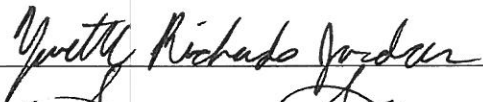

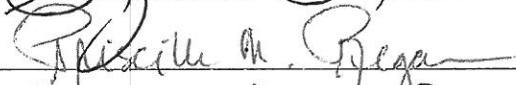
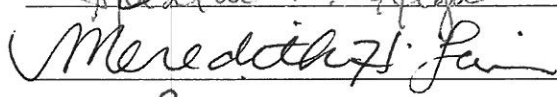

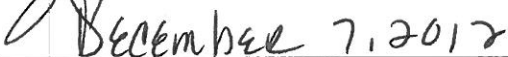


COLLABORATING TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS: IMPROVING ACCESS TO  
SUPPORT SERVICES FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER  
SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN WASHINGTON, DC

by

Shauna M. Fecher  
A Thesis  
Submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty  
of  
George Mason University  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Master of Arts  
Interdisciplinary Studies

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George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender .....	LGBT
Intimate Partner Violence .....	IPV
Metropolitan Police Department.....	MPD
Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit .....	GLLU
Break the Cycle.....	BTC
Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment .....	SAFE
Washington Empowered Against Violence .....	WEAVE
Simulation and Training Environment Lab .....	SiTEL



## **ABSTRACT**

### **COLLABORATING TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS: IMPROVING ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN WASHINGTON, DC**

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George Mason University, 2012

Thesis Director: Dr. Yvette Richards Jordan

There is a widespread need for education and resources capable of addressing intimate partner violence (IPV) in the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. This thesis describes the collaborative community response to IPV within the LGBT communities in Washington, DC by analyzing the collective efforts of advocates, law enforcement, and domestic violence service providers. Specifically, this study examines collaborative efforts to raise awareness and educate communities about IPV, help survivors report abuse to law enforcement, and help survivors seek immediate protection from abuse. The participants in this study work cooperatively to improve services for LGBT survivors; however, funding and capacity issues frequently inhibit progress. Results from this study lead to four major conclusions about successful collaborations.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Despite the considerable increase in advocacy for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights over the past few decades, relatively little attention has been paid to the issue of LGBT intimate partner violence (IPV). The assumption that intimate partner violence only occurs in heterosexual relationships is perhaps the most compelling and obvious explanation for this deficit in awareness. The traditional view of domestic violence as a problem framed primarily by gender subordination of women has translated into significant barriers for the recognition of intimate partner violence within LGBT communities and highlights the need to prioritize the development of policies and services capable of serving the affected people in these communities.

However, in certain cities across the country, there is an increase in collaborative grassroots community efforts to improve access to support services for LGBT survivors of intimate partner violence. Survivors and advocates in Cambridge, Massachusetts founded the Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project, a grassroots non-profit organization that established support services and safe-home networks for abused gay men (History of GMDVP, 2010). Advocates in San Francisco, California founded the Network for Battered Lesbians and Bisexual Women, an organization dedicated solely to "empowering and supporting survivors of woman-to-woman battering" (Grant, 1999, p. 184). Washington, DC is another community where advocates, law enforcement, and

service providers work together to improve access to education and support services for LGBT communities.

The purpose of this study was two-fold. The primary objective was to analyze the ongoing efforts of LGBT advocates, law enforcement, and domestic violence service providers to improve access to resources for LGBT survivors in Washington, DC. This study concentrated its primary analysis on three research areas: 1) raising awareness and educating communities about LGBT IPV, 2) helping LGBT survivors report abuse to law enforcement, and 3) helping LGBT survivors seek immediate protection from their abusers.

The secondary objective of this study highlighted successes in the collaborative process in these three research areas and uncovered impediments to successful collaboration and outreach to victims and survivors. This study contended that improving access to resources for LGBT survivors of intimate partner violence was best served by the following strategies: facilitating collaboration among the groups responsible for educating, protecting, and supporting, LGBT survivors; utilizing the combined expertise of participant groups to formulate context specific responses; maintaining an open dialogue among participant groups; and establishing legal, institutional, and community support for LGBT survivors.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is a critical need for increased education around LGBT intimate partner violence and for services that are capable of adequately supporting LGBT survivors. Traditional research, education, and support services related to domestic violence have

relied heavily on heteronormative conceptions of abuse. As a result, LGBT individuals experience difficulty recognizing abuse in their relationships and service providers are unequipped to properly address violence in a non-heterosexual context.

#### Raising Awareness and Educating Communities about LGBT IPV

Gaps in information and assumptions about intimate partner violence not only left many in LGBT individuals unable to recognize IPV and to acknowledge it as a central issue, but also affected the ability of LGBT victims and survivors to break out of isolation, report abuse, and seek protection. In a study conducted by The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), LGBT respondents reported that most of the information available on domestic violence was about heterosexual relationships (2009). As a result, those outside this normative identity experienced difficulty recognizing abuse within their relationships because they lacked an accessible model of what abuse looked like between two men, two women, or couples involving transgender identities.

Previous research suggested that the first step toward motivating a response around LGBT intimate partner violence was to identify the problem (West, 2002). This required such actions as defining the characteristics and dynamics of intimate partner violence, conducting empirical research on the prevalence and incidence of LGBT IPV, and addressing the unique contributing factors to LGBT IPV, such as internalized homophobia, insufficient access to education and services, and addressing the issue of denial of IPV among LGBT communities (West, 2002, p. 127). Moreover, researchers suggested LGBT community members played a key role in offering creative solutions to

addressing the issue and defining the problems that needed to be solved (Bornstein et al., 2006). In light of these findings, this study examined efforts sponsored by LGBT advocates to raise awareness and educate communities about LGBT IPV.

#### Helping Survivors Report Abuse to Law Enforcement

Two critical objectives for improving access to resources for LGBT communities include developing effective protection of victims and establishing appropriate services for survivors. LGBT survivors of intimate partner violence experience a myriad of barriers in their attempts to access protection and support from law enforcement and service providers. In the article, “Lesbians Organizing Lesbians Against Battering,” Ann Russo maintained that the “heterosexism of the social institutions,” such as police departments, court systems, and social service providers was one of the key differences between same-sex and opposite-sex abuse (1999, p.84). Russo contended heterosexist social institutions perpetuated the existence of violence in same-sex relationships because they were “inaccessible or hostile” to LGBT individuals (Russo, 1999, p.84). Research and recent history demonstrated that LGBT communities, similarly to many other minority populations, often had a tenuous and fearful relationship with police. Fearing that law enforcement would not take their reports of abuse seriously, LGBT identified people were substantially less likely to report abuse than heterosexual female survivors (Mobley & Murray, 2009).

Contacting law enforcement is often a survivor's first, and sometimes only attempt to report abuse, particularly in the case of life-threatening and/or physically abusive situations. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP)

attempted to quantify the growing need for improved access to police protection for LGBT survivors in its annual report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Intimate Partner Violence in 2010 (NCAVP, 2011). Findings from the report suggested funding for LGBT specific anti-violence programs and services were vitally needed. One of the most troubling statistics was the percentage decrease in the calls LGBT abuse sufferers made for police assistance, falling from 21.7% in 2009 to only 7.1% in 2010 (NCAVP, 2011). The reason for the decrease in calls for police assistance was not necessarily related to decreased violence but to decreased reporting, in no small measure due to police deficits in recognizing and taking seriously abuse within LGBT communities.

Despite the decrease in calls for police assistance, there was a substantial increase in same-sex incidents where the offender was arrested; 47.1% of incidents involving the police resulted in the arrest of the offender, a significant increase from the 2009 level of 27.3% (NCAVP, 2011). However, the NCAVP Report revealed a significant increase in reports of what was termed mis-arrests, the arrest of the victim or the dual arrest of both the victim and the abuser. Between 2009 and 2010 reports of mis-arrests rose from 7.1% of incidents to 23.2% (NCAVP, 2011). This increase was indicative of the many barriers LGBT survivors continued to face in reporting abuse to law enforcement. In light of these findings, this study examined efforts to help survivors report abuse to law enforcement in Washington, DC.

### Helping LGBT Survivors Seek Immediate Protection

Heteronormative conceptions of intimate partner violence, also known as domestic violence, present significant barriers for LGBT individuals seeking immediate protection from abusive relationships. Although most battered women's shelters accept biologically born female survivors, many bisexual women and lesbians are hesitant to seek their services because of special vulnerabilities that adhere to these groups. Shelters designed to protect heterosexual women from abusive male partners often do not have structures in place to adequately protect women from same-sex abusive partners. Moreover, intake procedures that are incapable of screening for female abusers open up the real possibility that abusers could be admitted to the same shelter.

While domestic violence shelters are theoretically available to bisexual women and lesbians, these shelters largely exclude bisexual men, gay men and transgender individuals from accessing emergency housing. The virtual absence of domestic violence shelters that serve these other marginalized groups compounds the problem of non-access to women-only shelters. Consequently, bisexual men, gay men, and transgender individuals who seek shelter from abusive relationships often find that their only alternatives for emergency housing are hotel vouchers and homeless shelters. This recourse is problematic because homeless shelters and hotels do not provide the resources or staff required to adequately support survivors of abuse. Moreover, these groups encounter the potential threat of additional violence at the hand of homophobic and transphobic residents of homeless shelters.

In 2011, the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) released its 2010 Domestic Violence Census Survey for Washington, DC. The survey reported that

eleven service providers in the District served 407 victims in one day (NNEDV, 2010). Suffice it to say, the District's domestic violence response community is active, if not over worked. The survey reported 257 victims found refuge in emergency shelters or transitional housing. However, 78% of unmet requests for assistance were from victims seeking emergency shelter or transitional housing. Domestic violence programs were unable to provide services for the following reasons: 82% reported not enough funding, 64% reported not enough staff, 27% reported no available beds or funding for hotels, and 18% not enough specialized services. As the findings from the NNEDV survey suggested, the domestic violence response community in Washington, DC is stretched for resources. In light of these findings, this study examined efforts to help LGBT survivors seek immediate protection from their abusers.

### **Background and Need**

The growing body of research on LGBT intimate partner violence revealed the numerous and significant barriers that survivors encountered during attempts to access public support services. Most studies focused on a specific barrier in a specific setting, such as the tendency for police and crisis center staff to downplay the seriousness of same-sex IPV, or the LGBT activist communities' focus on bias related violence (Pattavina et al., 2007; Brown & Groscup, 2008). Similarly, many studies addressed barriers to services in relation to specific stages of seeking support, such as difficulty identifying abuse or accessing long-term support and counseling. However, there was a lack of research that sought to examine the broad scope of barriers LGBT survivors faced at various stages of their attempts to access support.



Four of the most commonly offered responses to improving support for LGBT survivors included: promoting education about IPV within LGBT communities and among service providers (West, 2002; Kulkin et al, 2007), implementing sensitivity training for law enforcement and DV service providers in respect to LGBT intimate partner violence (Merrill & Wolfe, 2000; McClennan, 2005; Groscup & Brown, 2009), developing appropriate response protocol for law enforcement (McClennan, 2005; Kulkin et al., 2007), and developing laws, policies, and services that are inclusive of LGBT survivors (McClennan, 2005; Brown, 2008; Kulkin et al., 2007). However, many researchers neglected to suggest what these responses looked like in practice, which groups should take responsibility for implementing these responses, or how to obtain the necessary legal and administrative support for implementation.

Previous research indicated that developing a comprehensive response to LGBT intimate partner violence ultimately required collaboration (Kulkin et al., 2007; Merrill and Wolfe, 2000; Helfrich and Simpson, 2006). Merrill and Wolfe (2000) suggested that collaborations between domestic violence service providers and LGBT advocacy organizations might be the most creative way to “pool limited resources” for LGBT survivors (p. 27). In their article “Improving Lesbian Domestic Violence Services,” Helfrich and Simpson (2006) identified two “primary mediating factors” for improving services: 1) institutional awareness of the influences of heterosexism on service provision to lesbians and 2) the individual responsibility of service providers to address and minimize that influence (p. 359). However, the authors noted that long-term change was

impossible without “the cooperation and collaboration of individuals within their greater institutional and societal environments” (2006, p. 359).

For example, developing response protocol for law enforcement required cooperative participation among law enforcement officers and administrators, who needed to support and implement new protocol, as well as LGBT individuals and advocates, who had the necessary perspective to inform the development of appropriate response protocol. Promoting LGBT specific education, developing inclusive laws and policies, and implementing sensitivity training for law enforcement and service providers required similar collaboration. In order to add to the body of research, this study analyzed the collaborative efforts in Washington, DC to improve access to resources for LGBT survivors.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In order to help illustrate the practical value of collaboration, this study highlighted the ongoing efforts to improve access to protection and support services for LGBT survivors of intimate partner violence in Washington, DC. Specifically, this study examined 1) efforts to promote education and raise awareness about LGBT intimate partner violence through examining the work of LGBT advocates, 2) efforts to help LGBT survivors report abuse by examining specialized police training, and 3) efforts to help LGBT survivors seek immediate protection from abusive relationships by examining domestic violence laws and support services available in Washington, DC.

This study analyzed a variety of programs, policies, and activities that intended to reduce and potentially eliminate the barriers that LGBT survivors encountered when

seeking access to public support services in Washington, DC. More specifically, this study focused on advocacy and community outreach sponsored by LGBT advocates, specialized police training sponsored by the Metropolitan Police Department, and issues related to emergency housing and culturally competent domestic violence services in DC.

This study examined advocacy and community outreach efforts sponsored by the Rainbow Response Coalition (the Coalition) in order to understand how LGBT advocates raised awareness and educated communities about intimate partner violence. Materials developed by the Coalition formed a critical part of this analysis. Specifically, this study analyzed the vehicles and strategies used by advocates to raise awareness and educate communities about LGBT IPV.

This study analyzed specialized police training in order to understand the efforts sponsored by law enforcement to help LGBT survivors report abuse. This analysis was critical in Washington, DC because of mandatory arrest laws related to domestic violence: police are required to identify and arrest the primary aggressor in incidents where they have probable cause to believe that an “intrafamily offense” was committed. Previous studies revealed that police were more likely to make a dual arrest in same-sex IPV cases than they were heterosexual ones (Bentley et al., 2007). As such, this study examined the extent to which the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) trained officers to properly respond to cases of same-sex IPV, to carefully determine a primary aggressor thus avoiding dual or mis-arrests, and to avoid the issuance of dual Civil Protection Orders (CPOs). The second reason this study focused on specialized police training was due to reports that domestic violence cases comprised the majority of the MPD's Gay and

Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU) caseload: of the 555 cases assigned to GLLU in 2006, fully 75% were domestic violence cases (O'Bryon, 2008).

This study examined domestic violence laws, policies, and services in Washington, DC in order to understand the successes and impediments to collaboration in community efforts to help LGBT survivors seek immediate protection from abusive relationships. The persistent deficit of safe and adequate emergency housing was one of the most significant challenges faced by all survivors of domestic violence. LGBT survivors encountered additional barriers related to housing discrimination; in many states there were no anti-discrimination laws in place for public or emergency housing that provided protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Even in cities like Washington, DC where anti-discrimination protections were in place, accessing adequate emergency housing remained a significant challenge for LGBT survivors.

### **Significance to the Field**

This study contributes to the existing body of research by providing a qualitative overview of community responses to LGBT intimate partner violence in Washington, DC. Unlike previous research, this study analyzes the collaborative efforts of participant groups in order to highlight effective strategies for promoting education and developing the relationships needed to implement services for LGBT survivors. Remarkably, the community response in Washington, DC is supported almost entirely by the work of volunteers. The participant groups in this study focus on identifying the points of contact needed to green-light LGBT survivor services and develop creative strategies for building cooperative relationships with these individuals. By examining the factors that promote

and inhibit successful collaborations, this study serves as a resource for advocates in other communities.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This review of literature will address several broad areas of research related to LGBT intimate partner violence. The first section begins with a discussion of Lenore E. Walker's cycle-theory of violence: Walker's research was paramount to helping scholars and service providers understand the dynamics of power and control within abusive relationships. The second section explores different theoretical approaches to understanding the role of gender in abusive relationships. This section challenges the historical framing of domestic violence as an issue related to men's violence against women and highlights the need for alternative conceptualizations to explain how gender functions in abusive same-sex relationships. The third section discusses intersectional approaches to domestic violence research and reveals the critical need for an understanding of IPV within the larger context of structural forms of violence and oppression. The next section examines "minority stress," which refers to the unique stressors experienced by members of stigmatized populations. This section describes the internalized sexual minority stressors that correlate with intimate partner violence.

The fourth section focuses on disparities in services for LGBT survivors by addressing three broad contributory factors: anti-gay discrimination, the reluctance of LGBT advocates to prioritize the issue of IPV, and the lack of culturally competent support services available to survivors. The next section expands on the analysis of

service disparities by exploring the systemic, institutional, and individual barriers that LGBT survivors encounter due to the lack of culturally competent mainstream support services. The final section describes practical strategies for improving access to resources for LGBT survivors of intimate partner violence.

### **The Dynamics of Abusive Relationships**

Lenore E. Walker's cycle-theory of violence was the foundation for modern research on domestic violence service provision and paramount to explaining the cyclical dynamics of power and control that were present in almost all abusive relationships. The cycle-theory of violence maintained three distinct phases were associated with recurring abuse: tension-building accompanied with a rising sense of danger, the acute battering incident, and loving contrition, commonly referred to as the "honeymoon phase" (1979). Tensions gradually escalated and manifested in smaller acts of abuse during the first stage. Victims often developed coping mechanisms to placate the abuser in vain hopes of avoiding future abuse. However, Walker maintained that without intervention, the "uncontrollable discharge of tensions" which characterized the second phase of abuse inevitably resulted in the "acute battering incident" (1979, p.91).

Many similarities existed between intimate partner violence in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships, particularly in terms of the cyclical nature of abuse, escalation over time, and the personal characteristics of abusers (Mobley & Murray, 2009; Kulkin et al., 2007). In general, people did not knowingly enter into a romantic relationship with individuals they believed to be violent. More importantly, relationships were not abusive or violent all of the time, or even the majority of the time. Two of the most commonly

cited reasons for victims remaining in abusive relationships were “love” and “genuine affection” for the abuser (Merrill & Wolfe, 2000; Cruz, 2003). Consequently, when abuse occurred, victims tended to believe that abuse was out of character, and/or that the victim did something to deserve the abuse. The abuser exploited the victim’s trust during the “honeymoon phase,” and said whatever was necessary to convince the victim to remain in the relationship (Walker, 1979). This tactic was highly effective because victims genuinely wanted to believe that the abuser was remorseful and the abuse was an isolated incident. The honeymoon phase lasted anywhere from hours to years, with a potentially significant period of time passing between acute battering incidents. Because of the length of time between incidents, victims often tried to convince themselves that the abuse would not recur. Tragically, this was rarely the case.

#### Re-Examining the Role of Gender in IPV

Notwithstanding the wide range applicability of Walker's cycle theory of violence, relying too heavily on traditional heteronormative paradigms posed the risk of overlooking forms of abuse and “reasons for staying” specific to LGBT IPV. Because power and control were culturally associated with men’s dominance over women, the LGBT communities and the domestic violence response communities both assumed that a relationship between two members of the same sex should necessarily be more equal. As a result, members of both communities often denied the problem existed. The problem of denying the existence of same-sex IPV was compounded by heteronormative conceptions of the victim as female and the perpetrator as male. LGBT survivors were



less likely to recognize abuse within their relationships because their experiences did not fit the traditional female/victim, male/perpetrator dichotomy.

According to Elizabeth M. Schneider, author of *Battered Women and Feminist Lawmaking*, two activist perspectives that first framed the battered women's movement helped explain the tenacity of this heteronormative framework of abuse (2000). In the late nineteenth century, two groups of reformers worked to raise awareness about domestic violence: temperance campaigners who sought prohibition because they viewed abuse as the byproduct of the evils of alcohol, and feminists who sought autonomy and divorce rights because they viewed abuse as stemming from a husband's "right" of ownership over his wife (Schneider, 2000). Both frameworks defined women as victims of abuse, and men as perpetrators.

The feminist perspective evolved over time and shifted to frame domestic violence as yet another byproduct of men's societal control over women along with women's inferior status in the home, workplace discrimination, wage inequity, unequal educational opportunities, and the absence of social support and child care for mothers (Schneider, 2000). The first major push for domestic violence research and advocacy coincided with the second wave of feminism (Girshick, 2002). Accordingly, early domestic violence research was heavily influenced by feminist theory, which focused on the power differentials generated by a patriarchal society, such as men using violence to maintain power, control, and privilege over women (Girshick, 2002, p. 1503). Framing the issue of domestic violence in this way was tremendously successful in terms of

raising awareness about the issue, promoting solidarity, and eventually securing resources for heterosexual female victims and survivors.

More recently, scholars moved away from this model and toward developing new ways to examine the role of gender in IPV. In the article, “Theorizing Gender in Intimate Partner Violence Research,” Kristin L. Anderson argued that the conceptualization and measurement of gender were two central and neglected issues within research on intimate partner violence (2005). Anderson's article challenged the individualist perspective that framed most research on IPV and argued for a shift toward interactionist and structuralist perspectives in domestic violence research.

The individualist perspective relied on the notion that individual women and men incorporated femininity and masculinity into their identities through socialization and/or biological predisposition (Anderson, 2005). Anderson argued that this perspective reduced gender to the behavior of individual men and women and relied on the implicit assumption that analyzing the role of gender was limited to understanding women's and men's interactions with members of the opposite sex (2005). As a result, these analyses ignored “the complex ways in which gender operates in social interactions between same-sex people” (2005, p.856).

The interactionist perspective was rooted in the postmodern theoretical findings of scholars like Judith Butler, who revolutionized gender theory with her book *Gender Trouble*. Butler maintained that gender existed only in performance: individuals “do gender” in their interactions with other people, “performing” masculinity and femininity in order to fulfill social expectations (Butler, 1990). The interactionist perspective yielded

insight about the relationship between gender and IPV that was not captured through the individualist lens.

For example, Anderson proposed that violence was a “compensatory method of exerting control and constructing masculinity among men who feel that their authority or masculinity has been challenged” (2005, p.858). This finding was particularly relevant when examining violence between two male partners. David Island and Patrick Letellier, the authors of *Men Who Beat the Men Who Love Them* (1991), maintained that male batterers became violent not by sole virtue of being men, as the individualist perspective suggested. Rather, men became batterers because they have misinterpreted the concept of masculinity (1991).

Island and Letellier argued that becoming “nonviolently masculine” was a challenge for many men because society linked masculinity to violence and domination in numerous ways. They asserted, “to some men, being masculine means to intimidate, to dominate... to these men, being masculine is their attempt to control others so that they are sure that no one controls them” (1991, pp. 50-51). Male-dominated social arenas that systematically glamorized the use of violence, such as the U.S. military, violent full-contact sports, and the advertising and entertainment industries, attested to the prevalence of this construction of masculinity. Men’s relationships with each other were characterized by aggression and dominance.

Romantic relationships required a certain degree of emotional vulnerability, a requirement that stood in contrast to a man’s ability to achieve cultural conceptions of masculinity. Abusive gay men viewed this vulnerability as an indication that they lacked

authority or control. Having failed to achieve the concept of masculinity within the relationship, gay male batterers “overcompensated by controlling the one they perceive threatens or exposes their insecurities: (sic) their lover” (Island & Letellier, 1991, p.51).

The structuralist perspective defined gender as a form of social structure that functioned independently of an individual's desires. Anderson explained that gender functioned as a system of stratification used to place men and women in separate and unequal categories, roles, and occupations (2005). Within this system, violence was gendered in the sense that men were encouraged to be violent and that they received more training in the use of violence (Anderson, 2005). Conversely, women were discouraged from being violent and sometimes explicitly barred from being in positions that would call for its use, as is the case in U.S. military combat roles. Similarly, cultural expectations about male dominance have led to men enjoying access to a higher social status and more resources than women. Anderson contended that, because of these various mechanisms of social stratification, the consequences of intimate partner violence differed for women and men due to the larger system of gender inequality (2005).

The structuralist perspective applied to lesbian relationships was particularly suited for examining the barriers to leaving an abusive same-sex relationship. Carolyn West asserted that lesbian relationships had similar dynamics to heterosexual relationships with one significant exception, “women are socialized to define themselves in relation to significant others and to place a high value on intimacy” (2002, p.125). As a result, two women in a romantic relationship often found it more difficult to establish a sense of autonomy or an identity separate from their partner. This merging of identities

made it more challenging for lesbians to recognize abusive behavior, and often prevented them from leaving unhealthy relationships.

The effects of gender role socialization on intimate partner violence influenced gay males as well. Because definitions of masculinity encouraged men to be violent, physical violence among gay male partners was generally not viewed as a problem. Moreover, men rarely talked about their experiences as victims, in part due to fears that they would be feminized in the process (Island and Letellier, quoted in Brown, 2008, p. 458). As such, gay male victims were often left to struggle with an abusive relationship while simultaneously struggling with how to embody masculinity within their culture (Brown, 2008, p.458).

### **An Intersectional Approach to Understanding Same-Sex IPV**

Re-examining the role of gender in intimate partner violence was necessary to contextualize and better understand the dynamics of abusive same-sex relationships. It was equally necessary, however, to recognize that other identities and systems of power intersected to influence and perpetuate intimate partner violence. Intersectionality was predicated on the notion that forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, and homophobia did not function independently of one another. Rather, multiple forms of oppression intersected and combined to create “interlocking social structures that perpetuate inequality” (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005, p. 59). According to Leslie McCall, interest in intersectionality arose from critiques of gender-based and race-based research that failed to consider experiences of oppression based at “neglected points of intersection- ones that tended to reflect multiple subordinate locations as opposed to

dominant or mixed locations” (McCall, 2005, p.1780). Kimberlé Crenshaw, a prominent scholar in Critical Race Theory, was credited for highlighting intersectionality in the late 1980’s (Fish, 2007).

Although researchers developed the notion of LGBT communities as a social category to study same-sex IPV, the focus on the influence of gender precluded other discussions regarding the intersections of race, ethnicity, disability, age, culture, and class with systems of power and privilege. Julie Fish argued that researchers “homogenized” LGBT communities by emphasizing the similarities among LGBT peoples’ experiences, while obscuring the differences (2007). Homogenization was ultimately a political strategy intended to demonstrate that LGBT individuals experienced inequalities, and thus encountered barriers to accessing resources.

Fish argued that LGBT research must account for the diversity of LGBT communities. To do this, scholars needed to incorporate intersectionality as a methodological framework to understand how intersecting identities shaped and influenced an individual’s social position (2007). An intersectional approach to intimate partner violence was critically needed because violence occurred within the larger context of structural forms of violence and oppression including homophobia, racism, sexism, and poverty.

Natalie J. Sokoloff and Ida Dupont, authors of “Domestic Violence at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender,” asserted that gender was not the primary factor influencing domestic violence (2005). The authors contended that an intersectional approach to domestic violence research was necessary:

We exist in social contexts created by the intersections of systems of power (e.g., race, class, gender, and sexual orientation) and oppression (e.g., prejudice, class stratification, gender inequality, and heterosexist bias).... More important, gender inequality itself is modified by its intersection with other systems of power and oppression. (2005, p.43)

Intersectionalities heavily influenced a victim's help seeking behavior, reporting practices, and access to resources and education. A focus on equitable solutions required that domestic violence scholarship incorporate an intersectional approach to addressing "how different communities' cultural experiences of violence are mediated through structural forms of oppression such as racism, colonialism, economic exploitation, heterosexism and the like" (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005, pp. 45). Moreover, responding to the needs of survivors required responding to the structural forms of violence they encountered on a daily basis.

In the article, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color" (1993), Crenshaw examined the intersection of race and gender for women of color in the context of rape and domestic violence. Crenshaw developed her argument by examining structural intersectionality and political intersectionality. Crenshaw provided the following example to illustrate her point that women of colors' location at the intersection of race and gender made their experiences of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform "qualitatively different from that of white women" (p. 1245). In 1990, Congress amended the Immigration and Nationality Act to incorporate a marriage fraud provision that required a person who immigrated to

the United States and married a US citizen to remain “properly” married for two years before applying for permanent resident status (Crenshaw, 1991, pp. 1246-1247). As a result, many victims who immigrated to the US were forced to choose between protection from their abusers and protection against deportation. Even more troubling was the fact that many immigrant people depended on their spouses for information regarding their legal status. Even after an individual achieved permanent residency, an abusive partner could threaten to have the individual deported. Whether or not these threats were unfounded, individuals could still be intimidated if they did not have independent access to information (Crenshaw, 1991).

Political intersectionality analyzed the ways in which both feminist and antiracist politics, "paradoxically" helped to marginalize the issue of violence against women of color (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw explained that women of color experienced racism in ways that were different than those experienced by men of color, and sexism in ways that were different from the experiences of white women (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1252). Although women of color experienced these intersections of oppression in their daily lives, feminist and anti-racist scholarship proceeded as though sexism and racism occurred on “mutually exclusive terrains” (Crenshaw, 1993, p.1242). As a result, the political interests of women of color were overshadowed or compromised by political strategies that ignored intersectionality.

Crenshaw encountered the effects of political intersectionality when she gathered information for the article. When Crenshaw attempted to review statistics from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) on the rate of domestic violence interventions by



precinct, the LAPD refused to release the statistics (1993, p. 1252). A representative explained that there were two reasons the statistics were not released: first, domestic violence activists within and outside the LAPD feared that statistics reflecting a high rate of domestic violence in minority communities might be “selectively interpreted and publicized so as to undermine long-term efforts to force the Department to address domestic violence as a serious problem” (Crenshaw, 1993, p. 1253). Activists were concerned that opponents would subsequently dismiss domestic violence as a minority problem, undeserved of a proactive response.

The second reason was related to objections from minority communities: activists raised concerns that the data would unfairly portray minority communities as hyper-violent, potentially giving weight to the stereotypes used to justify discrimination and oppressive police tactics (Crenshaw, 1991). In both instances, women of color were “erased by the strategic silences of antiracism and feminism” (Crenshaw, 1991, p.1253). Both groups characterized their political priorities in ways that obscured the information needed to help confront domestic violence in communities of color.

### **Understanding Minority Stress**

Researchers developed the notion of “minority stress” to examine the impact of structural forms of oppression on the mental health of stigmatized populations (Meyer, 2003; Balsam, 2001). Stress theory was grounded in the analysis of “stressors,” defined as the events and conditions in a person’s social environment that caused change and required the person to adapt to a new situation or circumstance (Meyer, 2003, p. 675). Traditionally, researchers conceptualized “stressors” as personal events, such as the death

of a family member or losing one's job. However, social stress theory contended that conditions in the social environment (e.g., prejudice and discrimination related to racism, sexism, or homophobia) induced changes that required adaptation and could therefore be considered stressors (Meyer, 2003, p.675).

Minority stress referred to the additional and unique stressors experienced by members of stigmatized populations (Meyer, 2003). Meyer's minority stress model examined internalized stressors and externalized stressors; both were associated with negative mental health outcomes (2003). Disempowerment Theory asserted that individuals who felt inadequate and/or lacked agency were at a greater risk of using "unconventional means to assert their power, including violence" (McKenry quoted in Brown, 2008, p. 458). Understanding the role of minority stressors in IPV is critical to understanding, responding to and preventing violence in LGBT relationships.

Carvalho, Lewis, Derlega, Winstead, and Viggiano (2011) identified three forms of internalized sexual minority stressors that correlated with intimate partner violence: internalized homophobia, stigma consciousness, and identity concealment. Internalized homophobia referred to the internalization of societal prejudices regarding sexual orientation. In many cases, LGBT perpetrators of IPV displaced insecurities about their sexual orientation onto their partner (Carvalho, et al., 2011, p. 502). Sexual identity abuse rooted in homophobia was a central issue unique to LGBT intimate partner violence. Ann Russo explored the implications of homophobia in her essay, "Lesbians Organizing Lesbians Against Battering" (1999). More specifically, Russo posited that a key

difference between same-sex and opposite-sex abuse was “the homophobic context” that lesbian batterers used as “an additional strategy of control and domination” (1999, p.84).

Identity abuse referred to an abuser’s attempts to “demean, manipulate, and control one's partner” through the use of core aspects of the victim's identity (Parry, 2010, p. 26). In the case of LGBT IPV, sexual identity abuse was inextricably linked to societal attitudes of heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. One of the most common forms of sexual identity abuse included threats to reveal or “out” the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity against his or her will (Elliot, 1996). Other forms of identity abuse included using homophobic pejoratives to dominate and degrade the victim, and repeatedly questioning or trivializing the victim’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Sexual identity abuse had specific consequences for bisexual and transgender individuals because their experiences were marginalized both within LGBT communities, as well as in the larger heteronormative social context. For example, in a relationship involving transgender identities, an abuser tried to make his transgender partner feel that she was not “good enough” at being a woman; in a same-sex relationship between a lesbian and bisexual woman, the abuser openly doubted the authenticity of her bisexual partner’s attraction to women and constantly accused her of flirting with men (Bornstein et al., 2006, p. 176). Specific forms of abuse such as these were not often talked about, which made it difficult for LGBT survivors to recognize or articulate these tactics as inherently abusive.

Stigma consciousness was the second sexual minority stressor that correlated with intimate partner violence. Stigma consciousness referred to the internalized expectation that members of a minority group would experience discrimination and be stigmatized by others (Carvalho, et al., 2011, pp. 502-503). Stigma consciousness was positively correlated with an LGBT participants' desire to keep abuse silent in an attempt to protect victims of same-sex IPV from a homophobic legal system (Carvalho, et al., 2011, p. 503). Stigma consciousness prevented LGBT victims from reporting abuse because they expected first responders and professionals would display homophobic behavior and/or would not take their experiences seriously. These barriers were compounded when an LGBT victim belonged to another minority group.

Further complicating the issue of stigma consciousness was the notion that same-sex couples developed a higher level of attachment within their relationships than opposite-sex couples as a response to homophobic discrimination. This level of attachment, known as "merging" or "solidarity," was a bond developed between partners that served as a buffer or defense mechanism against outside oppression (Island & Letellier, 1991; West, 2002). This level of attachment presented challenges for same-sex relationships because of the pressure it created to act in unison; "having a different opinion or initiating social activities without the partner might be perceived as rejection, which in turn leads to conflict and possibly physical violence" (West, 2002, p. 125). Because partners developed this unique level of attachment in response to structural oppression, minor variations within relationships were perceived as outright rejection, at times resulting in escalation and abuse.

Finally, identity concealment referred to the non-disclosure of an individual's sexual orientation. Identity concealment related to social, familial, and contextual factors that restricted an individual's mobility and access to social support. LGBT individuals who were not "out" regarding their sexual orientation were less likely to disclose and or/report abuse because doing so required them to reveal both their sexual identity and victim-status. While LGBT individuals concealed their sexual identity from certain groups such as friends, family, and coworkers, they were open about their sexual identity within their local LGBT communities. However, because LGBT communities are relatively small, an LGBT victim may not disclose abuse when the perpetrator is more involved or has more ties to their shared social network. In the same vein, LGBT perpetrators often threatened to cut off or limit their partner's involvement in this shared community if they reported abuse.

Responding to the needs of LGBT survivors required responding to the multiple stressors and layers of violence and oppression they encountered in their daily lives. Intersecting identities shaped the meaning of intimate partner violence and how abuse was experienced by individuals, portrayed in communities, and responded to by advocates, law enforcement, and service providers. An intersectional approach to domestic violence research affirmed that there was no "one-size-fits-all" explanation for domestic violence. Consequently, responding to the needs of LGBT survivors of IPV required recognizing and addressing the differences in their experiences (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2007, p. 50).

### **Disparities in Services for LGBT Communities**

Research on same-sex intimate partner violence suggested three main factors contributed to disparities in services for LGBT communities: anti-gay discrimination, the reluctance of LGBT advocates to prioritize the issue of IPV, and the virtual absence of culturally competent support services. Societal anti-gay discrimination left LGBT communities with extremely limited social, political and legal protections (Pattavina, Hirschel, Buzawa, Faggiani, & Bentley, 2007; Mobley & Murray, 2009). The lack of broad social acceptance for LGBT Americans inhibited concern for their welfare, which in turn impacted the level of support for research and data collection on LGBT communities. Consequently, the few studies that attempted to quantify the rate of LGBT intimate partner violence were isolated, and their sampling methods incapable of demonstrating actual prevalence. Most research on same-sex IPV estimated the rate of violence in LGBT relationships was comparable to the rate of violence in opposite-sex relationships (Mobley & Murray, 2009; Kulkin et al., 2007). However, as of this writing, there were no federally funded health surveys or programs that collected data on sexual orientation and gender identity nationwide. This lack of information left researchers with little idea of where or how to begin their inquiries.

Claire Renzetti's *Violent Betrayal: Partner Abuse in Lesbian Relationships* was one of the first comprehensive studies on lesbian IPV to address the prevalence of violence (1992). Although Renzetti's work was one of the most commonly cited sources on the topic, she maintained that her study did not intend to estimate actual prevalence. Rather, her study affirmed the existence of lesbian battering and demonstrated that,

[Lesbian battering] does not occur so infrequently as to be an anomaly, and that once it occurs it is likely to reoccur and increase in frequency and severity- all important findings for responding to claims that lesbian battering is not a problem worthy of serious scholarship or domestic violence services. (1992, p. 196)

Renzetti maintained that researchers should view studies reporting statistics for lesbian battering with skepticism because sampling strategies did not allow for the measurement of “true prevalence” (1992, p. 195). As a result, most research on LGBT abuse was drawn from anecdotes, assumptions, and inferences, rather than solid statistical evidence. Negative societal attitudes toward LGBT communities and the lack of quantitative evidence that same-sex IPV was a serious problem, combined to form disincentives for responders and service providers to recognize the needs of these communities and follow through with improved access to services.

The second factor contributing to disparities in services was the lack of awareness about IPV among LGBT communities and advocates. LGBT advocates were slow or reluctant to acknowledge the prevalence and severity of IPV within their own communities (Herrmann & Turrel, 2008; Little & Terrance, 2010; West, 2002). The relative lack of attention given to this issue was reflective of several interrelated factors including the fight for legal equality, a concern for privacy, the need to combat social oppression and bias related violence committed against members of the LGBT communities, and the desire to shield the communities from additional discrimination. In respect to these community concerns, parallels were drawn between the reluctance to politicize the issue of domestic violence within communities of color.

Crenshaw asserted that efforts to suppress the politicization of domestic violence within communities of color were based in attempts to “maintain the integrity of the community” and resist validating negative stereotypes (1993, p. 1253). This perspective was articulated in different ways, but ultimately sought to avoid internally divisive issues. The concern for privacy and the desire to shield their communities from additional discrimination prevented many LGBT individuals and people of color from reporting abuse. One study compared the reporting practices for gay and lesbian survivors of IPV and found that only 48% of victims reported incidents of IPV, as opposed to the 60% who reported hate/bias based crimes (Pattavina et al., 2007, p. 379). Just as some communities of color neglected to prioritize domestic violence to maintain the integrity of their community, LGBT communities neglected to politicize the issue as a result of “not wanting to bring added subjugation and discrimination upon the gay community” (Kulkin et al., 2007, p. 75).

In “Lesbians Organizing Lesbians Against Battering,” Ann Russo suggested that denial was the primary problem to organizing lesbians against battering (1999). Denial was related to the fear that addressing lesbian abuse within the current, heterosexist context would increase homophobia:

the feeling that the most significant problems lesbians face as lesbians are homophobia, heterosexism, and bigotry from outside our relationships and groups; the fear that addressing the problem will divide already disempowered and struggling communities; and the fear that it may lead to lesbian despair and disillusionment about being lesbians. (Russo, 1999, p.85)



Many advocates for LGBT rights were preoccupied with securing social and legal equality. As such, there was an implicit fear that acknowledging violence within LGBT relationships could threaten the communities' projected image of solidarity and leave LGBT individuals vulnerable to yet another site of discrimination. In a time when advocates fought to achieve marriage equality, it appeared counterproductive to prioritize LGBT intimate partner violence as a community issue. Consequently, it was difficult to determine the extent to which the failure to prioritize the issue among LGBT advocates related to the absence of accessible information, or fears that acknowledging IPV would add to negative societal perceptions of the LGBT communities.

The final contributing factor to disparities in services for LGBT communities was the widespread lack of culturally competent services. Service providers and law enforcement generally lacked the education needed to provide culturally competent support to LGBT survivors (Kulkin, et al., 2007; Brown & Groscup, 2009; Simpson & Helfrich, 2007). Because domestic violence was framed as a "women's" issue, the majority of crisis response services were tailored to address the needs of heterosexual female victims. Heteronormative conceptions of domestic violence and a lack of culturally competent education among first responders and service providers, combined to create additional barriers for LGBT survivors.

Cultural competence required an understanding of the cultural differences among individuals, in addition to the "particular and structural needs" that different communities had (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005, p 51). Different communities hold distinct definitions and perceptions of domestic violence as well as what factors comprised the severity of abuse.

For example, culturally specific forms of abuse in Japan included overturning a dining table, which symbolically questioned a woman's legitimate role in the family, and dousing a woman in liquid which implied she was impure (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005, p. 42). Some Japanese respondents considered culturally specific forms of abuse to be substantially more severe than physical acts such as pushing, slapping, and throwing objects, which some respondents did not consider to be abusive at all (Yoshihama quoted in Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005, p. 42). Responding to victims of IPV required responding to the cultural context in which they experienced abuse.

It was necessary, however, for scholars to resist making generalizations and form a more critical analysis of how culture functioned in intimate partner violence. When violence occurred in immigrant communities or communities of color, culture was claimed to be a particularly influential correlating factor:

Specific cases are not conceptualized as reflecting individual behavior; instead, entire groups are stereotyped... the behavior of devalued groups is widely perceived as more culturally determined than that of the dominant culture....The belief that non-White others are said to engage in oppressive and misogynistic cultural practices fits long-standing biases and serves to downplay the existence of culturally prescribed and equally horrendous acts of violence against women in White Western communities. (Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005, pp. 46-47)

Over-stating or simplifying the role of culture in domestic violence perpetuated negative stereotypes held by the dominant culture. This was problematic because the dominant culture distanced itself from the issue, denied responsibility, and avoided a meaningful

conversation about the multiple systems of power that contributed to domestic violence. Moreover, the emphasis on culture as a purely negative force ignored the fact that cultural practices and beliefs sometimes functioned as protective agents (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2007, p. 46).

### **Barriers to Accessing Mainstream Support Services**

Literature on LGBT intimate partner violence identified a number of systemic, institutional, and individual barriers for LGBT survivors. According to Emily K. Simpson and Christine A. Helfrich, systemic barriers related mostly to heterosexist social attitudes and assumptions about the dynamics of violent relationships, such as stereotypes about mutual battering and the assumption that batterers were men and victims were women (Simpson & Helfrich, 2007, p.41). For example, police officers had difficulty identifying the abuser in LGBT IPV incidents because they lacked the proper training to make that assessment in the absence of a heteronormative partnership. As a result, officers minimized the seriousness of same-sex abusive incidents, failed to make an arrest or intervene, or ignored standard DV protocol requiring them to identify and arrest the primary aggressor by mis-classifying the incidents as “mutual fights” (Pattavina et al., 2007, p. 380). The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Program’s 2009 Report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Intimate Partner Violence indicated that police were 10 to 15 times as likely to make a dual arrest in cases of LGBT intimate partner violence than in heterosexual ones (NCAVP, 2010).

Lesbian survivors were harmed by the “leniency hypothesis,” which suggested police officers were less likely to arrest a female aggressor than a male aggressor in cases

with female victims (Pattavina et al., 2007). Law enforcement and service providers perceived same-sex IPV as less serious than violence in opposite-sex relationships because of heterosexist assumptions about men and women's capacity for violence and subsequent ability to defend themselves against a person of the same sex. Participants in a 2009 study on crisis center staff attitudes tended to rate violence in same-sex relationships as "less serious, less likely to occur, and less likely to get worse over time" than violence in heterosexual relationships (Brown & Groscup, 2009, p. 86). This finding was particularly troubling because crisis center staff represented the "frontline" of survivor services. When counselors downplayed the threat of lesbian abuse, they avoided recommending legal resources or emergency housing (Brown & Groscup, 2009; Simpson & Helfrich, 2007). Believing same-sex violence to be less serious, and therefore easier to fix, crisis center staff recommended potentially counterproductive treatment like couple's counseling, which they were less likely to recommend to heterosexual female survivors of abuse (Simpson & Helfrich, 2007, p. 41).

LGBT survivors encountered institutional barriers related to homophobia, societal ignorance about LGBT communities, and the heteronormative policies and language that framed the work of law enforcement and domestic violence service providers (Simpson & Helfrich, 2007). The majority of emergency housing and domestic violence shelters only admitted female survivors to create a "safe place" for heterosexual women seeking protection from abusive male partners (Simpson & Helfrich, 2007). Consequently, transgender individuals, bisexual men and gay men without a support network of family and friends were left with homeless shelters and hotel vouchers as the

only options for emergency housing. Lesbians and bisexual women felt unsafe or unwelcome at traditional domestic violence shelters.

Simpson and Helfrich reported that lesbian survivors expressed fear of homophobic attitudes held by heterosexual shelter residents (2007). Heterosexual shelter residents displayed a resistance to accept or interact with lesbians, presumably for fear of being sexually propositioned. Consequently, heterosexual women refused to share rooms or spaces with lesbian residents because they were preoccupied with lesbian survivors' sexual orientation, rather than their shared experience of surviving relationship violence (Simpson & Helfrich, 2007, p. 52). Other lesbian survivors reported agency staff lacked the education and experience of working with lesbian survivors and tended to make discriminatory remarks (Simpson & Helfrich, 2007).

Individual barriers to services related to the attitudes, concerns, and actions of individual IPV survivors. A respondent in one study eloquently summed up the heteronormative perspective in this way: “women as a gender tend to be less violent and men in their physical capacity can do more damage” (Simpson & Helfrich, 2007, p. 47). This narrowed discourse on domestic violence, which identified the abusive partner as male or necessarily physically larger, prevented many LGBT victims from identifying abusive tactics within their own relationships (Bornstein, Fawcett, Senturia, Shiu-Thorton & Sullivan, 2006). LGBT abusers were quite adept at identifying stereotypes and assumptions about same-sex abuse and exploiting these stereotypes to control and confuse victims. For instance, victims in same-sex relationships were more likely to defend themselves against physical abuse than victims in opposite-sex relationships

because of lesser size disparities and perceived gender equality between partners. Lacking the visible gendered power dynamic of a heterosexual relationship, some abusers convinced their victims that self-defense amounted to mutual abuse (Bornstein, et al., 2006). While LGBT victims were more likely to fight back due to perceived equality, abuse was not mutual because it involved a sustained pattern of one partner exerting power and control over the other.

Moreover, the intersecting influences of race, class, culture, gender, and disability had very real consequences for individuals who sought protection from abuse because individuals may have “internalized ideologies antithetical to disclosure of violence” (Bograd, quoted in Sokoloff & Dupont, 2007, p.43). LGBT victims neglected to report abuse when they were not “out” about their sexual orientation, or in some cases, their status as HIV positive. Victims who immigrated to the US hesitated to report their abusers because doing so frequently resulted in the victims’ deportation. Some people of color feared that calling the police could subject their partners to racist treatment by police and the justice system (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2007). As these examples demonstrate, different cultures held different reasons for not reporting abuse.

Crenshaw explained that resistance to reporting domestic violence in the African-American community was based in an attempt to avoid confirming negative stereotypes of hyper-violence (1991). Conversely, the concern of individuals in some Asian-American communities was grounded in efforts to preserve the “model minority” myth (Crenshaw, 1991, p 1257). Similarly, a Vietnamese woman hesitated to seek outside help from her abuser because she was taught that saving face and preserving familial integrity

was more important than individual safety (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2007, p. 43). Multiple layers of oppression in the lives of LGBT victims compound the experience of abuse and inhibit their ability to report abuse and seek protection from their abusers.

**Research on Practical Strategies for Addressing LGBT Intimate Partner Violence**  
Beth Leventhal and Sandra E. Lundy's edited collection, *Same-Sex Domestic*

*Violence: Strategies for Change*, was one of the few books that examined practical strategies for supporting LGBT survivors (1999). The book comprised a variety of essays that presented strategies for addressing LGBT intimate partner violence. Leventhal and Lundy stated their goal for the collection: "to provide comprehensive, practical information to a wide range of professionals, lay advocates, and activists who are likely to come into contact with queer people in abusive relationships" (1999, p. xi). The book was divided into four sections.

The first section contained personal accounts of abuse written by LGBT survivors. Survivor stories were an important strategy for raising awareness about IPV because they inspired empathy among their audience. Survivor stories allowed the discussion to move beyond a debate over the reality and severity of the issue, and toward "a more productive dialogue about actions to address the situation" (Rogers, 1999, p. 117). Survivor stories demonstrated the human experience of LGBT intimate partner violence and emphasized the urgent need for an adequate response.

The book's second section, "Legal Perspectives," proposed strategies for improving courtroom accessibility and providing competent legal representation for LGBT survivors. Evan Fray-Witzer's essay, "Twice Abused: Same-Sex Domestic

Violence and the Law,” offered suggestions for lawyers representing LGBT survivors. Fray-Witzer’s tactics included: promoting education, taking same-sex domestic violence seriously, avoiding mutual protection orders, and using experience from heterosexual domestic violence (1999). Similarly, Lundy’s essay, “Equal Protection/Equal Safety,” offered suggestions such as carefully assessing the clients’ needs and goals, challenging courtroom homophobia, and appealing mutual protection orders (1999). The “best practices” outlined in this section are a valuable resource for professionals representing LGBT victims and survivors.

The third section, “Organizing Coalitions/Building Communities,” proposed strategies for community organizing around LGBT IPV. These essays addressed a range of topics from understanding the role of HIV in LGBT abuse, to establishing safe-home networks for gay men. Curt Rogers wrote about the challenges related to IPV among activists in the article, “Organizing Support Services and Safe-Home Networks for Battered Gay Men” (1999). Motivating the domestic violence response community to adopt the issue was difficult because of practical barriers related to insufficient staffing and funding, which made it difficult for agencies to sustain their existing services. Motivating the LGBT communities to adopt the issue was challenging, but for reasons that appeared ideological.

Rogers noted three identifiable obstacles to motivating a response from the LGBT communities: indifference, HIV burnout, and denial. Indifference stemmed from the lack of public attention to the issue-- the significant lack of media attention created the illusion that LGBT IPV did not exist (1999). HIV burnout referred to the emotionally draining



aftereffects of advocating for HIV/AIDS related issues throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Rogers suggested the LGBT communities felt they had done more than their “fair share” of advocacy work and deserved “a vacation from social issues” (1999, p. 121). Finally, denial was the most significant challenge related to motivating a response from the LGBT communities. LGBT media avoided covering the issue because they perceived IPV as negative and wanted to avoid projecting a negative public image (Rogers, 1999). In a time where most LGBT activists focused on fighting bias-related crimes and achieving marriage equality, acknowledging violence within the communities seemed counterintuitive or counterproductive to accomplishing these goals.

The final section of Leventhal and Lundy’s collection, “Providing Services,” described practical approaches to providing support services to LGBT survivors. Gregory S. Merrill’s essay, “1 in 3 of 1 in 10: Sexual and Dating Violence Prevention Groups for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth,” proposed strategies for facilitating intimate violence prevention groups for LGBT teens (1999). Merrill’s suggestions included defining the terms of intimate partner violence, utilizing dating violence scenarios, presenting a continuum of values about violence, and examining the reasons why people stay in abusive relationships.

Alma Banda Goddard and Tara Hardy’s article “Assessing the Lesbian Victim,” outlined an assessment model for determining the abuser in a lesbian relationship. This model focused on the context and patterns of violence and included several stages of assessment to help service providers ensure that they were assisting the right person.

**Summary**

The research literature indicated that LGBT individuals faced numerous barriers related to recognizing abuse in their relationships, reporting abuse to law enforcement, and seeking immediate protection from their abusers. The research articles evaluated in this chapter provided support for understanding the barriers to education, protection, and support for LGBT survivors, particularly by emphasizing the need for an intersectional analysis. However, there were several weaknesses to the studies that limited their ability to help formulate a comprehensive community response to LGBT intimate partner violence.

These limitations included small isolated sample populations and limited geographical representation. For example, Leventhal and Lundy's collection proposed a wide range of strategies that advocates used in cities like Cambridge, MA; San Francisco and Los Angeles, CA; and New York City. However, there were practical explanations for the progressive services in these cities, such as the tough domestic violence laws in Massachusetts and the well-known concentration of gay men in San Francisco. It remains unclear whether the strategies suggested by these studies would be viable for LGBT populations in other geographical locations. Since there is no nationwide data collected on LGBT populations, and because domestic violence laws vary by state, there is a need to conduct multiple studies across different regions to identify strategies that work.

This study contributes to the literature on LGBT intimate partner violence by providing the first comprehensive analysis of community responses to LGBT intimate partner violence in Washington, DC. As the nation's capital and the heart of the US government, the District's response to LGBT IPV can have far reaching effects. This

study seeks to highlight the strategies used in Washington, DC, with the goal of providing an impetus to further research in other areas of the country.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) encounter numerous obstacles in their attempts to recognize abuse in their relationships, report abuse to law enforcement, and procure immediate protection from their abusers. The growing body of research on LGBT IPV indicated that many of these barriers were the direct result of social, political, and legal anti-gay discrimination combined with a general lack of awareness about IPV within LGBT relationships and a significant lack of culturally competent services among first responders and service providers.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the ongoing efforts sponsored by LGBT advocates, law enforcement, and domestic violence service providers to improve access to education, protection and support for LGBT survivors in Washington, DC. Specifically, this study analyzed three research areas: 1) raising awareness and educating communities about LGBT intimate partner violence, 2) helping LGBT survivors report abuse to law enforcement, and 3) helping LGBT survivors seek immediate protection from their abusers.

### **Setting**

In 2010, Washington, DC was home to the highest percentage of same-sex couples in the nation . A study sponsored by the National Center for Marriage & Family

Research (NCMFR) reported 31% of couples residing in the District identified themselves as same-sex (Wetzstein, 2010). The relatively high level of representation was overwhelmingly attributed to gay men, who comprised 26% of all unmarried households, in comparison to lesbians who accounted for only 4% (Wetzstein, 2010). The Williams Institute released a similar report based on data from the 2010 U.S. Census. The Williams Institute report revealed that 5,146 same-sex married couples resided in the District, comprising 19.3 same-sex couples per 1,000 households (Cooke, A. M., & Gates, G.J., 2010). As society gradually becomes more accepting of LGBT individuals, and states begin to afford them equal legal rights and protections, the number of individuals who come out as LGBT will only increase in the years to come. As such, there will likely be a visible increase in demand for public services that are capable of providing culturally competent support to LGBT survivors of intimate partner violence.

### **Getting to Know the District of Columbia**

The following section serves as a primer to explain the many laws, agencies, and programs referenced later in the study. This section begins with an introduction to the District's LGBT advocacy communities and a brief history of the Metropolitan Police Department's Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit. The following subsection provides a detailed explanation of the specialized police training. The final section introduces the many laws and policies analyzed later in this study. A brief description of the domestic violence response community in Washington, DC is included in Appendix I.

### The District's LGBT Advocacy Communities

Only one advocacy organization specifically addresses the issue of LGBT intimate partner violence in Washington, DC: the Rainbow Response Coalition (the Coalition). The Coalition's membership is entirely composed of volunteers, including individual advocates as well as representatives from local advocacy groups and government agencies. Founded in 2007, the Coalition seeks to unite "organizations and leaders from the LGBT communities, along with traditional domestic violence service providers and government agencies, to increase awareness about intimate partner violence amid the relationships of LGBT individuals" (What We Do, 2011). The Coalition engages in collaborative efforts with the police department's Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit, the DC Mayor's Office on GLBT Affairs, and other advocacy organizations in the District.

Although the Coalition is not an incorporated nonprofit, it has accepted donations on behalf of its fiscal sponsor, the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCCADV). DCCADV is a membership organization comprising the District's 12 primary nonprofit domestic violence organizations.<sup>1</sup> This study has included five of DCCADV's membership organizations: Ayuda, Break the Cycle, Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project (DVLEAP), Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (SAFE), and Washington Empowered Against Violence (WEAVE). The

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<sup>1</sup> Including Ayuda, Break the Cycle, District Alliance for Safe Housing (DASH), Deaf Abused Women's Network (DAWN), Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP), Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project (DVLEAP), House of Ruth, My Sister's Place, Inc., Ramona's Way, Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (SAFE), Washington Empowered Against Violence (WEAVE), and Women of Freedom Foundation (WOFF).

Coalition works closely with members of DCCADV and participates in its citywide Policy Task Force.

The Coalition meets once a month to discuss strategies for educating the DC community about LGBT intimate partner violence and improving access to resources for LGBT survivors. The Coalition envisions “a collective response to intimate partner violence within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning communities where resources, support and education are accessible to all within the DC Metropolitan community” (About Us, 2011). Accordingly, the Coalition’s membership comprises an assortment of community leaders and advocates, including LGBT survivors, policy analysts, attorneys, academics, researchers, and representatives from domestic violence housing and service providers. Representatives from the police department’s Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU) and the Mayor’s Office on GLBT Affairs attend the Coalition’s meetings regularly. The Coalition’s membership encompasses a wide range of expertise, experiences, and perspectives that are essential to formulating a comprehensive community response to LGBT intimate partner violence.

#### A Brief History of the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit

The Metropolitan Police Department's Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit is staffed by openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and allied members of the District's police department (GLLU, 2010). Founded in 2000, the GLLU was originally based in an office in Dupont Circle, which served as the Unit’s main point of contact until 2007. In addition to providing 24-hour police assistance to LGBT residents in the District, GLLU affiliates advise the Chief of Police on issues surrounding the LGBT communities, regularly visit

gay owned and operated businesses, serve as a representative for MPD at community events and serve as a resource for other law enforcement agencies nationwide (GLLU, 2010).

In 2006, the GLLU received the “Innovations in American Government Award,” a \$100,000 award sponsored by Harvard University's Ash Institute for Democratic Government. The GLLU was recognized for distinguishing itself from other community policing models by merging three approaches: “providing educational outreach to the LGBT community, educating its fellow police officers, and actively participating in day-to-day crime fighting responsibilities” (Awards, Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit, 2006). The award also recognized the GLLU's role in raising awareness about same-sex intimate partner violence. It was noted, “in 2000, no same-gender domestic violence cases were investigated. As of August 2005, GLLU members had investigated over 300 cases of domestic violence” (Awards, Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit, 2006).

Although the GLLU is a valuable community ally, the Unit has not been without controversy. A lack of communication between the police department and LGBT communities ignited this controversy and highlighted the importance of involving LGBT communities in collaborations with the department. In 2007, police Chief Cathy Lanier reassigned the GLLU's core unit of officers from the Dupont Circle office to posts throughout the city (Bowen, 2011c). Critics from the LGBT communities derided the quick decision without their input to “decentralize” the Unit. Lanier explained her reasoning behind the decision in a 2009 Washington Post article:



We can no longer afford to have a handful of people in specialized units to cover large numbers of the population who have special needs. There's no reason why I have to have that whole burden of that liaison unit on a handful of people when I've got more than 5,000 employees. (Labbé-DeBose, 2009)

Chief Lanier's new plan reorganized the city's special liaison units, including the GLLU, under a centralized operation known as the Special Liaison Unit (SLU).<sup>2</sup> Officers interested in working with the LGBT communities volunteered for specialized training sponsored by the SLU. These newly trained affiliate officers were available "during their regular shifts to respond to incidents in the gay community" (Labbé-DeBose, 2009). Under the new plan, the SLU trains "affiliate" officers in each of the City's patrol districts.

Chief Lanier responded when local advocates raised concerns about the sudden changes made without consultation. Chief Lanier apologized for the "miscommunication" and clarified that her decision intended to expand the GLLU's influence: "we need the [GLLU] to start being part of the police department as a whole, because I've got to change the mentality in the police department" (Najafi, 2007). While Chief Lanier appeared well intentioned in trying to expand the reach of the GLLU's services, she neglected to consult the very people who were responsible for training new affiliate officers.

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<sup>2</sup> The SLU is composed of four sub-units: the Asian Liaison Unit (ALU), Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Unit (DHHU), Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU), and Latino Liaison Unit (LLU).

Subsequently, the MPD asked volunteers from the LGBT advocate communities to develop and facilitate technical assistance training for the SLU. Again, advocates were not properly notified. After the first SLU training of 2009, a broad coalition of advocate organizations released a joint statement, lamenting that with only two days notice they were “asked to prepare outlines of their presentations before attending. This left no time for any real preparation, and only allowed for a few minutes of time for community members—almost entirely volunteers—to present anything at all” (Bowen, 2011c).

Despite the rocky beginnings of the SLU training program, advocates eventually developed a more mutually beneficial relationship with the GLLU. Kelly Pickard of Gays and Lesbians Opposing Violence was quoted as saying “I think there has been a tremendous effort within the GLLU and SLU—particularly within the last six months—to really engage community groups in more of a partnership” (Bowen, 2011d). The GLLU’s efforts to improve access to the LGBT communities were generally well received and allowed for more instances of collaboration. In 2010, the MPD invited LGBT activists to participate in a collaborative “Critical Incident Team,” composed of LGBT community leaders, local government officials, the MPD and its GLLU representatives. The Team meets once a month to discuss issues concerning the LGBT communities (Bowen, 2011a). Additionally, representatives from the GLLU periodically collaborate with LGBT advocates to “debrief” and discuss the progress of the GLLU training sessions. This newly formed, mutually beneficial relationship allowed LGBT advocates unprecedented access to the police department. However, advocates continue

to provide police training on an entirely volunteer basis, which poses challenges for creating sustainable training programs.

#### Training for the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit

The GLLU training takes place over the course of three days. The first two days consist of in-class training presentations and the third day is reserved for a field trip to a local LGBT organization. Training materials for GLLU sessions on issues affecting the LGBT communities are developed and facilitated by volunteers from local LGBT advocacy organizations. The first training day includes two modules. The first module<sup>3</sup> provides an introduction to the varying identities and characteristics of individuals in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, inter sexed and allied communities, and concludes with an explanation of the roles and responsibilities of GLLU affiliates. The second training module, “Coordinating Hate Crimes and Incidents,” provides an in-depth exploration of hate crimes, including information on how to identify and track hate crime statistics.<sup>4</sup>

The second GLLU training day includes five modules: GLBT Community Intro, GLBT Youth Issues, Transgender Issues, Intimate Partner Violence, and Bias Crimes in the GLBT Community. Five advocacy organizations collaborated to develop The GLBT

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<sup>3</sup> “Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU): Serving the GLBTQIA Communities in DC and Beyond” This training module included the following sections: Hate Crimes, Traffic Stops/Transgender Identity, Public Sex, Injury, Search and Detention, and Gay on Gay violence

<sup>4</sup> This training module included the following sections: Retrieving Reports, Tracking Hate Crimes and Incidents, Identifying Hate Crimes and Incidents, The Disposition of Hate Crime and Incident Reports, Pending Dispositions, and Safety Awareness.

Community Intro Module.<sup>5</sup> This study analyzed the GLBT Community Intro Module, as well as the Intimate Partner Violence Module (IPV Module).<sup>6</sup> In keeping with the collaborative nature of the trainings, advocates from these organizations meet regularly to debrief. The group of advocates collaboratively reflects on the progress of the training sessions, provide feedback to one another on each organization's presentation, and discuss the overall challenges, successes, and failures of the collective training program. GLLU representatives periodically attend debriefs to address the trainers' concerns or to contribute their own feedback.

#### Washington, DC: A Legal Primer

Washington, DC has a number of laws that specifically impact LGBT survivors, including mandatory arrest laws related to intimate partner violence. The District requires officers to determine and arrest the primary aggressor in incidents where they have probable cause to believe that an intrafamily offense was committed.<sup>7</sup> In Washington, DC the term "intrafamily violence" encompasses interpersonal,<sup>8</sup> intimate partner,<sup>9</sup> or intrafamily violence.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Including Rainbow Response Coalition, Break the Cycle, DC Trans Coalition (DCTC), Gays and Lesbians Opposing Violence (GLOV) and the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League (SMYAL).

<sup>6</sup> The Coalition and Break the Cycle collaborated to develop the Intimate Partner Violence Module

<sup>7</sup> DC Code Ann. § 16-1031: Probable cause to believe that an intrafamily offense was committed that resulted in physical injury including pain or illness or caused or was intended to cause reasonable fear of imminent serious physical injury or death.

<sup>8</sup> DC Code §16-1001. Definitions. (8) "interpersonal violence" means an act punishable as a criminal offense that is committed or threatened to be committed by an offender upon a person: (A) With whom the offender shares or has shared a mutual residence; or (B) Who is or was married to, in a domestic partnership with, divorced or separated from, or in a romantic, dating, or sexual relationship with another person who is or was married

Victims of intrafamily violence in the District can file a petition for one of two types of civil protection: a temporary (ex parte) protection order (TPO) or a civil protection order (CPO). If the court determines a victim's safety or welfare is in immediate danger, the judge can issue a TPO on the same day the victim files a petition. Perhaps more importantly, a TPO can be granted without the abuser being present in court.<sup>11</sup> TPOs are valid for 14 days and can be extended by 14-day increments at the discretion of the court.<sup>12</sup> Civil Protection Orders, however, require a court hearing where both the victim and the abuser are represented. Judges can issue CPOs if they determine there is "good cause" to believe that the abuser committed, or threatened to commit, a criminal offense against the victim.<sup>13</sup> The CPO remains valid for up to one year, depending on the details of the case, and requires the abuser to stay away from the victim, cease contacting the victim, vacate a shared residence, and reimburse the victim for medical costs, attorney fees, property damage, and other expenses.<sup>14</sup> The District's definition of intimate partner violence includes protections against offenders with whom

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to, in a domestic partnership with, divorced or separated from, or in a romantic, dating, or sexual relationship with the offender.

<sup>9</sup> DC Code §16-1001. Definitions. (7) "Intimate partner violence" means an act punishable as a criminal offense that is committed or threatened to be committed by an offender upon a person: (A) To whom the offender is or was married; (B) With whom the offender is or was in a domestic partnership; or (C) With whom the offender is or was in a romantic, dating, or sexual relationship

<sup>10</sup> DC Code §16-1001. Definitions. (9) "Intrafamily violence" means an act punishable as a criminal offense that is committed or threatened to be committed by an offender upon a person to whom the offender is related by blood, adoption, legal custody, marriage, or domestic partnership, or with whom the offender has a child in common.

<sup>11</sup> DC Code § 16-1004 (b)

<sup>12</sup> DC Code § 16-1004 (b)(2)

<sup>13</sup> DC Code § 16-1005(c)

<sup>14</sup> DC Code § 16-1005(c-1)

the victim is or was in a romantic, dating, or sexual relationship. In theory, the broad language of this statute provides LGBT survivors equal legal protection to file TPOs and CPOs against their abusers.<sup>15</sup>

The DC Human Rights Act of 1977<sup>16</sup> provides nondiscrimination protections in housing and public accommodations, including shelters, regardless of an individual's gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or status as a victim of an intrafamily offense.<sup>171819</sup> These legal protections are vital to LGBT survivors and their ability to access the same emergency housing and domestic violence facilities as heterosexual female survivors.

Although the Human Rights Act provides unique and valuable housing protections for LGBT individuals, a proposed amendment to the chapter on Housing and Commercial Space threatens to challenge these protections. In May 2011, the DC Office of Human Rights (OHR) released an Official Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that seeks to amend Chapter 10 (Housing and Commercial Space) of Title 4 (Human Rights) of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations.<sup>20</sup> According to OHR, the proposed amendment intends to provide additional protections for victims of intrafamily offenses

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<sup>15</sup> DC Code § 16-1001

<sup>16</sup> DC Code § 2-1401 et seq.

<sup>17</sup> § 2-1401.02 (12A) “a gender related identity, appearance, expression, or behavior of an individual regardless of an individual's assigned sex at birth

<sup>18</sup> § 2-1401.02 (28) “male or female homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality, by preference or practice”

<sup>19</sup> § 2-1401.02 (12A) “intrafamily offense” means an offense as defined in DC Official Code § 16-1001.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix D

from eviction and housing discrimination.<sup>21</sup> The proposed amendment includes a list of exceptions, one of which allows domestic violence shelters to limit their services to women.

The proposed amendment includes exceptions that would allow any private or government supported organization to limit their programs to one sex if they have a legitimate reason to do so:

Nothing in this chapter shall require any such program or activity without taking into consideration that individual's sex in those certain instances where sex is a bona fide occupational qualification or programmatic factor reasonably necessary to the normal or safe operation of that particular program activity.<sup>22</sup>

In other words, the proposed exemption intends to allow domestic violence shelters to operate as facilities that serve and house only female clients. The Coalition recognized the overarching consequences to LGBT survivors and submitted comments to the Office of Human Rights in response to the proposed change.<sup>23</sup> The Coalition's comments are analyzed in research area three.

### **Sample/Participants**

This study focused on the efforts sponsored by LGBT advocates, law enforcement, and domestic violence service providers in Washington, DC. The researcher

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<sup>21</sup> Specifically, this amendment would provide protection from eviction to victims of intrafamily offenses; provide release from a lease should a victim's safety be in jeopardy; and, generally, prohibit housing discrimination against victims of intrafamily offenses (see Appendix D).

<sup>22</sup> 1003.4 (see Appendix D)

<sup>23</sup> see Appendix E for a full version of the Coalition's comments

began her inquiry by searching the Internet for LGBT-specific domestic violence services in Washington, DC. Based on this preliminary research, which revealed a considerable lack of specialized resources, the sampling procedure used by the researcher was purposive sampling. Participants were restricted to organizations and agencies that offered specific programs, policies, or activities that served LGBT survivors. The participants of this research study included one LGBT advocacy organization, one police department and its specialized liaison unit, and five domestic violence service providers.

The Rainbow Response Coalition (the Coalition) represented the efforts of LGBT advocates in the District. The Coalition was chosen for this sample because it was the only organization in the District that specifically addressed LGBT intimate partner violence.

Representing law enforcement was Washington, DC's Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) along with MPD's Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU). MPD was selected for this sample because it was the District's primary police force. The GLLU was selected because of the specialized training officers received on LGBT intimate partner violence.

Five organizations represented the efforts of domestic violence service providers in the District were Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (SAFE), Break the Cycle (BTC), Women Empowered Against Violence (WEAVE), Ayuda, and Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment & Appeals Project (DV LEAP). Participants were selected based on their membership to the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence and their



response to a preliminary Same-Sex IPV Inventory survey, which was administered via email in March 2010 (see Appendix C).

### **Materials**

This study utilized a combination of existing data and original qualitative data. Existing data included current laws and proposed legislation in the District, police training modules, and participant agency policies, reports, and statistics. Qualitative data included observations and content analyses of participant materials. The researcher selected participant materials based on the following criteria: diversity in methods, potential for adaptation in other communities, and a stated objective to reduce the specific barriers to services for LGBT survivors identified in the literature review.

For the first research area, raising awareness and educating communities about LGBT IPV, the researcher analyzed three materials provided by the Coalition: questions from an interactive domestic violence-themed Wheel Game, a report on LGBT intimate partner violence (IPV Report) released by the Coalition in 2009, and a written testimony on hate crimes submitted to the DC Council. The Coalition developed the interactive Wheel Game to educate individuals about LGBT intimate partner violence at LGBT community events. The Wheel Game consisted of a cardboard wheel that participants spin to select one of three categories: myths and facts, multiple-choice, and true or false (see Appendix A for a full list of questions). The researcher analyzed and coded these questions based on the measurement instruments identified for the first research area (see Appendix B for a full list of measurement instruments).

Another material analyzed for this study was the 2009 report on LGBT intimate partner violence sponsored by the Coalition (IPV Report). The IPV Report analyzed responses to surveys that the Coalition distributed at various LGBT community events during 2008; a total of 568 surveys were collected. The Coalition collected data using nonprobability convenience sampling of the LGBT population attending these community events. The purpose of the surveys was to:

Obtain the LGBT perception of the problem of intimate partner violence, their experience, perception and understanding of whether domestic violence laws applied equally to the LGBT communities as they do to heterosexual relationships.” (IPV Report, 2009, p.3)

The survey included three sections: demographics, priorities and laws, and experience with intimate partner violence. The demographics section asked participants questions regarding their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, disability, and HIV status (see Appendix J for a breakdown of demographic statistics). The priorities and laws section asked participants if they believed intimate partner violence should be a priority in the LGBT community, if they believed domestic violence laws applied equally to LGBT relationships the same as heterosexual relationships, and if they believed domestic violence laws applied to relationships of people under 18 the same as they do legal adults.

The final section, experiences with abuse, asked participants if they had ever been in an abusive relationship; if they had ever been frightened for the safety of themselves, family, or friends because of anger or threats; if a LGBT relationship partner had ever tried to control most or all of their daily activities; and what types of abuse participants

experienced. The survey results found that 28% of participants self-identified as victims of IPV and revealed emotional abuse was the most commonly experienced type of abuse reported.

On July 6, 2011 the DC Council Committee on the Judiciary hosted a public hearing on hate crimes in Washington, DC and police department's subsequent response to reports of bias crimes. The Coalition submitted a written testimony to the Clerk's Office for inclusion in the public record (see Appendix F for a full version of the testimony). The testimony focused on the lack of MPD data collection on LGBT intimate partner violence and sought to raise awareness about the issue alongside the related anti-violence issue of hate crimes. The researcher analyzed and coded the IPV Report and testimony on hate crimes according to the measurement instruments identified for research area one (see Appendix B for a full list of measurement instruments).

The second research area, helping survivors report abuse, included four materials for analysis: a Simulation and Training Environment Lab (SiTEL) Module for the Metropolitan Police Department entitled "Identifying the Primary Aggressor in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) Domestic Violence Cases" (SiTEL Module); two voluntary GLLU affiliate training modules entitled "Intimate Partner Violence in the LGBT Community" (IPV Module) and "GLBT Community Intro;" and two interactive classroom training activities related to the IPV Module. "Myths and Facts" was the first of the two interactive training activities (see Appendix G). The second training activity involved an exercise in which officers practiced interrogation methods based on the details of an LGBT IPV scenario (see Appendix H for a full explanation of the format for

this activity). These materials were described in more depth in the results section for the second research area. The researcher analyzed and coded these materials based on the measurement instruments identified for research area two (see Appendix B for a full list of measurement instruments).

The third research area, helping survivors seek immediate protection, included three sets of materials for analysis: a Same-Sex IPV Inventory (see Appendix C), policies submitted by participant domestic violence agencies, and the Coalition's comments to the Office of Human Rights in response to a proposed amendment to the District's Housing Regulations (see Appendix E). The researcher analyzed and coded these materials based on the measurement instruments identified for the research area three (see Appendix B for a full list of measurement instruments).

### **Measurement Instruments**

Measurement instruments included three separate lists of thematic codes; each list of codes corresponded with the specific objective defined within each research area. These codes described the barriers to accessing services identified in the literature review and addressed the specific challenges related to raising awareness and educating communities about IPV, helping LGBT survivors report abuse, and helping LGBT survivors seek immediate protection from abusers. The researcher coded and analyzed materials to measure how participant materials addressed the specific barriers in each research area. A complete list of the thematic codes used to measure data in each research area was included in Appendix B.

**Collection and Procedure**

Methods for data collection included surveys, observations, and content analyses.

The first phase of data collection identified organizations and agencies that worked to improve access to resources for LGBT survivors of IPV. The researcher contacted twelve domestic violence service providers via e-mail and phone outreach to request their participation in a preliminary Same-Sex IPV Inventory survey and ultimately attained the participation of five agencies.

The Same-Sex IPV Inventory asked participants questions regarding LGBT specific services such as: does the agency accept male clients, does the agency have counseling or support groups specifically geared towards LGBT survivors, and does the agency have policies in place to protect lesbian survivors from their abusers being admitted? A complete version of the Same-Sex IPV Inventory was included in Appendix C. The researcher analyzed participant agency responses, along with relevant policies submitted voluntarily by domestic violence agencies. Only two agencies submitted official policies to be included in this study.

The researcher contacted members of the Coalition and attended a general monthly meeting to learn more about the Coalition and where to begin data collection efforts. After attending the meeting, the researcher became increasingly involved in the organization's activities, transforming her role from an observer to a participant-observer, in many cases. For this reason, the analysis was limited to the content of existing programs and activities, most of which were developed before the researcher's involvement with the Coalition.

The researcher obtained access to training materials for the MPD and GLLU through her involvement with the Coalition. PowerPoint® presentations for the MPD and GLLU training modules were coded and analyzed. There was no physical hard-copy format for the interactive GLLU activities due to the limited number of individuals who have facilitated the trainings. As such, the researcher collected observations at one training session to explain the format and objectives of the two GLLU training activities. Reported observations were strictly limited to exclude any speculation regarding participant behavior, and therefore did not require Human Subjects Review Board HSRB approval. The researcher collected observations with the sole intention of explaining what the training activities looked like in practice, in the absence of a physical format (see Appendix H). The researcher also collected observations at assorted Capital Pride events to explain the format of the Wheel Game.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher categorized materials to correspond with three separate research areas: raising awareness and educating communities about LGBT IPV, helping survivors report abuse to law enforcement, and helping survivors seek immediate protection from abusive relationships. The researcher coded and analyzed materials according to a list of thematic codes, which described the specific barriers within each research area. The researcher analyzed and categorized the coded data based on recurring emergent themes that described how participant materials sought to eliminate or reduce those barriers.

For the first research area, the researcher analyzed materials to identify common approaches and tactics used by advocates to raise awareness and educate communities

about LGBT intimate partner violence. LGBT survivors had difficulty recognizing abuse within their relationships because they lacked an appropriate model of what LGBT abuse entailed. As such, the researcher coded materials based on their ability to provide survivors with the education needed to help them identify and define their experiences with intimate partner violence. After preliminary rounds of analysis, codes were grouped into the following recurrent themes: engaging communities in a conversation, dispelling stereotypes and clarifying misconceptions about abuse, demonstrating similarities between LGBT and heterosexual abuse, providing concrete examples of LGBT specific abuse and barriers to services, and emphasizing equal legal protections for LGBT survivors in Washington, DC.

Previous research indicated that police officers frequently arrested the wrong party, arrested both parties, or failed to make an arrest at all when they responded to LGBT IPV calls (Bentley, et al, 2007). Additionally, LGBT survivors neglected to report abuse to law enforcement because they feared they would encounter homophobic attitudes from officers or that their reports of abuse would not be taken seriously. For the second research area, the researcher grouped emergent codes into the following themes, which described the strategies advocates used to help survivors report abuse to law enforcement: emphasizing the mutual benefit of police training, combatting heterosexist assumptions and homophobic behavior, explaining the differences between LGBT and heterosexual intimate partner violence and consequences for police assessment, and demonstrating best practices. For research area two, each core code was further broken down into subthemes, which identified the specific tactics advocates used to supplement

the core-theme strategies. Subthemes were introduced at the beginning of the discussion of each core-theme.

Emergency housing and domestic violence shelters were two vital resources for individuals seeking protection from their abusers, especially from abusers with whom they shared a home. When LGBT survivors attempted to access emergency housing, they often found that mainstream domestic violence shelters only accepted women who were born biologically female, which left gay men and transgender individuals with few options other than seeking protection in a homeless shelter or obtaining hotel vouchers. Lesbian and bisexual women who were born biologically female often hesitated to contact domestic violence shelters because they assumed shelters were for heterosexual women.

Domestic violence service providers were another vital resource for victims and survivors seeking protection: agencies offered a variety of resources including legal, educational, and mental health services. Though LGBT specific services were limited, some domestic violence service providers indicated they offered services for LGBT survivors. Codes for the third research area were grouped into the following themes: “equal” rights to emergency housing, “equal” housing alternatives: hotel vouchers and homeless shelters, and accessing support: domestic violence service providers. The third theme was further divided into the following subthemes: using broad and/or gender neutral nondiscrimination policies, avoid serving the abuser, limited availability of LGBT specific services, and promoting LGBT specific cultural competency training.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS**

The purpose of this study was to examine the efforts sponsored by LGBT advocates, law enforcement, and domestic violence service providers in Washington, DC to improve access to resources for LGBT survivors of intimate partner violence. This study examined the specific strategies these three groups utilized to 1) raise awareness and educate communities about LGBT intimate partner violence, 2) help LGBT survivors report abuse to law enforcement, and 3) help LGBT survivors seek immediate protection from their abusers.

An analysis of data yielded from participant materials revealed salient findings within each research area. The researcher analyzed and coded participant materials according to the measurement instruments defined for each corresponding research area (see Appendix B). Next, the researcher categorized coded data to highlight emergent and recurring themes. These themes described the specific strategies and thematic approaches used to accomplish the objective within each research area. Certain themes were further divided into subthemes, which described more specific tactics employed within each core theme area.

This chapter included results for all the three research areas. Due to the significant amount of reported data, an overview-guide was provided to help readers navigate the

specific themes presented in each research area. Readers are encouraged to reference this guide at the beginning of each research area.

I. Research Area One: Raising Awareness and Educating Communities about LGBT IPV

A. Research Materials (developed by the Rainbow Response Coalition)

1. Testimony on hate crimes submitted to the DC Council
2. 2009 Report on LGBT intimate partner violence in the Greater DC Area (IPV Report)<sup>24</sup>
3. Questions from the Coalition's domestic violence Wheel Game

B. Major Themes

1. Engaging communities in a conversation about IPV
2. Dispelling stereotypes and clarifying misconceptions about LGBT IPV
3. Demonstrating similarities between LGBT and heterosexual abuse
  - a. Similarities in characteristics of abuse
  - b. Similarities in prevalence of abuse
4. Providing concrete examples of LGBT specific abuse and service barriers
  - a. Examples of LGBT specific abuse
  - b. Examples of barriers to recognizing abuse and accessing services
5. Emphasizing equal legal protections for LGBT survivors in Washington, DC

II. Research Area Two: Helping LGBT Survivors Report Abuse to Law Enforcement

A. Research Materials

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<sup>24</sup> Rainbow Response Coalition (2009). *Survey Findings: Intimate Partner Violence*. Washington, DC

1. The Metropolitan Police Department's Simulation and Training Environment Lab (SiTEL) Module, "Identifying the Primary Aggressor in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Domestic Violence Cases"<sup>25</sup>
2. Two Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit training modules: "Intimate Partner Violence in the LGBT Community" (IPV Module), and "GLBT Community Intro"
3. Two interactive classroom training activities related to the IPV Module

#### B. Major Themes

1. Emphasizing the mutual benefit of police training
  - a. Helping build trust with the LGBT communities
  - b. Helping officers perform their duties more effectively
2. Combatting heterosexist assumptions and homophobic behavior
  - a. LGBT 101
  - b. Introduction to Heterosexual Privilege
3. Explaining the differences between LGBT and heterosexual IPV and consequences for police assessment
  - a. Recognizing LGBT specific abuse tactics
  - b. Assessing the crime scene
  - c. Avoiding mis-action for the victim
4. Demonstrating best practices
  - a. Using scenarios to explain materials and engage officers

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<sup>25</sup> Loudermilk, A. (2009). *Identifying the primary aggressor in lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender domestic violence cases*. Washington, DC: Rainbow Response Coalition.

- b. Providing additional tools to help officers

### III. Research Area Three: Helping LGBT Survivors Seek Immediate Protection

#### A. Research Materials

1. The Coalition's comments to the Office of Human Rights in response to a proposed amendment to DC Housing Regulations
2. Participant responses to the Same-Sex IPV Inventory
3. Policies provided by Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment and Washington Empowered Against Violence

#### B. Major Themes

1. "Equal" rights to emergency housing
2. "Equal" housing alternatives: hotel vouchers and homeless shelters
3. Accessing support: domestic violence agencies
  - a. Gender-neutral/broad nondiscrimination policies
  - b. Avoid serving the abuser
  - c. Limited availability of LGBT specific services
  - d. Promoting LGBT specific cultural competency training

### **Research Area 1: Raising Awareness and Educating Communities about LGBT IPV**

One of the most significant challenges to raising awareness and educating communities about LGBT intimate partner violence is the internal or “private” nature of the problem. Previous research found that individuals and activists frequently denied or ignored the existence of intimate partner violence within LGBT communities for fear of bringing “added subjugation and discrimination upon the gay community” (Kulkin et al.,

2007). Raising awareness about issues such as hate crimes, bullying and the subsequent rise in suicide among LGBT youth is relatively uncomplicated because there is a clearly defined external threat. Perhaps more importantly, these are blatant and condemnable offenses linked to larger social problems of ignorance and attitudes of heterosexism and homophobia.

Soliciting the same advocacy response around LGBT intimate partner violence is challenging because there is no clearly defined “us versus them” mentality. Additionally, the “private” nature of intimate partner violence discourages a large-scale response from individuals whose lives are not directly affected by abuse. Addressing intimate partner violence within LGBT communities requires a frank discussion about power differentials within relationships, as well as the ways that LGBT abusers exploit homophobia as a tactic to control and disempower victims. All of this ultimately requires acknowledging that a threat exists within the LGBT communities, and that is a difficult dialogue to begin. This is why raising awareness and educating communities about LGBT intimate partner violence is the first and most essential component to the goal of improving access to support services for LGBT survivors.

#### Theme 1: Engaging Communities in a Conversation about IPV

The Rainbow Response Coalition (the Coalition) used three methods to engage communities in a conversation about IPV: 1) a testimony on hate crimes submitted to the DC Council, 2) a 2009 report on LGBT intimate partner violence in the Greater DC Area (IPV Report), and 3) a domestic violence themed Wheel Game. The Coalition presented testimony before the Public Oversight Hearing on Hate Crimes in the District of

Columbia and Police Response to Reports of Hate Crimes, which also helped raise awareness about the IPV. Hate crimes are a frequently discussed topic in the Washington, DC LGBT activist communities because they pose a severe and visible threat. During the summer of 2011, the District experienced an influx of bias-motivated hate crimes, specifically targeting transgender communities: at least 20 transgender women were assaulted in the District between July and November of 2011 (Tomassoni, 2011). Although Coalition members were unable to attend the public hearing on July 6, 2011, the Coalition's written testimony on hate crimes was included in the public record.<sup>26</sup> The testimony addressed three main points:

first, the highly disproportionate amount of domestic violence cases that constitute the GLLU caseload; second, the progress that has been made in the liaison units; and third, to share concerns about the lack of department data collection regarding LGBT IPV cases.

The Coalition's participation helped to expose the lack of police sponsored data collection on LGBT IPV. The Coalition's testimony noted that when the organization first formed, its members contacted the Metropolitan Police Department to find out the current rate of intimate partner violence in the District's LGBT communities. Coalition members were surprised to find that, "despite the fact that MPD tracks many statistics related to domestic violence, it does not specifically track the rate of LGBT IPV."<sup>27</sup>

Despite the lack of official data collection, a few dedicated officers of the Gay and

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<sup>26</sup> Notice of Public Oversight Hearing: Hate Crimes in the District of Columbia and Police Response to Reports of Hate Crimes: Hearing before the Committee on the Judiciary, Council of the District of Columbia, (2011).

<sup>27</sup> Appendix F

Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU) reviewed their current and past files dealing with LGBT intimate partner violence. The GLLU officers found that “almost 80% of all cases handled by GLLU are domestic violence related cases.”<sup>28</sup> The discovery of this information underscored the concrete potential for raising awareness about the issue through police-sponsored data collection. This finding also highlighted the benefit of collaborating with law enforcement to improve their response to LGBT survivors.

The Coalition’s 2009 IPV Report<sup>29</sup> engaged community members in a conversation about IPV by asking participants directly about their experiences with abuse via the use of surveys. This approach was beneficial to raising awareness about the issue because LGBT individuals were almost never asked about their experiences with abuse. The surveys allowed participants to anonymously disclose their experiences with abuse, perhaps doing so for the first time. Even if participants never experienced abuse in their personal lives, the survey encouraged them to think about the issue, with the possible effect of changing preconceived notions about domestic violence. Moreover, by quantifying the experiences of individuals in the Metro-DC area’s LGBT communities, the IPV Report helped to raise awareness about the issue by demonstrating statistical prevalence.

At community events, including the very popular DC Capital Pride Week, the Coalition used the Wheel Game as another tool to engage communities in conversations about IPV. By piquing the interests of passersby with a fun activity, the Wheel Game

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<sup>28</sup> Appendix F

<sup>29</sup> Rainbow Response Coalition. (2009). *Survey Findings: Intimate Partner Violence*. Washington, DC: Rainbow Response Coalition.

attracted people into a discussion of IPV who might otherwise ignore or be turned off by the subject. When individuals correctly answered Wheel Game questions about LGBT intimate partner violence, a Coalition volunteer affirmed their correct answer and asked the participants how they arrived at their response. This type of exchange elicited a discussion about the participants' frames of reference and knowledge base, which enabled Coalition volunteers to learn more about other sources of education on the topic. Coalition volunteers also had the opportunity to collaborate with community members and share additional knowledge by expanding on the information the participants shared.

When participants were not sure how to answer a Wheel Game question a Coalition volunteer talked them through the question to arrive at an answer. When participants answered the question incorrectly, a Coalition volunteer asked why they believed their answer was correct. These exchanges provided more insight about community misconceptions regarding LGBT IPV, which allowed Coalition members to formulate responses that attempted to counter these myths. In all three instances, there was an interactive, collaborative exchange of knowledge and an opportunity to provide participants with factual information.

Theme 2: Dispelling Stereotypes and Clarifying Misconceptions about LGBT IPV  
Gaps in information and false assumptions about LGBT abuse are two main

factors contributing to the deficit in awareness about the issue among LGBT communities and domestic violence service providers. While the Coalition's testimony clarified the misconception that hate crimes were the most prevalent threat against LGBT communities, the Coalition's Wheel Game included questions aimed at dispelling



stereotypes and clarifying misconceptions about other aspects of LGBT intimate partner violence. One “True or False” question asked participants if they believed the following statement to be true: “since women are more likely to be equal in size, the damage inflicted by the lesbian batterer is typically less than that inflicted by the male batterer.” The correct answer indicated that regardless of relative size, “women are capable of committing severe acts of violence. Some female batterers have stabbed, shot, brutally beaten and/or killed their partners.” This question encouraged participants to re-think their preconceived notions about what physical abuse looks like and to consider acts of violence that do not require physically over-powering the other person.

The Wheel Game did not completely dismiss stereotypes; instead its questions focused on clarifying popular misconceptions such as “abuse in LGBT relationships is often mutual,” or “LGBT partners are more likely to equally participate in violence than are heterosexual partners.” Although abuse is never mutual, the Coalition was careful to address the reasons for this misperception: “while LGBT survivors may be more likely to fight back in self defense due to perceived equality, abuse in a relationship is not ‘mutual.’” This “perceived equality” that makes LGBT survivors more likely to fight back in self-defense is the same “perceived equality” that prevents many LGBT individuals from recognizing abuse within their relationships.

Many of the Myths in the “Myths and Facts” category related to assumptions about the correlation between relationship violence and “traditional gender roles.” For example, one question proposed that the batterer in a same-sex relationship was usually more “masculine, muscular and bigger,” while the victim was generally more “feminine,

smaller and weaker.” The wording of this question called to mind and challenged the normative conception of perpetrators as masculine and victims as feminine. The Coalition’s myth-busting statement clarified that partner abuse is not confined to gender roles. Intimate partner violence is fundamentally related to exerting power and control over another individual through the use of “emotional abuse, economic control, use of weapons, and threats.” The key point in this question is that controlling or exerting power over another individual is not necessarily a masculine characteristic, nor a sign of greater physical strength.

### Theme 3: Demonstrating Similarities between LGBT and Heterosexual Abuse

Demonstrating the similarities between LGBT and heterosexual abuse was the third strategy used to educate LGBT communities about what abuse might look like within their relationships. Due to the lack of an accessible gender-neutral model of domestic violence, advocates emphasized the similarities in characteristics of abusive relationships to establish a frame of reference. This framing encouraged individuals to view abuse in terms of power and control that were not necessarily related to gender subordination. Making this distinction was important because of the common misconception that partner abuse is more common in LGBT relationships where partners assume heteronormative gender roles. Additionally, demonstrating similarities in the prevalence of abuse helps to demonstrate that abuse is just as likely to occur in LGBT relationships as it is in heterosexual relationships.

#### *Subtheme 3a: Similarities in characteristics of abuse*

In the introduction to its IPV Report, the Coalition presented a definition of intimate partner violence that was borrowed from the National Coalition of Anti-

Violence Programs (NCAVP).<sup>30</sup> The Coalition chose this definition, which described intimate partner violence as “a pattern of behavior where one partner coerces, dominates, and isolates the other to maintain power and control over their partner,” because it was the most inclusive of both heterosexual and LGBT relationships. The Coalition emphasized that alternative definitions were too general across “identity categories such as race, class, culture, and sexuality,” leaving uncertainty as to what constituted violence, what constituted a partnership, whether men could be victims, and whether women could be batterers.<sup>31</sup>

The NCAVP definition emphasizes a pattern of coercion, domination, and isolation. These three characteristics are present in almost all abusive relationships, regardless of the partners’ race, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status. Findings from the IPV Report demonstrated the shared experiences of IPV survivors: “emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual violence were the most common types of abuse reported by survey respondents.” The Coalition cited this information in its testimony on hate crimes to emphasize the similarities in the types of abuse experienced in both LGBT and heterosexual relationships.

In order to illustrate the similarities between the characteristics of LGBT and heterosexual abuse, the Coalition’s Wheel Game presented the dynamics of power and control in more inclusive terms. One “Fill in the Blank” question posited, “LGBT

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<sup>30</sup> National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) (2011). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and HIV-affected intimate partner violence 2010. New York City: New York City Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, Inc.

<sup>31</sup> Rainbow Response Coalition. (2009). *Survey Findings: Intimate Partner Violence*. Washington, DC: Rainbow Response Coalition: p.3

perpetrators use the same \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ tactics as heterosexual perpetrators.” (The answer was “power and control”). Emphasizing power and control as the central factors of IPV is important because, in general, individuals are only exposed to heterosexual depictions of abuse. Heterosexual abuse is frequently portrayed in movies and television, written about in books, and widely addressed as a social problem. However, with very few exceptions, LGBT intimate partner violence is not discussed in the media nor addressed by governments as a social problem. Drawing parallels between the dynamics of power and control that exist in both LGBT and heterosexual relationships is an effective way to help expose the severity of the problem and its reach beyond heteronormative conceptions of abuse.

*Subtheme 3b: Similarities in prevalence of abuse*

Demonstrating similarities in the prevalence of abuse in both heterosexual and LGBT relationships is fundamental to raising awareness about two important objectives: 1) establishing that abuse is just as common in LGBT relationships as it is in heterosexual relationships, and 2) corroborating the need for LGBT specific education and resources. The Coalition's IPV Report found that 28% of all respondents reported having been in an abusive relationship. This percentage fell within the range of estimated prevalence of abuse reported in heterosexual relationships. Perhaps even more importantly, these findings were consistent across state demographic: 30% of DC respondents, 27% of Maryland respondents, and 24% of Virginia respondents reported having experienced intimate partner violence (IPV Report, 2009). The statistical similarities among these findings indicate that IPV is a common problem in many LGBT communities.

The Coalition's Wheel Game highlighted the prevalence of IPV within LGBT communities. One question in the “Myths & Facts” category proposed, “Domestic violence is more common in heterosexual relationships than it is in LGBTQ relationships.” The correct answer stated, “Studies indicate that partner abuse occurs in 25-33% of LGBTQ relationships, which is approximately equal to the prevalence of domestic violence in heterosexual relationships.” The limited awareness of IPV prevalence in turn obscures the pressing need for resources capable of supporting LGBT survivors.

#### Theme 4: Providing Concrete Examples of LGBT Specific Abuse and Service Barriers

Although similarities exist between abuse in LGBT and heterosexual relationships, there are forms of abuse specific to LGBT relationships. Unfortunately, the lack of education around LGBT intimate partner violence creates barriers for recognizing LGBT specific abuse as a tactic of control. Providing concrete examples of LGBT specific abuse is essential to helping individuals recognize and comprehend these tactics as inherently abusive. Another key component to this conversation is providing concrete examples of the barriers to accessing services in LGBT communities.

##### *Subtheme 4a: Examples of LGBT specific abuse*

Sexual identity abuse is one example of LGBT specific abuse: this includes threats to reveal an individual’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV positive status against his or her will. Surveys used for the Coalition's IPV Report included a section that asked individuals about their experiences with abuse. The surveys asked participants if they experienced forms of abuse such as, “threats of outing as LGBT” or “threats of outing as HIV positive.” These examples define behaviors and tactics that participants

may not have previously realized were abusive. The inclusion of a question that specifically addressed HIV abuse was particularly relevant considering the disproportionately high rate of HIV among gay men in the District (DC Department of Health, 2010).

The Coalition's Wheel Game expanded on the concept of LGBT specific abuse by providing concrete examples. One “Myth or Fact” question asked participants if they believed there was “absolutely no difference between domestic violence in same-sex relationships and domestic violence in heterosexual relationships.” The corresponding answer to this question acknowledged, “while the dynamics of partner abuse are the same in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships, LGBT intimate partner violence involves unique factors related to homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and heterosexism within society.” The Wheel Game recognized sexual identity abuse in one of its multiple-choice questions:

Which of the following are warning signs of an unhealthy relationship?

- restricting the people you hang out with
- threatening to out your sexual orientation, immigration, or HIV status
- reading your texts, emails, or face book without your permission
- all of the above

This question encouraged participants to consider the unique manifestations of power and control within LGBT relationships and to understand that threats to “out” an individual’s sexual orientation were just as serious as invading someone's privacy or isolating them.

*Subtheme 4b: Examples of barriers to recognizing abuse and accessing services*

One significant barrier to raising awareness about LGBT intimate partner violence is the misconception that abuse only occurs in heterosexual relationships, and only victimizes heterosexual women. This misconception has led to a severe deficit in both awareness about LGBT intimate partner violence and resources for LGBT survivors. One “True or False” question from the Wheel Game suggested, “battered LGBT men and women are just as likely to identify themselves as victims as are heterosexual women.” The Wheel Game’s statement of truth addressed the invisibility of LGBT domestic violence and the lack of adequate support services:

Many individuals are overlooked and do not receive needed help. There is a lack of recognition and legal legitimacy for LGBT families and, because domestic violence is thought to occur most commonly in heterosexual relationships, those in the LGBT community may not even realize that they are experiencing it.

This question provided an example of the broad barriers faced by LGBT survivors in recognizing abuse and accessing services. Other questions from the Wheel Game provided specific examples of the barriers related to disparities in services for LGBT individuals, which were covered in research area three of this study.

#### Theme 5: Emphasizing Equal Legal Protections for LGBT Survivors in DC

Findings from the Coalition's IPV Report revealed more than 50% of respondents did not believe or were not sure that domestic violence laws in Washington, DC applied equally to LGBT survivors. The Coalition responded to this need for education by including questions related to police response and legal resources to raise awareness about equal protection laws in the District. One “Myth or Fact” question asked

participants whether they believed the following statement to be true, “the law will not protect LGBT survivors.” A Coalition volunteer explained that this statement was a Myth: “while there are no laws specific to LGBT persons, in the Washington-metro area, existing domestic violence, stalking, and other laws are applied equally in cases of LGBT IPV.” Another statement of fact from the Wheel Game explained, “you can file for a CPO [Civil Protection Order] against someone who you have dated or had a romantic or sexual relationship with.” Subsequent questions from the Wheel Game reiterated that law enforcement must treat cases of both LGBT and heterosexual intimate partner violence equally.

The Coalition's testimony on hate crimes explained that equal data collection on intimate partner violence by the Metropolitan Police Department could improve its response to LGBT survivors. The Coalition recommended that MPD begin tracking appropriate statistics on LGBT intimate partner violence because doing so would be mutually beneficial for both the MPD and the LGBT communities in DC:

Having a better understanding of the number of incidences [sic] of LGBT IPV that the department has contact with per year can help emphasize the importance of training first responders, providing adequate services for survivors, and developing prevention and education efforts to reduce incidents of IPV

In other words, demonstrating the prevalence of IPV within the LGBT communities may help raise awareness about the growing need for support services capable of adequately supporting all survivors of IPV. This is a critical point to make in light of the equal legal treatment of same-sex and opposite-sex intimate partner violence in the District.



However, police officers must be willing to collect the data necessary to demonstrate prevalence and the subsequent need for LGBT specific services.

## **Research Area 2: Helping Survivors Report Abuse to Law Enforcement**

LGBT individuals, like individuals in other marginalized communities, are unlikely to report abuse because they have a fearful and tenuous relationship with law enforcement. Because of the legal system's history of hostility against these communities, many LGBT individuals do not even consider contacting police to protect them from abuse (Allen & Leventhal, 1999 pp. 77). One of the most important ways to help LGBT survivors report abuse is to focus on both shifting the LGBT communities' perceptions of law enforcement and changing the way law enforcement interacts with LGBT victims of crime.

### Theme 1: Emphasizing the Mutual Benefit of Police Training

Providing police officers with specialized training is a mutually beneficial approach to helping LGBT survivors report abuse because it helps to promote two goals: 1) communicating an attempt by law enforcement to build trust with LGBT communities and 2) helping police officers perform their duties more effectively.

#### *Subtheme 1a: Helping build trust with LGBT Communities*

The Metropolitan Police Department's Simulation and Training Environment Lab (SiTEL) Module, "Identifying the Primary Aggressor in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Domestic Violence Cases," is a PowerPoint® presentation containing educational information and a subsequent five-question quiz. Every MPD cadet is required to review the module and correctly answer each quiz question in order to proceed to subsequent training modules.

One of the first slides in the SiTEL Module acknowledged the “complicated and often fearful relationship” between LGBT communities and law enforcement. The module encouraged officers to understand and accept as valid the reasons for the skepticism of LGBT communities toward the police: “for example, research has shown that cases involving same-sex intimate partner couples are substantially more likely to result in the arrest of both parties.” Dual arrests have a significant impact on victims of LGBT IPV, who are effectively re-victimized for reporting abuse and/or defending themselves against their abusers.

When a victim is arrested as a result of calling police for protection, they are significantly less likely to report abuse to law enforcement in the future. By taking the proper care to avoid dual arrests, an officer’s actions on the scene can “greatly determine whether a member of the [LGBT] community will call the police in the future.”<sup>32</sup> The SiTEL Module attempted to empower officers by explaining that they had the ability to alter the LGBT communities’ perception of and trust in law enforcement by properly responding to crimes committed against LGBT individuals.

*Subtheme 1b: Helping officers perform their duties more effectively*

LGBT abusers often exploit the serious issue of homophobia as a tactic for manipulating both victims and law enforcement. In order to adequately protect LGBT victims, officers need to understand and be prepared to reject the tactics used by LGBT abusers. The SiTEL Module explained that in DC “we often hear people telling officers they can’t be arrested because [arresting a member of the LGBT communities] will result

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<sup>32</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 9: Notes

in putting the officer in a bad light.”<sup>33</sup> Over the past few years, the District experienced a significant increase in LGBT bias motivated crime, specifically geared toward the transgender communities (Tomassoni, 2011). As such, this type of threat was very real to officers, who were frequently chastised by the public and the media for their lack of sensitivity toward and response to LGBT victims of crime.

LGBT batterers also misuse homophobia in attempts to avoid arrest by highlighting fears of being harmed in jail. This manipulation tactic appears less obvious because batterers are attempting to appeal to an officer's sympathy and “might beg [the officer] not to arrest them because spending a night at the DC jail could put their life in danger.”<sup>34</sup> The expressed fear of homophobic violence was particularly challenging for GLLU officers, many of whom were themselves “out” members of the LGBT communities and had a first-hand understanding of this very real threat. Officers need the proper training to help them identify the purpose of these tactics and avoid manipulation, in order to prevent the abuser from successfully avoiding arrest.

#### Theme 2: Combating Heterosexist Assumptions & Homophobic Behavior Combating heterosexist assumptions and homophobic behavior among law

enforcement is an essential foundation for helping LGBT survivors report abuse.

Providing police officers with culturally competent education about the characteristics of LGBT individuals was one method used to improve officers’ ability to effectively protect survivors. The subthemes in this area described two broad educational strategies used to

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<sup>33</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 9: Notes

<sup>34</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 24: Notes

combat heterosexist assumptions and homophobic behavior among law enforcement: LGBT 101 and Introduction to Heterosexual Privilege.

*Subtheme 2a: LGBT 101*

The first subtheme, LGBT 101, refers to an introductory lesson on the distinct and varying characteristics of individuals within the LGBT communities. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals have a variety of unique characteristics, needs, and concerns that cannot be reduced to apply to all individuals within these communities. The SiTEL Module provided definitions of sexual orientation and gender identity and explained the difference between the terms. The SiTEL Module defined sexual orientation as “a person's attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex” and provided examples.<sup>35</sup> The next slide explained the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity: “sexual orientation has to do with whom you are attracted, but gender identity refers to one's own sense of self.” Explaining the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity is important because many heterosexuals confuse or conflate the terms. The SiTEL Module expanded on the definition of gender identity by explaining that a transgender individual is someone who “may be biologically male, but identify as a female, and vice versa.”<sup>36</sup> This definition acknowledges the difference between biological sex and gender, an issue discussed at great length among sociologists and gender studies scholars.

GLLU affiliates received further specialized training on various issues affecting the LGBT communities in DC. Officers who volunteer to become GLLU affiliates are

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<sup>35</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 2: This includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual.

<sup>36</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 3: Notes

required to attend a three-day in-class training program. Training on intimate partner violence in the LGBT communities is presented on the second training day. The LGBT IPV training session includes three components: the “Myths and Facts” icebreaker activity (see Appendix G), a PowerPoint® Presentation and lecture on LGBT intimate partner violence (IPV Module),<sup>37</sup> and an interactive police interrogation activity (see Appendix H).

Advocates begin each GLLU training day with a lesson on LGBT 101. The first training day includes a module called “Serving the GLBTQIA Communities in DC and Beyond.”<sup>38</sup> This module provides a broad overview of definitions and issues affecting gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersexed and allied individuals. The second training day commences with the GLBT Community Intro Module,<sup>39</sup> which expands on the definitions provided on the first training day. This module presents a more in-depth examination of the following topics: the importance of self-identification, heterosexism, homophobia, heterosexual privilege, examples of LGBTQ discrimination, and how homo-, bi-, and trans-phobia affect everyone.

*Subtheme 2b: Introduction to Heterosexual Privilege*

Defining heterosexual privilege is necessary for effective training because heterosexuals often fail to recognize the negative consequences of heterosexism. The GLBT Community Intro Module defined heterosexism as “the assumption of the inherent superiority of heterosexuality, and the obliviousness to the lives and experiences of

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<sup>37</sup> Developed by Rainbow Response Coalition and Break the Cycle

<sup>38</sup> Developed and facilitated by Gays and Lesbians Opposing Violence (GLOV)

<sup>39</sup> GLBT Community Intro (2011). Developed by DCTC, SMYAL, Rainbow Response Coalition, and GLOV

LGBT people, and the presumption that all people are, or should be, heterosexual.”<sup>40</sup> The assumption that all people should be heterosexual is embraced as normative in U.S. culture and reinforced through an “entrenched system of moral or religious beliefs, social attitudes, and legal and economic politics that offer privileges to heterosexuality over all other forms of sexual expression or reality.”<sup>41</sup> Heterosexuals often fail to notice these privileges because they are very rarely exposed to the disadvantages.

Providing examples of heterosexual privilege is a beneficial way to help officers begin to process and understand the concept. The GLBT Community Intro Module provided the following examples of heterosexual privilege: “not questioning one’s normalcy, sexuality, and culture; living one’s life without fear that people will find out that one is not heterosexual; and having role models of one’s gender and sexual orientation.”<sup>42</sup> These examples illustrate the subtle manifestations of heterosexual privilege that disadvantage LGBT individuals and position them as outsiders or “the other.” Armed with a better understanding of heterosexism, police officers may begin to understand the way heterosexual privilege works to disadvantage LGBT individuals.

Social conceptions of heterosexuality as normative help to perpetuate and validate homophobia. The GLBT Community Intro Module defined homophobia as “the irrational fear of, hatred of, aversion to or discrimination against homosexuals or homosexual behavior.”<sup>43</sup> Defining homophobia in broad terms is useful because it encourages officers to understand that homophobia is not restricted to extreme behaviors such as violence or

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<sup>40</sup> GLBT Community Intro, 2011, slide 12

<sup>41</sup> GLBT Community Intro, 2011, slide 12

<sup>42</sup> GLBT Community Intro, 2011, slide 13

<sup>43</sup> GLBT Community Intro, 2011, slide 11

hate crimes. Homophobia is manifested in a multitude of ways, from legally sanctioned marriage discrimination to socially endorsed attitudes of bigotry.

Theme 3: Explaining the Differences between Heterosexual and LGBT IPV and  
Consequences for Police Assessment

Explaining the differences between heterosexual and LGBT intimate partner violence is essential to preparing officers for the challenges they might encounter during their assessment of an LGBT IPV incident. The three sub-themes in this section address the differences between LGBT and heterosexual intimate partner violence and the consequences for police assessment, including challenges related to recognizing LGBT-specific abuse tactics, assessing the scene of the crime, and avoiding mis-action for LGBT victims.

*Subtheme 3a: Recognizing LGBT specific abuse tactics*

The SiTEL Module explained that LGBT abusers control their victims by minimizing abuse and convincing the victim that no one will believe them or that no one will care about LGBT abuse. Considering the lack of awareness around the issue among LGBT communities, in addition to the lack of broad social acceptance for LGBT individuals, these tactics represented a powerful control mechanism that effectively silenced countless LGBT victims. In order to help LGBT survivors report abuse, advocates focused on teaching officers how to recognize LGBT specific abuse.

The SiTEL Module provided specific examples of bi-phobic and trans-phobic abuse tactics. While homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia are hurtful when wielded by heterosexuals, these vehicles of hatred assume a whole new meaning when invoked by members of the LGBT communities. Abusers try to control and/or provoke bisexual

victims by referring to them as “fags” or “dykes.” Conversely, abusers may imply that bisexual victims are just confused about their sexual identity. Abusers might try to control transgender victims by disrespecting their gender identity and “referring to the partner with the gender pronoun that they do not prefer (i.e. yelling about “his” behavior when the partner identifies as a female).”<sup>44</sup> When tensions are high and abusers are fearful of being arrested, they often blurt out abusive and combative statements such as these to provoke their victims to act out. Consequently, when victims respond in self-defense to LGBT specific abuse tactics, police often misinterpret their responses as mutual participation in abuse. This is why advocates continually emphasize that abuse is never mutual and provide officers with tools to help them assess LGBT IPV incidents more effectively.

*Subtheme 3b: Assessing the crime scene*

One of the most substantial challenges for officers trying to determine the primary aggressor in same-sex IPV incidents is the common lack of size differential between partners. In heterosexual relationships, men generally outweigh women in both size and strength. This means the physical violence that male abusers inflict upon female victims has very different results than violence inflicted upon male victims, who are more likely to be evenly matched in physical characteristics. The SiTEL Module explained that physical violence occurring between two people of the same sex made it “more difficult to determine which injuries are offensive and which injuries are defensive.”<sup>45</sup> As a result,

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<sup>44</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 20

<sup>45</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 6



physical injuries among couples of the same sex often indicate that each party used equal force, an indication that frequently results in dual arrests.

Although assessing physical injuries may be more difficult in LGBT IPV cases, officers can use alternative methods to help them avoid negative outcomes for LGBT victims. For example, the SiTEL Module emphasized the importance of police report narratives; “it is important to document as much detail as possible in the narrative of your report whether you are able to identify the primary aggressor or not.”<sup>46</sup> This point is critical because the court system relies on police narratives to determine the outcome of IPV cases. If police reports are vague or do not properly document physical injuries and behaviors observed at the scene, the courts may not be able to determine the severity of an offense.

The “Myths and Facts”<sup>47</sup> portion of the GLLU IPV training also addressed the challenges related to size. In this activity, officers were asked to respond to a series of statements by standing on one side of the room if they believed the statement was a Myth or standing on the opposite side if they believed the statement was a Fact. This activity served as a precursor to the lecture on LGBT intimate partner violence and encouraged officers to think about potential consequences for LGBT individuals prior to the IPV training.

One statement proposed, “It is harder to identify the primary aggressor in LGBT domestic violence cases because violence tends to be mutual.” The facilitator for the activity explained that this statement was a Myth: identifying the primary aggressor was

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<sup>46</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 10: Notes

<sup>47</sup> See Appendix G

not more difficult because abuse was *mutual*. However, it is more difficult to identify the primary aggressor because of “lesser physical disparities between couples, and batterers deliberately exploiting a professional's lack of knowledge or stereotypes of the LGBT community.”<sup>48</sup> This statement encouraged officers to confront their own ideas and assumptions about abuse, while emphasizing the notion that relationship abuse was fundamentally related to the dynamics of power and control, not size and strength. While making the concession that it was more difficult to determine the primary aggressor in LGBT incidents, the “Myths and Facts” activity reiterated that abuse was never mutual. Therefore, officers needed to focus on factors other than physical size when assessing cases of LGBT IPV.

*Subtheme 3c: Avoiding mis-action for the victim*

Because officers have a limited amount of time to respond to a crime scene, they may find additional information and training to be extraneous, overwhelming, or unnecessary to their assessments. As such, advocates tried to inspire empathy among officers by explaining the consequences of what could happen when they failed to take the appropriate action. This was done with the hopes that officers would be more willing to put into practice what they were taught during training.

Avoiding dual arrests is critical in Washington, DC because of mandatory arrest protocol in cases of IPV. According to MPD General Order 304.11, police officers are legally required to arrest one party if they determine an intrafamily offense has

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<sup>48</sup> Appendix G

occurred.<sup>49</sup> Under the added pressure of having to arrest someone at the scene, officers sometimes arrest both parties in LGBT IPV cases when they are unable to ascertain the primary aggressor. However, MPD General Order 304.11 states that officers should avoid dual arrests because “a person who used force against another person only in self defense has not committed an intra-family offense and shall not be arrested.”<sup>50</sup> The SiTEL Module advised officers that it was critical to avoid dual arrests: “if you cannot determine the primary aggressor on a scene, you **must** call a detective or supervisor.”<sup>51</sup>

The SiTEL Module explained that ambiguous or “poorly worded” police reports could lead to “the issuance of dual protection orders or individuals not being able to obtain a protection order. Both situations place a victim at further risk.”<sup>52</sup> Survivors who are unable to obtain protection orders are at an increased risk for further abuse because they have no legal protection from their abusers. Dual protection orders are problematic because they punish victims for crimes committed against them, limit victims’ mobility and access to shared property, increase the likelihood that victims will be re-arrested for violating the protection order and significantly decrease the likelihood that victims will report abuse in the future.

#### Theme 4: Demonstrating Best Practices

One of the most commonly offered suggestions for improving police response to LGBT communities is implementing standardized best practices. The subthemes in this

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<sup>49</sup> II. Policy: Members shall affect mandatory and/or warrantless arrests in accordance with the DC Official Code and enforce intrafamily offense laws in cooperation with other jurisdictions.

<sup>50</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 6

<sup>51</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 6

<sup>52</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 10: Notes

section describe the different methods that advocates used to demonstrate best practices for officers. The first subtheme examined scenarios as a collaborative method for demonstrating best practices. Scenarios helped officers contextualize the information they were taught and encouraged officers to consider how they might respond to LGBT related police calls. The second subtheme described the additional tools provided to help officers perform their duties more effectively.

*Subtheme 4a: Using scenarios to explain material and engage officers*

LGBT advocates utilized scenarios to help demonstrate the challenges officers might encounter when assessing LGBT IPV incidents. Because LGBT communities are not monolithic, the materials and information presented to officers in these training modules do not necessarily apply to all abusive LGBT relationships. Advocates emphasized that every situation was different and that officers could not rely on preconceived notions about size and strength, particularly because perpetrators in the LGBT communities were “very adept at exploiting your assumptions about who the abuser is simply based on size and appearance.”<sup>53</sup>

The SiTEL Module illustrated this point by presenting a case study involving two men. This scenario demonstrated two different challenges related to identifying the primary aggressor when 1) sadomasochism was involved and 2) when there was a significant size disparity between two partners of the same sex.

The case study was told from the perspective of a man who decided to explore a submissive sexual role with a younger, dominant male partner:

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<sup>53</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 14: Notes

At 40, I felt the need to explore a submissive role and connected with a 25-year-old dominant male, with whom I felt “safe”- two inches shorter and 90 pounds lighter than me. One night, after three months of dating, he handcuffed me and began punching my head, a clear violation of my boundaries. I yelled “Stop!” which is also our “safe word,” but he kept on. I was panicked and nearly knocked him over a railing and down three flights of stairs before he stopped. (Loudermilk, 2009, slide 9)

Common misconceptions have led many people to conflate partner abuse with sadomasochism, and/or to assume that individuals who enjoy submission enjoy being physically or sexually abused. This is not the case. Sadomasochism requires consent, mutual trust and respect, open communication, and clearly defined boundaries developed collaboratively between partners. Partners who engage in sadomasochism discuss their physical and sexual boundaries so that both partners feel safe; they develop safe words so that either partner can withdraw consent clearly and easily. Sadomasochism becomes abusive when one partner objects and withdraws consent, and the other partner ignores that objection. This case study demonstrates the types of scenarios that challenge an officer's ability to determine who is the aggressor and who is the victim. The SiTEL Module explained, “In complicated cases like this one, you need to be equipped with as many tools as possible in order to help you determine who is the primary aggressor.”<sup>54</sup>

The importance of utilizing the full scope of investigative tools was further emphasized in the interactive IPV interrogation activity.<sup>55</sup> This activity included an

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<sup>54</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 8

interactive scenario, which was used to test officers' ability to properly assess an LGBT IPV case. The facilitator began the activity by presenting the details of a hypothetical domestic violence call involving two women. The facilitator presented officers with the physical details from the scene, as well as a list of facts about the couple's relationship history. Details from this scenario indicated that each woman had visible injuries. Similarly to the SiTEL Case Study, this scenario involved two partners who were significantly different sizes: Janet was 5'1", 100 lbs and Ashley was 5'10", 185 lbs.

After explaining the details of the case, the facilitator was joined by two volunteers who acted out the roles of Janet and Ashley. The facilitator divided officers into several teams and explained that each team would take turns interrogating Janet and Ashley separately. Officers needed to ask questions that would help them answer the following questions:

- What is the relationship between the parties?
- Was there an IntraFamily Offense?
- Who is the Primary Aggressor?
- What facts would you include in the police report?

This activity was useful because it demonstrated the importance of asking direct and specific questions when assessing cases of LGBT IPV. For example, the details of this scenario explained that Janet and Ashley “hook up” from time to time, but the two women were not girlfriends and did not live together. However, the stated facts of the case indicated that the women's relationship was sexual. Because the women did not live

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<sup>55</sup> See Appendix H for the GLLU Interrogation Activity Format

together, denied being in a romantic or dating relationship, and did not have a known common partner, officers needed to establish a sexual relationship in order to classify the incident as an intrafamily offense. To do this, officers needed to ask direct and specific questions about sexual orientation in a respectful manner.

The interrogation activity allowed officers to practice different interviewing methods in a safe and controlled environment. Police officers often struggled with what questions they should ask to establish the required relationship between the two women. The facilitator for the activity explained that the training session was a safe space; officers should feel free to ask questions without worrying about offending the facilitator and volunteers. In other words, it was better for officers to ask offensive or inappropriate questions in the classroom than at the scene of the crime. When officers did ask inappropriate or insensitive questions, the facilitator had the opportunity to explain why the questions were misguided and provided them with an alternative method of asking the same question.

*Subtheme 4b: Providing additional tools to help officers*

Interviewing witnesses, including neighbors and family members, is one of the seven steps to determining a primary aggressor. This is a challenge for assessing LGBT IPV investigations because witnesses may harbor prejudice against LGBT individuals and/or misunderstand an LGBT couple's relationship, believing them to be friends or roommates. The SiTEL Module explained the complications related to witness reliability: "Officers should remember that witnesses typically report based on their own beliefs, values and assumptions and thus perceptions can be skewed either negatively or

positively to their experiences.”<sup>56</sup> For instance, if neighbors have had good experiences with the couple, they may speak highly of both parties, including the abuser. The SiTEL Module reminded officers that abusers often present themselves well in public. As such, it was important for officers to “take [reliability and bias] issues into consideration when examining and evaluating the information presented to you by witnesses.”

On the other hand, if witnesses think negatively of the couple or LGBT people in general, they may make disparaging remarks about both parties. The SiTEL Module provided additional tools to help officers effectively interview witnesses to an LGBT IPV case: “are both parties 'out?'; are the neighbors homophobic?; will witnesses assume who is at fault based on appearances?”<sup>57</sup> Even when officers are knowledgeable or “culturally competent,” it may be difficult for them to properly gauge an individual's gender identity, and/or officers may not feel comfortable asking transgender individuals how they self-identify, assuming the question impolite or transphobic. However, this is not always the case.

The SiTEL Module explains to officers that if they are unsure of a person's gender, it is perfectly acceptable to ask the individual what gender pronoun they prefer by phrasing the question as such; “would you prefer to be referred to as a he or a she.”<sup>58</sup> In most cases, this question was not just appropriate but necessary for the GLLU to be contacted. While the question may appear intrusive or insensitive, it is better for officers to ask the question than to make incorrect assumptions. Further, the module explained,

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<sup>56</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 16: Notes

<sup>57</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 16: Notes

<sup>58</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 3



asking questions about gender identity demonstrates that the officer is “knowledgeable, sensitive, and respectful.” Transgender and gender-queer individuals are generally aware of and accustomed to people's uncertainty about their gender presentation. Asking individuals directly about their gender pronoun preference communicates an attempt to respect their identity and dignity.

### **Research Area 3: Helping Survivors Seek Immediate Protection**

Helping survivors seek immediate protection from their abusers requires a holistic response to their physical, legal, and emotional needs. This is a challenge in Washington, DC because of the persistent shortage of adequate domestic violence emergency housing. As of 2011, there were only 96 shelter beds for domestic violence victims and their children in the entire city of DC (Statistics, 2011). Additionally, in the District and across most of the country, there are no housing programs or domestic violence service providers that specifically serve LGBT survivors of intimate partner violence. Consequently, many LGBT and heterosexual survivors were left with few options that could fully support their needs.

Despite anti-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity for housing and public accommodations, there are fewer services for some constituencies of LGBT communities. Hotel vouchers, which are often used as an alternative to provide housing for survivors when there is a lack of shelter space, are nevertheless problematic because they are single solutions that do not help resolve other service needs of abuse victims. Similarly, while some domestic violence service providers in the District offer their services to LGBT clients, only a select few offer

LGBT specific services. The results for area three focused on two important resources for helping survivors seek immediate protection: emergency housing and domestic violence service providers.

#### Theme 1: “Equal” Rights to Emergency Housing

For survivors leaving a physically abusive relationship, accessing safe and confidential housing is often the most pressing need. The District Alliance for Safe Housing (DASH) is DC's cornerstone program for “addressing the overwhelming lack of housing and social services for victims of domestic violence” (About DASH, n.d.). The DASH website states that there are no domestic violence housing programs in DC that specifically serve LGBT survivors, but lists two such facilities located nearby in Maryland.<sup>59</sup> The website also notes that discrimination based on gender identity or expression is illegal in Washington, DC and that “any housing available to a female survivor is legally available to those who identify as women” (about DASH, n.d.). While this example applies specifically to transgender women, the anti-discrimination protection to which DASH refers is the Human Rights Act of 1977.

Although the Human Rights Act provides unique and valuable housing protections for LGBT individuals, those protections would be challenged if a proposed amendment to the chapter on Housing and Commercial Space passes. In May 2011 the DC Office of Human Rights (OHR) issued the proposed amendment, which, among other things, would allow domestic violence shelters to limit their services to women. In its comments to the OHR, the Coalition conceded its understanding of the provision’s

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<sup>59</sup> Turn Around Inc. (<http://www.turnaroundinc.org>) and Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence (<http://www.msfcv.org/>)

intention: to allow domestic violence shelters to operate as a “safe space” for heterosexual women leaving abusive male partners by limiting access to female survivors.

The Coalition objected to the underlying assumptions that “domestic violence is an issue that only affects heterosexual women, that only heterosexual women need access to safe shelters, and that the law should not provide equal protection for heterosexual and LGBT victims.”<sup>60</sup> The emphasis on equal protection for all victims of domestic violence was imperative because of the overwhelming lack of emergency housing options available to men and transgender survivors. Additionally, as mentioned in the Review of Literature, lesbians and bisexual women experienced their own barriers in accessing women-only domestic violence shelters (Simpson & Helfrich, 2007). Consequently, homeless shelters and hotels vouchers are two of the only alternatives for LGBT survivors who cannot or do not feel comfortable seeking protection at traditional domestic violence shelters.

#### Theme 2: “Equal” Housing Alternatives: Hotel Vouchers and Homeless Shelters

There are two primary federal statutes that govern and regulate access to domestic violence shelters, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)<sup>61</sup> and the Family Prevention & Services Act (FVPSA).<sup>62</sup> The courts have interpreted VAWA to allow the use of hotel vouchers as an equal alternative to provide housing for men.<sup>63</sup> Due to the

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<sup>60</sup> Appendix E

<sup>61</sup> Enacted as Title IV of the Violent Crime Control and Enforcement Act of 1994 (103, approved September 13, 1994), codified at [42 U.S.C. 13931](#) et seq.

<sup>62</sup> 42 U.S.C. 10401 et seq. <http://law.justia.com/cfr/title45/45-4.1.2.8.20.html>

<sup>63</sup> Appendix E

significant lack of shelter space in the District, hotel vouchers are the most commonly offered alternative for emergency housing.

Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (SAFE) is one domestic violence service provider in DC that provides shelter via the use of hotel placement. SAFE's response to the Same-Sex IPV Inventory noted the shortage of shelter space in the District and emphasized that SAFE does not differentiate between men, women, and transgender clients in their policies for emergency housing placement. While SAFE prides itself in offering equal access to hotel vouchers, their response sheds light on the additional barriers related to housing alternatives: "the only individuals that we cannot house are teens because it is illegal to house teens by themselves in a hotel." This has specific implications for LGBT teen survivors, many of whom may not be "out" about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity to family members.

Although hotel vouchers are theoretically available to all survivors of domestic violence, debate remains as to whether hotel vouchers can be considered an equal alternative to domestic violence shelters. The Coalition contends that hotel vouchers are not equal alternatives because they do not provide the same protections and on-site resources that traditional domestic violence shelters offer for heterosexual female victims: "While hotel vouchers may solve the immediate need for shelter, trans and male survivors of IPV do not have onsite access to traditional support services available to women at DV shelters, such as counseling and legal advice."<sup>64</sup> Although hotel vouchers are intended to provide immediate physical protection to survivors, they fail to provide

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<sup>64</sup> Appendix E

the same safety, legal, and emotional support services that are necessary to adequately support survivors of abuse.

Homeless shelters are another commonly offered alternative for survivors fleeing violence. The Coalition argued that this option, like hotel vouchers, was not an equal alternative to domestic violence shelters. Hotels and homeless shelters do not have confidentiality protections in place, nor is staff trained on how to handle the special safety needs of victims. As a result, the Coalition noted, “Any person of the same sex could enter a homeless shelter, thus leaving open the possibility of a gay male abusive partner finding and further harming his partner.”<sup>65</sup> Confidentiality protections are needed to ensure that emergency housing is safe and secure, and that abusers will be refused access. This is particularly important because abusive relationships become most dangerous when the victim tries to leave (Daly & Wilson, 1993).

### Theme 3: Accessing Support: Domestic Violence Agencies

Although emergency housing is a vital resource for many survivors fleeing abusive and violent environments, its protections are temporary and often fall short of addressing the many other long-term needs of survivors. Domestic violence service providers offer a variety of services that are equally vital to providing holistic support and protection to survivors of abuse. Understanding the ways in which traditional domestic violence service providers are attempting to improve access for LGBT survivors is useful for developing strategies to reduce the barriers they continue to face. The subthemes in

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<sup>65</sup> Appendix E

this section describe different tactics and strategies employed by domestic violence service providers to improve access to services for LGBT survivors.

*Subtheme 3a: Gender-neutral/broad nondiscrimination policies*

Many domestic violence service providers utilize broad and/or gender neutral policies in an attempt to be inclusive, while at times acknowledging the diversity of the population they serve. The first question on the Same-Sex IPV Inventory asked domestic violence service providers whether they had a nondiscrimination policy in place that included protections based on gender identity and/or sexual orientation for the clients they served. Although agency responses varied, the majority of participants sought to theoretically include all survivors of domestic violence through the use of broad and/or gender-neutral language in their official agency policies.

SAFE's official definition of the clients it serves is broadly stated to include “absolutely anyone who is a victim of domestic violence.” SAFE’s response to the Same-Sex IPV Inventory indicated that their service population includes a wide variety of individuals. As such, SAFE did not have client policies that targeted a specific population, nor did they advertise as a specialized “safe zone.” Their response clarified, “the list would be too long and varied to have any meaning or catch anyone's eye.” In other words, while SAFE does not advertise or provide LGBT specific services, its official policies recognize that domestic violence is an issue that affects all populations. Accordingly, SAFE utilizes broad language in its policies to allow for as much inclusion as possible for their service populations.

Washington Empowered Against Violence (WEAVE) and Break the Cycle (BTC) were the only two participants that reported having a nondiscrimination policy in place

that offered specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Break the Cycle indicated that its official nondiscrimination policy includes protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity; unfortunately, the agency did not provide a copy of the relevant policy for analysis in this study. However, WEAVE's response shed light on how other agencies could begin to craft LGBT inclusive policies.

In 2011 Washington Empowered Against Violence changed its name from Women Empowered Against Violence. WEAVE's board of directors voted unanimously to change the “W” in WEAVE from “Women” to “Washington” in order to “Eliminate the barrier that WEAVE's name could at times create, because it was gender specific” (Gamble, 2011). The organization asserted, “Our work is far too important to allow any kind of barrier to exist that would deter someone from seeking services or sharing in our mission” (Gamble, 2011). WEAVE's nondiscrimination policy protected all employees, applicants for employment, and clients against discrimination based on an individual’s characteristics and included a provision explicitly stating, “WEAVE does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or transgender identification.” WEAVE's nondiscrimination policy promoted inclusivity by expanding on the broadness of SAFE's policy: it specifically mentioned sexual orientation and gender identity.

The remaining two domestic violence agencies provide specialized services for specific populations. As such, their eligibility criteria varied based on other program-specific requirements. The Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project (DV LEAP) did not have a nondiscrimination policy in place that included protections for gender identity or sexual orientation. However, the agency’s response indicated that it

would be “happy to represent [LGBT survivors] if they otherwise met our criteria.” DV LEAP’s response also mentioned that the agency represented men in the past; however, the response did not indicate whether or not the clients were gay. Because DV LEAP is a legal consultant agency focusing on the appellate courts, its eligibility criteria is based on whether the agency believes a particular case would make good law for the domestic violence field and whether an appeal is viable based on the trial court record.

Ayuda indicated that its official policies complied with all local, state and federal laws. However, the organization did not have a nondiscrimination policy regarding sexual orientation or gender identity. This was likely due to Ayuda’s mission-specific client eligibility policy, which requires clients to be “foreign born, or filing a petition on behalf of someone who is foreign-born, that the person be within our income guidelines, and that Ayuda does not have a legal conflict in providing services.” Because they limit their services to foreign-born survivors, Ayuda may have been more concerned with communicating those specific requirements than crafting LGBT inclusive policies. Yet, many foreign-born survivors are also members of the LGBT communities, which is why domestic violence agencies should move toward an intersectional understanding of survivors’ identities and needs. With that being said, Ayuda’s last point regarding legal conflict in providing services highlights a common tactic used by service providers to help survivors seek protection: avoid serving the abuser.

*Subtheme 3b: Avoid serving the abuser*

Another prevalent theme to emerge from the Same-Sex IPV Inventory was the emphasis that agencies placed on not providing services to abusers. One question from



the Same-Sex IPV Inventory asked participants if they had a policy in place to protect a lesbian or bisexual woman from the possibility of her abuser accessing or being admitted to the same shelter. Although few agencies had such policies, most domestic violence service providers had “conflict policies” in place that required staff to screen for and deny services to abusers. Domestic violence conflict policies generally follow one of two models: a legal conflict of interest model or a primary aggressor model.

Ayuda's official eligibility requirements prevented staff from providing services to an individual where there was a legal conflict of interest. The agency's response to the Same-Sex IPV Inventory provided an example: “we cannot provide immigration services to a batterer where we represented his/her spouse/partner/etc. in a Protection Order case.” The legal conflict of interest policy is essential to ensuring the safety of survivors because it protects them from unintentionally encountering their abuser when they seek support services.

SAFE's basic conflict policy “follows a primary aggressor analysis rather than a strict legal conflict of interest policy.” SAFE's primary aggressor analysis, similar to the one used by the Metropolitan Police Department, considers the overall power and control dynamics in the relationship, in addition to the threat or use of violence. SAFE considers the following factors to be indicators of a primary aggressor: past history of domestic violence (reported or not), previous court filings, previous criminal cases, the size and relative strength of the parties, presence of physical injuries, and the demeanor of the party with whom the advocate is speaking. This primary aggressor analysis is gender neutral, which is useful not only for LGBT survivors, but also allows SAFE to “screen

for abusers generally to ensure that we are not assisting the wrong party.” This last point is essential to fulfilling SAFE's mission: “to assist victims of domestic violence and to ensure that our resources are not spent on those who commit domestic violence.”

Although SAFE's official eligibility policy was broadly stated to include anyone who is a victim of domestic violence, the agency's response to the Inventory specified that its conflict policy precluded assistance for abusers and prohibited SAFE from “helping both parties in the same case.”<sup>66</sup> As such, SAFE's policy was “to place someone in a different or typically unused hotel if we have assisted a partner of theirs, previously in another case, who is the abuser in the current case.” SAFE's primary aggressor conflict policy serves both practical and ideological purposes. Practically, the conflict policy protects survivors from unintentionally encountering their abuser and protects SAFE from misusing its resources on perpetrators of violence. Ideologically, it protects SAFE's mission to exclude abusers from accessing their resources.

*Subtheme 3c: Limited availability of LGBT specific services*

The second question on the Same-Sex IPV Inventory asked participants if they offered services specifically geared toward LGBT survivors of IPV. The Inventory also asked participants to provide referrals if they did not offer LGBT specific services. Despite broad language in the policies of domestic violence service providers, there were a few agencies in the District that advertised and provided LGBT specific services. Although LGBT specific services were limited, the majority of participants indicated that

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<sup>66</sup> SAFE has two conflict policy procedures for their primary programs, the Court Advocacy Program (CAP) and the On Call Advocacy Program (OCAP). The procedures differ based on the resources available to advocates at the time of contact with the client

their general services were available to everyone, or were able to provide referral information.

DV LEAP was the only participant to respond in the negative to the question on LGBT specific services. Again, this was likely due to the mission-specific nature of the agency, which required DV LEAP to select cases based on their potential to make good law for the domestic violence legal field. Despite its lack of LGBT specific services, DV LEAP included referral information for WEAVE in its response.

Ayuda, another specialized domestic violence service provider, does not offer any LGBT specific services. However, the organization indicated inclusiveness in its response: “all of Ayuda's legal and social services are available to LGBT clients, and indeed we have had many LGBT clients over the years.” Ayuda's response also included referral information for La Clinica del Pueblo,<sup>67</sup> an agency it used for social services referrals. While Ayuda's response demonstrates a step in the right direction, the fact that the organization has knowingly served LGBT clients in the past underscores the growing need for cultural competency training for staff members across all domestic violence service providers.

Although SAFE does not offer LGBT specific services, the agency's response indicated that it offers the same services to all survivors. SAFE's response also mentioned that its staff was able to provide referrals to LGBT specific programs depending on an individual's needs. SAFE's list of referral partners included the

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<sup>67</sup> “La Clinica del Pueblo is a non-profit, federally qualified health center that serves the Latino and immigrant populations of the Washington, DC metro area. Our mission is to provide culturally appropriate health services to persons in the Latino community regardless of their ability to pay.” <http://www.lcdp.org/template/page.cfm?id=13>

following organizations: the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League, Whitman Walker Clinic, Break the Cycle, and WEAVE. SAFE's response also indicated that it was “the only program in the city that houses straight men, gay men and transgender clients without question or differing accommodations.” Unfortunately, due to the poor response rate to the Same-Sex IPV Inventory, the researcher was unable to validate the basis of this claim. However, it was heartening to know that SAFE recognized the importance of providing equal housing opportunities to all survivors of intimate partner violence.

Break the Cycle and WEAVE were the only two participant agencies to report offering LGBT specific services. BTC's services included “legal representation at CPO hearings and custody hearings, specialized training for MPD on issues such as identifying the primary aggressor and laws unique to LGBTQ survivors and Know Your Rights Workshops for LGBT young people.” The LGBT specific services offered by BTC focused on improving education and providing legal representation for survivors, while attempting to reduce the institutional barriers facing LGBT survivors. However, BTC did not mention providing any direct support services.

WEAVE offered “legal assistance, counseling, case management, and support groups” for LGBT survivors. The agency also sponsored a specific legal project that focused on the needs of LGBT survivors and hosted support groups “specifically for LGBTQ survivors.” WEAVE's response also indicated that individual counseling and case management were provided to LGBT survivors but were not “specifically geared toward them.” However, if a survivor requested an LGBT specific therapist, WEAVE was prepared to “refer folks to a small list of therapists in the community who we trust.”

Like Break the Cycle, WEAVE's LGBT specific services provided legal representation and addressed the institutional barriers to services for LGBT survivors. However, WEAVE was unique in its provision of direct services, including counseling, support groups, and mental health referrals.

*Subtheme 3d: Promoting LGBT specific cultural competency training*

The Same-Sex IPV Inventory asked service providers if they had staff trained to provide culturally competent services for LGBT survivors. Agencies that responded "yes" were asked if all staff were trained, or if certain staff members were responsible for taking the lead on LGBT issues. When agencies responded in the negative they were asked to provide referrals for agencies that did have staff trained on LGBT cultural competency. Only two participants, DV LEAP and Ayuda, did not have cultural competency training for staff members. However, DV LEAP provided referral information for WEAVE.

Three of the five participant domestic violence agencies had LGBT cultural competency training for their entire staff. Break the Cycle reported that all of its staff members were trained but did not expand on its answer. SAFE responded that it was expected that "any and all of SAFE's staff would be able to provide services in a respectful and meaningful way to any member of [our] service populations." SAFE ensured that this was possible by requiring staff and volunteers to receive LGBT specific training "both at their initial 40 hour training and in periodic in-service trainings to provide culturally competent services."

WEAVE was perhaps the most well-known domestic violence service provider in the District that provided services specifically for LGBT survivors. WEAVE indicated

that its entire staff was trained in LGBT cultural competency; however, one staff member was specifically the lead on LGBT work. WEAVE's website conveyed the organization's pride in its accomplishments: “few organizations around the country have services specifically tailored to LGBT survivors and only four (including WEAVE) have full time staff dedicated to addressing the legal needs of LGBT survivors.”

### **Summary**

As evidenced by the themes in this chapter, collaboration is ultimately needed to establish a comprehensive response to LGBT intimate partner violence. The Washington, DC community works collectively to improve access to resources for LGBT survivors: the need for and willingness to provide services are evident. Yet, issues related to funding, capacity, and sustainability often thwarted these collaborative efforts from making the progress necessary to fully support LGBT survivors of abuse. Nonetheless, the three participant groups in this study worked collaboratively to educate communities and raise awareness about IPV, help protect LGBT victims by educating police, and help survivors seek protection by advocating for legal equality and promoting LGBT specific education among domestic violence service providers. Most importantly, these group efforts were almost entirely volunteer-based, which highlighted the practical barriers to building institutionally permanent resources. The final chapter will revisit the themes outlined in this chapter and discuss the importance of collaboration to accomplishing the objective within each research area.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender survivors of intimate partner violence encounter numerous barriers to recognizing abuse within their relationships, reporting abuse to law enforcement, and seeking protection from abusive relationships. The first objective in building a response to LGBT intimate partner violence is to define the problem and identify the groups most likely to respond (West, 2002; Rogers in Leventhal & Lundy, 1999, p. 118). Defining the problem of intimate partner violence requires such actions as conducting empirical research on the prevalence and incidence of violence, as well as the characteristics and dynamics of violence between LGBT partners (Leventhal & Lundy, 1999; West, 2002). Quantifying the prevalence of violence among LGBT partners is challenging because of stigmas related to identity, which form substantial barriers to the recognition and disclosure of abuse by LGBT individuals. When LGBT survivors report abuse or attempt to access support services, they face the dual stigmas of “coming out” both as LGBT individuals, as well as survivors of intimate partner violence.

The second objective in building a response to IPV is to develop outreach and education efforts that specifically address LGBT communities (Kulkin et al., 2007; West, 2002; McClennan, 2005). Research suggested that education efforts should address the issue of denying IPV within LGBT communities by providing information about the

characteristics, prevalence and dynamics of abuse, the role of homophobia and substance abuse in same-sex abuse, and other factors contributing to IPV (West, 2002, p. 127).

The purpose of this study was two-fold. The primary objective was to analyze the ongoing efforts of LGBT advocates, law enforcement, and domestic violence service providers to improve access to resources for LGBT survivors. This study concentrated its primary analysis on three research areas: 1) raising awareness and educating communities about LGBT IPV, 2) helping LGBT survivors report abuse to law enforcement, and 3) helping LGBT survivors seek immediate protection from abusive relationships. This study identified the specific strategies used to educate, protect, support, and advocate for LGBT survivors in Washington, DC.

The secondary objective of this study was to highlight successes in the collaborative process in these three research areas, as well as to uncover impediments to successful collaboration and outreach to victims and survivors. Previous research indicated that collaborative community organizing could benefit the efforts to serve and support LGBT survivors. Therefore, this study analyzed the collaborative community efforts in Washington, DC and found that improving access to resources for LGBT survivors of intimate partner violence was best served by the following practices: establishing cooperative collaborations among the groups responsible for educating, protecting, and supporting LGBT survivors; utilizing the combined expertise of participants in the collaboration to formulate productive and context specific responses; maintaining an open dialogue among participants in the collaboration; and establishing



legal, institutional, and community support for improving access to resources for LGBT survivors.

### **Discussion of Major Findings**

Formulating a comprehensive community response to LGBT intimate partner violence requires extensive education and collaboration among LGBT individuals and advocates, law enforcement, and domestic violence service providers. The materials included in this study could not have been developed and implemented without some degree of cooperation among these groups. This discussion revisits the recommendations offered by previous research studies and provides an analysis focusing on two questions: what strategies are used to accomplish the stated objective within each research area and why is collaboration necessary to accomplishing the objective?

The Rainbow Response Coalition (The Coalition) figured prominently in this research study. The Coalition's successes are largely the result of its collaborative makeup. The Coalition's core membership includes representatives from domestic violence housing and service providers; attorneys and policy analysts; GLLU affiliates; students, researchers, and individual advocates. Perhaps most importantly, the Coalition's membership includes individual LGBT survivors, whose input is critical to informing a comprehensive community response.

#### **Research Area 1: Raising Awareness and Educating Communities about LGBT Intimate Partner Violence**

The first research area analyzed three materials developed by the Coalition: 1) the 2009 Report on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV Report), 2) the testimony on hate crimes, and 3) questions from the Wheel Game. The results from this research area

revealed five core strategies used by advocates to raise awareness and educate communities about LGBT intimate partner violence.

Engaging communities in a conversation about LGBT IPV was the first strategy advocates used to raise awareness and promote education. The Coalition uses its Wheel Game to engage with LGBT individuals and begin a conversation that promotes a collaborative exchange of knowledge. Previous research suggested that extensive education and outreach campaigns should be directed toward the LGBT communities, specifically at conferences and events that attracted large gatherings of LGBT individuals (West, 2002, p. 126). The Coalition promotes education at numerous events in DC that specifically cater to the LGBT communities, including DC Capital Pride, Black Pride, and Youth Pride. Washington, DC hosted the nation's third largest Pride festival in 2010 with an estimated 250,000 people in attendance (Chibbaro, 2010).

Well-attended LGBT community events of these kinds are beneficial arenas to engage communities in a conversation about IPV for two reasons. First, advocates are able to reach large numbers of LGBT individuals at one time: a rare opportunity to reach this geographically diverse population. Individuals generally attend LGBT community events with a group of friends. This group experience is particularly evident during Capital Pride, when groups of LGBT individuals and their allied friends and family members attend events in solidarity, support, and celebration of the communities. Promoting education at LGBT events allows for group discussion and peer education about IPV in a positive environment. The Wheel Game facilitated this interaction, which allowed participants and their acquaintances to engage in conversations about their own

experiences and ideas regarding abuse. This collaborative exchange provided advocates with insight on community perceptions of LGBT abuse. At the same time, participants were able to ask questions of Coalition members, who provided culturally competent education and information about LGBT friendly resources. Advocates collaborated with LGBT community members in order to identify gaps in information and provide education that addressed these educational needs.

Second, LGBT community events are unique in the way they structure organizational participation: a variety of LGBT organizations are situated side-by-side representing a diversity of issues and concerns. Promoting outreach and education at LGBT community events is an effective strategy for raising awareness about IPV because it allows individuals to see the Coalition situated alongside other prominent LGBT organizations. This gives the appearance that LGBT intimate partner violence is an issue that is already included and embraced by the advocacy communities. The appearance of community inclusion is particularly important due to the stigmas and silence surrounding intimate partner violence. These venues also present an opportunity for advocates to engage with LGBT individuals and allies in a safe and welcoming environment.

The Coalition recognized the unique opportunity for outreach at LGBT community events and utilized these venues to collect data for its 2009 IPV Report. Advocates collaborated with community members to raise awareness about the prevalence of abuse within LGBT communities and identify the appropriate objectives for education and outreach. The Coalition engaged communities in a conversation by distributing surveys that asked LGBT individuals about their experiences with abuse. The

surveys asked respondents directly if they had ever been in an abusive LGBT relationship and included detailed questions about different types of abuse. This was an effective way to raise awareness about the issue because LGBT individuals are rarely asked about their experiences with abuse.

The surveys also asked participants whether they believed IPV should be a priority in the LGBT communities. In addition to quantifying the prevalence and defining the characteristics of LGBT abuse, these surveys measured the receptiveness of LGBT individuals to prioritize IPV as a community problem. Although only 30% of respondents from DC reported having been in an abusive LGBT relationship, 87% of respondents from DC indicated that addressing LGBT domestic and dating violence should be a priority in the LGBT communities. These statistics suggest that even if individuals have not personally encountered abuse, an overwhelming majority of LGBT respondents are receptive to prioritizing the issue when they are made aware of its existence.

Dispelling stereotypes and clarifying misconceptions about IPV was the second strategy advocates used to make education accessible to LGBT communities. The Coalition's Wheel Game includes several questions that address stereotypes related to heteronormativity, specifically in regards to the misconception that partner abuse is more common in relationships where partners embody "traditional" gender roles. Misconceptions of this nature are harmful because LGBT individuals are less likely to identify abuse within their relationships when their experiences do not match heteronormative definitions of abuse. In the same vein, LGBT communities may not recognize or take seriously accusations against abusers who do not fit the stereotypical

conception of an abuser. The Wheel Game’s myth-busting statement clarified that partner abuse is “fundamentally related to exerting power and control over another individual through the use of emotional abuse, economic control, use of weapons and threats” and thus had little to do with heteronormative gender roles. Moving away from traditional, heteronormative conceptions of domestic violence is an effective way to promote education within the LGBT communities and help individuals recognize and take seriously the warning signs of abuse.

The Coalition’s testimony on hate crimes clarified the misconception that bias related crimes were the greatest violent threat to LGBT individuals. Raising awareness about IPV alongside a more publicized issue like hate crimes allowed the Coalition to engage community members who otherwise may not have known about or considered the issue. Moreover, the testimony helped raise awareness about the issue among the groups responsible for protecting and supporting LGBT survivors. While acknowledging the importance of having a “frank and honest discussion” about hate crimes and prevention, the Coalition reiterated the statistic that domestic violence cases comprised the majority of the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit’s caseload: “Knowing that the majority of cases handled by the GLLU are domestic violence related, it is imperative that domestic violence be included in any discussion concerning the LGBT community, prevention, and police response.”<sup>68</sup> Providing evidence that IPV is a statistically relevant threat to LGBT communities may encourage LGBT advocates and individuals to begin viewing intimate partner violence as a community problem. Moreover, publicizing the statistic that GLLU

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<sup>68</sup> Appendix F

officers respond to more IPV cases than they do hate crimes may encourage LGBT individuals to view IPV as an equal, if not more significant, threat to the communities as hate crimes.

Demonstrating the similarities between LGBT and heterosexual abuse was the third strategy advocates used to promote education around LGBT intimate partner violence. Specifically, advocates demonstrated the similarities in characteristics and prevalence of abuse. Findings from the Coalition's 2009 IPV Report revealed that "emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual violence" were the most common types of abuse reported by survey respondents. These three characteristics of abuse are among the most common forms of abuse reported by both heterosexual and LGBT survivors. Demonstrating similarities in the characteristics of abuse allows advocates to establish a frame of reference for IPV that presents the characteristics and dynamics of power and control in more inclusive terms. This recognition also should lead to recognition of the need for LGBT specific education and resources.

The Coalition's IPV Report also demonstrated the similarities in prevalence of abuse: 28% of all respondents reported having been in an abusive relationship. This percentage falls within the range of common estimations of abuse reported in heterosexual relationships. Moreover, these findings were consistent across state demographics: 30% of DC respondents, 27% of Maryland respondents, and 24% of Virginia respondents reported having experienced intimate partner violence (IPV Report, 2009). By collaborating with community members to report their experiences with abuse, the Coalition was able to provide statistical evidence that IPV is a serious in many LGBT

communities; these statistical findings corroborate the need for LGBT specific education and resources.

The fourth strategy advocates used to raise awareness and promote education was providing concrete examples of LGBT specific abuse and the barriers to accessing support services. Previous research suggested that LGBT individuals were more likely to connect with the issue when abuse was framed in terms specific to their experiences. This is particularly relevant for LGBT youth, many of who may not fully understand or openly reveal their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Moreover, because multiple identities intersect to influence an individual's experience of IPV, research showed that a special effort should be made to target adolescents and people of color in the LGBT communities (West, 2002; Leventhal & Lundy, 1999). As such, advocates in DC focused on addressing the unique needs and concerns of adolescents and people of color in the LGBT communities.

The Coalition made a concerted effort to recognize the diversity of LGBT communities by participating in events such as Youth Pride and Black Pride. Black Pride is a five-day celebration known to draw as many as 30,000 attendees, though in recent years attendance dropped to around 15,000 (Walker, D., 2011). Youth Pride is a one-day event that specifically focuses on LGBT youth. The Coalition's Wheel Game included a question that asked participants to identify the warning signs of an unhealthy relationship. One of the correct answers included the partner "reading your texts, emails, or Facebook without your permission." To date, teenagers have nearly unlimited access to their peers via the use of text messages, email, Facebook, and other forms of social media.

Promoting education that appropriately addresses the experiences of LGBT youth is vital in helping them recognize the warning signs of unhealthy relationships and identify abusive behavior.

The fifth strategy advocates used to raise awareness and promote education was emphasizing the equal legal protections available to LGBT survivors in Washington, DC. Findings from the 2009 IPV Report helped define the objectives and strategies that advocates used to raise awareness about IPV by highlighting gaps in information and revealing the need for education on LGBT legal rights. For example, the Coalition's surveys asked respondents if they believed domestic violence laws in DC applied equally to both LGBT relationships and heterosexual relationships: 40% of respondents answered "yes," 37% answered "no," and 23% of respondents were unsure. By collaborating with LGBT individuals to measure their knowledge of IPV laws, advocates were able to formulate a response that addressed the need for legal education.

The Coalition responded to the situation of the majority of respondents not knowing or being unsure by including legal information in their efforts to raise awareness and promote education. The Coalition specifically defines the legal protections available to LGBT individuals in all of its outreach and education efforts. The Wheel Game includes statements of fact such as: "the police must treat cases of LGBT partner violence the same way they treat heterosexual domestic violence," and "LGBT people can get protection orders from their abusers." The Coalition emphasizes equal legal protections in order to address the widespread uncertainty of legal protections available to LGBT individuals.



### Research Area 2: Helping Survivors Report Abuse to Law Enforcement

The second research area included three materials for analysis: 1) the

Metropolitan Police Department's Simulation and Training Environment Lab (SiTEL) Module, 2) the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit training module (GLLU Module), and 3) two interactive classroom training activities related to the GLLU Module. The analysis for research area two revealed four core strategies used to help survivors report abuse to law enforcement.

Emphasizing the mutual benefit of police training was the first strategy used to help survivors report abuse to law enforcement. Previous research indicated that LGBT survivors of IPV were less likely to report abuse than heterosexual female survivors because of the tendency for police officers to minimize the seriousness of abuse between same-sex partners, fail to make an arrest or intervene, ignore standard domestic violence protocol requiring them to identify and arrest the primary aggressor, and mis-report same-sex IPV incidents as "mutual fights" (Bentley et al., 2007, p. 380). Emphasizing the mutual benefit of police training is vital because police officers are constantly inundated with information on the proper procedures for responding to reported crimes. Moreover, emphasizing the mutual benefit of police training fosters a positive environment for promoting collaborative efforts. As such, advocates need to emphasize the mutual benefit to police officers in order to garner their support for implementing best practices and avoiding mis-action for LGBT victims.

The SiTEL Module sought to empower officers by explaining that they had the ability to alter the LGBT communities' perception of and trust in law enforcement. The module explained that an officer's action on the scene could "greatly determine whether a

member of the [LGBT] community will call the police in the future.”<sup>69</sup> Yet, advocates must publicize their collaborative efforts with the police department so that LGBT communities are aware of these attempts to promote education: this may be the only way to begin altering negative perceptions of police within the communities. The required training in and of itself communicates an attempt to promote culturally competent education among officers in the District. Hopefully, these training courses will gain the publicity needed to begin shifting negative perceptions of law enforcement within LGBT communities. Additionally, publicizing LGBT training within the police department may raise awareness about the need for additional services and training among advocates, housing and service providers.

Combatting heterosexist assumptions and homophobic behavior was the second strategy advocates used to help survivors report abuse to law enforcement. Previous research suggested that individuals involved in helping professions needed to willingly address “their own issues with homophobia as well as to be clear of their own limits/bias surrounding both GLBT issues and intimate partner abuse” (Walsh quoted in Brown, 2008, p. 461). Before police officers can properly respond to incidents of LGBT IPV, they must first learn how to acknowledge the perspectives and lived experiences of LGBT individuals, as well as the diversity of LGBT relationships. Advocates in the District used two specific approaches to combat heterosexism and homophobia: LGBT 101 and Intro to Heterosexual Privilege.

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<sup>69</sup> Loudermilk, 2009, slide 9: Notes

Advocates are mindful to not make assumptions about their audiences' frame of reference when teaching law enforcement officers how to respond appropriately to cases of LGBT IPV. Instead, advocates begin the GLLU training courses with two modules that provide a lesson on LGBT 101: "Serving the GLBTQIA Communities in DC" and "GLBT Community Intro." These lessons are critical because law enforcement officers bring with them preconceived notions about gender identity and sexual orientation when they respond to IPV calls; this inevitably affects their responses to violence between LGBT partners. Explaining the difference between biological sex and gender is essential because the general public tends to view the terms "sex" and "gender" as synonyms rather than categories of varying identity. Framing gender in terms of self-identification provides police officers with a better understanding of the experiences of transgender individuals, whose biological sex does not align with their gender identity.

Additionally, explaining the differences between sexual orientation and gender identity allows advocates to demonstrate the diverse experiences of individuals within the LGBT communities and the need for officers to fully understand the different issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender victims of crime. Teaching LGBT 101 in a designated "safe space" allows officers to ask questions that may be inappropriate or counterproductive in the field: in turn, advocates are able to provide alternative methods to asking LGBT individuals how they self-identify. This instance of successful collaboration demonstrates the importance of confronting uncertainty about LGBT characteristics and helping officers understand the realities and experiences of LGBT individuals.

Intro to Heterosexual Privilege explains the status and privileges afforded to heterosexuals by virtue of their normative sexual orientation. Because heterosexuals benefit from the privileges of heteronormativity on a daily basis, they are less likely to identify heterosexism as a problem because it does not negatively impact their lives directly. The GLBT Community Intro Module defined heterosexual privilege as “the assumption of the inherent superiority of heterosexuality, and the obliviousness to the lives and experiences of LGBT people, and the presumption that all people are, or should be, heterosexual.” Heterosexual officers must acknowledge their own heterosexual privilege and recognize how that privilege may affect their assessments of LGBT IPV incidents.

Explaining the unique differences between IPV in heterosexual and LGBT relationships was the third strategy advocates used to help survivors report abuse. Specifically, advocates explained how these unique differences translate into challenges for the proper assessment of LGBT IPV cases. Because officers are trained to assess heterosexual IPV incidents, it is vital to encourage law enforcement to acknowledge their own preconceived notions about intimate partner violence, including stereotypes related to gender and size. Officers often have difficulty determining which person’s injuries are offensive and which person’s injuries are defensive in cases of LGBT IPV, particularly when partners are evenly matched in physical size and strength. When officers do not receive the proper training to determine the primary aggressor, they sometimes assume that LGBT abuse is mutual or that both parties participate equally in violence. This assumption is particularly troubling in light of mandatory arrest laws in Washington, DC,

which subject officers to the added pressure of the requirement to arrest one party in cases of IPV. In order to combat the harmful effects of such assumptions, LGBT advocates continually emphasize the notion that abuse cannot be mutual: IPV is fundamentally related to a sustained pattern of one partner exerting power and control over the other.

Demonstrating best practices was the final strategy advocates used to help survivors report abuse to law enforcement. Advocates utilize scenarios to help demonstrate best practices; these scenarios allow officers to practice their assessments of LGBT IPV incidents in an environment where advocates can evaluate educational needs and provide officers with information to help them better serve LGBT victims of crime. Advocates encourage officers to ask open and honest questions, even if the question may be incorrect or inappropriate: they reiterate the importance for officers to ask potentially harmful questions in a setting where advocates have the opportunity to intervene and provide alternative best practices. When a question arises that could lead to a counterproductive exchange in the field, advocates pause to explain why the question is misguided and provide an example of how the question can be asked alternatively. This collaborative process allows officers to ask questions and practice interrogation methods in a designated “safe space” where advocates can provide information to help officers respond to LGBT survivors sensitively and effectively.

When addressing heterosexism and homophobia among law enforcement, it is critical for advocates and educators to proceed in ways that do not alienate their audience, particularly when enlisting their help to combat oppression and inequality. Just as white

people often deny the privileges afforded to them by virtue of their white skin, heterosexuals fail to recognize the advantages associated with their “normative” sexual orientation. The failure to recognize privilege inhibits a meaningful discussion about individual accountability in combatting all forms of social oppression.

Peggy McIntosh explored the implications of unacknowledged societal privilege in her article, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” (1989). McIntosh turned her analysis inward to explain why people are often unwilling or unable to recognize their own privilege, “As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege which puts me at an advantage” (1989, p.10). This is problematic because unacknowledged privilege gives way to unconscious oppression:

After I realized the extent to which men work from a base of unacknowledged privilege, I understood that much of their oppressiveness was unconscious. Then I remembered the frequent charges from women of color that white women whom they encounter are oppressive. I began to understand why we are justly seen as oppressive, even when we don’t see ourselves that way. I began to count the ways in which I enjoy unearned skin privilege and have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence. My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. (McIntosh, 1989, p. 10)

In order to garner support for combatting homophobia, educators must frame heterosexual privilege in a way that empowers individuals to recognize their privilege and utilize this recognition to instill positive change.

In the GLLU training sessions, advocates acknowledge that some police officers are hearing terms such as heterosexism and heterosexual privilege for the first time. The training module explains that stereotypes regarding sexual orientation and gender identity are learned through personal experience or “lack of firsthand experience and indirectly from parents, teachers, peers, and mass media.” Communicating to the audience that homophobic stereotypes often result from learned behavior or lack of exposure is a positive way to frame the discussion. By presenting the information in this way, audience members are less likely to feel blamed for their role in believing or accepting stereotypes. Moreover, this instance of collaboration emphasizes the importance of recognizing and rejecting heterosexism and homophobia in order to serve LGBT victims positively and effectively.

### Research Area 3: Helping LGBT Survivors Seek Immediate Protection

The third research area included three materials for analysis: 1) the Coalition’s comments to the Office of Human Rights (OHR), 2) responses to the Same-Sex IPV Inventory, and 3) policies provided by Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (SAFE) and Washington Empowered Against Violence (WEAVE).

The first theme in this research area analyzed “equal” rights to emergency housing. The District has a number of laws that provide equal housing rights to LGBT

survivors. The Human Rights Act<sup>70</sup> prevents housing facilities from discriminating against individuals based on their status as a victim of an intrafamily offense, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression. Previous research indicated that one of the most important ways to improve access to support for LGBT survivors is to establish policies and laws that are inclusive of LGBT individuals (West, 2002; Leventhal & Lundy, 1999; Kulkin et al., 2007). However, domestic violence housing in the District is severely limited. When there are only 96 beds available for survivors, LGBT individuals are more likely to be turned away for issues related to capacity than they are discrimination. As a result, collaborative efforts to serve LGBT survivors often fall short due to insufficient financial and physical resources rather than insufficient interest from service providers.

Considering the lack of adequate emergency housing, this study analyzed the “equal” alternatives available in the District: hotel vouchers and homeless shelters. When discussing “equal” alternatives to emergency housing, it is important to remember that domestic violence shelters provide a myriad of survivor services including legal advice, safety planning, and mental healthcare. These support services are necessary to provide both immediate and long-term protection to survivors. For example, survivors can obtain protection orders against their abusers; however, many individuals are unsure of how to navigate the legal process of obtaining a protection order. It is for this very reason that most domestic violence shelters provide legal advice or partner with other agencies that

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<sup>70</sup> The Human Rights Act (HRA) of 1997<sup>70</sup> established nondiscrimination policies pertaining to housing and public accommodations, including domestic violence shelters.



offer legal services. Moreover, many LGBT individuals are unaware that they have equal legal protections under IPV and housing laws in DC.

As the results of this study illustrate, hotel vouchers and homeless shelters are not equal alternatives—for any survivor of abuse—because they fail to provide the same support services offered by domestic violence shelters. Domestic violence shelters and service providers offer support groups, counseling, and other mental health services to help survivors recover from the emotional trauma of abuse. Moreover, domestic violence shelters guarantee physical safety by maintaining confidential locations and installing various security mechanisms to ensure the safety of shelter residents. As the Coalition aptly concluded in their comments to the Office of Human Rights, “separate and in this case fundamentally different services are not equal.”

Despite the overall lack of equal alternatives to emergency housing in the District, domestic violence service providers made an effort to provide equal services to LGBT individuals. The participants in this study unanimously reported an awareness of and willingness to support LGBT survivors. However, the widespread lack of financial resources for domestic violence services in general highlighted the practical limits to successful collaborations.

The third theme in this research area related to accessing support from domestic violence agencies. The subthemes within described the strategies that agencies used to improve access to their existing services for LGBT survivors. Adopting broad and/or gender-neutral nondiscrimination policies was the first strategy domestic violence agencies used to promote inclusivity. Previous research indicated that domestic violence

service professionals needed to be educated about LGBT IPV and trained to use inclusive language when referring to domestic violence (Kulkin et al., 2007, p. 85). Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment's (SAFE) official definition of the clients it serves is stated broadly to include "absolutely anyone" who is a victim of domestic violence. While this strategy is an adequate starting point for promoting inclusivity, service providers need to explicitly address discrimination and respond by establishing written and spoken language that includes the experiences of LGBT individuals (West, 2007; Leventhal & Lundy, 1999). Break the Cycle and Washington Empowered Against Violence (WEAVE) accomplished this by establishing nondiscrimination policies that provided explicit protections for individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Another strategy of domestic violence agencies to help LGBT survivors seek protection is to avoid serving abusers. Hopefully, the adoption of gender-neutral conflict policies is evidence of a shift away from the assumption that agencies are screening primarily for heterosexual male abusers. SAFE's conflict policy is gender neutral, which allows SAFE to "screen for abusers generally to ensure that we are not assisting the wrong party." Gender-neutral conflict policies may encourage agency staff to move away from heteronormative assumptions in their conflict assessments. However, further education is needed to fully understand and respond to the needs of LGBT survivors.

Promoting LGBT specific cultural competency training was the last tactic used to help LGBT survivors report abuse. Three out of five participant agencies reported having cultural competency training for its staff. SAFE required its staff and volunteers to participate in LGBT cultural competency training "both at their initial 40 hour training

and in periodic in-service trainings to provide culturally competent services.” Break the Cycle and WEAVE also reported that staff members participated in cultural competency training on LGBT communities. Every participant in this research area reported a willingness to work with LGBT individuals in their responses to the Same-Sex IPV Inventory; most participants already sponsored efforts to help LGBT survivors seek immediate protection. Yet, as this study and so many before it have demonstrated, insufficient financial and physical resources are two of the most significant barriers to providing services for LGBT individuals.

As this study demonstrates, successful responses to LGBT IPV require legal, administrative, and community support, as well as extensive education and collaboration. The collaborative efforts in this study demonstrate the concrete potential of grassroots community organizing to build a successful response to LGBT intimate partner violence. However, financial resources are needed to bolster these collaborative community responses and to implement resources that are sustainable and institutionally permanent.

### **Limitations**

One of the most significant limitations to this study was the limited response rate from domestic violence service providers. Despite the researcher’s best efforts, only five agencies responded to the Same-Sex IPV Inventory, accounting for less than 50% of the District’s twelve core domestic violence agencies. As a result, the findings for the research area three were limited and not statistically representative of the District’s domestic violence response community.

Another limitation to this study was the lack of statistical and demographic information available on the LGBT communities in the District. Consequently, there were limitations in the analysis due to lack of information on race, class, nationality, sex/gender, disability, and other intersecting identities. This study intentionally “homogenized” the LGBT communities by emphasizing the similarities in their experiences, without addressing the differences. As mentioned in the Review of Literature, homogenization is a political strategy used to demonstrate that LGBT individuals experience inequality and thus encounter barriers to accessing services (Fish, 2007). The lack of demographic information on the LGBT communities limited this study’s ability to examine LGBT IPV within the larger context of structural forms of violence and oppression including racism, sexism, and poverty.

A related limitation was the lack of intersectional scholarly research on LGBT intimate partner violence. With very few exceptions, most studies on LGBT IPV relied on language such as “same-sex” IPV, which erased the experiences of some transgender and bisexual individuals, while other studies neglected to include a discussion on the implications of race, class, culture, religion and ethnicity. This was a substantial limitation because these marginalized identities intersect with the influences of sexual orientation and gender identity to affect reporting practices and disparities in access to support services.

In order to formulate effective protection and support for LGBT survivors, there needs to be an analysis of the intersections of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, class, disability, religion, and immigration status to understand the additional factors that impact

experiences of abuse and prevent individuals from accessing services. An intersectional approach to this study was critically needed to contextualize the diverse issues affecting individuals within the LGBT communities and the differential impact on individuals' reporting practices and help seeking behaviors. Other factors to consider were the disclosure or nondisclosure of sexual orientation and/or gender identity; bisexual individuals' experiences of abuse with opposite sex partners; transgender individuals' experience of abuse with partners whose gender aligns with their biologically assigned sex; as well as the dynamics of interracial/interethnic relationships.

Another limitation related to the institutional instability of the materials analyzed in this study. This limitation became increasingly evident in the wake of one significant event that occurred in the beginning of 2012: the closing of Washington Empowered Against Violence (WEAVE). WEAVE was the only domestic violence service provider in the District that provided direct services for LGBT individuals; its closing was evidence of the institutional challenges that inhibit responses to LGBT survivors. In February 2012, WEAVE announced that it would close its doors and cease operations by March 31, 2012. WEAVE's official website attributed the decision to financial difficulties, stating that WEAVE was affected by "the same challenges facing other non-profits in today's economic climate" (2012). The decision significantly impacted DC's domestic violence response community: in 2011, WEAVE provided legal and counseling services to around 350 clients (WEAVE, 2012). The organization notified clients of the decision a week in advance and worked to transfer their clients to other agencies

(Thomas-Lester, 2012). However, WEAVE's closing was evidence of the limited capacity of domestic violence services in the District.

An article in *The Washington Post* alleged WEAVE's closing was related to possible mismanagement of funds and cited tension among the staff and leadership within the organization (Thomas-Lester, 2012). The *Washington Post* article reported WEAVE lost two substantial grants over concerns that funds were not being used for the designated purposes: the DC Office of Victim Services rescinded a \$100,000 grant and the D.C. Bar Foundation withdrew a \$170,000 grant (Thomas-Lester, 2012). Despite the implications of misconduct that accompanied allegations of mismanaged funds, the article suggested that WEAVE's financial challenges were related to inexperience rather than malice.

Melissa Hook, head of the Office of Victim Services, was quoted as saying "there were questions raised about the billing process. We are withholding judgment until we see what develops" (Thomas-Lester, 2012). Comments from an unnamed DC government official supported Hook's resistance to pass judgment, "it's not that anybody thinks the money was stolen, just that because of inexperience, things were billed that the funds weren't allocated for" (Thomas-Lester, 2012). The closing of WEAVE highlights the limitations related to financial resources and institutional capacity.

The final limitation was related to the fact that almost every piece of material analyzed in this study was developed on an entirely volunteer basis. Similarly, participants in this study enacted responses to LGBT IPV in spite of the numerous obstacles impeding their progress. Like most LGBT advocacy groups in the District, the

Coalition is not an incorporated nonprofit, and its continued existence relies entirely upon the time, commitment, and willingness of its limited volunteer base. Moreover, volunteers from the Coalition and the other LGBT advocacy organizations must sacrifice time from their paid jobs to facilitate police trainings, which typically occur during the traditional workweek. This limitation became evident when the Metropolitan Police Department requested LGBT 101 training for every recruit class entering the academy: a request that advocates were unable to meet. Although the request for additional training was undoubtedly positive to the larger goal of improving access to resources for LGBT survivors, it served to highlight the limited capacity of volunteer organizations and the related barriers to successful collaboration when funding issues arise.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the results of the study, there were several recommendations for future research. In order to improve access to resources for LGBT survivors, there must be a legal obligation for law enforcement and service providers to ensure their services are equally accessible to LGBT individuals. A recommendation for future research is to monitor the status of legal equality for LGBT individuals and determine whether legal equality translates into increased protections for LGBT survivors of IPV. Specifically, it would be beneficial for future research to examine IPV laws in states that have passed marriage equality and determine whether marriage equality is linked to other kinds of equal legal protection, including support for IPV survivors.

Another recommendation for future research is to identify creative alternative strategies for establishing resources in communities where advocates encounter

institutional barriers or disinterest from public officials and lawmakers. One issue that was discussed frequently in this study, and many others, was the significant lack of standardized data collection on LGBT intimate partner violence. The Coalition responded to the lack of official reporting by conducting an independent quantitative analysis of LGBT intimate partner violence in the District. The 2009 IPV Report was the first of its kind in DC, which serves as a reminder that most research on LGBT intimate partner violence is isolated and thus limited in its ability to demonstrate actual prevalence. Further collaboration with LGBT individuals is needed to quantify their experiences with abuse, demonstrate prevalence across different communities, and subsequently articulate the objectives for meeting survivor needs.

The Coalition has leveraged its collaborative relationship with the police department to begin collecting data on LGBT intimate partner violence. Although MPD has not started to officially track LGBT IPV as the Coalition requested, the department agreed to forward dispositions (police reports) to its members. The Coalition documented more than 100 cases of LGBT intimate partner violence between August 2011 and November 2012. Although standardized reporting throughout the department would surely produce a more thorough quantification, the Coalition implemented a creative alternative strategy to begin raising awareness about the prevalence of the problem. A related recommendation is for volunteer organizations to focus on increasing the capacity of their volunteer base through exposure, partnerships, and outreach, or move towards incorporating and establishing a permanent nonprofit.



Another recommendation for future research is to focus on identifying different strategies for building cooperative networks and coalitions among advocates, law enforcement, government officials and domestic violence service providers. The success of the materials in this study relied heavily upon the corporative relationships established among the groups responsible for providing services to survivors. Advocates and researchers should turn the discussion toward identifying the points of contact needed to green-light LGBT survivor services and develop strategies for building relationships with these individuals. LGBT advocates should also communicate with advocates in other communities to learn from the successes and failures of their efforts and share different strategies for coalition building.

A final recommendation for future research is to conduct case studies within varied constituencies of LGBT survivors to determine how different marginalized identities intersect to influence the experiences of abuse and barriers to accessing services. Specifically, researchers should focus on the experiences of people of color and the implications of racism; immigrant people and the implications of citizenship; bisexual people and their experiences with abusive opposite sex partners; and transgender people and their experiences with abusive partners whose gender aligns with their biologically assigned sex.

## **Conclusions**

Notwithstanding limitations of resources and the paucity of statistical data on the diverse LGBT communities, this study of collaborative work serves as a successful model on many fronts. Analyses of the three major research areas demonstrate that

raising awareness and educating communities about LGBT IPV, helping LGBT survivors report abuse to law enforcement, and helping LGBT survivors seek immediate protection from abusive relationships involve creative strategies for building a collaborative community response to LGBT intimate partner violence. Results from this study lead to four major conclusions about the collaborative process.

The first conclusion is that improving access to resources requires collaboration among the groups responsible for educating, protecting and supporting survivors, as well as those who advocate for LGBT equality. In order to address the issue of LGBT intimate partner violence at every level, LGBT individuals and advocates, law enforcement, and domestic violence service providers must develop functional, cooperative relationships. Participants should engage in reflexivity and collaborate to ensure they have the knowledge and resources needed to develop education and services that are truly inclusive and culturally competent.

In order to protect and support LGBT survivors, advocates must solicit the cooperative participation of stakeholders who have the authority needed to implement institutional responses. For example, helping LGBT survivors report abuse requires the participation of law enforcement officers to respond sensitively and effectively to their calls for help. However, law enforcement must be willing and able to implement best practices for responding to LGBT victims of crime; this requires the department's cooperation to sponsor education and systematically train police officers. While these relationships may be challenging to establish, collaboration with law enforcement is ultimately necessary to implement training and ensure that education is institutionally

viable. Although the Coalition is fortunate to have Board members with strong ties to local government and police officials, advocates in other communities can theoretically access these public servants. Building functional relationships with these groups is fundamental to improving services for LGBT survivors.

The second conclusion is that collaborations should utilize the combined expertise of participant groups to formulate productive and context specific responses to LGBT IPV. The Coalition utilizes the specialized knowledge of its individual members to develop educational materials reflective of its membership's combined expertise. The Coalition encompasses a wide range of perspectives and knowledge including that of LGBT survivors, policy analysts, attorneys, academics, researchers, and representatives from domestic violence service providers and the GLLU. The diversity of perspectives within its membership allows the Coalition to formulate strategies that are context specific and informed by the knowledge of both domestic violence experts and survivors.

For example, a Coalition member who specializes in domestic violence policy developed the MPD SiTEL Module. This individual brought with her the specialized knowledge of both the District's domestic violence laws, as well as the unique needs of LGBT survivors. This expert knowledge informed the SiTEL Module's educational content and ensured that it was legally sound and LGBT competent. A Coalition member who works as a researcher for a justice policy organization in the District was the primary author for the testimony on hate crimes. This individual understood how to frame the issue of intimate partner violence as a community problem related to unequal data collection and the prioritization of hate crimes. The researcher in this study collaborated

with these two individuals to author the Coalition's comments to the Office of Human Rights. By combining the expertise of its members, the Coalition effectively tailors its responses to suit its intended audience and thus maximizes the effectiveness of collaborative efforts.

Five advocacy organizations<sup>71</sup> collaborated to develop the materials presented during the three-day GLLU affiliate training sessions. Each advocacy organization was responsible for developing the training module in its area of expertise, with the exception of the GLBT Community Intro Module, which four LGBT organizations developed collaboratively.<sup>72</sup> Advocates from Break the Cycle and the Coalition collaborated to develop the IPV Module. As a result, this module reflects the Coalition's expert knowledge of LGBT survivor needs and service barriers, in combination with Break the Cycle's expertise in DC's domestic violence laws, survivor services, and police codes of conduct, as well as teen dating violence. Moreover, the primary author and facilitator for the IPV Module is a legal associate for Break the Cycle, who also serves on the Board of Directors for the Coalition. The specialized attention to detail in terms of legal language and knowledge is incredibly beneficial because the training materials speak to officers on their level, in their language. Additionally, a representative from SAFE generally attends the GLLU trainings to remind officers of the victim services available via the Court Advocacy Program (CAP) and the On Call Advocacy Program (OCAP).

A third conclusion is that collaborative efforts are more likely to succeed when an open dialogue is maintained among participants. The open dialogue between the GLLU

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<sup>71</sup> SMYAL, DCTC, Rainbow Response Coalition, Break the Cycle, and GLOV

<sup>72</sup> SMYAL, DCTC, Rainbow Response Coalition, and GLOV

and LGBT advocates has been well documented throughout this study. In addition to what has been previously mentioned, it is worth noting that GLLU trainees fill out evaluation forms after training sessions. This allows organizations to gain insight on the effectiveness of their training and to adjust their materials and presentations to reflect the officers' suggestions and thus increase effectiveness.

In keeping with the collaborative nature of the GLLU training sessions, members from each advocacy organization maintain an open dialogue by meeting regularly to debrief, discuss the successes and failures of the training sessions, and provide feedback on each training module. Moreover, members from each organization are generally cross-trained to facilitate every GLLU training module. This collaborative effort is crucial to sustaining the all-volunteer program: if an organization cannot send a member to facilitate, one of the other organizations is prepared to fill the gap so the training program will not suffer. Additionally, the Coalition has collaborated with these organizations to host "Train the Trainer" events to teach new volunteers how to facilitate police training and thus increase capacity for the GLLU volunteer training program.

The final conclusion is that legal, institutional, and community support are requisite foundations for improving access to resources for LGBT survivors. The District has a number of laws and policies that explicitly protect LGBT individuals and thus support the development and provision of services for LGBT survivors. Although every state has legislation defining domestic or intimate partner violence, these definitions vary drastically and most states do not provide the same level of protection for LGBT individuals.

According to the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Data Resource Center's (DVSADRC) National Summary of Domestic Violence Legislation (2012), four states specifically exclude same-sex partners from their definitions of domestic violence. Additionally, fourteen states exclude dating relationships from definitions of domestic violence and two states require sexual relationships to establish the defined relationship between parties (DVSADRC, 2012). Because domestic laws in the District provide equal protection for LGBT individuals, there is a legal obligation for law enforcement and service providers to respond. The materials analyzed in this study would not be as viable in a city or state that lacks legal support for protecting LGBT individuals.

Institutional support is another necessary component for responding to LGBT survivors. LGBT advocates in most communities do not have the same access to and support from law enforcement as do the advocates in Washington, DC. The very existence of the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit is relatively unique and only a few cities in the US have similar liaison units.<sup>73</sup> The GLLU promotes institutional support by responding to requests for data collection on LGBT IPV and agreeing to collaborate with advocates. GLLU sergeants started to forward police reports of LGBT IPV incidents to the Coalition so they can begin to track incidents independently. In many communities, establishing a similar cooperative relationship between law enforcement and advocates would be difficult, though not impossible.

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<sup>73</sup> Including Arlington, VA (<http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/Police/gllt.aspx>), Atlanta, GA (<http://www.atlantapd.org/lgbtliaison.aspx>), Austin, TX (<http://lgpoa-austin.org/>), and Philadelphia, PA ([www.facebook.com/lgbtpoliceliaison](http://www.facebook.com/lgbtpoliceliaison))

Another crucial underpinning for building a response to intimate partner violence is gaining support from LGBT individuals and advocates. LGBT advocates in the District were receptive of prioritizing intimate partner violence and consistently included the Coalition's participation in LGBT community events. This was a significant advantage because the Coalition would not be able to sponsor such a high level of education and outreach without the support of LGBT community advocates and inclusion in these community events. This community support is also related to the fact that the Coalition established its role as a leader among the District's LGBT advocacy communities. Following the aftermath of Chief Lanier's controversial decision to decentralize the GLLU, the Coalition co-hosted a GLLU Meet and Greet with Gays and Lesbians Opposing Violence and the DC Center (Najafi, 2010). Advocates invited members of the LGBT communities to attend the event and interact with GLLU officers to ease the mounting tension between the two groups.

In conclusion, this study of collaborative work serves as a successful model for understanding the environmental factors that promote and inhibit community responses to LGBT intimate partner violence. The collaborative efforts in Washington, DC highlight the critical need for social conditions that fortify equal responses to LGBT survivors, including culturally competent education, community support, legal support, institutional support, and financial support. These environmental elements need to be cultivated elsewhere for similar community responses to thrive. The participant groups in this study were largely successful in their efforts to improve LGBT survivor services despite the lack of financial and material resources.

Remarkably, participants compensated for material deficits by implementing creative strategies to build relationships with community stakeholders. By leveraging these relationships and working collaboratively with the groups responsible for protecting and supporting LGBT survivors, the participant groups in this study gained the status, access, and credibility needed to promote education and positive change within institutional support structures. This study described the educational strategies and successful collaborative processes that shaped community responses to LGBT IPV in Washington DC. Advocates can refer to this work as they begin to recognize and respond to the needs of LGBT survivors in their own communities.



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## APPENDIX A: Questions from the Rainbow Response Coalition's Domestic Violence Wheel Game

### Fill in the Blank Questions

(Correct answers are bolded and underlined)

1. The perpetrator's **apologies** and loving gestures in between the episodes of abuse can make it difficult to leave
2. In order to increase your **dependence** on him/her, an abusive partner will cut you off from the outside world
3. **Emotional abuse** is often minimized, yet it can leave deep and lasting scars
4. Perpetrators in same sex relationships use the same **power** and **control** tactics as heterosexual perpetrators
5. Many abusers use the immigration status of their partners as a way to **control** them
6. Societal **homophobia** may cause LGBTQ individuals to face additional obstacles to safety and services
7. Abusers commonly use **threats** to keep their partners from leaving or to scare them into dropping charges
8. Domestic violence and **substance abuse** are two different problems that each require specialized intervention
9. You do not need to be a **US citizen** to get a restraining order
10. **Healthy relationships** are based on the belief that two people in a relationship are partners with equal rights to have their needs met

### Multiple Choice Questions

(Correct answers are indicated by an asterisk and bold font)

1. When the abuser sets up the survivor so the survivor is bound to get the abuser angry. This is called:  
A. Normalcy  
B. Blaming the victim

- C. Tension building \***  
D. Fantasy/seduction
2. When a perpetrator spends a lot of time thinking about what you've done wrong and how they will make you pay, this is called
- A. Excuses  
B. Normalcy  
**C. Fantasy and planning\***  
D. Guilt
3. What percentage of pet owners experiencing IPV state that their pets were abused?
- A. 25%  
B. 10%  
**C. 71%\***  
D. 89%
4. Statistically, the chances of the abuser severely injuring or murdering their partner significantly escalates when the partner
- A. Tries to leave the relationship\***  
B. Does not cook dinner  
C. Forgets to do the laundry  
D. Tries to find a job
5. The abuser exhibits kind and loving behavior, which is also known as
- A. Tension building  
**B. Normalcy\***  
C. Fantasy  
D. The abuse
6. Children who witness domestic violence are at an increase risk for developing
- A. Gender identity issues  
B. STDs  
**C. PTSD\***  
D. Eating disorders
7. The single most identifiable risk factor for child abuse is
- A. Poverty  
**B. Domestic violence\***  
C. Parental drug abuse  
D. Race or ethnicity

8. When the perpetrator makes decisions for you and/or the family, tell you what to do, and expect you to obey without question, this is called
- A. Humiliation
  - B. Isolation
  - C. Dominance\***
  - D. Threats
9. The perpetrator lashes out with aggressive, belittling or violent behavior. This is called:
- A. Stalking
  - B. Set up
  - C. Abuse \***
  - D. Sex play
10. When the perpetrator rationalizes what he or she has done. These are:
- A. Set-up
  - B. Excuses\***
  - C. Normalcy
  - D. Guilt
11. A Civil Protection Order (CPO) can protect individuals from abuse by which of the following groups?
- A. Current/former intimate partners
  - B. Someone who is/was in a relationship w someone who you are/were in a relationship with
  - C. Roommates
  - D. all of the above\***
12. Which of the following is NOT an example of behavior in a healthy relationship?
- A. Sharing decision making
  - B. Needing to be with you 24/7\***
  - C. Letting me express my opinion without fear
  - D. Having great, consensual sex
13. How many LGBT victims of IPV get help from service providers?
- A. 1 in 3
  - B. 1 in 5\***
  - C. 1 in 2

14. Which of the following is NOT a stage in the cycle of abuse?
- A. Tension building stage
  - B. Honeymoon stage
  - C. Abusive incident
  - D. Resolution stage\***
15. Which of the following is not a common form of abuse?
- A. Physical abuse
  - B. Emotional abuse
  - C. Isolation
  - D. Cultural/identity abuse
  - E. None- all of the above are forms of abuse\***
16. LGBT youth are at a higher risk of dating violence than their straight peers- what percentage of LGBT youth report incidences of dating violence?
- A. 15%
  - B. 30%\***
  - C. 10%
  - D. 20%
17. Which of the following is NOT a behavioral indicator of abuse
- A. Extreme jealousy
  - B. Constant lying
  - C. Acting "masculine"\***
  - D. Cruelty to animals or children
18. Which of the following are warning signs of an unhealthy relationship?
- A. Restricting the people you hang out with
  - B. Threatening to out your sexual orientation, immigration, or HIV status
  - C. Reading your texts, emails, or face book without your permission
  - D. All of the above\***
19. What percentage of cases handled by the GLLU are related to DV?
- A. 50-60%
  - B. 20-30%
  - C. 40-50%
  - D. 75-80%\***
20. What percentage of LGBT relationships includes abuse?
- A. 10-15%

- B. 20-35%\***
- C. 25-30%
- D. 5-10%

#### True or False Questions

1. Perpetrators who withhold affection as a form of punishment are not displaying abuse
  - False: this is a form of sexual abuse
2. Obtaining a restraining order can increase a person's risk of harm from the batterer
  - True: anytime a survivor takes steps to disclose themselves from the batterer, they are increasing their risk
3. Transgender people are more likely to be perpetrators of abuse
  - False
4. Domestic violence is as common in straight relationships as it is in LGBTQ relationships
  - True: research indicates that the rate of DV in LGBTQ couples is the same as that in heterosexual couples (25-33%)
5. Perpetrators violent behavior can be caused by alcoholism and or drug use
  - False: substance abuse is often given as an explanation or excuse for violence. It may increase the likelihood of violence but it does not cause it
6. DV occurs primarily among gay men and lesbians who hang out at bars, are poor, or people of color
  - False: DV is a non-discriminatory phenomenon
7. The law provides equal protections for heterosexual, and LGBTQ victims of domestic violence
  - True
8. It really isn't violence when a same-sex couple fights. It's just a lover's quarrel or a fair fight between two equals
  - False: this is based on the false assumption that two people of the same gender have no power differences. It ignores the fact that DV depends on the choice of one partner to take advantage of his/her partner in abusive ways

9. A person who chooses to stay in a relationship cannot be trusted to make a wise decision with other life issues
  - False: even though survivors don't have control over violence, many find ways of keeping themselves as safe as possible. Sometimes this entails doing things that they may dislike or feel bad about or may seem wrong to an outsider
10. The batterer will usually be butch, bigger, and stronger. The victim will usually be femme, smaller, and weaker
  - False: size, weight, butch, femme, or any other physical attribute or role is not an indicator of whether or not a person will be a victim or a batterer
11. LGBT partners are more likely to equally participate in violence than are hetero partners
  - False- while LGBT survivors may be more likely to fight back in self-defense due to perceived equality, abuse in a relationship is never mutual
12. Partner abuse is about one person exerting power & control over another
  - True- IPV can be through emotional abuse, economic control, use of weapons, threats etc.
13. The police must treat cases of LGBT partner violence the same way that they treat hetero domestic violence
  - True
14. Battered LGBT persons are less likely to identify themselves as victims of IPV
  - True- LGBT IPV often remains unseen or invisible & therefore many individuals are overlooked and do not receive help. B/c DV is thought to occur most commonly in hetero relationships, those in the LGBT community may not even realize that they are experience abuse
15. It's easy to identify an abuser based on how they act in public
  - False- abusers are skillful manipulators, knowing how to present a good image so that abuse remains a secret
16. LGBT people experience less DV than hetero couples
  - False

17. The law does not protect survivors of DV who are in same-sex relationship
- Trick questions- varies by state.... DC does!
18. LGBT people can get protection orders from their abusers
- True- you can file for a CPO against someone who have dated or had a romantic or sexual relationship with
19. IPV is more common in het relationships than LGBT
- False- IPV occurs in 25-33% of LGBT relationships which is approximately equal to the prevalence of Hetero DV
20. Violence b/w two LGBT partners is a fair fight between two equals
- False- labeling violence as "mutual" or a "lovers quarrel" only minimizes and denies the severity of abuse w/in a relationship, which can lead to death.

#### Myth V. Fact Questions

**Myth-** LGBT abuse more common in relationships with gender "roles" butch/fem

**Fact-** partner abuse is not confined to gender roles

**Myth-** since women are more likely to be equal in size, the damage inflicted by the lesbian batterer is typically less than that inflicted by the male batterer's

**Fact-** women are capable of committing severe violence, some female batterers have stabbed, shot, brutally beaten and/or killed their partners

**Myth-** the law will not protect LGBT survivors

**Fact-** while there are no laws specific to LGBT persons, in the Washington-metro area existing DV, stalking, and other laws are applied in cases of LGBT IPV

**Myth-** it is generally easier for LGBT victims to leave an abuser or seek help

**Fact-** it is more difficult because LGBT survivors often fear not being taken seriously, being "outed" or fear how they will be treated by mainstream service providers

**Myth-** violence occurs in the LGBT community b/c of high rates of alcohol and drug use

**Fact-** ultimately, IPV is about exerting power over another. Substances DO NOT cause violence, but are a significant co-factor because they may lower inhibitions that may prevent someone from becoming violent

**Myth-** there is absolutely no difference b/w abuse in LGBT and het relationships



**Fact-** LGBT DV has unique factors that relate to homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and heterosexism within society. As a result there are often inadequate and insensitive support or resources available

**Myth-** LGBT partner abuse occurs primarily among women and men who are poor and/or people of color and those who frequent bars

**Fact-** ongoing abuse occurs in approximately 1/3 of relationships regardless of sex orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, religious affiliation, gender ID, birth sex etc.

## **APPENDIX B: Measurement Instruments**

For the first research area, raising awareness and educating communities about LGBT IPV, materials were coded to measure their response to the following barriers: lack of statistical prevalence of same-sex IPV, inaccessible models of intimate partner violence, stereotypes linking abusive behavior with masculinity, stereotypes that women are not violent, stereotypes that the victim is necessarily female/feminine and the abuser is male/masculine, misconceptions about the primary characteristic of abusers, stereotype that a fight between two men or two women constitutes a “fair fight”, misconception that same-sex abuse is mutual, framing IPV as a “private” issue, lack of awareness among LGBT community members, and a lack of awareness among LGBT advocates.

For the second research area, helping survivors report abuse, materials were coded and analyzed to measure their response to the following barriers: mistrust of law enforcement, inaccurate reporting, mis-arrests (failing to properly identify the primary aggressor and arresting the wrong party), dual arrests, police misconduct, homophobic/heterosexist attitudes, dynamics of abuse seen through the lens of heteronormativity, ambiguous policies with heteronormative language, tendency for same-sex abusers to exploit uncertainty about same-sex abuse, the “leniency hypothesis”, and difficulty identifying a primary aggressor.

For the third research area, helping victims procure immediate protection, materials were coded to measure their response to the following barriers: female-only domestic violence shelters, unequal access to emergency housing, barriers related to homeless shelters and hotels as emergency housing, lack of intake screening procedures for same-sex abusers, homophobic/heterosexist attitudes of staff members, heterosexist and ambiguous language/polices, perceiving same-sex IPV as less serious than opposite sex IPV, lack of LGBT specific support groups and lack of culturally competent legal counseling.

## **APPENDIX C: Same-Sex IPV Inventory**

1. Does your organization provide services or offer programs for male survivors?
  - A. If yes, what services or programs does your organization offer for men? (Please list)
  - B. If no, are you able to provide a referral for an organization that does serve male survivors? (Please include referral information)
2. Does your organization have a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and/or sexual orientation?
  - A. If yes, is a copy of the policy available to the public?
  - B. If no, what is your organization's eligibility criteria?
3. Does your organization offer services specifically geared towards gay and lesbian survivors?
  - A. If yes, what are the nature of those services (counseling, emergency housing, legal advice)? (Please list in detail)
  - B. If no, are you able to provide a referral for an organization that does offer LGBT specific services? (Please provide referral information)
4. Does your organization have staff trained to handle the specific needs of gay and lesbian survivors?
  - A. If yes, are all staff trained, or are certain staff members responsible?
  - B. If no, can you provide a referral for an organization that does have trained staff?

### **Additional Questions for Organizations with Shelters/ Emergency Housing Facilities**

1. Does your organization admit male survivors?
  - A. If yes, is there a separate facility?
  - B. If no, can you provide a referral for a shelter that does accept male residents? (excluding homeless shelters)
2. Does your organization have a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and/or sexual orientation?
  - A. If yes, what is the language of the policy?
  - B. If no, how do you select which clients are accepted?

3. Does your organization have a policy in place to protect a lesbian or bisexual woman from the possibility of her abuser accessing or being admitted to the same shelter?
  - A. If yes, please include a copy of this policy
  - B. If no, do you have any screening process for female abusers during the intake procedure?

## **APPENDIX D: Office of Human Rights Notice of Proposed Rulemaking**

The Director of the Office of Human Rights, pursuant to section 301(c) of the Human Rights Act of 1977, effective December 13, 1977 (D.C. Law 2-38; D.C. Official Code § 2-1403.01(c)(2001)), hereby gives notice of the intent to amend chapter 10 (Housing and Commercial Space) of title 4 (Human Rights) of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR).

The purpose of this amendment is to provide updated guidelines for transactions in real estate pertaining to dwelling and commercial space accommodations, especially those involving the protected category of status as a victim of an intrafamily offense. Specifically, this amendment would provide protection from eviction to victims of intrafamily offenses; provide release from a lease should a victim's safety be in jeopardy; and, generally, prohibit housing discrimination against victims of intrafamily offenses. The Director has also proposed a number of substantial additions with respect to the rights and responsibilities of housing providers and tenants and a number of clarifying amendments to other provisions of the chapter.

The Director also gives notice of the intent to take final rulemaking action to adopt these proposed rules not less than thirty (30) days from the date of publication of this notice in the D.C. Register.

Chapter 10 of title 4 DCMR is deleted in its entirety and amended to read as follows:

## CHAPTER 10: HOUSING AND COMMERCIAL SPACE

1000 General Provisions: Scope and Purposes

1001 Prohibited Practices

1002 Additional Protections for Victims of an Intrafamily Offense

1003 Exceptions

1004 Responsibilities of the Director

1099 Definitions

1003 EXCEPTIONS

### **1003.4**

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to prohibit any private or government supported educational institution, hospital, nursing home, homeless shelter, youth correctional institution, or other organization, with a bona fide business necessity to so do, from limiting occupancy or use of a dwelling on the basis of sex or age.

### **1003.6**

Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit a person engaged in the business of furnishing appraisals of residential real property from taking into consideration factors other than race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, family responsibilities, disability, matriculation, political affiliation, source of income, status as a victim of an intrafamily offense, or place of residence or business of any individual.

## **APPENDIX E: The Rainbow Response Coalition's Comments to the Office of Human Rights**

July 30, 2011  
Alexis Taylor, General Counsel  
Office of Human Rights  
441 4th St. NW, Suite 570N  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ms. Taylor:

The Rainbow Response Coalition writes to offer comments on the Office of Human Rights' (OHR) proposed regulations to provide guidance concerning housing discrimination and protections for victims of domestic violence. The Rainbow Response Coalition ("the Coalition") is a community-based organization dedicated to addressing intimate partner violence (IPV) in the Greater D.C. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) communities. The Coalition envisions a collective response to intimate partner violence within the LGBTQ communities where resources, support and education are accessible to all within the D.C. Metropolitan area. While we applaud the overall content of these regulations, and indeed think they will provide groundbreaking safety protections for victims and survivors, we would like to express our serious concern that the business exemption provision violates local and federal law and will disproportionately harm gay men and the transgender community.

Our interpretation of this provision is that it applies to homeless shelters, including domestic violence shelters. We speculate that the exemption is written into the regulations to allow for businesses or programs, such as domestic violence shelters, to continue to operate and exist without violating the DC Human Rights Act, including the current domestic violence housing law being applied. While the Coalition recognizes that the intention of this exemption is to provide a "safe space" for a woman leaving her abusive male partner, we strongly object to the underlying assumptions that domestic



violence is an issue that only affects heterosexual women, that only heterosexual women need access to safe shelter, and that the laws should not provide equal protection for heterosexual and LGBT victims.

Research has shown that IPV occurs at the same rate in heterosexual relationships as it does in LGBTQ relationships. In 2009, the Coalition released a groundbreaking report on intimate partner violence in the LGBTQ community based on surveys conducted over a year's time at various community events. This, the District's first report of its kind, confirmed what national research has shown: 28% of respondents self-identified as survivors of IPV. As society becomes more accepting of LGBTQ persons and affords them more legal rights, the number of individuals who come out will likely increase. As this demonstrates, there will be a growing need for domestic violence services and shelters that are capable of supporting and protecting all survivors of IPV, including LGBTQ persons.

Currently in the District and across much of the country, domestic violence shelters for men (including gay men) and transgender individuals do not exist. Consequently, gay men and transgender survivors who do not have a support network of family and friends, or the financial resources to flee domestic violence often find that hotel vouchers offered through traditional domestic violence shelters or the Crime Victims Compensation program are their only option for safe, emergency housing. Traditional single-sex homeless shelters are not safe options for men fleeing abuse: they don't have confidentiality protections in place nor are staff trained on how to handle the special safety needs of victims, and any person of the same sex could enter the shelter, thus leaving open the possibility of a gay male abusive partner finding and further harming his partner. This is problematic because survivors of IPV are in the most danger when they leave their abusers.

The federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Family Prevention & Services Act (FVPSA) both govern and regulate access to domestic violence shelter and services. Although the courts have interpreted VAWA provisions to allow for the use of hotel vouchers by domestic violence shelters to house men, FVPSA, recently

reauthorized, has not (because it has not been in effect long enough to be litigated). While hotel vouchers may solve the immediate need for shelter, transgender and male survivors of IPV do not have onsite access to traditional support services available to women at domestic violence shelters, such as counseling and legal advice. Separate, and in this case fundamentally different services are not equal. Once it is implemented, FVPSA will surely be litigated one day and we will finally have the courts interpretation of these provisions, but it is the Coalition's position that the current statutory language in FVPSA is very clear and requires that domestic violence shelters cannot discriminate on the basis of sex.

Finally, the sex exemption provision in the proposed housing regulations violates the other provisions in the DC Human Rights Act (HRA), which state that you cannot discriminate against individuals based on their sex, sexual orientation or gender identity in housing matters. There is only case law on the issue of male access to domestic violence shelters in one state, yet the findings are particularly relevant for the District. California provides for protections on the basis of sex in its equal protections clauses in the state Constitution, and the California Appellate Court ruled that "male victims of domestic violence are similarly situated to female victims for purposes of the statutory programs and no compelling state interest justifies the gender classification." The HRA is essentially DC's equivalent of an equal protection clause and the same reasoning should apply that it violates nondiscrimination clauses to bar men from entering shelter.

We strongly recommend that this provision be eliminated or at the very least clarified to ensure that men and transgender individuals who are also victims of domestic violence have access to emergency shelter, which has proven to be so important in helping women flee from domestic violence and become safe.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue and for OHR's work to protect all survivors of domestic violence from discrimination. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at [info@rainbowresponse.org](mailto:info@rainbowresponse.org)

Sincerely,

Rainbow Response Coalition

## **APPENDIX F: The Rainbow Response Coalition's Testimony on Hate Crimes**

July 6, 2011

Committee on the Judiciary Public Hearing on Hate Crimes in the District of Columbia  
and Police Response to Reports of Hate Crimes

Testimony of Paul Ashton

Rainbow Response Coalition, Treasurer

### **Introduction**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony about important issues regarding the Metropolitan Police Department's Gay & Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU). The Rainbow Response Coalition ("the Coalition") is a community-based organization dedicated to addressing intimate partner violence (IPV) in the Greater D.C. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) communities. The Coalition envisions a collective response to intimate partner violence within the LGBTQ communities where resources, support and education are accessible to all within the D.C. Metropolitan area. The Coalition will testify on three main points: first, the highly disproportionate amount of domestic violence cases that constitute the GLLU caseload; second, the progress that has been made in the liaison units; and third, to share concerns about the lack of department data collection regarding LGBTQ IPV cases. The Coalition believes these issues can begin to be remedied through the implementation of several simple changes to the liaison units.

### **Incidence of Intimate Partner Violence**

The most significant reason the Coalition is testifying today is to educate the public, the Council, MPD and the rest of our community to the fact that the vast majority of all cases handled by the GLLU are domestic-related cases. It is critical that MPD institute some changes to ensure its response to these difficult cases is increasingly effective and appropriate.

Research has shown that intimate partner violence occurs at the same rate in the LGBTQ communities as it does in the heterosexual community. In 2009, the Coalition released a groundbreaking report on intimate partner violence in the D.C. community based on surveys conducted over a year's time at various community events. This, the District's first report of its kind, confirmed what national research has shown: 28% of respondents self-identified as survivors of IPV. Emotional abuse, physical violence, and sexual violence were the most common types of abuse experienced.

One of the first lifelines for those experiencing abuse is law enforcement. Last year alone, MPD received over 31,000 domestic-related calls -- one every 17 minutes. The GLLU is a critically important resource for LGBTQ victims, particularly given the fact that in our community, fear that responding officers will be unaware of the dynamics of same-sex partner abuse and/or homophobia are major barriers to requesting police service

### **GLLU History and Importance**

Since the division's inception, GLLU officers have played an important role in the LGBTQ community, and their community policing model has led to significant strides having been made towards addressing a host of gay-related crime issues. GLLU officers play an active role in numerous community groups including the Rainbow Response Coalition, and have historically been very responsive to questions and concerns from all. GLLU has also received several national awards as a model to be replicated and heralded.

However, significant problems continue to plague the handling of LGBTQ IPV cases by the department. When the Coalition was formed in 2007 one of our first steps was to contact MPD to find out the current rate of intimate partner violence in the LGBTQ community. Surprisingly, we learned that despite the fact that MPD tracks many statistics related to domestic violence, it does not specifically track the rate of LGBTQ partner violence and this policy still hasn't changed. It is only through the dedication and enormous amount of time invested by GLLU officers who reviewed their current and past files that we have uncovered the highly disproportionate amount of IPV cases that

constitute the GLLU caseload. The hard work and research of these dedicated officers revealed a key piece of information needed to address this important social issue: almost 80% of all cases handled by the GLLU are domestic violence-related cases, not hate related crimes.

As a coalition and advocates within the LGBTQ community, we understand the importance of addressing hate crimes. The increase of hate crimes over the years warrants a frank and honest discussion about how best to understand why these acts are occurring and how best to prevent and respond to future incidences. However, knowing that the majority of cases handled by the GLLU are domestic-violence related it is imperative that domestic-violence be included in any discussion concerning the LGBTQ community, prevention, and police response. If further strides are going to be made in addressing this issue it is crucial that MPD begin officially tracking the incidence of LGBTQ IPV and standardize reporting as part of all data collection.

### **The Progress of GLLU**

Rainbow Response is a part of a coalition of LGBTQ organizations that participates in training officers on issues of LGBTQ awareness, and in Rainbow Response's case specifically LGBTQ IPV. In addition to participating in four in-person trainings annually, Rainbow Response developed an online training module that all officers must complete on how to identify the primary aggressor in an LGBTQ domestic violence case. The Coalition believes these trainings are valuable educational tools that can enable officers to better serve the LGBTQ community by being able to successfully identify a primary aggressor. We are proud of the trainings we have developed and our partnership with MPD and take seriously our efforts to educate first responders to ensure that they are knowledgeable about LGBTQ IPV.

Chief Lanier has been a catalyst of change for the Special Liaison Units (SLU) within MPD. Under her leadership MPD has bolstered the number of GLLU affiliated officers. Since our participation in SLU trainings the Coalition has trained 21 core SLU members and 124 SLU affiliate members. While this speaks volumes of the progress that has been made regarding SLUs and especially the GLLU, there are still strides to be

made to ensure that all of MPD is adequately prepared to address issues surrounding LGBTQ IPV.

### **Concerns & Recommendations**

We will now speak to our concerns and recommendations regarding the GLLU. The Coalition brings these issues to the attention of the Council so that they can ensure that MPD makes changes that truly revolutionize the response of law enforcement to LGBTQ IPV cases and correct existing gaps.

The Coalition is concerned about the lack of clear policies describing how affiliate officers work with the core GLLU, how the GLLU is informed of cases for data tracking purposes, and the lack of data collection regarding LGBTQ IPV cases. Specifically, the Coalition recommends that MPD begin collecting appropriate statistics on incidences of LGBTQ IPV. This data would be of invaluable help not only to MPD, but also the LGBTQ community as a whole. Having a better understanding of the number of incidences of LGBTQ IPV that the department has contact with per year can help emphasize the importance of training first responders, providing adequate services for survivors, and developing prevention and education efforts to reduce incidents of IPV. While the Coalition is well aware that statistics collected by MPD would not capture the entirety of LGBTQ IPV in the District, it would be a significant first step in helping to provide a more comprehensive understanding of domestic violence.

It is our hope that through a greater understanding of IPV, specifically LGBTQ IPV that MPD and partnering organizations such as Rainbow Response can develop a comprehensive strategy and public awareness campaign to reduce the rate of domestic violence in the District. By taking simple steps such as adding one demographic question on sexual orientation to domestic violence intake data MPD can continue to be a leader in shaping a positive community focused law enforcement response to IPV.

### **Conclusion**

The Coalition is thankful for the opportunity to address these important issues. We remain committed to the ongoing development of a more expansive and robust GLLU that can become a national model for law enforcement responses to LGBTQ IPV.

The Rainbow Response Coalition is looking forward to continuing our partnership with MPD and sharing our assistance and expertise. These partnerships will enable us to leverage our combined resources, knowledge and energy to ensure that all victims' and survivors' needs are met.

## **APPENDIX G: GLLU Myths and Facts Activity**

**Domestic violence is as common in LGBT relationships as it is in heterosexual relationships.**

**Fact:** Research indicates that the rate of domestic violence in LGBT couples is the same as that in heterosexual couples. Statistics gathered from the Lesbian & Gay Community is that domestic violence in Gay & Lesbian relationships is approximately 25 – 32% (basically the same percentage as in the heterosexual community). About 1 in 4 lesbians and 1 in 4 gay men have experienced domestic violence in their same gender relationships.

**The batterer is usually more masculine, muscular and bigger, while the victim is usually more feminine, smaller and weaker.**

**Myth:** This is simply not true. Size, weight, butch, femme, or any other physical attribute or role is not an indicator of whether or not a person will be a victim or a batterer. A person who is 5'2", prone to violence and very angry can do a lot of damage to someone who may be taller, heavier, stronger and non-violent. A batterer does not need to be 6'4 and built like a rugby player to smash your compact discs, hit you with a lamp, destroy your clothing, throw things or tell everyone in your workplace that you are "really a queer."

**LGBT persons don't have to worry about children, therefore it's easier for victims to leave.**

**Myth:** The Urban Institute has found that same-sex parents are 1.7% more likely to adopt children than all other households. Besides adoption, LGBT persons have children through a variety of different means. They may have their own biological children from a



previous heterosexual relationship, or they may have children through artificial insemination or surrogacy.

**A female batterer is less dangerous/lethal to her partner than a male batterer.**

**Myth:** Women are as capable of committing and do commit acts of severe violence as. Some female batterers have stabbed, shot, brutally beaten and/or killed their partners. Dismissing the potential severity of female battering can be fatal.

**It is harder to identify the primary aggressor in LGBT domestic violence cases because violence tends to be mutual.**

**Myth:** The dynamics of domestic violence (i.e. one partner seeking power and control over the other) are the same whether it's a heterosexual couple or a same-sex couple, therefore the violence is not mutual. However it is true that it can be harder for professionals (including law enforcement and victim advocates) to determine the primary aggressor in LGBT domestic violence cases for a variety of reasons including lesser physical disparities between couples, and batterers deliberately exploiting a professionals lack of knowledge or stereotypes of the LGBT community.

**The law provides equal protections for heterosexual, lesbian and gay victims of domestic violence.**

**Fact:** While the D.C. Intra-Family Offense Act does not discuss gender, individuals in dating relationships, domestic partnerships, and marriages are protected the same as heterosexual relationships in cases of domestic violence and stalking. However, laws vary greatly from one jurisdiction to another. For more information, visit the ABA's website: <http://www.abanet.org/irr/enterprise/lgbt/> However, over half of LGBTQ individuals who participated in the Rainbow Response Coalition's 2008 survey ([www.rainbowresponse.org](http://www.rainbowresponse.org)) did not know or did not think domestic violence laws protected them the same as heterosexual victims.

**It really isn't violence when a same-sex couple fights, it's just a fair fight between equals.**

**Myth:** This is based on the false assumption that two people of the same gender have no power differences. It also ignores the fact that domestic violence depends on the choice of one partner to take advantage of her or his power in abusive ways. There is nothing “fair” about being knocked against a wall, being threatened, or enduring endless criticism from an angry lover. Dismissing domestic violence as “just a lover’s quarrel” trivializes and excuses violence that is as real and dangerous as any in a heterosexual relationship.

## **APPENDIX H: GLLU Interrogation Activity**

### **Set-up:**

Divide participants into three groups. Write background details from the scenario exercise on the white board. Verbally explain the scenario to officers, including information about witnesses, excited utterances, and the women involved in the incident. Highlight information from the presentation that will help them determine the primary aggressor and remind them what sort of information should be included in their report/narrative.

### **Objective for Participants:**

- Determine the relationship between the parties
- Determine whether or not there was an IntraFamily Offense
- Determine the primary aggressor
- Explain what facts are relevant/important to include in their police report

### **Activity:**

Explain to officers that they will have the opportunity to interview both women involved in the incident. Woman #1 will sit at the front of the room and will begin by describing her recollection of events. Officers will then discuss her account within their groups and decide which question to ask the interviewee. The facilitator will go around the room and allow each group to ask one question at a time. Each group will take turns to ask a total of three questions (more or less depending on time/quality of questions)

Repeat activity with woman #2.

### **Discussion:**

Ask officers if they were able to determine a relationship between the parties. Ask how they came to reach the conclusion.

Ask officers if there was an IntraFamily Offense.

Ask officers who they determined to be the primary aggressor.

Ask how they came to reach their conclusion and how their reasoning may differ from determining the primary aggressor in an opposite-sex incident.

Ask officers what facts they would include in their police report

## **APPENDIX I: DC's Domestic Violence Response Community**

The DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a membership organization for the District's 12 primary nonprofit domestic violence organizations: Ayuda, Break the Cycle, District Alliance for Safe Housing, Deaf Abused Women's Network, Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP), Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project (DV LEAP), House of Ruth, My Sisters Place, Ramona's Way, Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (SAFE), Washington Empowered Against Violence (WEAVE), and Women of Freedom Foundation (Member programs, n.d.). Five of these 12 organizations are included in this study: Ayuda, Break the Cycle, DVLEAP, SAFE, and WEAVE.

Ayuda is a multi-lingual legal and social assistance organization for low-income immigrants in the areas of “immigration, human trafficking, domestic violence and sexual assault” (About Ayuda, 2010). Ayuda's domestic violence services include a “full range” of legal assistance, including family law and immigration matters, TPO and CPO representation, child custody and visitation, and child support. Ayuda also provides case management and crisis intervention and has social workers on staff to assist with emergency and transitional housing (Domestic violence and sexual assault, n.d.).

Break the Cycle is a national nonprofit organization with offices in Washington DC and Los Angeles. BTC's mission is to “engage, educate and empower young people to build lives and communities free from domestic and dating violence” (Mission & Values, n.d.). Break the Cycle addresses teen dating violence through prevention education, help & legal services, public awareness, youth leadership and activism, training and support, and policy and advocacy (How We Help, n.d.).

The Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project is a partnership of George Washington University Law School and a network of participating

law firms. DV LEAP is committed to assistance in meritorious appeals of civil and criminal cases concerning the rights of domestic violence survivors and their children in DC (Programs, DC LEAP, n.d.) In addition to providing technical assistance for Pro Bono attorneys, DV LEAP “provides victims with the continued support needed to take a case through the appellate court process, in order to advance justice and achieve both system and perpetrator accountability” (DVLEAP, What We Do, n.d.)

The mission of Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment is to “ensure the safety and self-determination of domestic violence survivors in Washington, DC through emergency services, court advocacy and system reform. SAFE provides an On Call Advocacy Program (OCAP) Response Line, available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. OCAP services are only available to the MPD and 18 partner non-profit organizations and government agencies. OCAP advocates are trained to implement safety planning, explain legal information, and provide immediate crisis shelter to survivors, among other services. OCAP advocates also work closely with MPD officers, offering consultation regarding legal options for domestic violence survivors and collaborating to raise awareness about OCAP services. The MPD also requires all officers to call the response line from the scene of a domestic violence crime and to offer OCAP services to every domestic violence survivor with whom they speak (On-Call Advocacy Program, n.d.).

In 2011, Washington Empowered Against Violence changed its name from Women Empowered Against Violence. WEAVE's board of directors voted unanimously to change the “W” in WEAVE from “Women” to “Washington” in order to “eliminate the barrier that WEAVE's name could at times create, because it was gender specific” (Gamble, 2011). Executive Director, Jeni Gamble asserted, “our work is far too important to allow any kind of barrier to exist that would deter someone from seeking services or sharing in our mission” (Gamble, 2011). WEAVE's services include safety and needs assessment, full legal representation, group and individual counseling, technical assistance for attorneys, and education about relationship violence for young people and adults.

## APPENDIX J: 2009 IPV Report Demographic Statistics

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Washington, DC</b>
<b>Gender Identity</b>	<b>Female- 64%</b> <b>Male- 29%</b> <b>Transgender- 2%</b> <b>Other- 1%</b>	<b>Female- 25%</b> <b>Male- 35%</b> <b>Transgender- 2%</b> <b>Other- 1%</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Gay/Lesbian- 71%</b> <b>Bisexual- 12%</b> <b>Heterosexual- 11%</b> <b>Other- 4%</b> <b>No Answer- 2%</b>	<b>Gay/Lesbian- 66%</b> <b>Bisexual- 14%</b> <b>Heterosexual- 11%</b> <b>Other- 6%</b> <b>No Answer- 2%</b>
<b>Race</b>	<b>African American- 32%</b> <b>Latino/a- 8%</b> <b>Asian/Pacific Islander- 3%</b> <b>White- 51%</b> <b>Other- 5%</b> <b>No Answer- 1%</b>	<b>African American- 40%</b> <b>Latino/a- 6.5%</b> <b>Asian/Pacific Islander- 1.5%</b> <b>White- 44%</b> <b>Other- 6%</b> <b>No Answer- 2%</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Yes- 7%</b> <b>No- 86%</b> <b>No Answer- 7%</b>	<b>Yes- 12%</b> <b>No- 82%</b> <b>No Answer- 6%</b>
<b>HIV Status</b>	<b>HIV Positive- 3%</b> <b>HIV Negative- 88%</b> <b>Not Sure- 3%</b> <b>No Answer- 6%</b>	<b>HIV Positive- 5%</b> <b>HIV Negative- 86%</b> <b>Not Sure- 4%</b> <b>No Answer- 5%</b>

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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Shauna M. Fecher was born in New Jersey and spent her formative years in Northern Virginia. She attended Virginia Commonwealth University, where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Women's Studies in 2009. She went on to earn her Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies from George Mason University in 2012.