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Police Response To Same-Sex IPV a Qualitative approach

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ABSTRACT

POLICE RESPONSE TO SAME-SEX IPV: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

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The present thesis examines the views that police have towards cases of same-sex IPV (intimate partner violence) in a qualitative sense. An issue highlighted by poor relations and uneven rates of arrest; this study sought to look beyond the usual quantitative approach to the issue. This was analyzed through use of semi-structured interviews with both law enforcement and social service workers in domestic violence organizations.

13 interviews were conducted, 6 with law enforcement, and 7 with social service workers, asking the participants about their views and interactions with same-sex cases, police, and the LGBTQ community as a whole. The results implied a set of two different social realities between the groups, with law enforcement viewing the system as fair to all, and social service workers saying it was not doing enough for victims. Yet in this disagreement, an interesting point was found, as both sides seemingly held common views on how to improve it.

From this analysis, I suggest another layer exists in the issue, with the detachment police have from those involved in these cases leading to these negative interactions. This reality that law enforcement is in may in turn be leading to the poor interactions described by those in social work, rather than any true animosity towards the community. It is from this analysis that I suggest a continued focus on this disconnect and call for more community-oriented approaches as a step to mend the relationship between law enforcement and the LGBTQ community.

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POLICE RESPONSE TO SAME-SEX IPV:
A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The introduction of primary aggressor policies, which have been implemented in various ways in around 35 states, has given police more directed control over handling cases of intimate partner violence, or IPV for short (Hirschel et al. 2021). Since their initial implementation around 40 years ago, an increase in arrests has occurred since; police have more freedom to assess these scenes and make arrests (Hirschel et al. 2021). While initial study of these policies has shown an increase of arrests, resting around the 50% mark, the increase of arrests themselves has had mixed results, giving positives for arresting the aggressor, but also increasing arrests of victims (Durfee 2012, Hirschel et al 2021).

When it comes to same-sex cases, these policies have proven ineffective (Hirschel et al. 2021). Same-sex couples do not receive the same treatment under such policies, with police often taking harsher or less serious responses to such cases (Hirschel and McCormack 2021). Whether these harsher or lackluster responses are due to personal bias or ignorance is unknown since, in terms of research, barely any studies have been conducted on LGBT interactions with police, and even less has been done specifically on same-sex IPV (Edwards et al. 2015).

In cases where officers do respond to IPV cases, the disparity in arrest rates between heterosexual and same-sex couples is not entirely different. As showcased by the Hirschel and

McCormack (2021) study of incidents that resulted in an arrest, 43.7% for female couples faced arrest, and male couples came in at 46.1%. Heterosexual couples experienced a 49.9% arrest rate. However, upon examining cases of dual arrest a drastic difference can be found between heterosexual couples and same-sex couples. 54.9% of female couples saw dual arrest, 61.9% of male couples saw dual arrests, and 2.9% of heterosexual couples saw an outcome of dual arrests (Hirschel and McCormack 2021).

The disparity in these statistics is a major point of concern, but despite the numbers, they have only recently been found. This in part stems from the study of same-sex IPV. Overall, the study of interpersonal violence (IPV) has had a heterosexual orientated focus of research. Beyond this initial approach, data concerning same-sex couples, or LGBT¹ cases, has not received the same amount of attention as heterosexual cases (Hirschel, McCormack and Buzawa 2021; Addington 2020). While this trend has become less of an issue with recent work that has purposely sought to study LGBT IPV (Edwards et al. 2015; Lee, Zhang, and Hoover 2012; Goodmark 2013), issues with a dedicated focus specifically same-sex data still persists. Beyond this, an understanding of issues that cause these interactions has not been examined much outside of the quantitative lens.

While previous work has suggested that failings stem back to the training and policies of the police themselves, that work did not extend to same-sex cases (Hirschel and McCormack 2021), I believe another variable exists. This rests within the attitudes of the police themselves towards same-sex couples and domestic violence. To better understand why this occurs, I will

¹ The use of both same-sex and LGBT cases is important for use of past literature as studies on IPV have used both definitions in their work.

focus on the attitudes that officers and social service workers carry towards police response to same-sex IPV cases.

For analyses, I will use the social construction of analysis for a theoretical basis. The use of social construction is important for better understanding how the social roles of the participants impact their views and actions (Hector 2016). The use of social construction also allows for analysis of the division of labor between social service workers and law enforcement. With this theoretical approach in mind, this would look for the current attitudes held by officers, whether it be impacted by current policy, or personal experience and current culture. Through a series of conducted interviews, I strived to find the answer to an important question: How do law enforcement and social service workers perceive police response to same-sex IPV cases?

LITERATURE REVIEW

DV and Police Response

Of note for analysis, both the acronyms of LGB and LGBT will be used in reference to the respective literature. The LGB acronym accounts only for lesbian, gay, and bisexual respondents, whereas LGBT accounts for the same, but also includes transgender respondents. This leads into the groundwork of the discussion, the history of primary aggressor laws. These policies stem from the complicated view of domestic violence (DV), which refers to violence that occurs within the home; IPV differs from DV as it focuses on the violence between intimate partners specifically. Despite the differences, opposite-sex DV is still important for understanding the history of primary aggressor policies. DV has long been considered a matter of “personal dispute” or even a family matter, and these views often discouraged officers from acting on such cases (Hoppe et al. 2020). This would eventually change, with the first legislation focusing on domestic violence coming into existence in the 1960s to 1970s; These laws originally only considered mediation and police response for cases where a serious injury occurred (Hirschel et al. 2021) Through both public pressure and the advocacy of DV victims, further legislation in the 1980s saw the shift from the role of a DV as a personal matter to one of criminal offence, requiring the response from law enforcement (Hoppe et al. 2020).

The models of law that would follow stemmed from a single study conducted in 1984 on DV called “The Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment”, which examined three responses to DV: Arrest, informal mediation, and separation for a minimum of 8 hours (Hoppe et al. 2020). The goal of this study was to determine the best deterrence towards repeating violence, and was measured using self-reports of victims, official records, and reports of DV over a six-month period (Hoppe et al. 2020). The results of the study showed that arrests held significantly better results than mediation and separation (Hoppe et al. 2020). The model of the study would see welcome adoption from law enforcement under growing public pressure to better handle DV cases and through the first official policy modeling the study, enacted in 1985 by Washington state, which required an arrest at the scene of a DV incident (Hirschel et al. 2021). Despite this, further replication of the study years after its introduction failed to achieve similar results. (Hoppe et al. 2020).

These studies, as shown in a meta-analysis by Hoppe et al. (2020), 11 studies were conducted after the initial experiment, seeking to replicate the results produced. The results of the analysis showed no significant results but did show that arrests were slightly effective in reducing repeat offenses (Hoppe et al. 2020). (Hoppe et al. 2020). The results of these studies create concern for the adoption of the arrest model in the case of fully dealing with offenders. Regardless however, following laws took a focus on identifying the primary aggressor at the scene of the crime and distinguishing between “offensive” and “defensive” injury, leading to the conception of the first primary aggressor policy (Hirschel et al. 2021).

Even as other states followed in implementing their own policies, many chose different ways to implement such laws. These differences include nuances down to phrasing, with most

states making use of the word “shall”, whereas New Hampshire, Michigan, and New Jersey make use of the word “Should” for a mandatory term (Hirschel et al. 2021). Determination in finding the aggressor, despite being the point of the policies in the first place, varies between states, with at least 20 states having policies mandating that the primary aggressor must be identified, and distinctions must be made between intentional injuries and self-defense injuries. (Hirschel et al. 2021). States within this demographic of notable distinction include Alabama, which requires officers to get both parties’ testimonies if both are displaying injury, whereas Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, and North Dakota require separate accounts regardless of injury (Hirschel et al. 2021). States vary further when making assessments, Florida, Rhode Island, and Texas have no set criteria for officers to look for when it comes to the assessment of the situation, while other states require sufficient evidence, present injury, and thorough analysis of the scene to identify the aggressor (Hirschel et al. 2021, Dichter et al. 2011). Of the 35 states with primary aggressor policies, 28 of them, including the district of Columbia, require some form of arrest, with the remaining 7 leaving it to officer discretion on whether to arrest or not (Hoppe et al. 2020).

The intended role of such policies is designed to give better aid to the victim at the scene of IPV and have helped increase the arrest of aggressors at the scene, yet previous work has also shown (Hirschel et al 2021, Lantz 2020, Lockwood and Prohaska 2015) that such policies has not always carried a beneficial outcome. These can range from arresting the victim, falling to arrest at all, or arresting both parties, which can create further distress for the victim (Hirschel et al. 2020) This stems from issues that exist within the laws, which influence how officers respond within the limits current policy, how officers actually identify the scene on arrival, and

consideration of external biases holding sway in addition to the policies themselves (Lockwood and Prohaska 2015). The way identification at the scene is conducted varies based on a state-by-state basis in regard to policies as denoted earlier, but outside factors also deeply play into how an officer will make their conclusion. Previous research from Lee, Zhang, and Hoover (2012) has shown a variety of factors that go into who officers decide to arrest in an IPV situation. Areas of concentrated disadvantage yield higher rates of arrest, and even after dusk cases leading to a harsher response from officers, with higher rates dual arrests and arrests of males at the scene.

Further external factors were identified through study of over 9,000 DV cases, gathered from police reports and the US census bureau that impacted arrests decisions (Lee, Zhang, and Hoover 2012). This included ethnicity, immigration status, and a more notable factor, gender. Officers were more likely to make an arrest if the case involves a male and female couple, and less likely to act if the couple is male and male or female and female (Lee, Zhang and Hoover 2012, Hirschel et al. 2021). This stems from officers, viewing cases where the woman is the victim as being more severe than cases where the male is the victim, regardless of their own gender (Lockwood and Prohaska 2015). The impact of gender on same-sex cases however does not translate directly. Same-sex female cases, police are less likely to take them seriously, due to the perceived notion of men always being the aggressors and are less likely to find a woman as the aggressor (Edwards et al. 2015). Applying such perceptions to same-sex cases can lead to officers failing to respond to the situation accordingly, and unless arrests are required, they are less likely to take meaningful action, regardless of whether it is a male and male or female and female couple (Lockwood and Prohaska 2015).

Beyond this point of applying assumed gender roles to the victims, officers will also respond differently based on whether they are a man or a woman. Outside of those involved in the situation, previous work has shown that male officers are more likely to escalate such situations, as well as engage in victim blaming, and apply stereotypes of men being the aggressors and women being the victims at a higher rate than female officers (Lockwood and Prohaska 2015). This causes many IPV cases to go unreported. While proper response does serve to be beneficial to the victim, many fear mistreatment from officers in the form of stigma, shame, retaliation from the aggressor, and secondary victimization (Lantz 2020).

In same-sex cases, fears are elevated as officers apply schema and stereotypes of heterosexual cases to analyze same-sex disputes, causing victims to worry that their cases will not be properly assessed or taken seriously for lacking the elements present in heterosexual cases (Lantz 2020). These fears vary even greater by gender. In regard to reporting IPV to officers, with previous studies showing that victims of same-sex IPV are less likely to report to the police, instead seeking informal help, such as friends and family (Lantz 2020). When they do report to the police, same-sex female victims are more likely to disclose victimization, with a previous study show the roughly 60% reported such to the police, whereas male same-sex IPV victims were less likely to report at all (Lantz 2020). This response is actually similar to those in heterosexual relationships. This lack of male reporting arises from fears of officers treating them poorly for their homosexual status, and internalized shame over their relationship status (Edwards et al. 2015, Lantz 2020).

The issues surrounding primary aggressor policies, with regards to variation from state to state, carry similar faults and positives. Since the introduction of primary aggressor laws, arrests

have lingered around the 50% mark for single arrests in 2020, showing a sharp increase of police response to IPV cases prior to their introduction, which lingered around the 2% mark or less in 1970. (Hirschel, Buzawa, Pattavania, and Faggiani 2007, Hirschel et al. 2021). Despite the increase in arrests, failures such as arrests of the victim, dual arrests, or no arrests at all, further complicating the issues with IPV police response (Frye, Haviland, and Rajah 2007).

Further failings with IPV cases stem from beyond the initial arrests, with both officers and prosecutors alike being unable to properly respond to such cases in the first place (Hirschel and Hutchison 2001). In a previously conducted study of 424 cases, 262 or 64.4% of studied cases did not result in any kind of prosecution, with prosecutors' decisions considering factors about the victim, ranging from prior criminal history, race, or gender, on whether to prosecute or not (Hirschel and Hutchison 2001). This stemmed from whether the victim was perceived as under the influence, previously married, and even race, with black defendants more likely to face prosecution than white cases (Hirschel and Hutchison 2001, Danielle and Frieburger 2013). With such information considered, any action taken to punish IPV aggressors effectively is rarely conducted, with many cases never making it to court (Hirschel and Hutchison 2001). These initial issues are only amplified for same-sex couples come forth, and such cases often warrant specific attention.

Study of Same-Sex IPV

Previous studies on same-sex IPV have given insight into the perception of LGBT relations. When it came to male same-sex perceptions and female same-sex perceptions, both sides viewed IPV as being a problem within the community but struggled to identify it (Finneran and Stephenson 2012, Edwards et al. 2015). This recognition of the issue but lacking response is

shared also by those in heterosexual relationships (Edwards et al. 2015). In terms of actual occurrence, the only information readily available is perception from those within the LGB demographic, with trans perceptions not available. A summary of this data can be found in the work of Edwards et al. (2015), whose extensive review of relevant same-sex IPV literature reveals the associated factors with the topic itself, including rates of prevalence and victimization that have been studied.

In a study of approximately 14,200 IPV cases, only around 400 (3%) pertain to LGB cases (Edwards et al. 2015). While this result is statistically in line with the current population, that statistic becomes a barrier in terms of examining the issue. Edwards et al. (2015) also showed in a review of the literature on sexual minority related IPV research, a pool of 358 empirical articles were examined dating back to 1999. After accounting for factors of relevance, which include a focus on or mention of sexual minorities, present analyses on IPV, measures IPV statistically, measures experiences and not perceptions, and presents original data, only 96 articles proved to contain a focus on same-sex identities; Other articles simply lumped them in with heterosexual persons, and many failed to adequately study same-sex issues (Edwards et al. 2015). The articles which did not concentrate heterosexual and same-sex relationships into a singular entity go into far more depth in how they studied same-sex IPV.

The articles used looked specifically at those under the LGB acronym and did not account for transgender data. To analyze any differences between heterosexual victims and LGB victims, reoccurring types of IPV were looked at from the chosen studies (Edwards et al. 2015). Of the 96 identified studies; 62 of the studies pertained to incidence and/or prevalence rates and showed that 97% of the participants within these studies had experienced psychological,

physical, and sexual IPV, making it a common factor (Edwards et al. 2015). Of these types, psychological IPV appeared the most frequently within the studies, sharing this amongst samples of both lesbian IPV victims at 97.6%, and gay IPV victims at 93.5% across the studies that were examined in the review (Edwards et al. 2015). In cases of rates of sexualized IPV, using the Conflicts Tactics Scale, a cognitive appraisal tool designed to gauge what type of violence is present, showed that 33.3% of men in same-sex relationships reported some form of sexualized IPV. These forms were, but not limited to, forced sexual acts and sexual victimization, with 9.5% of gay and bisexual men reporting these forms of harassment, the presence of both of these forms of violence present encompasses broader forms of both physical and verbal sexual harassment (Edwards et al. 2015).

Beyond conducted studies, epidemiological data showed to be more reliable for determining rates of IPV. The CDC's Sexual Violence Survey documenting lifetime prevalence of IPV, including sexual, physical, and stalking victimization (Edwards et al. 2015). Those in the survey self-identified as LGB; Within the survey, 61.1% of lesbian women, 43.8% of bisexual men, 37.7% of gay men reported being a victim of the aforementioned types of IPV over their lifetime, occurring at rates higher than both heterosexual women at 35% and men at 29% (Edwards et al. 2015). When considering strictly severe physical IPV, the same trend of higher rates for LGB respondents continued; 49.3% of bisexual women reported severe physical IPV, followed by 29.4% of lesbians, and 16.4% of gay men attesting to the same. The rates for heterosexual women were reported at 23.6% and men at 13.9% (Edwards et al. 2015). The rates of the epidemiological data not only provide the most comprehensive information on the subject, but also supports that LGB individuals are more prone to IPV as a whole. (Edwards et al. 2015).

Further studies also found differences in perpetration in same-sex cases, with male couples being more likely to include acts of self-defense in comparison to female couple cases (Edwards et al. 2015).

The following section on risk factors of victimization continues with further results, with 25 of the studies examined focusing on potential factors correlating with rates of LGB IPV victimization (Edwards et al. 2015). Risk factors that would lead to higher rates of victimization across studies varied extensively, including racial minority status, younger age, lower socioeconomic status, substance use/abuse, low self-esteem, psychological and physical health problems, and history of incarceration (Edwards et al. 2015). While these factors all showed a correlation between rates of same-sex IPV and victimization, other specific studies also denoted the effects of internalized homophobia and “being out” as holding impact on victimization rates, as such feelings or general openness would invite further victimization (Edwards et al. 2015). This control that these factors have in such cases leads to staying within them for longer, which in turn leads to them continuing.

Beyond these points, further factors that were present in the occurrence of same-sex IPV seem to suggest perpetration stems from a series of minority stressors, such as discrimination towards the victim’s sexual orientation (Edwards et al. 2015). This comes to show that in case of both the victims and perpetrators of same-sex IPV, both sides are negatively impacted by issues connected to their sexual orientation.

LGBT Relations, Police, and IPV

The relations between the LGBT community and police carries a troubled history. The United States has a long past of discrimination; with some forms like harassment at the hands of police still occurring within the present day (Mallory et al. 2015). When referring to police response, recent data has shown that same-sex LGB offenders and victims are less likely to cooperate with police due to the fear of being outed to unknowing family, or the response of the officers due to their same-sex status (Lantz 2020). Outside of LGB respondents, transgender individuals suffer their own grievances with police, with their own identities serving as further barriers in regard to police interaction (Goodmark 2013).

Further barriers with police also stem from officers being unable to properly deal with same-sex individuals (Hirschel and McCormack 2021) due to a lack of policy addressing response in such cases (Wolf et al. 2003). In the case of IPV cases, previous research has shown that discrimination against LGBT populations by law enforcement has been an ongoing issue, leading to trust fractures and other barriers (Mallory, Hasenbush, and Sears 2015). These absence of trust have led to respondents not wishing to interact with police, leading to continued violence without proper intervention (Mallory, Hasenbush, and Sears 2015). The scarcity of trust also stems from previous issues of discrimination from officers and law enforcement, where often victims in such cases would face harassment and belittlement over their identities if made known to the officers at the scene (Mallory, Hasenbush, and Sears 2015). While previous research into IPV has shown mixed results when it comes to the decision of the to arrest same-sex individuals in IPV cases, relations overall have been sour (Lee, Zhang, and Hoover 2012).

Recent work taking a focus on males shows that 40% of gay and bisexual men believe contacting police in response to partner violence would not be effective, and 59% believe police officers would do more for a heterosexual woman than them (Mallory, Hasenbush, and Sears 2015). Assumptions on same-sex female IPV cases suffer instead from issues of being taken less seriously by police, facing stigmas that persist traditionally for heterosexual cases but not for same-sex cases (Baker et al. 2012). These assumptions are reflected in literature that does not solely pertain to same-sex cases. In addition to officers' specific responses to same IPV cases, documented individual testimonies against police from LGBT respondents report discrimination of some kind, with many claiming verbal harassment and physical abuse at the hands of officers (Mallory, Hasenbush, and Sears 2015).

Why this happens is the biggest point of contention in recent data. The consequences of dual arrests are high, often resulting in denying victims access to adequate services, loss of employment, added financial hardship, and further reluctance to call the police in cases of domestic violence (Hirschel and McCormack 2021). Beyond these consequences, as for why this occurs stems back to previous research examining the negative attitudes that officers have towards same-sex couples (Mallory et al. 2015). But the basis of why this occurs is mainly just a point of continued speculation, with only outdated issues identified in past literature being the most likely source for why it is occurring.

In Summary

LGBT criminology as a whole is a developing field, growing through the use of long needed studies and attention, and this issue is no different. The review of the literature and the understanding of the issue itself shows that more attention is needed, and only through further

work can this be properly studied. As previous work has shown (Edwards et al. 2015, Hirschel and McCormack 2021), the issues around same-sex IPV have not been fully considered in their own right. This extends to the response of police to same-sex cases. The knowledge that disparity in arrests and treatment does exist, and while it has been studied in its own way, not every possible angle has been considered; Previous work sought to understand the issue of LGB IPV rather than how officers are fully responding to these scenes, leading to a gap within the research. It is from this gap that the research I have conducted becomes relevant, as I seek to help expand on the perceptions of officer's response.

Past data has shown that discrimination is present, and that dual arrests are more prominent within same-sex cases, but some gaps in the literature do exist. While current literature makes use of broader, quantitative study, it is here I argue for the need of more qualitative work to examine the attitudes of officers and those working with victims themselves. Existing work has shown that single arrests are less likely to occur, but information as to why that is the case is still lacking. The question I posed on examining perceptions of both law enforcement and social service workers seeks to expand on what may be happening at those scenes. It is from this point that I conducted my own work in the qualitative sense, seeking to further develop this otherwise neglected area of research and expand on literature as a whole.

THE STUDY

Research Questions

The current literature shows that police are far more likely to act in dual arrests for same-sex cases in comparison to heterosexual ones, as shown in the previous review of the work. But even though the data has shown this on a national scale, there is still much left in the open to understand what leads police to this higher frequency. Given what is currently known about the relationship between police and LGBT individuals, this leads to the questions I seek to gain greater clarity on my main question on “How do law enforcement and social service workers perceive police response to same-sex IPV cases?” To do so, four more questions were raised:

1. How do law enforcement and social service workers view current IPV policies?
2. How do social service workers’ perception of police response to IPV cases vary from law enforcement?
3. How does law enforcement view the LGBT community?
4. How do law enforcement and social service worker see a need to improve relations with the LGBT community, and if so, how should it be done?

Data

The data gathered focused on two groups, specifically law enforcement and social service workers within organizations that assist victims of domestic violence. Participants were chosen based on initial contact established prior to conducting research through connections of professors and peers, and then advanced with a snowball technique of recruitment. Location was also a factor, with each respondent working within the northern Illinois region. Respondents were active in the counties of Ogle, Lake, Dekalb, Kane, and Winnebago specifically. A total of 13 interviews were conducted, with participants ranging in positions within both systems. Of the six law enforcement interviews, two worked with probation, two worked as officers, one was a commander, and one was a detective. Of the law enforcement respondents, three of them were men, and three of them were women. Of the men, two were white, and one was black. Of the women, all three were white. The respondents primarily operated in rural counties, but each operated in more urbanized sections. Each had varying levels of experience within law enforcement but were all familiar with domestic violence (see Table 1).

Table 1
Law Enforcement Demographics

Name	Job title	Gender	Race	Urban or Rural
Maria	Detective	Female	White	Urban
Howard	Commander	Male	White	Urban
Rachel	Officer	Female	White	Rural
Hank	Officer	Male	Black	Urban
Connor	Probation Officer	Male	White	Rural
Gwen	Probation Officer	Female	White	Rural

For the domestic violence social service workers, there were seven participants. Of the seven, one was a legal advocate, one was a victim advocate, one was a chief program officer and therapist, and the last four were counsellors. Six of the respondents were women and the last was a man. Of the women, four were white, and two were Latino. The sole male was white. Experience also ranged, with some respondents having a couple of years in the field while another accumulated around thirty years in the field. The respondents were all based within primarily rural counties, Kane, Dekalb, Lake, and Winnebago (see Table 2).

Table 2
Social Service Workers Demographics

Name	Job Title	Gender	Race	Urban or Rural
Mary	Victim Advocate	Female	White	Rural
Jerry	Chief Program Officer	Male	White	Rural
Olivia	Legal Advocate	Female	White	Rural
Elaine	Counsellor	Female	Latino	Rural
Stacy	Counsellor	Female	Latino	Rural
Julia	Counsellor	Female	White	Rural
Rebecca	Counsellor	Female	White	Rural

Each was informed of their rights to withdraw from the interviews or project at any point, as well as given the reassurance that any physical recordings would be permanently deleted after transcription was completed. Gathered quotes used in the paper from the interviews have been edited for sake of grammar and readability, but still maintain the original intent and message of the respondent. Pseudonyms were also used for each respondent, to aid in easier quotations and identification for the data's sake, all while preserving anonymity.

Methods

The study in itself was done under IRB approval under protocol number HS23-0213. To gather data, I conducted semi-structured interviews. Two of the interviews were conducted in person, with the remaining eleven being conducted over Zoom. Interviews varied in length, with the shortest being around twenty-three minutes, and the longest going to fifty minutes. An average of thirty minutes was calculated. Law enforcement interviews averaged out to be either the longest or shortest, ranging from twenty-three minutes at the shortest, and fifty at the longest, whereas social service workers averaged around the thirty-minute mark. The recorded interviews were transcribed through use of Microsoft Word, and then gone through manually to fix or add missing letters and words and correct grammar.

A structured set of questions was developed for each group and modified throughout the course of the study based on the position held by the respondent and responses from previous interviewees. The question set for law enforcement saw the greatest modification throughout the study, as the duties and experience of those interviewed varied based on location and position. Beyond the structured questions, the interviews were overall semi-structured; with questions changing and evolving based on information shared by participants, or as points of interest were raised through previous tangents. Regardless of the structure, each interview sought to gather specific information from the two groups. I analyzed the data through use of inductive coding, creating codes to be examined as the data was collected and examined. To conduct this, data from both groups was sorted and analyzed initially along the research questions, and further used to find themes within the data as a basis for gathering related quotes and information from the

respondents. I then analyzed the data through comparative study, further coding for themes within the responses in order to develop a theory about the information present.

For the law enforcement side, the questions asked for information pertaining to overall perception of IPV within the county they work in. From beyond this, questions then scour for their own views on any current IPV related policies such as, whether they view such procedures as effective or not. Further inquiries would then go into asking their own method of response to IPV cases, including what they look for to aid in addressing them. From this, their overall perception and response to same-sex cases was asked about, with questions aiming to understand their own interactions with those within the LGBTQ community. They were also asked on how they view current relations between law enforcement and the LGBTQ community itself. Participants were then asked for any other points of interest they deemed relevant to the topic, as well as any questions they may have about me. This was conducted in such a way to gain insight on my four questions I had for law enforcement, and structured so that answers to previous questions would build onto the following ones.

For social workers, a similar structured interview guide was utilized with the same main goal of understanding their views on IPV on same-sex cases. The questions asked for their own views on IPV and its occurrence, while then going into their views on if any policies or efforts by the law have been effective in aiding victims. The next set of questions then inquired for any shared accounts from victims on their own interactions with police during their own cases, including any consistent issues or complaints they have heard or received. I also asked about who is most likely to seek their services, and then specifically ask about same-sex survivors. From here, questions then pertained to their experiences with same-sex victims, including their

interactions with officers and how it compares to the accounts of heterosexual victims. Questions then asked about any barriers they identified between law enforcement and the LGBTQ community in the case of IPV, and then for their own perceptions on what could be further implemented or used to improve these areas. Finally, questions are then asked on anything that they feel is important or needs attention to better understand the topic.

FINDINGS

Views of the Effectiveness of Current IPV Policies

In examining opinions on current policy and response to domestic violence, the results varied drastically from the perspectives of both law enforcement and social workers. Of the six officers interviewed, four felt that current IPV laws were effective and working well, serving as a useful guideline in making decisions at the scene of the arrest. Most also claimed that arrest only occurred when violence was present throughout the responses. Howard, a commander, gave this response:

“We handle every domestic dispute or report of domestic violence with thorough investigation. No matter who's involved. And in the end if there is any violence that's, you know, proven or evidence of violence, then we are mandated to make an arrest”.

Another respondent, officer Hank also brought up a positive point of the current law in helping victims receive an order of protection, while also alluding to access to services, in which he stated the following: “I think it's easy for those like, you know, victims to get orders of protection. And you know, there are lots of services and things like that they could utilize.” A common element within law enforcement response outside of the probation element was the use of the law in these cases. It was often stated that arrests would only occur if violence was present, as yelling or even signs of emotional distress would not always warrant an arrest. This set a standard for using their legal consciousness as a baseline of response, with the assessment of the officer at the scene able to use their knowledge of the law to make an arrest.

The four respondents who were actively responding to these calls overall spoke in favor of the current laws as a whole, with the sentiment of “the laws are doing enough” being commonplace. Their experience with the laws did differ slightly, with the two respondents working in probation tending to put more emphasis on treatment in comparison to officers’ view on initial response. The male probation officer, Connor, made note of the programs in place that existed to help both victims and perpetrators. The services for victims were through domestic violence shelters. The other respondent working in probation, Gwen, did not fully agree, going on to say, “I would like there to be a policy in place for de-escalation, for social workers to be accompanying police when they go to DV instances,” Beyond this point of calling for better de-escalation, points of just trying to be more respectful to those at the scene were expressed by two of the respondents. One officer, Maria, put in her words, as “basic respect that should be expected” by officers responding to a call. Overall, the response from officers did seem to indicate that current laws and policies were working as they should to help victims.

From the social worker’s perspective, the response was more varied and stronger. Five of those interviewed expressed strongly that current laws did not work in favor of the victim at all as they fail to fully account for the types of abuse that are present at the scene, or not doing enough for victims with short arrest times or not requiring support unless physical abuse is present. As one counsellor named Elaine said, “They're not enough. I never feel like they're enough.” This negative sentiment was overall common for those working within social organizations. Other respondents echoed the same complaint in different ways. One counsellor respondent, Stacy, viewed the laws as being, in some cases, more harmful to those involved than beneficial. Her reasoning can be summarized, as those who are arrested are denied specific types of services, with victims and perpetrators being put through completely different programs,

making proper assessment from police before arresting critical. As she said in regard to victims who were arrested, “There are certain services that we may not be able to extend to them, which hinders them.” The differences in these programs were echoed by 4 of the respondents, as putting a victim through a perpetrator program would do more harm than good for them based on the inaccurate label.

Another counsellor respondent, Julia, viewed the laws as not considering the situation enough, and even in cases where arrest is needed, that overall current policy did not consider everything at the scene. As she said, “I think they're very uninformed when it comes to trauma and understanding domestic violence because a lot of these situations are a lot more complex than the law wants to give it credit for...” Another counsellor respondent, Rebecca, echoed a call for current policies to be changed to be more comprehensive at federal law level. This stemmed from disappointment with some state laws, referring to states where arrests are not required, with the hope of federal law would at least ensure arrest is conducted. Yet she also expressed doubts given the current political climate. The other two interviewed, the chief program officer and the legal advocate, expressed a better view of the policies, with the program officer Jerry saying the system worked, whereas the legal advocate Olivia put an emphasis on the importance of treatment being required in accordance with an arrest, saying the following, “I think treatment being mandated is often hugely helpful. Even though I think most research shows that maybe mandates aren't always so successful.” The point of mandatory treatment within the law was also reflected on by those within probation, showing a point of connection between the two groups. But even as mandatory arrest was viewed as a good point, the common consensus was the length of detainment was “not enough”.

In terms of improving the laws themselves, many of the changes expressed by the participants were similar. Of the five who felt they were not doing enough for victims; the most common suggestion was making the laws more comprehensive for the types of abuse occurring. One of the five, counsellor Stacy said that the required arrests were good as time separating the victim and aggressor was beneficial but stated that having more time for separation would also be useful. Counsellor Rebecca, who mentioned the federal point, expressed concern over abuse of the laws if the aggressors have connections with those in law enforcement, and stated that moving it beyond the state level could possibly hold those who commit such abuse more accountable.

Of the two that said the laws were overall effective, the one who was a legal respondent did express frustration with how hard it is to get such cases prosecuted, as evidence that is required usually does not exist as long as the identified aggressor does not openly admit to any violence. This makes such prosecution under current law difficult unless extensive proof is collected at the scene.

Overall, from the gathered data, it would appear that social workers hold a more critical view of the current laws than those within law enforcement. This creates a rather extensive contrast between the two groups, in which those working in organizations hold a far more critical view of current laws and policies over officers, as even those who felt they were working overall still could be doing more.

Views on Officer Response

Beyond the view of the laws themselves, the response in practice also created some interesting contrasts. The view on officer response was mixed amongst the two groups. For law enforcement, the respondents felt that the police were doing enough at the scene of DV cases to

be effective, with commander Howard praising the efforts of his department and their cooperation with the county's domestic violence shelter. A common response amongst all but one respondent, the probation officer Gwen, was the emphasis on "we treat everybody the same", stating the victim's identity or status did nothing to impact how they would act at the scene.

Officer Hank outlined what criteria are generally looked for when responding to a call, stating the following: "You know it's not mandatory, but it's kind of like a, policy that, you know, if probable cause exists, you make the arrest." This level of assessment and response was shared amongst those who responded to calls, stating that physical abuse had to be present in order to conduct a proper arrest. This set the previous laws, which were perceived as useful guidelines, to help create the basis for how police responded to the scenes.

The views on police response to same-sex cases was uniform amongst law enforcement. Of the six respondents, the four outside of probation spoke of applying the same level of assessment as they would to any case. A theme of equal treatment, outlined by the discretion of the officer and the baseline of laws and policies was a common point of agreement. A common theme amongst response was the rarity of such events occurring, which is not shocking in itself given the limited nature of the population. But even officers who worked in more urban or rural areas reported around similar rates of response, with most cases being between female couples rather than male couples.

The variation on this however was apparent on the probation side. Probation officer Gwen felt mixed, saying that when officers responded well it showed with the victims, however many felt uneasy working with law enforcement in general, with many wanting to avoid the prospect of it entirely. As she said:

“I think, yeah, I think unfortunately my clients have had bad experiences with law enforcement. I think due to possibly lack of training, maybe you know profiling that you know that they tell me that they go through, you know, and I want to validate their experiences because you know that's rough and awful.”

This complaint about the treatment of her clients actually showed some connection to the complaints carried by social workers, with many stating the same issues she mentioned her clients seem to face.

Social workers showed even more mixed views of police action. Five of the respondents criticized the police, saying that they did not do enough for the victims at all. As counsellor Elaine put bluntly about police response, “it fucking sucks.” This sentiment stemmed from feelings that officers did not care about victims, treating them poorly at the scene, failing to show empathy for the victims or not taking them seriously. The same respondents also went on stating that officers in themselves were not fully qualified to handle and assess such cases, or simply “did not care”, doing the bare minimum in response. Another respondent stated the same feelings of negativity, but also made note of positive interactions, saying when police took the time to connect them to resources and services, it led to a more positive interaction as a whole. The points of negativity varied greatly based on whether the officer took the time to be compassionate to the victim and connect them to resources, or whether the officer failed to take them seriously. Amongst those interviewed, various factors seemed to determine this, whether it be physical injuries, the size of the aggressor or victim, or even the time of the day. These factors seemed to be apparent, regardless of whether the case involved a heterosexual couple or same-sex couple.

The legal advocate Olivia, in regard to her organization, said that overall they were doing good work, but there was still room for improvement in terms of showing compassion and taking

the plights of the victims seriously. Program officer Jerry said the police overall did a fantastic job, and openly cooperated with his organization, with many victims citing positive response and cooperation with law enforcement. He did denote, however, some cases of negativity, with officers making rough and quick assessments. He also mentioned that officers would tend to “arrest the big one”, targeting whoever was tallest between the man and woman, a point he attributed to many cases of safe assessment at such scenes, but overall, the view of the law response was a positive one.

This seems to show an important distinction for response with officers who did more for the victims beyond what was required by the law, giving better credit to officers that did more for the victims than simply make an arrest, showing that some level of assessment and care for the victim beyond base application of overall arrest policy led to more favorable views of police.

In regard to social workers perceptions on police and same-sex cases, complaints came down to police and their interactions with the LGBTQ community, saying officers had little to no understanding of the community or even fully acknowledged them. Victim advocate Mary stated: “I feel like law enforcement might lack the education or, feel like there's an inability to actually see same-sex relationships being like, violent just because they're same-sex.” Many attributed this to cases of ignorance, lack of training, or even just the limited nature of the group, being an uncommon crowd to interact with.

The program officer Jerry cited issues of generational difference, stating that many officers in the system were “older folk” who were behind on the times, and therefore less understanding of the demographic, and even pushing back against it. Another common sentiment was saying that officers often lacked compassion or understanding for LGBT victims, and

through this ignorance they failed to understand the community. Counsellor Stacy stated they believed gender biases to contribute to this lack of care, with the logic of “be a man” in the case of male leading to lackluster police response. This once again lined up with studies of past perceptions, however the viewpoint that things were slowly getting better was a common place theme amongst both of respondents, albeit at a slow pace.

Another theme mentioned by social worker respondents was that the type of violence that occurred with same-sex couples was the same as heterosexual couples. This theme was mentioned by five of the participants, stating that despite the same element, violence was similar. This was brought up as a point of negativity about police and same-sex cases, whereas even though the couple involved may not be heterosexual, the same types of abuse are happening. This goes to challenge the claims of equal assessment indirectly, as a common theme amongst those who stated this was that past same-sex victims would suffer the same types of abuse as many heterosexual clients, but fear police not taking them seriously as heterosexual couples or dismissing them based on their same-sex relationship status. For the other three, some different points were mentioned. Counsellor Rebecca talked about how past victims had their own identities used as a point of abuse, with their partner threatening to disclose their identity to friends and family who are not aware.

In the case of those that were same-sex and disclosed that status to the workers, many did not even report to police, nor did they want them involved, in fear of retaliation or mistreatment. Counsellor Elaine said, “A lot of the times they don't believe that a female could do that to another female, or a male could do that to another male. So, it's just like the whole perspective of them not believing them.” Even the two respondents with the least critical of the response of officers had some complaints.

Counsellor Julia mentioned that often that same-sex victims do not often have support networks to turn to, and that also adds another layer in the violence they face. These points are relevant especially given that those who mentioned further stated that often officers would not consider those unique factors. This creates yet another perceived complication in terms of officers responding to same-sex cases specifically.

Views on the LGBTQ Community

The views on the LGBTQ community were consistent amongst law enforcement respondents, holding an overall neutral view on the community. Of the six respondents, two expressed being aware of the community, with probation officer Connor saying it's "something they deal with". Officer Hank mentioned that he was "Somewhat familiar" but also stated that all were treated the same within the system. Commander Howard his department for their relations with the community, citing his own experience with LGBT family members and friends, and wanting to use his knowledge to try and harbor better relations with the community.

Two of the law enforcement respondents were members of the community itself, and both expressed frustration with the system. Officer Rachel wished that more resources and training were available to officers, wishing for just basic respect and understanding towards members of the community. Probation officer Gwen stated that while things were not great, they were getting better, as they said, "we're slowly but surely getting more inclusive, so that's good." Detective Maria admitted that their knowledge of the community was not expansive, but also expressed a desire to want to learn more but was "worried about saying the wrong thing", but regardless tried their best to understand those within it.

Another common trend amongst the side of law enforcement was the rarity of such cases. Whether the couples were both men and women also varied based on the respondent, but the

overall theme of rarity was a commonly echoed sentiment. This is not entirely major, but the point of intrigue stems from the fact that even officers in more urban areas reported these cases being a rarity in line with those who worked in more rural counties.

A final point that was brought up by all the participants was the need to mention or refer to transgender individuals. Though mentioned of this when asked about the overall community is not unexpected, the respondents felt a need to mention transgender individuals or topics even on questions that made no mention of that group, only same-sex couples. For two of the respondents, they explicitly referred to transgender cases.

Views on Improvement

Both sides of respondents carried similar views on how to improve relations, rooted in concepts such as training and trust. Of the six law enforcement respondents, all of them mentioned training in some capacity, agreeing that extra training was not a bad thing. One respondent of the law enforcement talked about establishing events and outreach to the LGBT community to try and foster better relationships between the two and calling for members of the community to “give them a chance”.

The call for more training was apparent in every respondent on the law enforcement side, with each calling for more to be done and conducted to better understand working and responding with those that were LGBT. Probation officer Connor mentioned that training was increasing, saying, “I’ve just seen training LGBTQ information. Information or just more education on it. I’ve never gone to one, so I can’t tell you what it was, but you know there is the opportunity for people to go.” Other respondents further added on to the point of having more training and awareness of the community as a whole. One respondent even expressed frustration with being behind on the terminology, stating she wanted to be respectful but found it at times

difficult to follow. Officer Rachel, a member of the LGBTQ community, further echoed this to a degree, expressing that without training and the “right people” to talk to, it created a frustrating spot of wanting to be respectful, but not appear as ignorant. Commander Howard even mentioned trying to have police be more involved with member of the LGBT community through events, and through this outreach would better relations hopefully be achieved.

Another theme amongst law enforcement relating to improvement that appeared was tied to negative media attention and “bad actors” within the system. Four of the law enforcement respondents expressed frustration with both recent media attention further straining the relations police had with the community. Detective Rachel specifically mentioned knowing of some of her coworkers holding more “conservative” viewpoints, and further stated that some bad police do exist, but the majority of those she worked with were genuinely respectful.

The biggest difference in improvement from both sides was echoed through the social workers. Five of the respondents echoed a call for more compassion and understanding for the victims, citing that in most negative cases with officers, officers in themselves were not fully qualified to handle and assess such cases, or simply “did not care”, doing the bare minimum in response, or felt they simply did not care or wanted to take them seriously. Counsellor Rebecca called for greater empathy training and personality screening, stating that: “Massive amounts of like empathy training, I guess, like yearly or weekly empathy training for police.”

This call for training went beyond the scope of simply LGBT cases, with each of the respondents stating that a better understanding of what DV and IPV can be in the first place was needed. One respondent talked about the need for more “informal” avenues for encouraging LGBT individuals to seek help in the first place, and furthermore called for available services to be more supportive of same-sex clients and to be more willing to work with law enforcement,

saying “Reporting this to the police would be beneficial” in terms of getting put through proper support avenues. Program officer Jerry on the social worker side made mention of the generational divide, stating that he expected response and understanding to get better as the old moved on and the young came in.

Overall, though, there was a surprising amount of connection in responses between both groups, with an emphasis on better understanding and training. Counsellor Stacy believed that better relations could be achieved eventually but clarified with saying “I think it’s going to take time.” A constant theme amongst the social service workers interviewed gave reference back to the bad relations police had with the LGBT community being the biggest issues in establishing trust. In contrast to the police as well, who in most cases called on a meeting with the community itself, a common trend amongst social service workers was that it was down to the police to be more proactive in establishing these relations.

DISCUSSION

The results from the findings have shown an interesting view of both IPV and perceptions of same-sex cases, with the interviews conducted giving more credence to points raised in past qualitative work (Hirschel and McCormack 2021, Edwards et al. 2015). It is from this that I theorize that there do exist two different social realities between law enforcement and social workers, which in turn contributes to these two vastly different responses. From the gathered data, a difference in opinion between both social service workers and officers has shown to be apparent. Those working with the victims proved to be more critical of than the those in law enforcement, creating clashing views on IPV response. Yet a common ground was found in alleviating the issues, with both sides calling for points of better training, relations, and working with the community. The fact that both groups can have such different views yet come to agreement on how to fix them raises some questions but shows potentially two different social realities that are present amongst the groups.

For the law enforcement side, the interviews showed that five of the six respondents truly believed that all were treated equally within the system. From my own interpretation based on points of speculation in past literature (Hirschel and McCormack 2021) that theorized a disconnect between law enforcement and the LGBTQ demographic, it would appear that a theme of self-serving bias may be present amongst the officers, who are attributing their own assessment of the scenes they respond to be conducted properly and fairly under the law. This is

further supported by another theme that was present amongst four of the respondents referring to “bad actors” and poor media portrayal. One officer even stated she believed that there were those in the force that may harbor genuinely hateful views do exist amongst, the majority were people who cared.

This is then challenged by the social service workers, whose more critical view of police challenged those claims directly. This could potentially exist from the two sides’ involvement in the process itself. In the reality of law enforcement, the officers have no interaction with the victims or perpetrators beyond their part in arresting and bringing the identified aggressor into the system, whereas the social service workers who are the ones actively working with these groups get insight into what occurred that officers may not be aware of or even acknowledge. From working with the victims, the social service workers can more clearly see and hear their experiences and concerns with the police. The response from the probation side of law enforcement even seems to reaffirm this. The probation side showed enough variance from the response of frontline enforcement, which could be attributed to their position in the system and, like the social service side, having more direct interactions with both victims and perpetrators. This shows that further interaction with both sides of the case in turn removes some of those barriers that seem to exist between the two realities present.

From these differences between the two groups, the vastly different realities become more apparent. The perception of officers towards same-sex cases was not at the level of concern that social workers held it. The biggest concerns they did hold related to how the community saw them, rather than any issues that might exist in responding to their cases. This seems to imply that the officers responding to these cases did not consider any issues that may persist past their

initial assessment, giving more creditability to their own unique reality of the situation. The issues they did acknowledge with the LGBT community was kept largely separate from their own responses, attributing it to being an issue of trust and perception rather than their own judgment. Such views even continued to their station, with one theme present that such issues may exist in other precincts, but not theirs. The reality around them suggests that they are aware of issues that may persist between the law and the LGBT community, but at the same time does not affect them or those around them. This creates a point of awareness amongst the participants of the tensions that do exist, but at the same time shows an unwillingness to acknowledge them at a closer level.

From the reality of the side of social workers, once more can a direct challenge be to the reality of law enforcement with their own. Where the law respondents who actively responded to cases of IPV and talked of equal judgment, the social workers held a critical view of how they responded. From their perspectives, they attest that officers for the most part do not engage in equal or fair assessment. This ranged from not taking victims seriously or simply making rushed calls for arrests based on “safe factors”. But it is from this negative view that another point of the reality created by law enforcement is identified. Those responding could truly believe the judgment they are using is fair and the same, but as shown from outside by the social workers, that initial judgement could be flawed from the start. This was only strengthened further by what measures social workers deemed to be appropriate that officers appeared to lack, such as showing greater compassion for the victims, and taking the time to look for more than just obvious signs of physical abuse. Gathered from this, the basis of both realities appears to spring forth.

The response of the law seems to have set themselves in a light where problems do exist, yet the methods they use are truly equal, but the social service side paints such methods as being an issue that they are truly unaware of given their own claims of equal treatment. This suggests that the basis of both realities extends to the very start of assessment on each side. Law enforcement appears to be rooted in their initial view of response, easing their concerns under practiced assessment. The social service sides assessment however is given more depth, as they are interacting in-depth with the victim in comparison to the brief period of interaction that officers have. The final piece showcasing this stems to the probation side, as unlike law enforcement that responds to these scenes, they also have deeper interaction with victims and perpetrators, yet are disconnected from the initial arrest. From this it would seem the creation of both realities has a connection to interaction with the victims.

These two different experienced realities could also give insight into the shared response on improvement. For law enforcement, the call for more training may simply be a standard response on such topics, whether they care to see it implemented or not. As the majority of the respondents show confidence in their assessment and application of current law, this questions why they feel more training would be necessary. When social service workers called for more training, it was done with a belief that officers do not do enough to understand the victims in the first place, once again adding to that point of contention, even when the two are in an area of agreement. This gives reason to believe that some difference in reality and perception does exist for law enforcement. The views of those working with victims paint a more negative light of their response as whole, which contends with their claims of equal treatment.

However, from those interviewed, it was shown that some officers are wanting to be more informed and have the chance to learn and interact with the community, four of the law enforcement side expressing this, and two mentioning that more knowledge is not necessarily a bad thing. This point existed beyond the call for training, serving to be a more informal solution rather than one that would need implementation on a state or federal level.

This point on wanting better relations with the community does also actually challenge some past literature, in which law enforcement showed a lack of desire to engage with the community (Mallory, Hasenbush, and Sears 2015, Hirschel and McCormack 2021, Lantz 2020). This originally led to a call for further training and education amongst officers. Previously suggested solutions from more expansive policies as well as following through with prosecuting cases and requiring more funding for victim services catered to same-sex couples could be effective (Hirschel and McCormack 2021), community-oriented solutions were not often suggested. Previous work has highlighted these bad relations between police, but that same work also showed that police that took the time to establish these community connections often led to more positive interactions as a whole (Mallory, Hasenbush, and Sears 2015). This is critical since, unlike the point on training and need of enforced policy, there was clear agreement on these outreaches from both the social organization side and law enforcement side.

With four of the law enforcement respondents making explicit mention of better community relations, and two wanting to try and be more respectful of those within the LGBTQ demographic, this could be a point of implementation. How these events would be established also lies back within suggestions from the respondents, with one officer stating his own participation in pride month events. Three respondents also mentioned having police present at

pride parades as another bridge of better relationships, or just taking the time to gender victims correctly and acknowledge their LGBTQ status.

These answers were not absent on the side of social service workers. Even those heavily critical of the police calling for similar community connections. Of the seven interviewed, four made mention of having police being more involved at LGBTQ events as sources of connection, rather than a point of negativity. One respondent however did make note of the bad history between the two groups, stating that even if such strides were made, it would still take considerable time to heal, when thinking of this relationship, given past literature (Edwards et al. 2015, Finneran and Catherine 2015) this is not a new point in the collective data. But in the case of what appears to be two separate views of the same issue, the call for community created a clear bridge beyond training, showing these future reach outs as an important thing to consider going forward.

With any form of research, challenges presented themselves. In terms of gathering data, social service workers have been far easier to interview and converse with in comparison to officers. This in turn forced a broader net for examining law enforcement, talking to any involved at the policing or court levels. This challenge was expected, and just from the quality of the data that has been gathered, as there were still enough respondents to gather consistent trends in the interviews. Despite this, it is still worth considering for future research, as getting law enforcement to actually respond was a constant difficulty. As one participant stated outside of the interview as it ended, when asked for any more possible participants, they simply said that “nobody wants to talk about this.” This challenge of speaking to law enforcement should be addressed going forward, whether through different methods or approaches.

This also presents a limitation of bias from those who were willing to talk, as more meaningful data could be gathered from those who are less likely to speak on this issue. This bias could also lead to officers and those within the system who are not actively contributing to the issue being more likely to speak on it, which in trying to study these interactions creates an obstacle in itself. Future study on police reports could highlight these interactions in a better light, and work past the limitation of response. Research going forward would also benefit from limiting respondents from specific regions to see if there is any active difference between respondents in rural areas and urban areas. The final challenge presented to this study was the lack of full intersectionality, as the scale of this study could not fully account for factors of race, class, and especially transgender cases, which as response from the interviews showed, needs to be considered going forward.

CONCLUSION

The issues between police and same-sex IPV are only a small part of a far more complex relationships between law enforcement and the LGBTQ community. From talking to those involved, a better understanding of this problem remained apparent, but also showed that a lot of pieces still need to be sorted. Going forward, further work would better account for more specific areas, and more perspectives from officers within the system would be beneficial to examine.

The initial application of the social construction of reality proved to be of benefit, as the data showed themes present within the theory itself (Hector 2016). The roles of the participants seemed to have heavy influence on their responses and knowledge. The two different realities that exist between both the social workers and law enforcement appear to stem from a basis of set procedure and different interactions with victims and perpetrators of IPV. This division of labor between the two groups seems to suggest that the problem of police interaction may not be one of true malice, but rather lacking understanding based on their position within society. Through the data, this gives credit to the use of social construction as a theoretical approach to this topic.

Areas identified that need further focus would need to expand on the response of officers at the scene of same-sex IPV cases. The research done in this study has identified some areas of interest and further study, showing the opinions of officers could benefit from continued

research. Research into possible community-based responses could also be beneficial in order to give more contrast to the commonly called legal level response. The research seen here identified a further disconnect between the views of those working with victims and those working with law enforcement. In this area, further research into the law enforcement views specifically would prove useful. Developing these two seemingly different angles of an issue would only prove to be beneficial within the area of study.

Going forward, some questions are also brought up. What is it about outlined response that has law enforcement convinced of equal treatment? To focus more on officers who actively respond to these scenes from further interviews and over different areas could help to expand this area. How much of these assessments are outlined by law or even just personal views? The data that was gathered only showed that something is present in their assessments, and to see what those factors might be beneficial to further study. A further examination into possible community-based relations would further expand on the data gathered here, as such an identified point of agreement could serve as a bridge to mending relations going forward. To further study not just the opinions of law enforcement, but perhaps those involved in specific LGBT community groups would only help to find a way to mend such issues between the two groups. The data gathered and assessed has shown that some level of disconnect exists, and to further study these two realities with specific focus could only help to better understand why they truly exist. Too often has data been assessed from use of quantitative assessment, and this study has shown the benefits that qualitative work could bring to completing the bigger picture.

Many of the law enforcement respondents are aware of the LGBTQ+ community, but expressed frustrations of not keeping up with it, lacking the training, or even mentioning bad

actors that cause issues with those within the community. The social organization side further adds to this, expressing that simply a better understanding of not only those within the community is needed, but also of domestic violence in itself. When care is taken to approach these issues, the potential for it to work, but it all comes down to those responding to take the situations at hand seriously. While this does not answer why difference in response is so drastic, the angles presented within the work seem to give insight to why it may exist.

The treatment of both same-sex couples and IPV has come a long way thanks to the policies in place but work still needs to be done. However, through continued research and establishing better resources and training, this work can be done. As the respondents showed, systems rooted in empathy for the victims and taking the time needed to understand those at the scenes of IPV would be of great benefit, and continued training to inform law enforcement of the LGBTQ community as whole would also be a welcomed approach. Whether these systems of education stem from expanded policy, or through reaching out to the community itself, there are pathways of improvement that can be done. If such steps are taken, then perhaps those glaring negatives can be reduced further

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APPENEDIX A
LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your perception of IPV rates within the area of your precinct.
 - a. How does the current law outline deal with those calls.
 - b. Does your station hold any specific protocol.
2. How often do you find yourself responding to domestic violence calls.
 - a. Do you think it is a major problem in the area.
3. How do you assess cases at the scene?
 - a. What do you look for when talking to those involved.
4. Have you ever responded to same-sex couples for domestic violence.
 - a. How often have you found yourself responding to those cases.
 - b. Were they primarily male or female cases.
5. Can you describe how those calls went.
 - a. Were they different from cases with male and female couples.
 - b. Did it present any challenges for assessing the scene.
6. Are there any challenges you see when interacting with the LGBT community.
 - a. How do you feel those can be addressed.
7. Do you think any policies or training would be beneficial to responding to same-sex cases.
 - a. If not, what would be effective if anything.
8. Is there anything else you feel I should know.
 - a. Do you have any closing thoughts on the subject.
9. Do you have any questions for me.

APPENDIX B
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER AND ORGANIZATION SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about current mandatory arrest policies pertaining to domestic violence.
 - a. Do you think the laws are doing enough.
 - b. What more could be done if needed.
2. How have survivors talked about interacting with police.
 - a. What issues if any were present.
3. How often do you have survivors from same-sex IPV cases.
 - a. Are they primarily male or female.
4. How do they describe their experiences with law enforcement.
 - a. How has it differed from heterosexual accounts.
5. What challenges do you see between law enforcement and the LGBTQ community.
 - a. What are some things that could be done to strengthen trust and relations.
6. What would suggest for treating IPV cases given your experience with victims.
7. Is there anything else you feel I should know.
 - a. Do you have any other closing thoughts on the subject.
8. Do you have any questions for me.