DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillments of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

Joe Michael Cruz, B.A.

Denton, Texas

August, 1996
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The purpose of this study is to examine domestic violence as it occurs in same-sex male relationships. Data were collected by in-depth interviews with twenty-five gay males, who were between the ages of 23 and 43, and who had previous experience being in a homosexual relationship where domestic violence was present.

The major findings of this study include the respondents': 1) definitions of domestic violence and abuse; 2) the type of domestic violence or abuse personally experienced; and 3) reasons they believe domestic violence or abuse occurs in these types of relationships. This study illustrates the need for further research in this area of domestic violence and for programs or services targeted for this specific population.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence as it occurs in same-sex male relationships\(^1\) is a social problem that lacks sufficient research and analysis. The social science literature with respect to gay men and domestic violence is practically non-existent. Intimate violence has been identified as a problem in the gay community (Bartolomeo, 1990; Island and Letellier, 1991(a); Island and Letellier, 1991(b); Kirby, 1994; Tuller, 1994; and Zuniga, 1995), however, adequate empirical evidence, prior to this thesis, could not be located.

“Domestic violence with gay male relationships is not a well-documented phenomenon...” and, “...informed sources suggest that it is considerably more widespread than the gay community would dare to admit” (Kirby, 1994, p. 46). While no national database exists for actual numbers of victims or perpetrators of gay-male domestic violence, it has been estimated that between 350,000 and 650,000 gay men in the United States are victims of domestic violence perpetrated by their lovers (Island and Letellier, 1991a). Additionally, the issue of domestic violence has been named the third largest health problem facing gay men today, second to AIDS and substance abuse (Singer and Deschamps, 1994).

\(^{1}\) The terms same-sex male relationships, gay male relationships, and homosexual male relationships will be used interchangeably.
My major concern in this study was to examine the issue of domestic violence among men in same-sex relationships and to understand why with respect to this topic, a gap exists in the social science literature. I believe that social scientists and practitioners need to thoroughly analyze the gay community in order to better understand the life situations facing this particular population. I strongly believe that the lack of research pertaining to the gay community is a violation of human rights. Thus, I have set forth to study the gay community in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. My intentions are to make social scientists and practitioners aware of the lack of resources and literature available in this area of study.

Statement of the Problem

Because the issues of domestic violence have been brought to the forefront of American thought and consideration, e.g., the O.J. Simpson case; and issues of homosexuality have also been discussed recently (due to President Clinton’s enactment of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy regarding gays/lesbians in the U.S. military) it seems a propitious time to consider both in combination. The purpose of this study is to examine domestic violence as it occurs in same-sex male relationships. The research questions that guided this study and that were asked of the respondents are:

1) How do you define domestic violence? How do you define abuse?

2) Describe the kind of domestic violence or abuse you have encountered in same-sex relationships.

3) Why do you think these forms of domestic violence or abuse occur in
same-sex relationships?

The 25 respondents who participated in this study were between the ages of 23 and 43. All of the respondents in this study had experience in a relationship fraught with domestic violence, either presently or previously. Additionally, all respondents self-identified as either the victim or the perpetrator of the violence or abuse encountered in the relationship.

The research site for this study was the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. This area of the state is the second largest metroplex in Texas. This specific research site was chosen not only for population size but also for my proximity to the area.

In introducing the issue of domestic violence and discussing it sociologically, I will draw upon the work of Norman K. Denzin (1984) and the perspective of symbolic interaction, specifically, negative symbolic interaction. Denzin asserts that emotionality and the self are at the root of domestic violence. He discusses the issue of negative symbolic interaction as being one aspect of the phenomenon of domestic violence. He believes that the issue at hand arises as a result of the interactional framework within families where the subordinate and superordinate roles may collide (pp. 486-487).

In relation to emotionality and the self, Denzin states, "The self and its feelings are at the core of violent conduct. If emotionality is understood as self-feelings directed toward self and others, violence can be understood only from the point of view of feeling, self-reflective, violent individuals" (pp. 488-489). Hence, he is stating that the violent man (or individual) is never free of negative emotion, nor are his victims, because they are bound together in a structure of negative experience. In
discussing negative symbolic interaction, the interactional structure includes the use of emotional and physical force to regain what has been slowly lost through violence—the sense of intimacy, closeness, and "we-ness" that characterize all primary groups.

Denzin (1984) cites several stages through which family violence moves. These stages amplify the cycle of family violence and are:

...denial of the violence; pleasure derived from violence; the building of mutual hostility between spouses and other family members; the development of misunderstandings; jealousy, especially sexual; increased violence and either; eventual collapse of the relationship; or the resolution of violence into an unsteady, yet somewhat stable state of recurring; violence (pp. 490-491).

"Violent behavior is constructed within a situation, between two or more persons, through a process of interaction" (Hepburn, 1973, p. 427). In addition, "The selves of violent family members are located in a circuit of progressively differentiated violent and nonviolent conduct that transforms the family of violence into a conflict-riddled, painful field of experience that moves, if not checked, into self-destruction" (Denzin, 1984, p. 485).

According to one sociology dictionary, the "sociology of the family" is, "...an intimate domestic group made up of people related to one another by bonds of blood, sexual mating, or legal ties" (Marshall, 1994, p. 174). Another definition is: "family in American society is a visual image of adults and children living together in mutually satisfying and harmonious ways" (Eitzen and Zinn, 1989, p. 372). Yet another social scientist states that a family is "a social group of two or more people
related by blood, marriage or adoption who live together” (Macionis, 1989, p. 639). Within the context of the latter definition, one could argue that accepting someone completely and amorously would be an “adoption” of that person or of each other. Although it is more likely that this description refers to the legal adoption and not some sort of amorous symbolic adoption. The term “family” is not easy to define. In order to utilize the literature written about domestic violence, intimate violence and family violence in heterosexual relationships, I will argue that violence in the home of a cohabiting same-sex dyad should also be considered “family violence” and “intimate violence” as well as “domestic violence.”

When addressing family violence, it is important to first decide that it is a health problem. In fact, “if we reject the notion that violence and abuse are the products of mental illness or intraindividual pathologies, then we implicitly accept the assumption that there is a social pattern that underlies intimate abuse” (Gelles and Strauss, 1988, p. 77). Gelles and Strauss identify several characteristics of a family that serve to contribute to violence within that social organization. Time spent together is such a trait. Because we spend so much time around the person we are cohabiting with, we tend to develop deep intimate involvement which may lead to more sensitivity when it comes to insults, failures, etc. In addition, the quality of knowledge in relation to family members sets the stage for a potential argument or disagreement. These authors refer to “zero-sum” activities where ultimately one partner will win and the other will lose (p. 80). Inequality in regard to income and household duties, serve as family stressors, as do stresses from the outside world.
Another societal characteristic that is present in families and could possibly lead to family violence is status inconsistency where the perpetrator may use his actions as a means of controlling other family members (Gelles and Strauss, 1988, pp. 78-88).

"Perhaps the most telling of all attributes of the battering man is that he feels inadequate and sees violence as a culturally acceptable way to be both dominant and powerful" (p. 89).

Goode (1971) states, "Like all other social units or systems, the family is a power system. All rest to some degree on force or its threat, whatever else may be their foundations" (p. 624). He relates four sets of resources used by people in society to move others to achieve their goals. These are prestige and respect; force and threat of force (also termed "power"); economic variables; and love, attractiveness, friendship or likeability. These four resources are all present in families, thus contributing to the possibility of domestic violence. Goode argues that the particular structure of each family is fairly rigid with regard to the roles contained within it. Family relations often become strained if the members of the family begin to feel as though they are contributing in excess e.g., contributing love, money and respect of the others present. Thus, "one or more members begins to feel a sense of anger and frustration, of being cheated by the exchanges in which they engage" (Goode, 1971, p. 632). Because the people involved within this unit are usually already emotionally close, they know each other's weaknesses and have learned how to successfully hurt one another (pp. 624–632). Hepburn (1973) explains this aspect of a relationship, in the term "accountability" as:
Each participant in an enduring dyad has an extensive knowledge of the other's constellation of social identities, or social biography. The greater the social biography that each has of the other, the greater the accountability. The familiarity which evidences an intimate knowledge of alter by ego also, in an enduring relationship, necessitates an intimate knowledge of ego by alter. Each may draw upon the other’s constellation of identities, the negatively as well as the positively valued, to hold him accountable (p. 421).

Hepburn (1973), like Goode (1971), addresses factors that facilitate the initiation of violence, but more specifically, that of family violence. These factors are “interdependent” and “critical in triggering physical violence” (p. 424). One of the five factors is the subculture of violence. This is the simple acceptance of violence as legitimate to use against another person. The next factor is experience. Hepburn states:

Those who have been successful in the use of violence in the past are likely to consider it a viable alternative in the present situation. It is to be noted that it is not merely prior success with violence, but rather prior success in similar situations with similar (or the same) persons that facilitates violence in the present situation (p. 425).

Hepburn (1973) also states that intoxicants (the third factor) are present in over fifty percent of confrontations which end in violence. Whether or not an audience is present can affect the way an actor responds to confrontation by his or her partner. The last factor involved is the cost of failure and not wanting to lose at something.
“It appears likely that he who perceives the need of successful retaliation, but whose verbal and non-physical methods fall short, will resort to violence” (p. 426).

Richard J. Gelles (1993) discusses sociological factors that contribute to the dynamics of domestic violence. Some of these are identical to those previously addressed, some are similar, and some are new and different. He also highlights the time one spends with members of the family. In addition, he believes the interaction of family members is much more varied than the interaction with non-family members. The intensity of involvement in relation to family members is the third factor contributing to this phenomenon. He discusses impinging activities and the zero-sum aspect of these activities. For example, watching a television show. One person will get his way and watch the show of choice, while the other will not. (If the issue is as simplistic as this, neither negotiation or compromise is being present.) Thus, a winner and a loser are present in certain situations and decisions. The “right to influence” is explained as being “…the implicit right to influence the values, attitudes, and behaviors of other family members” (p. 35). Age and sex differences, as well as stress resulting from ascribed roles\(^2\) may serve to induce family violence, while privacy and the lack thereof within a family may also increase tension and the likelihood of domestic disputes. Involuntary membership can be explained by the fact that families are “exclusive organizations” (p. 36). One way to relate this to gay and lesbian relationships and “families” is to refer to Gelles’ statement, “Being in a family

\(^2\) an ascribed role is a “…social position that is received at birth or involuntarily assumed at a later point in the life course; a social position about which the individual has little or no personal choice...” such as being a father, son, daughter or mother (Macionis, 1989, p. 151).
involves personal, social, material, and legal commitment and entrapment” (p. 36). In his explanation, the difficulty involved in getting out of a family where domestic violence may be taking place is addressed. The last two issues contributing to violence in the home are stress and the extensive knowledge of social biographies, where an intimate would know the other’s weaknesses (pp. 35-36).

The socialization process of men may contribute to the understanding of domestic violence as it is present in gay male relationships. Goode (1971) accepts that “Males are reared to believe that backing down is to deny one’s masculinity, and bystanders [previously addressed in this chapter as one’s “audience”] are more likely to egg the conflicting parties on to a higher level of conflict” (p. 633). The male sex role as dictated by our society has several dimensions. The display of certain emotions like “fear, tenderness, trust, love, and weakness are discouraged” (Franklin, 1988, p. 63). These are attributes associated with being feminine, and men are socialized to not exhibit these types of characteristics. (Since some men, typically go through a similar socialization process, homosexual men are no different than heterosexual men, in this respect.) Another aspect of the male sex role focuses on respect. A male is socialized to desire to be respected, and to become successful. Furthermore, men are also reared to display an air of confidence, to be self-reliant, and to be strong. The last aspect of the male sex role is one which involves being violent and daring. “Aggression and violence must be aspects of our culture’s ethos because they are omnipresent in American society...[furthermore] ...societal support for male aggressiveness and male violence are integral features of male socialization and many
male's everyday lives" (Franklin, 1988, pp. 63-65). An important part of the male socialization process is the casual use of violence. “Some...men with a problem of being abusive have been taught, perhaps through sports or the military, to react to problems violently” (Tessina, 1989, p. 104). Franklin (1988) concurs with this and states, “aggression and violence in male sports beginning with Little League and extending through high school and into professional leagues is unabashedly supported, encouraged, and often demanded by parents, coaches, and spectators” (p. 65). Island and Letellier (1991a) also concur and state, “...becoming nonviolently masculine in our society is difficult because...Hollywood, television, sports, the military, advertising...are all guilty of making this unfortunate connection [between violence and masculinity]” (p. 50).

Delving into the specific dynamics of the homosexual male relationship, Tessina (1989) states that her counseling experience with gay men has included several cases in which intimate violence was a problem. She cites the existence of alcohol and drug abuse in all of the cases she has dealt with professionally. More specifically, she asserts, “The use of alcohol and drugs clouds rational thinking and removes inhibitions, making it possible for anger to explode and become unmanageable” (Tessina, 1989, p. 104). Tessina contends that violence and abuse can be physical, verbal or mental; damages the victim, the abuser, and the witnesses; follows a pattern and will repeat itself until that pattern is altered; and will not merely disappear on its own. Persons involved in violent relationships and families need to obtain professional help (p. 105).
In conclusion, general definitions of the term “family” have been given so as to integrate the social science mainstream literature, to the issue at hand. Not only have brief descriptions of the work by Gelles and Strauss (1988), Denzin (1984) and Goode (1971) been introduced, literature relating to the typical socialization of men in U.S. society and relationship issues regarding gay men have been illuminated and will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Clarification of Terms

Before delving into a review of the social science literature relating to domestic violence, intimate violence and family violence, it is important to comprehend the terms being addressed. Violence has typically been defined according to the researcher(s) conducting a particular study and for the purposes of that project. Using various methods, researchers usually include in their definitions of domestic violence, physical violence, and then various forms of abuse, which range from emotional and verbal to psychological and in some cases material abuse. Additionally, defining the term “family” is largely left to the one conducting the study. Specific definitions of the family vary and have not typically included a literal reference to a romantically involved homosexual dyad. For example, the 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing report for the state of Texas cites the following definition for the term “family type:”

A family consists of a householder and one or more other persons living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. All persons in a household who are related to the householder are regarded as members of his or her family. A household can contain only one
family for purposes of census tabulations. Not all households contain families
since a household may comprise a group of unrelated persons or one person
living alone (B-15).

However, the definition of gay men and lesbians in families could be assumed to be
included in the definition of “unmarried-partner household” from the same document
which reads:

An unmarried-partner household is a household other than a married-couple
household that includes a householder and an unmarried partner. An unmarried
partner can be of the same sex or of the opposite sex of the householder. An
unmarried partner in an unmarried partner household is an adult who is
unrelated to the householder, but shares living quarters and has a close personal
relationship with the householder (B-15).

As previously noted, however, any text that states an unmarried-partner household can
include two gay men or two lesbian women is absent from the description.

According to anthropologist George P. Murdock (1949), whose definition of the
term family is one of the most often cited:

The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic
cooperation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of
whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more
children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults. Used alone, the
term 'family' is ambiguous. The laymen and even the social scientist often
apply it undiscriminately to several social groups which, despite functional
similarities, exhibit important points of difference (p.1).

A critique of Murdock’s definition would obviously state that while homosexuality is gaining publicity in the media and becoming more talked about, this type of relationship continues to be far from what Murdock terms the “socially approved sexual relationship” (p. 1). Additionally, Murdock’s popular definition doesn’t allow for the varying forms of family that have recently been brought to the forefront of those studying the family, e.g., single-parent families. Interestingly, Strauss et al. (1980) (in their 1976 study) state that the definition of the term family used was: “...any couple who indicated that they were married or living together as a couple” (p. 24). However, close scrutiny of the monographs indicate that homosexual couples are not addressed in any of the books by these authors and were, thus, not included in their national surveys.

Gay Male Battering

The problem of gay male domestic violence is alluded to in the social science literature, as Rosenbaum, Cohen, and Forsstrom-Cohen, in Ammerman and Hersen (1991), state, “Violence between homosexual couples also has been documented...No type of interpersonal relationship seems to be immune [to domestic violence]” (p. 39). Additionally, Lenore Walker in Island and Letellier (1991a) asserts:

Power, not gender, underlies gay male abuse. Yet, we must not forget that most gay men and lesbians were raised in heterosexual homes where power differences between men and women fueled the sex role socialization patterns that they model in their own relationships (p. xix).
The book by Island and Letellier (1991a) documents personal accounts of the co-author experiencing physical, psychological and sexual abuse, and they clearly state, "No literature exists about this problem. No research has been done...ignorance is widespread, outreach to victims is scarce, and few services are provided" (p. 1).

It is important to note that a small body of literature does exist with respect to domestic violence in homosexual male relationships. Typically, these data appear in community newspapers and books written for the gay and lesbian community. For example, in a text by Silverstein and Picano (1992), the authors caution the reader, "Battery usually begins with an occasional slap or 'loving' punch, which is often explained away, or not meant" (p. 56).

Island and Letellier (1991a) outline an organizational framework for theory development of gay male domestic violence that includes 18 tenets:

1) Gay men's domestic violence exists in three forms: physical, material, and psychological. 2) Domestic violence in all its forms is primarily a power issue. 3) There is an identifiable increase in the strength of force used by a perpetrator that, in time, leads up to a first incident. 4) There is a single, identifiable, unambiguous first incident of violence. 5) There is usually a random, but nonetheless continual, increase in the frequency of violent episodes. 6) There is usually a random, but nonetheless continual, increase in the intensity of the episodes. 7) There is usually a random, but nonetheless continual, increase in the severity. 8) There is a spreading effect, a situational and environmental diffusion, that takes place over time. 9) Eventually, there
will be a serious incident that will irrevocably change how the victim perceives the perpetrator. 10) Sex is a primary reinforcer that guarantees the perpetuation of domestic violence. 11) Violence is a self-reinforcing act for the perpetrator. 12) The longer that the individuals are in a relationship, the more likely that violence will eventually occur and that it will be harder for a victim to leave. 13) The victim will make many attempts to stop the perpetrator from committing violent acts, and those attempts will fail. 14) By use of violence the perpetrator has set a standard for controlling the victim and must maintain it. 15) The victim will make at least one attempt, and often many more, to leave the abusive partner. 16) The victim experiences increased feelings of isolation as the violence continues. 17) There is a random, but nonetheless continual, decrease in consideration given to the victim’s feelings by the perpetrator. 18) The perpetrator will persistently attempt to persuade the victim that the incidents of violence have been provoked (pp. 41-44).

Lastly, Harris and Cook (1994) conducted a study examining the reactions of college students to stories of family violence. Three types of scenarios were presented, one in which a woman beat her heterosexual husband; another in which a man beat his heterosexual wife and a third in which a gay man beat his same-sex partner. The findings state that, “...suggestions of negative attitudes toward homosexuals [were present], most notably the fact that the battered gay partner was the least liked of the three victims...On the rating of whether the victim should leave the batterer, subjects
most strongly said that the gay partner should, perhaps because the relationship was
seen to be less permanent than the marriage bond in the other two cases” (p. 563).

Theories for Why Domestic Violence Occurs

Several sociological theories and perspectives exist which attempt to explain
why violence occurs in intimate relationships. These theories include conflict theory,
exchange theory, the perspective of negative symbolic interaction, and social learning
theory.

Conflict Theory

As explained by Utech (1994), conflict theory is when differential distributions
of power and economic resource inequalities in the family and society contribute to
domestic violence. He states, “Those with the greatest economic resources...also wield
the greatest amount of power within the family. Conflict may arise when economic
and technological changes force a realignment of traditional family structure” (p. 29).

Related to this theory is the analysis of the family institution as a social
Gelles maintains that several characteristics of the family revolve around an inequality
of power and control. These are:

1) time at risk; 2) range of activities and interests; 3) intensity of involvement;
4) impinging activities; 5) right to influence; 6) age and sex differences; 7)
ascribed roles; 8) privacy; 9) involuntary membership; 10) stress; and 11)
extensive knowledge of social biographies (pp. 35-36).

While some of these characteristics are not relevant to same-sex couples, the majority
of the characteristics could be attributed to this group. Issues of power and control with respect to the respondents participating in this study are included in Chapter IV.

Exchange Theory

Exchange theory also relates to an unequal distribution of power or control in the family. As conceptualized by Utech (1994), this theory relates the human desire to seek rewards and to avoid punishment in interactions with others. Specifically, "...rewards, both material and socioemotional, cannot always be exchanged equally. Mutual rewards tend to promote solidarity; unequal rewards tend to create conflict. When there is inequality in the exchange, differences in power emerge, levels of conflict increase, and the stage for potential violence is set" (p. 31).

Negative Symbolic Interaction

Norman K. Denzin (1984) discusses the sociological perspective of negative symbolic interaction as it relates to domestic violence. Denzin's basic premise is that:

Emotionality, the self, the schismogenic processes of negative symbolic interaction, and the structures of bad faith are at the core of domestic family violence. The selves of violent family members are located in a circuit of progressively differentiated violent and nonviolent conduct that transforms the family of violence into a conflict-riddled, painful field of experience that moves, if not checked, into self-destruction (p. 485).

Denzin contends that the interactional framework supported in the social system called "family" is riddled with inequalities. Those inequalities breed hostility that typically remains unchecked and eventually presents itself in negative ways, pro-actively,
beginning the cycle (as the victim reacts) of negative symbolic interaction, domestic violence and abuse.

Social Learning Theory

As Siegel and Senna state in *Violence, Abuse and Neglect: The American Home*, by Utech (1994), social learning theory, as it relates to domestic violence, is:

Social learning suggests that a child who grows up in a home where violence is a way of life may learn to believe that such behavior is acceptable and rewarding. Even if parents tell children not to be violent and punish them if they are, the child will still model the behavior after observed parental violence (p. 33).

Additionally, a description termed “societal conditioning” by Szymanski (1991) states:

Societal conditioning—parents, family life, school, the media, and so on—is to blame, that ours is a violent, patriarchal society, and the brutal feelings which surge up in men...could erupt at any moment in even the most well-adjusted American male (p. 37).

Pagelow (1984) states, “Social learning theory is defined as an integration of differential association with differential reinforcement, so that people with whom one interacts are the reinforcers that result in learning of deviant and non-deviant behavior” (p. 117). And:

...behavior bringing success is most likely to be repeated. One of the basic propositions of social learning theory is that reinforcement following behavior increases the probability that the behavior will be repeated, and another is that
intermittently reinforced behavior is the most difficult to extinguish (Pagelow, 1984, p. 119).

Issues of Mental Health

Mental health, with respect to gay male victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, is interesting to address. The literature on gay men relates the problem of internalized homophobia as an unhealthy mental state affecting many in the gay community. To clarify, “Internalized homophobia refers to the direction of societal negative attitudes toward the self” (Meyer, 1995, p. 40). Franklin (1988) discusses dimensions of masculinity and the male role in American society. He believes there are specific dynamics to the roles men play in our society and they include: the establishment of sufficient distance from femininity; the need to be looked up to and respected; the requirements of being tough, confident and self-reliant; and the aura of aggression and violence (p. 63-65). Furthermore, Franklin states:

Because men and masculinity are valued so highly in American society, most adult males who do not conform to societal expectations for men pay a high price. This is so regardless of whether the deviation is aberrant, deliberately nonconforming, or due to an inability to conform (p. 131).

Coleman (1980), in an analysis of battering men, found that:

One characteristic of the men evident in interviews and therapy sessions was their belief that to be a man, one must be strong and dominant, superior and successful. Feelings of inadequacy in any of these areas were devastating to the men's self-esteem and self-regard. Getting fired from a job, being told
what to do by a wife, or feeling unsuccessful as a breadwinner created intense anxiety and feelings of helplessness (p. 211).

Gelles and Strauss (1988) also relate issues of masculinity to domestic violence or abuse in the following:

Being in control, being master (or apparent master) of a situation, increases one's sense of self-worth. For men or parents whose sense of self-esteem may have been damaged or devalued by experiences outside of the home (losing a job, being humiliated by a boss or fellow co-worker, etc.), control at home is even more important (p. 34).

Additionally, “perhaps the most telling of all attributes of the battering man is that he feels inadequate and sees violence as a culturally acceptable way to be both dominant and powerful” (Gelles and Strauss, 1988, p. 89).

The antitheses of these beliefs are expressed by Rosenbaum (1986) in an article regarding men, masculinity and abusive husbands. His findings are that, “abusive husbands were clearly and significantly lower in masculinity, less likely to be androgynous, and more likely to be classified as undifferentiated than either nonviolent, maritally discordant or satisfactorily married men” (p. 127).

McWhirter and Mattison (1982) state while anti-gay attitudes permeate American society, they seem to have an extreme effect on the homosexual community. The issues of ignorance, prejudice, oppression and homophobia are dealt with in every same-sex relationship. Furthermore, they believe that most gay men are either unaware of these issues, or are unaware of how profoundly they are affected by them.
specifically their own homophobia or self-oppression (p. 87). Silverstein and Picano (1992) contend that one of the reasons for domestic violence in a same-sex relationship is, "...homophobia in some form; probably, self-hatred passed on as hostility toward the partner" (p. 57). Additionally, Moore and Bundy (1983) state, "...internalized oppression refers to the process by which these pervasive negative messages about one’s self worth result in depression, despair, and self-destructive behavior" (p. 14). Lastly, Meyer (1995) states:

Long before they begin to realize their own homosexuality, homosexually-oriented people internalize societal anti-homosexual attitudes. When as adolescents or young adults they recognize same-sex attraction, they begin to question their presumed heterosexuality and apply the label 'homosexual' or 'gay' to themselves (p. 40).

Stress to fulfill some preconceived notion of a masculine role in the relationship might be another reason for gay male battering. Such stress could perhaps be a manifestation of internalized homophobia. Prince and Arias (1994) cite findings of personality traits of batterers who are characterized as, "having low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority" (p. 126). Furthermore, they state these men often have a strong need for power and control; ascribe to traditional sex-roles; are extremely rigid and oversocialized, personality-wise; and maintain a dogma of strength and dominance that is central to their self-concepts as men (p. 126). Lastly, Prince and Arias (1994) state, "...abusive men feel pressure to be dominant and in control, yet feel personally inadequate to fulfill these self-imposed expectations" (p. 126).
Another aspect of mental stress is the fact that homosexuality is generally not condoned by U.S. society at large. Moore and Bundy (1983) state, “In civil rights, in housing, on the job, in access to public accommodations, and in simply walking down the street, gay men do not enjoy equal protection, either legally or socially, from recurring, institutionalized oppression” (p. 11).

Cycle of Violence

Much of the literature on domestic violence and abuse relates a theoretical framework of inter-generational transmission or the cycle of violence for explaining why this aberrant behavior occurs in intimate relationships. Pagelow (1984) and Utech (1994) provide extensive analyses of this perspective. Pagelow (1984) begins by defining it as the notion that interpersonal violence is “bequeathed” from one generation to the next (p. 223). Utech (1994) offers that it is, “...the social process whereby the maltreatment syndrome is transmitted inter-generationally within the family setting. The focus is not so much on the behaviors as it is on the process of learning those behaviors and associated attitudes by children from their parents or models” (p. 136).

According to Utech (1994) the concept of the cycle of violence was developed by Suzanne Steinmetz after her analysis of fifty-seven families indicated that parents solved marital problems based on the same models used for controlling their children. These methods are learned through imitation by the children and then become part of their battering repertoire for dealing with interpersonal problems. These children, as adults, use the same methods of conflict resolution with their
spouses and children. Thus the cycle continues (Utech, 1994, p. 136).

Pagelow (1984) does not completely subscribe to this perspective and cautions social scientists in accepting the explanation wholeheartedly. She cites empirical evidence whereby some studies have experienced methodological limitations which prohibit the evidence from being generalized to a much wider population, i.e., society at large. Some of these limitations are small sample sizes, or responses whereby less than 50% of the sample stated there was previous familial experience with domestic violence or abuse. Specifically, she cites researchers who had only 'several' of the respondents in a study confirm the theory (pp. 226-228). (Pagelow cautions the reader against believing that 'several' could be generalized to mean the majority of batterers or victims in a relationship where domestic violence is present.) In her conclusion she states that some evidence has been offered in support of the theory stating that abused children will most likely become spousally abusive adults, but the information is not conclusive especially with regard to whether the abused child will become the perpetrator or the victim. She proposes a grammatical modification of this framework to read:

...boys who witnessed paternal violence are more likely to become violent than boys who were targets of paternal violence, but boys who were targets of paternal violence are more likely to become violent adults than boys who were targets of maternal violence (Pagelow, 1984, p. 253).

Pagelow offers this modification in an attempt to explain the nuances involved between being abused and witnessing violence as a child, and becoming a batterer as
an adult.

Myths Surrounding Domestic Violence

Several myths about domestic violence appear in the literature. These myths should be addressed so that they may be obliterated from the minds of a sociological audience.

Addressing first the myths associated with domestic violence as discussed by Island and Letellier (1991a): 1) heterosexual women are the only victims of domestic violence and battering (homosexual men are never victims); 2) domestic violence is more prevalent in heterosexual relationships than in same-sex relationships; 3) domestic violence between two of a same-sex dyad is an equal fight; 4) violence between two men is normal; 5) domestic violence between two gay men in a relationship is a lover’s quarrel; 6) the perpetrator is always bigger and stronger than the victim; 7) men who are violent or abusive while using alcohol or drugs are not liable for their actions; 8) domestic violence between gay men has increased as a result of the AIDS virus and substance abuse; 9) intimate violence in a same-sex relationship is warranted sadomasochistic behavior; 10) gay male victims of interpersonal violence are immune to legal protections; 11) victims provoke batterers into committing acts of violence or abuse; 12) victims exaggerate the violence experienced, otherwise they would leave the relationship; 13) it is easier for a victim of same-sex battering to leave a relationship than it is for a female victim in a heterosexual relationship; 14) gay male domestic violence occurs within the population that frequents night clubs, are of low socio-economic status or are members of an
ethnic minority group; 15) victims of domestic violence are codependent (pp. 16-24).

Community United Against Violence in San Francisco, California addresses these myths in literature made available to the gay community and reminds persons that help is available to those in need.

Likewise, Utech (1994) offers the following myths of domestic violence:

1) Family violence is rare; 2) Family violence is confined to mentally disturbed or sick people; 3) Family violence is confined to the lower class; 4) Family violence occurs in all groups- social factors are not important; 5) Children who are abused will grow up to be child abusers; 6) Battered wives like being hit, otherwise they would leave; 7) Alcohol and drug abuse are real causes of violence in the home; 8) Violence and love do not coexist in the family (pp. 17-19).

The reader is left to examine the similarities and then relate the findings of this study to the disbanding of these myths, as the respondents in this investigation relate demographic data regarding their socio-economic status, reasons for why they stay(ed) in the relationship, the fact that there was not any pleasure derived from the violent or abusive episodes, etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature available on domestic violence is applicable to relationships where the persons involved are heterosexual and of the opposite sex in addition to those relationships where both members are of the same sex. Information relating to the terms family and family violence has legitimized the relationships
where those involved are of the same sex and illustrated how this dyad indeed endures many of the same problems, with respect to domestic violence, as it’s heterosexual counterpart. Furthermore, theories of why domestic violence occurs and specifically, the theoretical framework of inter-generational transmission of violence have been discussed, as well as, conflict theory, exchange theory, social learning theory and the perspective of negative symbolic interaction. The mental health of gay men and internalized homophobia have been addressed and offered as possible reasons for gay male domestic violence as well. Lastly, myths regarding family violence have been presented.
This research study has been carried out in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. This area of the state is the second largest metroplex in Texas. This geographic region (Dallas, Fort Worth, and the cities and towns encompassed by these two urban centers) is made up of 2,216,000.1 square miles and contained a population of three million people in 1990 (1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing). The North Central Texas Council of Governments Research and Information Services (1995) estimates this area of the state is populated by 4,182,5000 people. In this chapter I will address the methodology utilized in data collection for this study.

Research Design

In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 respondents. This method of data collection is pertinent for gaining sociological insight on the social phenomenon of domestic violence in same-sex male relationships, and for a better understanding of the issues surrounding men in same-sex unions who are faced with the dilemma of interpersonal violence within their relationships. This study was guided by the use of major research questions, which is in keeping with qualitative methodology in sociology (Lofland and Lofland, 1995; Berg, 1992). These questions pertain to the issues of domestic violence in same-sex male relationships and the dynamics involved in this group. Additionally, they were asked of the respondents only. The research
questions guiding this study are:

1) How do you define domestic violence? How do you define abuse?

2) Describe the kind of domestic violence or abuse you have encountered in a same-sex relationship.

3) Why do you think these forms of domestic violence or abuse occur in same-sex relationships?

This study is qualitative in nature and is based on discovery and not on the testing of hypotheses. Thus, my endeavor is modeled in an exploratory manner.

I have used the methodology set forth in Rubin's (1976) Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working Class Family as a model for analyzing the data. The criteria used in the selection of the sample were twofold: 1) respondents were chosen for their past experiences with interpersonal violence in a same-sex relationship, 2) the respondents were in the age group 23-45. Due to the small sample size and the qualitative nature of the study, I do not claim to have a representative sample. However, I do believe that social scientists will be able to make generalizations with regard to gay men in these types of relationships who live in other regions of the United States.

Nature of the Sample

I interviewed 25 men who self-identified as gay, in this study, and as having had experience being involved in a relationship where domestic violence was present. Additionally, the data were collected over an eight-month period—September 1995 through May 1996. All of the respondents were guaranteed confidentiality. I assured all respondents that I would be the only person collecting the data for this project,
transcribing the interview tapes, analyzing the data, and writing the findings and conclusions. I obtained consent from all respondents to tape record as well as to take notes during the interviews, through the use of formal consent forms. The form informed the respondents that the interviews were confidential and voluntary. The data collected for the project were recorded with a code number. All material collected was coded differently. For instance, the typed transcripts, consent forms and notes for each interview were coded with letters, the interview tapes were coded with numbers. The key containing the code was stored in a place that only I have access to and it was destroyed after the study was completed.

Initially, the proposed age group for the respondents in this study was 25 to 45. However, I interviewed one person who was not in proposed age range. This man was 23 years old. The specific ages of the respondents in this study were as follows: One was 23; three were 25; two were 26; two were 30; two were 31; two were 32; one was 33; three were 34; two were 35; one was 36; one was 37; one was 39; two were 40; one was 41; and one was 43.

Because the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) have had such a dramatic impact on the gay community, I decided to obtain the HIV status of the respondents. All of the respondents stated they had been tested for the HIV virus. Fourteen of the respondents indicated they were HIV negative, while 11 indicated their HIV status as positive, meaning they were carriers of the virus. However, I do not believe that the issue of domestic violence is directly related to HIV or AIDS. In fact, when asked if
the HIV status of the respondent contributed to the domestic violence, the 11 who were positive replied in the negative.

The Sampling Process

At the onset of the research project, I was introduced to potential respondents by two social contact persons. One was a counselor for the Dallas AIDS Resource Center, and the other was a member of the Dallas Gay/Lesbian Alliance (DGLA) and was associated with the DGLA Domestic Violence Project. I later met different contact persons by becoming an active member of the DGLA and by contacting different social service agencies in the Dallas gay community. Additionally, because of my prior research and knowledge in the area, I was invited to be a panelist as part of the Domestic Violence Project during a monthly meeting of the DGLA. The topic of the panel presentation was Domestic Violence in the Gay/Lesbian Community. In many instances, after initial contacts were made with respondents, they introduced me to other potential respondents in the community who had experienced domestic violence with same-sex relationships. Thus, the respondents themselves became contact persons. This kind of strategy is discussed by Berg (1992) as the "snowball effect."

I was able to establish ties with the Dallas gay community, and became familiar with some of the social contacts included in the potential pool of respondents. Also, I made contact with local counseling agencies. For example, I sent a description of this study to agencies such as, the Dallas Legal Hospice, the AIDS Arms Network, a therapist, the Metropolitan Community Church, Oak Lawn Community Services and
AIDS Services of Dallas. Each of my contacts in these agencies assisted me in making my study known to potential respondents. Additionally, I made contacts at a health club and contacts through my friendship network.

Although entry into the field was relatively easy, I did encounter several difficulties in scheduling interviews and in obtaining respondents. During the first two months of data collection, interviews were typically scheduled with ease and an average of three per week were conducted. However, the data collection was then hampered by the holidays of Thanksgiving in November, Christmas in December and New Year’s in January. As can be expected, it was difficult to schedule potential respondents during the time period surrounding these holidays.

Another problem that arose was one of the social service agencies I contacted had moral and ethical problems with approaching their clientele about possible participation in this study. While several clients at that agency were involved in therapeutic relationships that included experiences with domestic violence, the counseling staff had the following reservations: The possibility of influencing the client to participate in the study by merely approaching him, and the potential problem of addressing the issue with a client who was perhaps not emotionally or psychologically ready to deal with the issue. By way of illustration, one respondent had initially agreed to the interview. After several attempts were made to contact him by telephone regarding an interview appointment, my telephone calls were not returned. After approximately one week I was able to speak to him and his reservations about the interview were expressed. We decided on an appointment time
and he was shown the interview guide. He was instructed that he could either omit answering specific questions, or we could cancel the interview if he felt uncomfortable. Upon reviewing the questions, he agreed to do the interview without omitting any of the questions.

Other problems were encountered in scheduling interviews and in obtaining respondents. An example includes missed interview appointments (e.g., eight individuals were contacted regarding interviews and either they did not return the phone call, or scheduled and then missed an appointment time, or indicated they were not interested). In addition, conflicting schedules between researcher and respondent posed a problem. In one instance a respondent, who was contacted five or six times, always indicated he was interested and then missed two scheduled appointment times. This individual also seemed to try to befriend me and sent facsimiles not related to the study. In another instance, I was conducting an interview with a respondent at his place of employment. He is a leasing agent and while the telephones were forwarded to an answering service and the office door was locked (the interview was conducted during his lunch break) another employee unlocked the door, and came into the office with a disgruntled resident who had locked herself out of her apartment. Thus, the interview was interrupted for about 45 minutes, which in turn extended the total time spent with the respondent and increased the total time needed for completion of the interview.

Demographic Background of Respondents

All respondents self-identified as gay, when asked if they were gay or bi-
sexual. Four stated they had been in a heterosexual marriage previously, but have since come to terms with their homosexuality.

The educational attainment of my respondents ranged from an eleventh grade education to post graduate credit hours. Specifically, one had an eleventh grade education; one had a GED certificate; three had high school diplomas; one had one semester of college; three had one year of college; two had two years of college; one had two and a half years of college; five had Associate's degrees; one had 2 years of college and one and a half years at an art institution; four had Bachelor’s degrees; one had five years of college; and two had post-graduate education.

With respect to the number of brothers and sisters, each respondent reported a range from zero (being an only child) to 10 siblings. The specific number of siblings of each individual was as follows: two respondents had no siblings; three had one sibling; eight respondents had two siblings; three had three siblings; three had four siblings; one had five siblings; three had six siblings; one had nine siblings and one had 10 siblings.

The length of time that respondents reported living in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex ranged from 6 months to 38 years. One respondent had lived in the Metroplex for 6 months; one had one year; one had one year and 4 months; one had 2 years; one had 3 years; one had four years; two had five years; one had six years; one had seven years; two had eight years; three had nine years; two had ten years; one had 13 years; one had 14 years; one had 15 years; one had 25 years; one had 29 years; one had 32 years; one had 33 years; and one had 38 years.
The respondents' employment ranged from unemployed/disabled to full employment. The former were typically men who were HIV-positive and were diagnosed with AIDS. Seven were unemployed at the time of the interview; one was in the restaurant business; two held clerical positions; one was a customer service representative; one was in banking; one was in the insurance industry; two were engineers; one was a teacher; two were leasing agents; one was a designer; two were hair stylists; two were business owners; one was a collection manager and one was a business systems analyst.

The respondents' experience regarding whether they were raised in a violent home varied. Twelve responded in the affirmative when asked if there was violence in the home when they were growing up, while 13 reported that no violence was present. Of the twelve, however, only two reported having personally experienced violence. (The remaining ten reported either having witnessed their parents engaged in physical or verbal abuse, their parents engaged in interpersonal violence with siblings, the siblings hitting one another, or another situation.)

All of my respondents, except for two, reported their violent or abusive relationships being over or having been terminated. The length of time out of the relationship for those respondents who had terminated the relationship (23 total) ranged as follows: one was out one week; one was out four months; two were out six months; one was out eight months; one was out nine to twelve months; two were out ten months; two were out of the relationship two and a half years; three were out three years; one was out four and a half years; two were out five years; one was out
six years; one was out seven years; one was out eight years; two were out nine years; one was out ten years and one was out 14 years. When asked if the break up of the relationship was amicable, 12 said, "Yes." Twelve respondents said "No," and one indicated his partner had died.

Collection of Data

I entered the field in September 1995 and completed the interviews in May 1996. The data were derived from in-depth interviews. These interviews have been supplemented with data collected before and after the formal interview when appropriate. The total time spent with a respondent ranged typically, from a one hour interview to a four-hour visit. The only conversation tape recorded was the formal interview. Respondents divulged stories of personal issues, family histories, relationship dilemmas, etc., during and after the formal interview. I will address issues which arose as a result of the data collection in the findings.

In-depth Interviews and Data Analysis

In-depth interviews were used as the primary procedure for data collection. I constructed an interview guide which enabled me to collect demographic data, as well as, basic data on domestic violence in same-sex male relationships. The interview guide had two parts, the first of which contained questions used to obtain demographic information. The second part asked the respondents to reply with regard to domestic violence and abuse, in general, and then specifically to what was experienced personally. This interview guide was a point of departure. I frequently probed through the use of follow-up questions and comments relating to the problems faced
and issues encountered as a gay male confronted with interpersonal domestic violence.

The actual formal interview which was recorded on tape ranged from one hour to a four-hour visit. Interviews were scheduled by telephone contact or contact in person, after an initial introduction through a contact person or a previous respondent. All interview appointments were made at the convenience of the respondents. Many times, interviews were conducted on weekends or during the lunch hour of the respondent due to their unavailability during the week as a result of employment or other personal issues.

Interviews were conducted in the home of the respondent, in the home of the researcher, and in various public places, such as coffee houses and delicatessens. These sites were suitable and conducive to the interview process, as well as mutually agreed upon by the researcher and the respondents. The atmosphere at these sites was typically relaxed and conversations flowed freely. Informal discussions with respondents ranged from three to four hours. The topics of the conversations ranged from issues relating to homosexuality, gay life in Dallas, issues of domestic violence, the respondents' theories of male socialization and the effects it had on same-sex relationships, and the impact of AIDS on the gay/lesbian community. I did not record any data during those conversations if the respondents indicated it was off the record.

As stated above, I obtained permission to tape record each interview and to take notes. On one specific occasion, I was asked to turn the recorder off so that the respondent could tell me about the drug dealings of his former significant other. This request was complied with immediately. The recorder was turned on again after he
described these incidents and the interview resumed with the questions on the interview guide. All of the respondents were assured of the fact that I would be the only one to transcribe the tapes and analyze the data. Thus, I believe everyone felt comfortable discussing the issues at hand. No one interviewee was visibly bothered by the presence of the tape recorder, nor my note taking. Identifiable traits, such as their occupation, have been altered to protect from possible identification of the respondents.

At the time of the interviews the respondents were all guaranteed confidentiality. To accomplish this, I took precautions in the presentation of the data. In order for the voices of the respondents to be heard without being identified, I have used the method of composite case (see Sjoberg and Nett, 1968). This method involves combining like quotes from two or more respondents.

Respondents' lifestyles varied with respect to the degree of self identification as gay. Thus, an analysis of various interview sites revealed that some of the respondents' homes were replete with gay “touches” (i.e., homo-erotic art, symbols of the gay community such as the rainbow flag, the pink triangle, etc.) while others were void of any visible gay-identifying objects or symbols. (To guarantee my safety and that of the respondent, I only did “in house” interviews in instances where I had previous knowledge of the respondent, i.e., the respondent was a friend of a person known to me.) The interviews that were conducted at the homes of the respondents were invaluable because they allowed me to observe the respondent in his natural setting.
I was very aware of the moral and ethical dilemmas associated with qualitative research as set forth in Berg's (1992) text. At no time were any of my respondents placed in danger or at risk due to participation in this research project. Pagelow (1984) addresses the difficulties one can encounter when conducting research on family violence, mainly the issues of privacy and selective inattention by researchers (p. 13). Furthermore, because of the specific population being addressed, I was aware of the issues surrounding the gay community and was careful not to relate any socially mainstream judgments or values to my respondents.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The objective of this chapter is to analyze the problems that homosexual men encounter at home and in the community when they are involved in a relationship where intimate violence is present. The sample consisted of 25 men who self-identified as gay and as having had prior experience with domestic violence in a same-sex relationship. These men were all residents of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and informal conversations, both before and after the interviews.

I have used information documenting domestic violence, as it is present in the heterosexual realm of U.S. society and have been able to find similarities with respect to the behaviors of men in same-sex relationships. In doing this, I have taken the data collected and have utilized Lillian Rubin's (1976) World's of Pain: Life in the Working Class Family as a guide for the analysis. Her techniques for data analysis involve an examination of the information based on specific issues or themes. She then quotes from interviews so as to provide the reader with a comprehension of how the respondents have defined their life situations. I have organized the data for this study in a similar way.

In every case, the respondents for this study were guaranteed confidentiality. Thus, I have modified a few of the respondents' characteristics so that readers will
not be able to identify these individuals. Basic findings of the data are presented in this chapter as they were reported by the respondents.

In presenting the data, I will first present the major findings and then will address the minor findings. These data were obtained through the perceptions of the gay men who have experienced family violence in their romantic relationships with other men, and represent their definitions of the situation.

Definition of Domestic Violence or Abuse

The first major finding that emerged from the data was the respondents’ agreement on personal definitions of domestic violence or abuse. Because this study was exploratory in nature, I have presented their personal definitions of the terms domestic violence and abuse in this study. This is different from previous research, e.g., Strauss et al. (1980) used the Conflicts Tactics (CT) Scales to measure violent or abusive acts in their study of abusive families, conducted in 1974. They took specific acts and categorized them on a continuum from nonviolent to the most violent. Thus, it was the researchers’ judgment that defined what was violent and what was not.

The findings with regard to definitions of domestic violence, according to the respondents, are as follows:

I define it [domestic violence] as an imbalance in the delegation of power in the relationship. One partner seems, in a domestic violence situation, to have an...an...extreme need to control the other person. People breaking and threatening you, threatening things, threatening your life, threatening, you know to break things, break your hand, rip your arm off and hand it to you and
things like that. One person hitting the other person or breaking or throwing things.

Another respondent said:

I suppose that my definition would include abusive, emotional and physical attacks. These might be even non-violent sick manipulations, or control. Control games that go on. Hitting and bruising and overall fighting. Fist fighting.

Other respondents defined domestic violence as:

I would define it exactly as you would in a heterosexual relationship...physical, mental and verbal abuse. It's far deeper than just physical abuse. Just abusive, verbally. It can be physical at times, or just not... I suppose any kind of abusive behavior towards your partner whether it be physical, mental, psychological.

Lastly, one respondent replied:

Well, verbal and physical abuse. I don't really know how to define it.

Because I don't understand it. It's just something that happens.

I asked the respondents about abuse and whether a difference existed in their own minds between domestic violence and abuse. One respondent reported:

Violence and abuse, to me, it's pretty close to the same thing. I've seen it in one of my relationships and between my parents. Whenever I've seen violence it's been abuse too. So it's the same thing, to me.

Another participant said:
Abuse encompasses domestic violence. Violence would be more physical and more exaggerated [emotionally]. Abuse certainly includes more understated or manipulative or controlling experience. Abuse would be mental and physical...and violence, I would pretty much say, is physical.

One respondent stated that domestic violence was physical, mental and verbal abuse.

When I probed for his definition of physical, mental and verbal abuse, he replied:

Well from my experience it was more along the lines of... Mentally. He didn’t believe what I told him, which led to the emotional end of it, because you try to justify yourself, but it’s like he wouldn’t believe [me]. Which finally ended up literally turning into a punching match.

Another respondent defined abuse as:

Abuse can take physical forms. It can also be mental. Cruelty or abuse, spiritual abuse where the person...and I think of spiritual abuse where a person tries to foster the belief in the other person that they are in control of the other person’s life.

Lastly, when I asked another respondent for a definition of abuse, he said:

Verbal abuse, that’s when you know somebody for a long time, for a lot of years, then you know them like a clock and you take the things that would hurt them the worst and crank it out, just really pump the hell out of it.

Argumentative.

I then asked this respondent for a more specific definition of physical abuse and he said:
Hitting, slapping...it could be a mild version or it could be extreme where people are, you know, half-killing one another, shall we say?

Domestic Violence or Abuse Personally Experienced

The second major finding dealt with the type of domestic violence or abuse experienced by the respondents. For determining the type of domestic violence or abuse encountered in the relationships, several questions were asked. First, I asked for a description of the type of violence or abuse encountered in the relationship. Additionally, a question regarding details of a specific violent or abusive episode was posed.

The types of domestic violence or abuse encountered by the respondents in this study, typically, were similar to the definitions of domestic violence or abuse used in the literature addressing violent heterosexual relationships. Respondents reported having experienced physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse and mental abuse. This coincides with the literature on gay men’s domestic violence found in the media targeting this population (Bartolomeo, 1990; Island and Letellier, 1991(a); Island and Letellier 1991(b); Kirby, 1994; Letellier, 1994(a); Letellier, 1994(b); McCoy, 1995; Moore and Bundy, 1983), but it also mimics the types of violence described by Gelles (1987) and Gelles and Strauss (1988) in the social science literature written about heterosexual relationships.

When asked about the type of violence or abuse encountered in the relationship, one respondent told about having been at a party where he kissed someone else on the cheek, sending his partner into a jealous rage:
...And my lover was extremely jealous, dragged me into the bedroom by my leg and proceeded to beat the [crap] out of me.

Another respondent said:

Mostly it was emotional and kind of controlling, manipulative things. There were three specific instances when it became physical violence and that was enough.

One person described the controlling behaviors of his partner as:

It's, oh God, it's really strange. Very controlling. I can't have friends. If I have a friend, even if it's male or female, it induces a fight because if I spend more than an hour away from the house, other than work, I'm abandoning him and it's a 'Poor me' situation and then it escalates to like, lots of things...I can't have friends. I can't go out and do things with friends that would be completely platonic, [because] he automatically assumes and accuses me of having an affair or whatever.

Another respondent replied with an abusive example by stating:

There was a lot of verbal abuse and emotional abuse. I mean he was...in his violent moods he would degrade me, tell me I was stupid or I was nothing but a...faggot and he was always belittling me [and] my family. Family is very important to me. See, he knew what buttons to push and he'd push them.

One respondent said he experienced:

Physical violence, hitting, pulling hair, scratching. Then of course the verbal abuse, shrieking at the top of the lungs, profanity, and damage of property,
broken mirrors, broken pictures, scratched paint, flatted tires, broken windshields...a lot of physical [violence]. I mean we would get into a lot of fist fights, throw things at each other. But the last relationship, gosh we’ve locked each other out of the house. My lover would get upset and beat his head into the wall.

Another reported:

Well, there was a lot of verbal [abuse] you know. A lot of belittling, a lot of damage to one’s self esteem, one’s ego. There was some physical...There were fights, but mostly verbal or emotional types...the belittling, to the point where you start to wonder or question yourself.

Additionally, one respondent stated:

Well, he would drink a little bit and he would come home and if I wasn’t awake he would wake me up to fight. If I didn’t go out and drink with him he’d get angry and we’d fight. And if there wasn’t enough money around the house and he couldn’t see that his drinking and doing drugs was the reason, then there was another fight and that was verbally as well as physically. And this got to where it was a couple of times a month...I mean a lot of trips to the emergency room.

Lastly, one respondent reported incidents of:

...hitting, objects being thrown. And verbal abuse as well.

The respondents were asked to relate a specific violent or abusive episode.

One respondent stated that he often brought work home. This usually consisted of
personnel files. What the partner would do was peruse the information in the files and:

...he would see that if two people who had similar positions, one might make more than the other. Well if we were ever in a situation where they're both there, he'd bring that up [to the individuals].

One respondent reported a physically abusive incident and related:

One time...he let the car get repossessed. He told me he had made the payment, because I gave him the money to make the payment. And he didn’t make the car payment and he didn’t pay the apartment rent. He had been out drinking and doing drugs and spent the money, so I had to go to organizations to get our bills paid and we ended up in a really bad fight, to where I had a broken arm and he had a broken leg.

Another respondent talked about communication problems within the relationship, where the partner tended to want to leave a heated discussion and he [the respondent] would not allow the partner to do so until the matter at hand was resolved. What usually resulted was:

...he'd turn around again and hit me. So then once one hit came, it couldn’t ever be just one, it had to be this pounding, jackhammer thing. He had to do it ’till I either was bleeding or out cold...I bled a lot.

Another respondent said:

...I'm returning from an evening out at clubs, at the clubs, I was in a rental car. And there was a difference of opinion and he slammed the car into park
while traveling at full forward speed, highway speed. Which of course, needless to say, the transmission in the vehicle locked up, but fortunately had a safety so that it just basically clicked to a halt. All the power went out. Then [he] proceeded to take the keys out of there so I couldn’t...it locked the steering wheel and before the car even came to a full stop, jumped out of the vehicle after smacking me in the face with a nearly full Dr. Pepper can. So I was momentarily dazed and couldn’t control the vehicle even if I had the opportunity.

One respondent said of his experiences:

A lot of fights. A lot of violent fights. Then once, he attacked me in the bathroom with a knife and almost cut my finger off. And then the worst was he followed me out of a bar and attacked me and bit my nose off.

Another said:

...one night I walked in and the house was dark. And I didn’t think he was home. And I walked through the door, shut it, turned around and he hit me right across the forehead with a pool cue and beat the living hell out of me.

One respondent reported being at a night club with his partner. A fight ensued after he told his partner that he was ready to return home for the night. (A brief description of the relationship revealed that the respondent’s partner was not monogamous and was apparently trying to meet someone else.) The respondent said, “So get your boyfriend and come home” and the following ensued:

...and I was walking down the sidewalk and all of a sudden something jumped
on my back and took a plug out of my ear and I just reached back, grabbed it and pulled it over and it was him... And I had this blood running down the side of my head and I just got in my car and got home.

One last respondent spoke of a fight after having been at a party. The partner wanted to return to the party after the two of them had driven home in their respective cars. As the partner was driving away, the respondent swung his hand and nearly shattered the window. The following ensued with the partner exclaiming:

"Why the...did you do that?" I [respondent] said, "Because you're a...[jerk]."

And so with his left hand he just swung up and caught me in the jaw and, of course at that point, I lost any rational behavior I had, so I reached back in the car...and grabbed him by the collar and I managed to pull him like half way out of his car door and I was just pummeling him. I was just hitting him in the face because he was just totally stuck and there was no way he could get out because he was half way in and half way out of the car door and he managed to knock me right in the bottom of the chin again and it just stunned me. And so when I was standing there stunned, he, of course, pulled off and I went inside.

Reasons for Same-Sex Violence or Abuse

The third major finding deals with reported reasons that men would abuse their same-sex partners. To examine the issues involved I asked the question, "Why do you think these forms of domestic violence or abuse occur in same-sex relationships?"

The responses were varied, but again, seemed to relate to the mainstream social
science literature on heterosexual domestic violence. The issues involved were internalized homophobia (Meyer 1995), control (Prince and Arias, 1994; and Hendricks-Matthews 1992) jealousy and insecurity, money (Berger, 1990) drugs or alcohol (Levine and Rosich, 1996), and inter-generational transmission of physical violence as learned behavior (Gelles and Cornell, 1990; and Tolman and Bennett, 1990). For example, one respondent alluded to internalized homophobia as addressed by Meyer (1995) and stated:

Well, the main reason is because in a gay, in a same-sex relationship there’s so many other pressures that the straight community does not realize. The ridicule, the discrimination, the bias that we face just identifying ourselves as gay men in gay relationships. Also, not only that, but when you’re in a relationship with another gay man, they are...you’re also having to deal with the emotional baggage that they bring to the relationship. The problems that they’ve had growing up and coming out, coming to grips with their homosexuality and sometimes you’ve got so many emotions...

On the issue of control, one respondent said:

Men are conditioned to be the ones who are in charge of a relationship and the ones who make all the calls. And so when you get two men in a relationship together, they both expect that power and I think a lot of men don’t know any other way to get that power except to hit whomever they’re with. Too much testosterone! He’s a control freak about me. It’s just an unhealthy need to want to control another human being for whatever, you know, the perpetrator’s
reasons are.

With respect to jealousy and insecurity, one person replied:

Yeah, he’s insecure about everything. He’s insecure about me. I think insecurity has a lot to do with it and...Insecurities got him a lot. Well, I guess, not just insecurity, but...I want to say jealousy.

Regarding money:

He is constantly aggravated and bitching about money. Financial strains put a lot of stress on our relationship.

With regard to drug and alcohol abuse, one person said:

I’d say alcohol. Alcohol plays a big factor and then maybe there’s underlying reasons of personal problems. I think anything, be it alcohol, drugs, anything that alters your way of thinking at all, is a contributing factor to domestic violence.

Regarding inter-generational transmission of violence as a learned behavior, one person said:

I think that if we’re talking about men, I think that there’s a societal approval of men being violent with each other. I think there’s violence in same-sex relationships for the same reasons that there are in heterosexual relationships, you know? The perpetrator learns violence in his household...when he’s growing up that carries over with him into his own relationships...you were brought up in that environment so you think that’s the way it’s done.

And:
I think it has to do something with...it’s your upbringing. I think to a point, you’re taught by your parents. And in my opinion, they teach you these skills and you’re around this environment and you’re learning this. And I think you tend to do the same things in your relationship. And you see how your father treated your mother and I think in a sense it works out that way.

Minor Findings

The minor findings that emerged from these data are as follows: the fact that the respondents believed violence was wrong; the belief that domestic violence is prevalent in the gay community; the fact that formal assistance and support are needed by the gay community to help those involved in relationships where domestic violence is present; the belief that the respondents would leave a battering or abusive relationship, should they find themselves involved in one again in the future; data regarding the prevalence of substance abuse in the relationship of the respondent; information regarding whether the respondent believed he was the victim or the perpetrator and why; contributing factors for why these men stayed in their relationships; and perceptions of police and EMS personnel.

Opinions that Violence is Wrong

Interestingly, all of my respondents who were asked the question, “Do you think it’s wrong or bad to exhibit physical force against another person?” replied in the affirmative. When queried further with regard to whether or not this might be justified, only six said, “No,” while the rest of the respondents said that in certain instances of self-defense or protection of a loved one or one’s property, physical force
and violence may be appropriate and acceptable.

Prevalence of Domestic Violence in the Gay Community

Overall, the respondents unanimously expressed a belief that domestic violence is prevalent in the gay community. Three believed it was just as prevalent as it was in the heterosexual community. One said he thought violence is prevalent in society; three combined a “Yes” or “No” with a “Don’t know;” twelve stated they thought it was prevalent; three responded “No;” two stated they did not know; and one respondent said he believed it occurred in 80% of relationships. Citing the literature available, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence states that, “Over 50% of all women will experience physical violence in an intimate relationship, and for 24-30% of those women the battering will be regular and on-going. Every 15 seconds the crime of battering occurs.”

Need for Formal Assistance and Support

All of my respondents said they thought formal assistance and support were needed by the gay community. Suggestions ranged from money and a safe house, to counseling, and then to more education and a dissemination of information to the persons involved about the negative consequences of domestic violence and the options available to those in need. Respondents said some sort of public assistance is needed and their thoughts are illustrated by the following two quotes documenting the exact types of social support:

Awareness. I believe that as a community people need to educate themselves as to what same-sex violence is...and I think armed with that kind of education
people should try to reach out to the victim to let [him] know that they do not need to stay in the relationship...I think counseling is a very good idea. Therapy of some sort...I think they need a shelter of some kind. They need some kind of financial aid set up....when you don’t have any place to go and you don’t have any place to stay it’s hard to leave somebody.

Another said:

Some place where people would be comfortable enough to go and discuss their personal lives and to see what’s going on. Having a comfort zone. Some place they can go and work these things out. Like a center.

Comments About Future Domestic Violence

All but one respondent replied that they would absolutely rule out being involved in another violent or abusive relationship and all replied that they would terminate a casual dating relationship if violence or abuse erupted. One respondent said he would seek counseling before terminating the relationship. The exact words of one of the respondents were:

I would terminate the relationship. Terminate, immediately. I’d walk away immediately. The thought of it scares the hell out of me.

Presence of Substance Abuse in the Relationship

When questions were asked about substance abuse, 19 respondents replied that it was present in the relationship and five said that substance abuse was not present. (One respondent was not asked, as I deviated from the interview guide and forgot to ask the question.) It should be noted that of the 19 replying in the affirmative, nine
said it was a problem with the significant other and not himself. The majority of men (16 total) stated that the substance abused was alcohol, while ten said recreational drugs and alcohol or just recreational drugs.

Respondents' Identification with being the Victim or the Perpetrator

When respondents were asked whether they believed they were the victim or the perpetrator, 16 replied they were victimized, while nine said they were both victim and perpetrator. Of particular importance is the fact that of the nine reporting having at times instigated a violent or abusive episode, some of these respondents believed they perpetuated an episode by provoking their partner. (It would have been interesting to ask the respondents for their definition of provocation of a violent or abusive episode, and if mere provocation is abusive. However this study did not deal with this issue.)

Contributing Factors for Staying in the Relationship

Of the 25 respondents, only 20 were asked the question, “What was the length of time you were in that relationship [where domestic violence was or is present]?” because I decided to add it to the interview guide after completing five of the interviews and did not go back to collect the missing data. The responses were varied, and as follows: one respondent said ten months; two said one year; two said one year and two months; four said one year and six months; one said one year and ten months; one said two years and six months; one said three years; two said four years; one said six years; one said seven years; two said eight years; one said nine years and six months; and one said ten years. The majority of the reasons cited by the men included
in this study, for staying in the battering or abusive relationship, confirm again, studies conducted with heterosexual couples and the theories written about gay men’s domestic violence. By way of illustration, Gelles and Cornell (1990) cite the following as reasons women stay in battering (heterosexual) relationships:

(a) they have negative self-concepts, (b) they believe their husbands will reform, (c) there is economic hardship, (d) they have children who need a father’s support, (e) they doubt they can get along alone, (f) they believe divorces are stigmatized, and (g) it is difficult for women with children to get work (p. 79).

Furthermore, Island and Letellier (1991a) cite the following reasons: fear, nowhere to go, learned helplessness and no money.

The reasons respondents gave for staying in their relationship as long as they did are as follows:

For fear of the batterer or abuser:

Fear. I felt trapped. Fear of repercussion, fear that he would just totally disrupt my life... And of course, I did have some fear that, I don’t know if I ever thought that he would ever kill me, but I really don’t know. I don’t want to take the chance.

In support of economic hardships:

There were financial obligations... money issues. We had a company together and I was afraid to go it alone... financial security. I was a student and didn’t feel that I had a way out. That economically, I was trapped in the relationship.
Thinking that I couldn’t be able to pay the rent on my own.

For love or thinking the partner would reform:

Emotional attachment. I thought I really was in love with the person. And I thought that it would go away...just the fact that I think I was really and truly in love with him.

For believing one should stay to make things work:

That was the first real relationship and I thought you were supposed to make it work. You know, kind of like the hetero-thing, for better or for worse...I felt like I’d made a commitment. I’d think, ‘This can change.’ or ‘I can make it better. Somehow I can make this work.’ I loved him...there was a lot of love there.

For doubt of being able to get along alone or having a negative self-concept:

...I had, you know, deep rooted issues about abandonment. Not wanting to be by myself. I have a fear of being on my own...I had a very low self-esteem and I just felt that being with someone and being abused emotionally and physically, on occasion, was just the price I had to pay to have someone.

Also, respondents stated a lack of experience with regard to other same-sex relationships:

I had just come out and was inexperience[d] with the gay lifestyle. Not having anything to compare it to. Naïveté. I was very emotionally immature when I got into it.

Perceptions of Police and EMS Personnel
The literature on domestic violence paints a picture of the indifferent police officer who, upon arriving to the scene, either denies that domestic violence is taking place or tells the batterer (typically the male in a heterosexual relationship) to take a walk and cool down. Gelles and Strauss (1988) state, “Indifference arises out of either ignorance that family violence occurs, or the conviction that if there is violence between family members it is a private matter that ought to be resolved within the confines of the home” (p.162). One respondent was able to confirm this finding by stating that he had called the police and:

They came out and those two police officers made him leave and made sure he left. But he came back because he said he needed his checkbook.

After the respondent had to call a second set of police officers the response was quite different:

And the second set of officers that came told me that if they had to be called back out here they’d take us both to jail...they told me they’d haul us both to jail.

The medical community also seems to have an attitude of indifference or denial when it comes to domestic violence calls. Gelles and Strauss (1988) speak of the medical community as having attitudes of denial for failure to acknowledge an injury or condition as abuse, or failure to report suspected cases of maltreatment.

Furthermore, Jacquelyn Campbell in Knudsen and Miller (1991) addresses the issue of medical personnel blaming the victim for victimization when (s)he is already from a minority group. Once again, this was confirmed by a respondent who stated:
Well the ambulance people were real weird about it. They asked what had happened, I said, “Well my lover had...” and he [the ambulance driver] turned around [to his partner] and said, “Oh, we’ve got another faggot incident.”

And then we got to the [Medical Center] I recanted my story and said I had gotten pushed by a person running by, just...I thought it was none of their business. I thought if I was going to have to put up with grief, I’d just lie.

With regard to interpersonal relationships and a lack of adequate communication skills (see Hamberger, Feurbach and Borman, 1990), a respondent concluded that men do not know how to relate to one another at times. For example:

Because men don’t know how to deal with each other they don’t know how to talk to each other on a respectful understanding level. I think one or both parties are unable to communicate. I think, and this is strange, that the only reason two men are really together is sex. Or it starts out to be the sex and then it falls into a comfortable pattern and they don’t want to break the pattern. I can’t truly notice or see love between two men. I can’t see that. I think that men just use men for whatever they want and that’s where the violence starts, because they don’t really care about each other.

In conclusion, I believe it is important to recognize the similarities between mainstream social science literature documenting domestic violence in heterosexual relationships and that experienced by the respondents participating in this study. The issues regarding why one would stay and the types of domestic violence and abuse experienced by the respondents in this study mirror the experiences endured by
women in the heterosexual community who are living in relationships where domestic violence is present.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

After interviewing men who have experienced domestic violence in same-sex relationships it is imperative that we continue to study this group. Further research will fill the gap in the social science literature. Practitioners, as well as social scientists, must learn how to aid gay men who are living in relationships where domestic violence is present, and assist these persons in leaving the relationship and getting self-help.

This study was exploratory in nature. I carried out in-depth interviews with 25 gay men in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. While this is a small-scale study, data have been provided on how men in same-sex relationships define their life situations. Also, this study has indicated that it is important for society to gain an understanding of this social problem and recognize that education, social services, and government funding must be made available to the persons in need.

One of the most important findings in this study was to learn the respondents' definitions of abuse and domestic violence. This study differed from the work of Strauss et al. (1980) in that the respondents defined their life situations and described their perceptions of violent or abusive behaviors.

A subsequent finding portrays the actual type of abuse or violence respondents encountered in intimate relationships. The types of behaviors experienced mirrored
what is documented in the literature and believed to be experienced by heterosexuals involved in these types of relationships (see Gelles and Strauss, 1988). Among these are emotional, physical, verbal, and mental abuse.

A third finding in this research are the beliefs why domestic violence or abuse occurs in same-sex relationships. The common issues of control in this study confirmed what was found by Prince and Arias (1994) and Hendricks-Matthews (1992); the factors of alcohol and drug abuse previously reported by Levine and Rosich (1996) existed in this sample and the framework of inter-generational transmission of violence as addressed by Gelles and Cornell (1990), and Tolman and Bennett (1990) was also present in the relationships addressed in this study.

Based upon the recommendations of the respondents and the literature existing on gay male domestic violence a call for further research and analysis is in order. Because few research studies in the area of gay male domestic violence exist (especially with some of the available data being personal accounts of violence and abuse experienced and not on empirical research per se), it is imperative that social scientists continue to address the issue at hand in order to gain a better and more complete understanding of the social phenomenon of domestic violence in same-sex relationships.

Specifically, respondents and social scientists (see Short, 1996) call for social service agencies to be made available to the population being addressed. Additionally, Gelles, 1987 calls for clinical applications of data available on domestic violence. Respondents taking part in this research project stated a desire for support services
such as a safe house for gay men, counseling services with trained professionals who can deal effectively with the special dynamics of same-sex male relationships, and funding from the federal government to aid in maintaining these social support services. Lastly, those taking part in this study believed it was important for researchers, as well as those who had previous experience with violence in gay male relationships to share information and to educate those who might need to be enlightened. (Several respondents stated they stayed in their respective relationships out of ignorance of a healthy gay male relationship.)

In my judgment, stronger family ties between persons in the gay community and their families of origin are in dire need. Many men involved in this study believed they had no place to seek refuge and no one to talk to regarding their life situations. Because a jealous, controlling, and abusive significant other typically isolated his victim from friends, it is imperative for the family of origin to support a family member who is a member of the gay community. In many instances the immediate family is the only source of hope for a victim of domestic violence.
APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part I: Demographic Characteristics

1. What is your age?
2. Where were you born?
3. In what city and state were you raised?
4. How many siblings are in your family?
5. Where do your parents live?
6. What is your level of education?
7. How long have you lived in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex?
8. What is your occupation?
9. Do you consider yourself gay or bisexual?
10. What is your marital status: single, married, separated, divorced, widowed?
11. Have you been tested for the HIV virus?
12. What were the results?
13. (If appropriate) Do you think the condition has contributed to the domestic violence?
14. Are you presently in a relationship with a member of the same sex?

Part II: Domestic Violence or Abuse

15. How do you define domestic violence in same-sex relationships? (Probe.)
16. Do you believe a difference exists between violence and abuse?
17. Have you been in a relationship where domestic violence was present?
18. What were some of the contributing factors for your staying in the relationship?
19. What was the length of time you were in that relationship?
20. Prior to this relationship, have you been in another abusive or violent relationship? (Probe.)
21. Were you or your partner substance abusers? If so, what were the substances?
22. Have you experienced emotional abuse in a same-sex relationship?
23. Are there any other types of abuse? (Probe.)
24. Describe the type of violence or abuse encountered in the relationship.
25. What was the frequency of the episodes?
26. Would you consider yourself the victim, the perpetrator, or both?
27. Was there violence in your home when you were growing up?
28. Why do you think violence or abuse occurs in same-sex relationships?
29. Do you think it's wrong or bad to exhibit physical force against another person?
30. Do you think physical force is ever justifiable?
31. Has your abusive relationship ended?
32. (If appropriate) How long ago did the relationship end?
33. (If appropriate) Was the end of the relationship amicable?
34. (If appropriate) Can you describe the actual end of the relationship?
35. (If appropriate) How did you decide to split up? Explain.
36. (If appropriate) Did you seek support from others in ending the relationship?
37. What factors do you think contribute to domestic violence in same-sex relationships?
38. Did you ever fight with your partner about money or sex?
39. Do you believe there is a need for community support in response to same sex male domestic violence?

40. Are you presently utilizing social services? (Probe as to the type of social services.)

41. Were social services available to you? (Probe.)

42. Do you believe domestic violence is prevalent in the homosexual community?

43. What kind of assistance is needed in order to effectively deal with domestic violence within the homosexual community?

44. Would you absolutely rule out being involved in a violent or abusive relationship in the future?

45. What do you think your probable reaction will be to an abusive or violent episode in a future dating situation? Will you terminate the relationship or seek some sort of counseling?
REFERENCES


National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, General information pamphlet. Denver, CO.


