated to the use of violent tactics: "As for the role of substance use and use of violent tactics, those who rarely use substances

were less likely to use violent tactics (mean = 4.75), compared to subjects that use substances occasionally, mean = 5.22,  $F(3,352) = 8.$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings are consistent with prior research. Similarly, partners' reported use of violent tactics was higher among those who occasionally or frequently used substances, (mean = 5.49), compared to those who rarely use substances, (mean = 4.47,  $F(3,391) = 3.391$ ,  $p < .01$ ).” (Harms, 1995, p.29)

31. Furthermore, Harms found “... subjects were less likely to use violent strategies with different educational backgrounds (mean=4.33) compared to subjects' use of violent tactics in same education dyad, (mean=4.66,  $F(1,364) = 6.327$ ,  $p < .01$ ). With regards to inter ethnic relationships, subjects were less likely to use violent tactics in same ethnicity relationships, (mean = 4.44), compared to subjects' use of violent tactics in inter ethnic relationships, (mean = 4.74,  $F(1,355) = 4.811$ ,  $p < .05$ ).” (Harms, 1995, p.27)

32. “A series of ANOVA's indicated significant differences in use of violent tactics associated with status discrepancies. In the few relationships with a major age difference, subjects were more likely to use violent strategies (mean=5.55), compared to subjects' use of violent tactics in same age.” (Harms, 1995, p.27)

33. Merrill places perpetration in terms of a ‘continuum of possible behaviors’, thus in essence agreeing, at least in part, with the CCC model: “The concept of degree of severity of the batterer assumes that batterers can be placed along a continuum of mild to severe depending upon their capacity of impulse control and the severity of violence used. This concept helps us to distinguish between batterers who have a higher degree of control over their impulses and use ‘milder’ forms of abusive behavior and batterers who have little or no impulse control and regularly use severe, life-threatening forms of violence...”(Merrill, 1996, p. 20)

34. Island & Letellier estimate only .1% of all batterers present themselves for treatment.

35. Lundy describes typical victim response: “Often, the battered woman [or man] is shocked by the first assaultive incidents. She believes that if she changes her behavior to please the batterer, the violence will stop. Eventually, when the violence does not stop, the abused woman becomes hypervigilant, scrutinizing her batterer's demeanor for even the slightest portent of a coming assault. She may minimize and deny the battering to herself and others, either from shame, desire to protect the batterer, or from terror or what the batterer will do to her if she reveals the abuse. She may not know that there are viable alternatives available to remaining in the relationship, or these alternatives simply may not exist.”(Lundy, 1993, p. 278)

36. Renzetti (1988, 1992) also make this conclusion in her work on lesbian relationships.

37. Lundy in her study of judicial and service provider response to same-sex abuse in Massachusetts concluded: “...although same-sex domestic violence is as prevalent and serious as heterosexual domestic violence, cultural and institutional homophobia has isolated its victims from the psychological, social, and legal support they need to safely leave the abusive relationships.” (Lundy, 1993, p. 274)

38. Statistics were provided by the Metropolitan Toronto Police, Sergeant Susan McCoy

39. Sergeant Susan McCoy, former Domestic Violence / Partner Abuse Coordinator (for five years until March of 1997) now teaches Police Diversity (under the Human Relations Section). Police Diversity is a four year old mandatory program of sixty hours which includes domestic violence intervention and same-sex couple issues. Sergeant McCoy believes gay domestic violence is under reported because of re-victimization and the force's failure to confirm two men are couple. In June 1993, gender specific language was removed from the force's protocol, although Ministry of the Solicitor General remains gender specific (“wife assault”). Sergeant McCoy states that the force does not keep records on the numbers of same-sex domestic incidents.

40. The force's protocol stipulates that "arrest is the preferred response" and the "officers will arrest/charge when reasonable grounds exists." Furthermore, officers are advised they should not necessarily be influenced by "the race, ethnicity, sexual preference, social class, or occupation of the victim." (MTP, 1993, p. 10)

41. One Crown attorney at K court (in interview) indicated she had little experience with same-sex battering and illustrated even less concern about it.

42. (Snow, K., *The Advocate*, 6/2/92)

43. Merrill argues that many community leaders fear information about same-sex battering would be used to justify the continued denial of basic civil rights to gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals, including the right to marry.

44. "[domestic violence] has been called the second closet. Talking about domestic violence in lesbian, as well as gay, relationships has long been considered taboo in those communities – lest their discussion spark more homophobia in society. 'In a sexual minority, there's always resistance to airing dirty laundry'..." (Newsweek, October 4, 1993)

45. Merrill states that the problem is "the gay community is fighting so many direct attacks on our rights that it's difficult to face the internal problems, the violence within the community, but that failure contributes to the isolation of those who are battered."

46. In their work "Attributions About Spouse Abuse: It Matters Who the Batterers and Victims Are," Harris and Cook in a sample of 372 college students found the same story of domestic violence with gay partners to be rated as less violent an incident (4.63 for hetero men batterers, 3.74 for hetero women batterers, and 3.57 for gay males - 1 not violent, 7 very violent), while the sample responded more frequently that the gay victim should leave the relationship (2.22 for gay, 2.43 for men hetero, and 3.52 for female - 1 definitely, 7 definitely not), and overall liked the gay victim the least (3.36 male batterer, 3.90 female batterer, 4.38 gay - 1 very much, 7 not very much) (Harris & Cook, 199?, p. 559)

47. "Gays and lesbians are more likely to be victims of domestic violence than anti-gay violence, suggests a survey released Tuesday by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs... ...Activists in four of the six cities logged more cases of domestic violence than anti-gay hate violence.... ...The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs estimates from its review of the scanty research that domestic violence occurs in a quarter to a third of same-sex relationships." (San Francisco Examiner, October 22, 1996, p. A-1)

48. (Lehman, 1994)

49. Renzetti here discusses several studies including her own which found lesbian acting self-defensively yet describing their behaviors in terms of mutual combat: "Lie et al. (1991) found that of the 169 women they surveyed who had ever been involved in a lesbian relations, 56.8% had both experienced and used violence in these relationships. Of these, only 30% considered their use of violence to be purely self-defensive, whereas 42.9% perceived it as mutual battering and 27.1% saw it as both self-defense and mutual battering. Three major difficulties arise when we reflect on these findings. First, as Hart (1986) points out... ...women who have been battered frequently accept the label 'mutual battering' even if they were violent toward their partners only once. Second, victims may adopt the mindset of the batter. As Asherah (1990) states: 'Often batterers use the survivor's self-doubt to their advantage. Batterers are notorious for labeling the survivor

'mutually abusive' in order to avoid taking responsibility for their actions' (p. 57). Third, because the researchers did not distinguish between victims and batterers, their sample may have included batterers who, while acknowledging they were abusive also claim that their partners provoked them through verbal abuse or were also violence, so they had no choice but to respond violently. Hart (1986) says, 'Batterers always see themselves as the victim of the battered woman' (p. 185). In my study, 78% of the 100 participants responded affirmatively to the questions, 'Did you ever defend yourself against the battering or retaliate against your batterer?' When asked to elaborate on what they had done, only 18 respondents described behaviors that could be classified as fighting back – trading blow for blow or insult for insult. Rather, the majority (64) described reactions that were clearly self-defensive, typically pushing their partners away, holding their arms or wrists to keep from being hit, or blocking punches with their own arms or with an object. However, respondents indicated that often their attempts to defend themselves were futile or resulted in greater violence being inflicted on them." (Renzetti, 1992, pp. 109-110)

50. "Because gay male relationships involve two males and set out to be more egalitarian than heterosexual relationships, the current victim may tend to believe that even violence perpetrated entirely by the partner is a shared responsibility of the two partners. The victim will feel a male-male, same gender parity, which is obviously not present in heterosexual relationships. The victim may, therefore, inappropriately feel accountable for the violence. The victim's perception of his accountability is fed and nourished by the batterer who blames him for the violence and tries to persuade him that the battering is a shared problem. The victim will consequently show a tendency to tolerate more than one instance of violence and a hesitation to leave the relationship when repeated instances of violence occur." (IL, 1991, p. 108)

51. Several studies have shown indication that same-sex couple experience greater abuse in their relationships. This may be due to the fact that these couples experience different, if not greater, factors leading to abuse; and/or it may be due to socialization processes where barriers to hitting (for instance) someone of the same sex are not as great. In one study by Lie and colleagues (1991) investigating past exposure to domestic violence in a sample of 174 self-identified lesbians, it was found that lesbians were more often victimized and fought back more frequently. Over 70% of these women had past intimate relationships with a man and over 95% with a woman. More respondents reported being the victim in their past relationships with women (73%) than in their past relationship with men (65%) while twice as many women (68%) used violence against a female partner than against a male partner (33%).

52. (Snow, 1992, p. 61)

53. "Many gay men may also adhere to the false notion that male aggression and violence are natural and innate, all a part of what it is to be male. As a result, these men may allow themselves to stay with an abusive partner and tolerate what would certainly be labeled "domestic violence" in a heterosexual relationship, but is labeled by the gay male victim as a natural part of gay relationships. Combine the misconception that men are 'violent by nature' with the absence for many gay men of healthy nonviolent relationship models, and the stage has been set for victims who, at least at first, do not try to leave their abusive partners." (IL, 1991, p. 103)

54. "As a result [of gender misconceptions], women abused by women and men abused by men, as well as their friends, family, and providers, may not characterize and respond to these abusive behaviors as "battering" as they would if they had been perpetrated by a man against a woman."(Merrill, 1996, p. 66)

55. Renzetti here discusses how the batterer's dependency on (her) partner creates jealousy and often substance abuse. Renzetti does discuss power and its relation to dependency issues elsewhere – the discussion here is quoted in order to place Renzetti on substance abuse issues. "The factor that in this study

was most strongly associated with abuse was partners' relative dependency on one another. More specifically, batterers appeared to be intensely dependent on the partners who they victimized. The abusive partner's dependency was a central element in an ongoing, dialectic struggle in these relationships. As batterers grew more dependent, their partners attempted to exercise greater independence. This, in turn, posed a threat to the batterer, who would subsequently try to tighten her hold on her partner, often by violent means. The greater the batterer's dependency, the more frequent and severe the abuse she inflicted on her partner. In most cases, the batterer eventually succeeded in cutting her partner off from friends, relatives, colleagues, and all outside interests and activities that did not include the batterer herself... ..The intense dependency of the batterer typically manifests itself as jealousy. It is not enough for the batterer to possess her partner; she must also guard her from all others who could potentially lure her away. The battering victim is subjected to lengthy interrogations about her routine activities and associations. She is repeatedly accused of infidelity, and although the accusations are almost always groundless, her denials rarely satisfy the batterer. Violence is a frequent end product of the batterer's jealous tirades. The over-dependency of the batterer may also manifest itself through substance abuse, especially alcohol abuse. When under the influence of alcohol or drugs, she may feel stronger, more independent, more aggressive. She may act on these perceptions by becoming violent and abusive, especially toward her partner. This is particularly likely if along with the belief that alcohol or drugs make her powerful, she or her partner or both of them also believe that an individual under the influence of alcohol or drugs is not responsible for her actions. Thus substance abuse appears to be a facilitator rather than a cause of lesbian battering." (Renzetti, 1992, p. 116)

56. "Of the 20 respondents who identified as HIV-positive, 60% indicated that fear of becoming sick and dying had played "a major part" in their decision to remain."(Merrill, 1996, p. 54)

57. The 2-Spirited People of the 1<sup>st</sup> Nations and Metro Woman Abuse Council have initiated a coalition of service provider to network existing resources and assess possible services for lesbian and gay domestic violence victims.

58. Statistic provided by the Metropolitan Toronto Police, Sargent Sue McCoy.