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Breaking barriers and building bridges: Police responses to same-sex partner abuse in England and Wales

Kate Butterby

Abstract

Partner abuse is now recognised as a problem that affects people within same-sex relationships as well as those in heterosexual relationships, and literature in this area is on the increase. However, there is still a scarcity of research exploring how the police respond to people who report same-sex partner abuse. Using a mixed-method feminist approach, the aim of this thesis was therefore to explore the police responses to same-sex partner abuse in England and Wales. The nature and extent of reported same-sex partner abuse crimes in England and Wales was explored via data gathered from Freedom of Information requests sent to police forces. Alongside these, one-to-one interviews were carried out with victims who had experienced police response (n=4), police officers and staff (n=19), and professionals from statutory and voluntary organisations who support victims (n=12). Findings suggested that a 'process-driven' approach was adopted by police; police generally stated that they respond in the same way to all partner abuse incidents. However, this meant that dynamics specific to same-sex relationships were sometimes overlooked. Perpetrators were also found to enact 'pre-emptive coercive tactics' to discourage victim help seeking, and cause them to fear a 'coerced response' from help-providers. Additionally, gender stereotypes were found to influence police decision making around attribution of blame and risk, with physical injury being the key indicator used to determine risk. Freedom of Information requests also indicated that roughly half of police forces in England and Wales provide little or no specialist support for same-sex partner abuse victims. Implications for policy and practice include a rethink of the process-driven way of working, and ensuring police possess a thorough understanding of coercive control (including risks unique to same-sex relationships). Combining innovative methodology and a variety of participant voices to examine an under-explored area, this thesis offers a unique contribution to a small body of research within the UK exploring police responses to same-sex partner abuse.

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

Breaking barriers and building bridges: Police responses to same-sex
partner abuse in England and Wales

Kate Butterby

Doctoral Thesis

Department of Sociology

Durham University

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Signed: *K Butterby*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

'Police intervention can mean life or death, and captivity or freedom from abuse for many victims'
(Melton & Sillito, 2012, p.1096)

1.1 Setting the scene

Partner abuse affects women and men occupying all age, class, ethnic, sexual orientation and gender groups, and is recognised internationally as a public health problem. Though men and women both experience partner abuse, it is widely acknowledged via empirical research and data internationally that partner abuse is most commonly experienced by women at the hands of their male partners or ex-partners (Hunnicut, 2009; Renzetti, 1999; Seymour, 2017). Additionally, it is held that men commit more crime than women and are more violent (National Resource Center On Domestic Violence (NRCODV), 2007). Due to this, the majority of empirical research which explores partner abuse focuses on women as victims of men's violence and abuse, and as a consequence there is a relatively large amount of knowledge relating to this within the academic world.

There is no longer any question about whether partner abuse occurs within same-sex relationships (Donovan & Hester, 2011), with the bulk of published research exploring same-sex partner abuse (SSPA) being carried out in the United States (Baker, Buick, Kim, Moniz, & Nava, 2013), and leading experts such as Donovan, Hester and Barnes the notable key academics exploring the area within the United Kingdom. However, due to an academic focus on women as victims of men's violence and abuse, SSPA is often overlooked, and a much smaller body of research is in existence. From the research that does exist, we have some idea of the dynamics of same-sex abusive relationships, ways in which abuse is perpetrated, and reasons why victims do not report to the police. However, very little is known about the experiences of those who *do* report to the police. Additionally, research seldom explores police's experiences of responding to SSPA; an area that this thesis will cover. As a result of these gaps in knowledge, victims' experiences of being responded to and polices' experiences of providing a response to SSPA are rarely present within literature.

1.2 Aims

The research considered four overarching aims:

1. To consider the nature and extent of police recorded SSPA crime in England and Wales.
2. To explore the help-seeking decisions victims face when deciding whether to call the police about SSPA.
3. To examine how police perceive SSPA and what responses they provide to victims.
4. To consider the extent to which police are aware of, and provide, specialist provision for victims experiencing SSPA.

This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge in the fields of criminology, policing and LGBT studies by using mixed-methods to explore police responses to SSPA; a previously under-explored area. By using national police recorded crime data alongside semi-structured interviews with victims, police and professionals, an in-depth picture was built up as to the scope, nature and intricacies of police responses to SSPA.

1.3 Knowledge Transfer Partnership

The thesis was carried out alongside my role as 'Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) associate in policing domestic abuse'. KTP projects aim to use knowledge generated within academic institutions to assist organisations in improving an aspect of their service. For the KTP I was involved with, the key aim was to improve the police response to domestic abuse within one police force. During the three years of the project, I was based within a police force in North-East England, which enabled me to build up relationships with police within the organisation and develop an understanding of key police data systems. Additionally, I was required to complete qualitative tasks such as interviews with police officers and people experiencing domestic abuse, and therefore was able to increase my competence within these areas. It was during the commencement of the KTP when pursuing academic literature on policing domestic abuse that I identified a gap in the literature with regards to policing of SSPA, and it was from here that I decided to focus the thesis more specifically within this area.

1.4 Policing of domestic abuse

A bank of academic research considering police responses to domestic abuse generally has been steadily carried out over the past few decades. From some of the earliest research in the 1980s and over the next twenty years, victims' views on police response tended to be unfavourable. In 1987, Radford interviewed women about their experiences of male violence. One woman interviewed who was being harassed and threatened by her ex-husband said 'the police don't usually come, they say it's "domestic"' (p.38); indicating the perceived triviality of the violence experienced. Similarly, headlines by the media from the present day indicate negativity towards police forces and their inadequacy at responding positively to victims, for example, 'Domestic violence victims 'not taken seriously by police'' (Morris, 2014); 'Police's response to victims of domestic violence is lamentable' (Horley, 2013).

Though victims within same-sex relationships may experience some of the same negative responses from police as those experienced by women facing violence from men, these may be experienced in a unique way due to same-sex victims' intersecting gender and sexual orientation identities.

Donovan, Hester, Holmes, & McCarry (2006) asked 701 participants in their study whether they thought there were differences between heterosexual and same-sex partner abuse and the majority (69%) said no. The researchers did however find within the study that though those experiencing abuse within same-sex relationships shared some commonalities with heterosexual women, for example, the way that post-separation abuse occurred, they also faced important differences, such as having their sexuality used as a tool of control. As a further example of how those in same-sex relationships may experience abuse differently, same-sex partner abuse may be downplayed by police. Alhusen et al. (2010) found in their research that an officer described an incident involving two women as 'it's just a couple of dykes, whatever' (p.6). Similarly, Hester and colleagues' (2012) research reported that a police officer told a gay man in their research that the only abuse a gay man could experience was buggery. These examples suggest that the incidents were viewed as less serious, or not as abuse at all, due to both partners being the same sex. These unique differences must be taken into consideration when thinking about the nature, impact and context in which SSPA occurs.

As victims in same-sex relationships have therefore been suggested to experience abuse and police response differently to those within heterosexual relationships, this thesis will aim to uncover some of the unique ways that same-sex victims experience abuse and police response at the intersections

of gender and sexual orientation (and other oppressions, where appropriate). In order to frame the research, a feminist theoretical framework will be drawn upon.

1.5 A feminist theoretical framework

Feminist scholarship focuses on the study of, and social conditions surrounding, women living in a sexist and oppressive society (Stanley & Wise, 1983). The prevailing belief of feminists and the dominant discourse surrounding partner abuse is that gender privilege is the primary source of power used by men to abuse their female partners (Rohrbaugh, 2006). This is illustrated within every culture worldwide; men abuse women more than women abuse men, suggesting that gender plays a central role in heterosexual partner abuse (Hunnicut, 2009; Renzetti, 1999; Stark, 2007).

'Domestic violence' began to be used to describe violence and abuse within partner relationships in the 1970s, alongside the first empirical research exploring domestic violence in response to the emerging women's movement (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; Westmarland, 2015). The Movement, known as the 'Battered Women's Movement' in the US (and as part of the Women's Liberation Movement in the UK) focused on male perpetrated violence towards women as a social and political problem (Stark, 2007; Stiles-Shields & Carroll, 2014). Based on a patriarchal model (Baker et al., 2013), the Movement rejected individualistic and psychoanalytic theories which placed the blame for violence on genetics, evolution, and psychology, instead explaining the subordination of women by men as a result of social construction (Romito, 2008; Stark, 2007). During this time, physical injury was deemed to be the most serious through the eyes of the law, and many women who had experienced severe controlling and life-limiting forms of domestic violence but not sustained physical injury were not taken seriously (Stark, 2007). Some women involved in the Movement in the early 1970s did recognise that domestic violence revolved around power and control exerted by men, and some shelters targeted aspects such as political and economic injustice faced by women alongside physical violence (Stark, 2007). However, by the late 1980s there was a primary focus on physical violence as the key element of domestic violence, adopted so that women's experiences could be articulated, taken seriously, and legal ramifications brought about (Schneider, 2000; Stark, 2007).

The widespread focus on physical violence and injury meant that the ongoing, pervasive, structural restraints and deprivations enforced on women by men were acknowledged to a lesser degree, with the limited discussion that did exist instead being based around 'psychological abuse' (Stark, 2007).

In Evan Stark's 2007 book entitled 'Coercive control: How men entrap women in personal life', Stark uses decades of knowledge generated by feminist academics and practitioners to focus on 'coercive control', a concept which captures the ways in which men strip women of their autonomy and micro-regulate their behaviour by using gender-based power to instil fear. He describes coercive control as though women are trapped within a cage, with limited space for action and agency due to men enforcing gender stereotypes based around masculinity and femininity. Looking back to the Movement within the 1960s and 1970s, Stark argued that 'the decision to narrow the focus to violence was not inevitable' (Stark, 2007, p.200), drawing on how understandings of 'battering' as coercive control were in existence prior to the 1960s, including that control could be exerted in the absence of physical violence. Overall, he stressed the importance of our understanding of domestic violence now being based around coercive control, and recognition that physical violence is a mechanism which can be used to various degrees (or may not be used at all) to sustain this power and control. Important to Stark's notion of coercive control is that it he believes it is highly gendered; it is men who possess the political and social power to instil fear and entrap women due to sexual discrimination and gender inequality (Stark, 2007).

Due to the focus on male violence towards women within relationships stemming from unequal gender-based power relations, violence and abuse in same-sex relationships did not have a place within the focus of the Movement (Baker et al., 2013). Instead, the Movement primarily focused on white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied women as being the key group that warranted social concern (Walters, 2011).

1.5.1 Lesbians within the Movement

Lesbians have faced a long struggle to have their voices heard within the Women's Movement, and to this day, although progress has been made, their plights are still not acknowledged by all feminists. When considering where the focus of the Movement lay, although women from minority groups (for example black, working class, lesbian, disabled) were not directly excluded and did participate, for example, by staffing shelters, their unique needs due to their sexual orientation were seldom acknowledged. Though part of the work of the Movement did address homophobia within shelters and amongst other service providers, it did not focus upon specific needs of lesbian women and transgender (trans) women, rendering them invisible (Stark, 2007). This has been attributed in part to the notion that lesbians (and gay men) within same-sex relationships were not viewed as fitting into the structurally unequal partnerships as were seen when considering heterosexual

relationships, and, as such, the structural imbalance of power and dependence was not believed to occur (Donovan, 2017). Additionally, lesbian feminists were aware that overthrowing patriarchy would be more difficult if they expressed a need for acceptance of the gay lifestyle (Alderson & Wistrich, 1988, as cited in Auchmuty, Jeffreys & Miller, 1992). Lesbian women were expected to give their support to the feminist aims of the Movement, and consequently, this did not leave room for them to express how, as non-heterosexual women, they were different from heterosexual women (Calhoun, 1994). Thus, the consideration that heterosexuality in itself may also be a political system that oppresses lesbian women was not accounted for, and by pledging their allegiance to the feminist movement, lesbians were aligning with a heterosexist system (Calhoun, 1994).

In a speech given in 1904 by the first known lesbian activist, Anna Rüling, an attempt was made to unite lesbians and heterosexual women:

If people would just observe, they would soon come to the conclusion that homosexuality and the Women's Movement do not stand opposed to each other, but rather they aid each other reciprocally to gain rights and recognition, and to eliminate the injustice which condemns them on this earth (WiiN Women's Library, 2003).

Calhoun (1994), however, advised that to be lesbian is not necessarily to be feminist, and the two must not be combined otherwise being lesbian is reduced to a special form of feminism rather than being important in its own right. To outline the difference, Calhoun stated that lesbians experience two forms of oppression in their lives: the type which arises from a gender-unequal society and also from within the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community. She claimed that due to lesbians and gay men being seen as equal within the gay rights movement, the oppression faced by being a woman and oppression from being lesbian were not distinguished between for lesbian women. As lesbian women have had to assert how they were different to gay men within a gender-unequal society, this meant that issues of being a woman within a heterosexist society were ignored. It is important to mention this as there was consensus in the 1970s and early 1980s that women in relationships with women were free from oppression (see Donovan, 2017); that is, they were free from the confines of male-domination due to not being in heterosexual relationships. However, this claim was rebuked by Calhoun, who explained how lesbians are often seen to be free from patriarchal constraints due to not being in a relationship with a man, but actually they are still often subject to a large amount of sexual inequality and heteronormative oppression from the wider society due to their sexual orientation:

To refuse to be heterosexual is simply to leap out of the frying pan of individual patriarchal control into the fire of institutionalised heterosexual control (1994, p. 564).

Due to the normalisation of heterosexual identity within society, heterosexism exists, described as a 'form of oppression which subordinates sexualities and lifestyles that differ from heterosexuality' (Murray et al., 2006/7). Heterosexism is upheld by the social structure of heteronormativity: 'the mundane production of heterosexuality as the normal, natural, taken-for-granted sexuality' (Kitzinger 2005, p.477). Within the UK (and worldwide) it can be seen via law, policy and social customs that heterosexuality is valued as the central and 'normal' sexual orientation. As an example of this within policy, same-sex couples were only granted the right to marry within England in 2014. In addition, someone in a same-sex marriage cannot claim for divorce on the grounds of adultery if their partner has an affair with someone of the same sex, as this claim is only valid if a partner has had sexual intercourse with someone of the opposite sex. Policies and structures such as these uphold heteronormativity and discriminate against people in same-sex relationships, seeing them and their relationships as 'less than' or 'other'.

As a result of heterosexism and sexual inequality, a lesbian woman may have to hide her sexual orientation at her job, be harassed, be rebuked for showing affection to her partner in public, and live surrounded by heteronormative ideals such as having no lesbian role models within the media. Calhoun (1994) asserted that for heterosexual women the main oppression results from patriarchy, but for lesbians it is from heteronormativity, meaning that lesbians and heterosexual women place different meaning and relate differently to the word 'woman'. Calhoun (ibid) also argued that due to the political structure of heteronormativity, the collapse of patriarchy would not necessarily benefit lesbian women in the same way as heterosexual women, as lesbian women would still be subordinate to structures valuing heterosexuality.

1.5.2 Gay men and masculinity

For gay men in society, the constraints of heteronormativity focus primarily around ideas of masculinity. Men in same-sex relationships are uniquely positioned within society, due to both their gender and sexual orientation. By violating cultural and societal heteronormative norms by being in a relationship with someone of the same sex, men having relationships with men brings into question ideas around masculinity and what this means in light of power within same-sex relationships. Within masculinity studies, the type of masculinity which is deemed the most

normative and honoured pattern of practice is known as hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell and Messerschmidt describe this as widespread ideals, fantasies and desires which embody 'the most honored way of being a man' (p.832). These practices are in reality only embodied by a minority of men, however men position themselves against them, and they allow men's dominance over women to continue (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Although hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily mean that a man will be violent, it means that they may strive for dominance by the use of persuasive and intrusive tactics (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

When considering hegemonic masculinity in relation to gay men, on the one hand, it has been purported that gay men violate hegemonic masculinity. Researchers who adhere to this thinking believe that gay men diverge from the heteronormative assumptions associated with being a man such as having societal power, and not being capable of being a victim (Barbour, 2011). The social constructions of hegemonic masculinity mean that gay men may be viewed as weaker or inferior to heterosexual men, demonstrating a difference in cultural power between heterosexual men and men in same-sex relationships (Barbour, 2011). Similarly to lesbian women, this may result in gay men being viewed as 'less than' within a heteronormative society. On the other hand, gay men have still been socialised as men within a society that values their gender, and though marginalised due to their sexual orientation, have resisted this by exercising social power such as forming the Gay Rights Movement. Due to this, gay men could be said to have claimed some social and political space within society and so possess more societal power than lesbian women.

1.5.3 Emergence of same-sex partner abuse research

When comparing the emergence of partner abuse research in same-sex and heterosexual relationships, SSPA research began to arise later than literature focusing on men's violence towards women; evolving in the 1980s and 1990s in both the UK and the US (Hester & Donovan, 2009; Renzetti, 1992). Due to the prominence of the Movement and focus on women's equality, a large proportion of research in the field considered partner abuse in lesbian relationships (Stiles-Shields & Carroll, 2014). In addition, many gay males were focusing their attention on the HIV/AIDS crisis at the time, and as a consequence may have received less attention than lesbians with regards to partner abuse (Elliott, 1996).

Looking to the present day, there is a small but growing pool of research within the UK focusing on SSPA. Despite concerns by some that using a feminist analysis of partner abuse to apply to same-sex relationships may position women as violent (Girshick, 2002), and hence undo the work of feminists over the past decades, it is also acknowledged that considering partner abuse in same-sex relationships is important and can increase knowledge around partner abuse generally (Baker et al., 2013). Additionally, it has also been highlighted that exploring SSPA and considering women's use of violence and abuse (and men as victims) does not mean to say that partner abuse is gender-neutral (Baker et al., 2013), but instead acknowledges that men can be victims and women perpetrators. The stance taken for this thesis is that LGBT people are oppressed by both gender inequality and heteronormativity, and the extent to which each combines to affect a person's experience will depend on the individual person alongside other oppressions they face, as will now be explained.

1.6 A focus on gender and sexual orientation

When considering the application of feminist theories to SSPA, some researchers assert that there are large gaps that cannot be filled via a sole focus on gender (Perilla, Frndak, Lillard, & East, 2003). For example, for some researchers, looking at violence and abuse between two men immediately removes the obvious marker that gender is the only cause (Baker et al., 2013), meaning that there are likely to be other factors influencing abuse. This viewpoint holds that the existence of partner abuse within same-sex relationships illustrates that partner abuse is not inherently linked to the power and control held by men (Girshick, 2002; McClennen, 2005; Rohrbaugh, 2006).

The fact that SSPA exists presents challenges to the core beliefs of some feminist thinkers, particularly with regards to the gendered nature of violence and abuse. However, it has been argued that these challenges should be recognised as opportunities to widen the feminist paradigm by including intersecting factors (Murray et al., 2006/7). Within this thesis, examining SSPA from a feminist perspective allows an exploration of how gender-based power and other factors intersect to influence partner abuse and responses to partner abuse within same-sex relationships, rather than viewing gender purely as an *explanation* for abuse (Baker et al., 2013). Irwin (2008) struggled with this when deciding to explore violence within lesbian relationships, but stated that by studying this area she did not wish to remove attention from male violence towards women. It is hoped that this thesis can be viewed along a similar vein – to expand on the small pool of research that has been carried out on SSPA, but at the same time holding the importance and centrality of the struggle against men's violence towards women, and the vital role of gender within this.

Renzetti (1992) is an advocate of considering intersections, stating that the heterosexual feminist model of power and control can be applied to those in same-sex relationships, but other factors such as sexual orientation, age, education and income and how these are interpreted and experienced should also be considered. Similarly, Donovan and Hester (2014) also assert that parts of the heterosexual feminist model can be applied to same-sex relationships, whereas other scholars such as Stark (2007) state that sexual inequality contributes to but does not cause abuse in same-sex relationships. Arguing that sexual inequality contributes to SSPA because of its discriminatory effects e.g. relating to income, employment and education, Stark (2007) feels that sexual inequality plays a part in SSPA but that it does not cause partner abuse due to both people in a same-sex relationship sharing a sexual identity. He suggests that SSPA (though he refers specifically to lesbians) is an aspect of male dominance, and factors such as age, race and class differences may be used to achieve power and control within same-sex relationships rather than sex differences. Additionally, as previously mentioned, he distinguishes coercive control as a uniquely gendered phenomenon perpetrated by men towards women due to men's opportunities for dominance (Stark, 2007, 2009).

Linking to the pervasive and ongoing nature of coercive control, at the time of writing this thesis, there was suggestion from research carried out in Spain that violence and abuse within LGBT relationships is viewed as an 'invisible phenomenon' (Carratala, 2016, p.46), and as episodic and individual, rather than a cultural and societal issue in the same way that men's violence towards women is perceived by the majority. Carratala (2016) states therefore that the pervasive nature of SSPA is downplayed and remains unacknowledged as a serious problem of society. However, research has not yet fully explored the structures which uphold SSPA and the theoretical underpinnings of coercive control as applied to same-sex relationships, and hence the reasons for its existence and how it is maintained cannot be fully ascertained.

For this thesis, I adopt the stance that gender inequality creates the opportunity for abuse within all relationships as we are all socialised within societies that uphold male-dominated structures, values and beliefs (Baker et al., 2013; Hunnicutt, 2009). As a consequence, the impact of gender is central to understandings of partner abuse, regardless of the gender of perpetrator and victim (Calton, Cattaneo & Gebhard, 2015). I believe that whilst sexism creates the opportunity for heterosexual men to abuse their partners, homophobia, a tool of sexism, creates the opportunity for those in same-sex relationships to abuse their partners (Elliott, 1996). For this reason, if it were not for gender-based inequalities, homophobia would be likely to decrease (though not disappear as people in same-sex relationships would still be in a minority within a heteronormative society). Expanding

the focus from gender allows an exploration of how other identities can intersect to produce experiences, and considering multiple oppressions gives a more complete picture of the contexts which affect experience (Parry & O'Neal, 2015). At the same time, this approach allows for multiple oppressions faced by people to be classed as equally important, rather than some being dominant at the expense of others (Crenshaw, 1991). For this thesis, it also allows the opportunity to consider male-dominated culture alongside other oppressive factors which may influence partner abuse (George & Stith, 2014). Importantly, a focus on intersections does not view these oppressions as simply sitting beside one another, but considers what sits at the intersections of the oppressions, and thus expands a gendered analysis of partner abuse. The thesis will be structured around this understanding, taking into account the crucial importance of gender inequality as affecting people's experiences of partner abuse, whilst at the same time exploring the ways that sexual orientation intersects with gender to produce specific experiences for those in same-sex relationships (Donovan & Hester, 2014; Hester, 2010). Overarching the above, the impact of structures such as heteronormativity and homophobia as affecting individual experience will be examined. Due to the recruited sample, oppressions such as race and class are less able to be commented on, however the influence of oppressions such as these will be considered, where appropriate.

1.7 Rationale

Over the past two decades, research considering SSPA has begun to increase, as the problem is becoming more widely recognised. In 2003, Kuehnle and Sullivan recommended that future research explored why gay and lesbian victims of partner abuse choose to report or not to report to the police, in addition to assessing their perceptions of how they were treated by police. Fifteen years later, although research has given an insight into some of these areas, there still remain gaps. We have some understanding as to the reasons why same-sex victims may choose not to report, such as believing that partner abuse only happens to heterosexual women (Donovan et al., 2006; Hassouneh & Glass, 2008), feeling that emotional abuse is not serious enough (Donovan et al., 2006; Hewitt & Macredie, 2012) and fears of being 'outed' if they report (Kirkland, 2004). However, what we currently lack is insight into why some victims do choose to report to the police, and when they do, what their experiences are. Victim help-seeking and police responses have been explored to some extent, though most commonly they emerge as a subsection of research focusing on another aspect of SSPA. Donovan and Hester (2011) and Hardesty, Oswald, Khaw, and Fonseca (2011) suggested that when there is an escalation of violence or fear of threats, same-sex victims will be more likely to call, linking to other research suggesting that calling the police is a last resort for many victims (Alhusen, Lucea, & Glass, 2010; Tesch & Bekerian, 2015). When considering police responses,

women have highlighted discriminatory responses such as having the abuse downplayed due to being in a relationship with another woman (Alhusen et al, 2010; Hassouneh & Glass, 2008), and others pertain that police may not understand the complexities of SSPA (Knight & Wilson, 2016), instead using myths around same-sex relationships to guide their practice (Tesch, Bekerian, English, & Harrington, 2010).

Due to the prevailing nature of partner abuse (Dichter & Gelles, 2012; Stark, 2007), victims are likely to need police intervention more than once, and it is therefore vital that police response is considered. However, research is severely lacking regarding police views, perceptions and experiences of responding to SSPA. A small body of research has been carried out with police to consider their perceptions of SSPA (Cormier & Woodworth, 2008; Felson & Lantz, 2016; Pattavina, Hirschel, Buzawa, Faggiani, & Bentley, 2007; Younglove, Kerr, & Vitello, 2002), however, it often uses survey methodology or secondary analysis of existing statistical data. Due to these methodological decisions, the in-depth experiences of police officers are rarely documented, and as police have the power to make decisions regarding a victims' well-being, it is vital that their views and perceptions are known.

In addition to the theoretical considerations described earlier, there are also methodological criticisms arising when researching SSPA. These primarily arise from definition problems (of partner abuse and being 'LGBT'), sampling problems, and issues with methodologies and methods. As such, many researchers claim that findings from individual research studies cannot be generalised due to differences in these areas used by researchers, and as a consequence there is a struggle to move forward in understanding trends and the extent of SSPA. The largest study to date which considers help-seeking behaviours of those in same-sex relationships was carried out over ten years ago by Donovan et al. (2006), who asserted that only one in ten of the 746 people who completed their questionnaires had contacted the police, and only four of 44 people taking part in semi-structured interviews had done so. Though two of the authors later explored police reporting and response pertaining from this data in more detail (Donovan & Hester, 2011), more work is needed to build a clearer in-depth picture of police response. To begin to address these needs, this thesis utilised Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to collect nationally recorded police data on recorded SSPA crimes, supplemented with individual qualitative interviews with victims, police and support professionals. Using the two methods alongside one another was deemed the most appropriate way to explore nationally reported data and consider experiences via the in-depth experiences of victims, police and support professionals.

1.8 Definitions and concepts

Within this thesis there are a number of key terms and definitions used which have stimulated discussion within literature. For this reason, I now outline the terms used within this thesis.

1.8.1 Domestic violence and abuse

One of the major considerations before commencing work in the area of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) is to consider the use of terminology such as 'domestic violence', 'domestic abuse' or 'partner abuse', as choice of terminology will shape the way that DVA is measured (Hester, 2004), and affect the extent to which research findings can be compared against each other (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). It may be impactful to report statistics such as 'someone contacts the police every 30 seconds about domestic abuse' (HMIC, 2014a), but if one author has included family violence within their definition of DVA, and another has not, comparing results from the studies would not provide an accurate representation of the prevalence of domestic abuse. This thesis will draw upon the (non legal) Home Office England and Wales (2013) definition of domestic abuse:

'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

Controlling behaviour

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim'

(Home Office, 2013)

This definition has been found to have some problems, such as obscuring the ongoing behaviours used by perpetrators by using terminology such as 'any incident *or* pattern of incidents' (Kelly & Westmarland, 2016), and including family and intimate partner violence within the same definition despite the likely differing dynamics present in each (Kelly & Westmarland, 2014, 2016). Additionally, though the definition mentions coercive and controlling behaviours, these behaviours do not form the superseding framework from which the rest of the definition is built (Kelly & Westmarland, 2016); explained by Stark as crucial to understanding domestic violence (2007). However, as this definition is published by Government, and used by police forces to inform their practice, it will be adopted for this thesis.

1.8.1.1 Use of 'partner abuse'

This thesis considers abuse perpetrated by one partner (or ex-partner) towards another regardless of their domestic living situation. To embody this notion, the term partner abuse will be used. This term has been chosen over domestic violence or domestic abuse so as to make clear that abuse can occur between partners who do not live together in a domestic relationship, and also in order to emphasise that abusive behaviours do not always involve violence (Barnes, 2007; Hester, 2004). Romito (2008) stresses in her book how the term 'abuse' is often used within a UK context to emphasise this latter point; however, terminology differs between countries. I may use other terms to describe partner abuse when discussing research carried out by other researchers to reflect their choice of language, but it should be assumed, unless stated otherwise, that these terms all relate to abuse within intimate partner relationships.

A further reason for adopting the term partner abuse is that the current research does not include abuse perpetrated by family members, as the Home Office England and Wales (2013) definition does. Although a serious issue, family violence and abuse will be excluded from this research due to the possible different dynamics between victim and perpetrator in an abusive family relationship compared to those experiencing intimate partner abuse (Kelly & Westmarland, 2014).

1.8.2 Sexual orientation and gender identity

It is now widely accepted that partner abuse occurs in same-sex relationships (Chan, 2005; Donovan, Barnes & Nixon, 2014), and is a big problem (Ristock, 2002); however, estimating prevalence rates is problematic for a number of reasons. Similarly to issues of defining partner abuse, ways in which researchers describe people in same-sex relationships differ greatly. The most widely recognised term is LGBT which is used to encompass women who are attracted to women (lesbian), men who are attracted to men (gay), those of either gender who are attracted to both men and women (bisexual), and those whose gender identity does not correspond to the same sex they were assigned at birth (transgender/trans); who can be attracted to those of the same or opposite gender. In addition, further letters such as Q (queer/questioning) and I (intersex) are sometimes added to extend the acronym further. Though an easily identifiable acronym, the use of the term LGBT is problematic for many reasons when considering its use within research. LGBT is often used as a blanket term, however, some research which states it is considering the views of LGBT people may include lesbians only, gay men only, and may or may not include trans and/or bisexual people. Additionally, including transgender within the acronym 'LGBT' portrays being trans as a matter of sexual orientation and not gender identity, which means that studies which purport to consider LGBT people often do not reflect experiences specific to trans people, and in some cases, trans people do not make up any of the participant sample (e.g. CAADA, 2013). Also, the term LGBT is limiting people as to how they may identify, whereas research has shown that identities spread much further than this narrow binary (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005).

This research uses the term 'same-sex' rather than 'LGBT' to define inclusivity criteria. This means that any person who has experienced partner abuse within a same-sex relationship is eligible to take part in the research, regardless of how they define their gender or sexual orientation. Hence, trans people who were in same-sex relationships were included in the research. Using 'same-sex' rather than 'LGBT' prevents people from having to apply the 'LGBT label' to themselves if they do not see themselves reflected in this. It also allows people who may have experienced partner abuse within a

same-sex relationship but consider their identity to be heterosexual to be included within the research, as not everyone in a same-sex relationship identifies as LGBT (Knauer, 2011). However, as with the terminology around partner abuse, 'LGBT' will be used within this thesis where other researchers have used this terminology within their work, or to refer to LGBT people generally within the wider field.

1.8.2.1 Use of sex versus gender

This decision to use 'same-sex' was made to reflect the most commonly recognised terminology within academic research and generally within society, in addition to being terminology used by police forces in England and Wales. Although 'sex' is used, it is recognised that many of the issues discussed within the thesis occur as a result of gender roles and stereotypes, that is, they are socially constructed and influenced by culture, gender inequality, and heteronormativity. It is also recognised that this choice of terminology may have influenced which people decided to participate in the research, depending on whether they identified with the terms used.

1.8.3 Using terms 'victim' or 'survivor'

There exists much debate as to the most appropriate term to use to describe a person who has experienced partner abuse. Within literature, the two most common terms used are 'victim' and 'survivor', with some authors choosing to combine both terms as 'victim/survivor'. As the debate over terminology continues in the field of men's violence towards women, it does too within SSPA research. Donovan and Hester (2010) in their paper entitled '*I hate the word victim*' describe how the heteronormative narrative around domestic violence 'others' people who have experienced abuse, and hence individuals may deliberately try to distance themselves from the term 'victim' due to its connotations with vulnerability and passivity. These negative connotations have also been discussed by authors in relation to women abused by men (Kelly, 1988). Opposing the word victim, Donovan and Hester (2010) argued that often those experiencing abusive behaviours may feel responsible for the emotional work of their relationship and therefore place themselves as the stronger person who is responsible for fixing the relationship. It can be seen here that the term 'victim' would therefore not accurately describe the role they feel they play within the relationship.

Some support organisations (such as Rape Crisis, a charity supporting those who have experienced sexual violence) and those who have experienced partner abuse themselves prefer the term

'survivor'. Unlike the term 'victim', this term places more emphasis on active resistance and everyday coping against the abuse. In relation to the current thesis with its strong emphasis on police response however, I will use the term 'victim' to refer to people who are experiencing partner abuse. Though there is much debate around this term, it is the term most often used within the Criminal Justice System (Donovan & Hester, 2014), and as this thesis explores police interaction with those experiencing same-sex partner abuse, it is deemed appropriate. It must be noted that this is not to ignore the active resistance shown by many people who experience abuse, but instead simply to enable the likely readers of this thesis to be familiar with the term chosen and to be able to navigate and understand the thesis more easily.

1.9 Thesis structure

The thesis has begun with an introduction to the topic being researched alongside an outline of the rationale and research aims. The theoretical framework has been outlined and the use of a feminist framework to take account of sexual orientation has been introduced. Key terminology has also been defined. Chapter Two outlines key research in the fields of SSPA and policing of partner abuse. It covers the extent, historical positioning and nature of SSPA, before moving onto a discussion of UK law surrounding SSPA and barriers victims may face when deciding whether to report to the police. Police perceptions of, and responses to, SSPA are then discussed, before finally considering specialist provision within forces for victims of SSPA, and police relationships with other support organisations. Chapter Three considers the methodology, including the methodological approach adopted for the research, and the rationale for its selection. The suitability of mixed-methods is also discussed, as are the ways quantitative and qualitative methods work together. The stages of the research are outlined, beginning with using Freedom of Information requests to gather quantitative data followed by qualitative semi-structured interviews. Key issues around methodology and ethics are considered, as are reflections on conducting qualitative interviews with police, professionals and victims of SSPA.

The fourth chapter outlines the first stage of data collection, using FOI requests to examine the nature and extent of reported SSPA crime in England and Wales over a year long period. Number of crimes, crime types, outcome, and risk ratings are the primary factors explored from the data. Similarities and differences within these areas based on gender are also considered. The findings are then discussed in light of existing research, with new insights given. Chapters Five, Six and Seven all discuss findings from thirty five semi-structured interviews with police (n=19), support professionals (n=12) and victims (n=4). Thematic analysis of police and professionals' interviews allowed key

themes to develop, and an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of four victim case studies provided an in-depth analysis of their experiences which were used alongside police and professionals' views. Chapter Five considers victim help-seeking behaviours for SSPA. The interviews aimed to uncover why victims seek help from police and any barriers they face. Chapter Six presents findings pertaining to police perceptions of and responses to SSPA; specifically, the different ways in which police perceived SSPA and how this affected their responses were analysed. Chapter Seven is the final findings chapter, and outlines the role of specialist SSPA provision within police forces, and the extent to which police liaise with external support organisations to provide a service to victims. Findings from Chapters Five, Six and Seven all conclude with a discussion of findings in light of existing literature. The final chapter of the thesis, Chapter Eight, integrates all of the findings in relation to the research aims and objectives. Implications for policy, practice and further research are discussed, in addition to reflections on the research process overall. The chapter also outlines key contributions that this research has made to knowledge.

Chapter 2: Partner abuse in same-sex relationships

In order for the thesis to be framed, existing literature focusing on three key areas is considered. First, the nature and extent of same-sex partner abuse is discussed, with a focus around difficulties with determining prevalence and the ways in which abuse is perpetrated within same-sex relationships, in the context of socio-cultural constraints. Second, a discussion entails relating to victim reporting of SSPA, with an exploration of barriers that people may face when deciding whether to report to police. Finally, police responses to SSPA are discussed, including a consideration of UK law surrounding SSPA, victim reporting, police perceptions and responses pertaining to SSPA, and finishing with consideration of specialist provision within police forces and police's relationship with other support agencies. A summary will follow and the trajectory that will be followed by this thesis is outlined.

2.1 Extent of same-sex partner abuse

Partner abuse is a substantial problem nationally and internationally, with statistics from the latest Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) reporting that 5.9% of women and 3% of men said they had experienced abuse from a partner or ex-partner between April 2016 and March 2017 (ONS, 2016a). The CSEW is used to monitor the extent of crime in England and Wales as well as gathering people's views about the Criminal Justice System (CJS), and includes crimes that have not been reported to the police. The survey includes a chapter focusing on intimate partner violence, and though it reports on statistics referring to abuse experienced by males and females, the survey does not identify victim and perpetrator gender identity or sexuality, and so is perceived to be a heterosexual sample (McCarry, Hester & Donovan, 2008); a finding which is replicated when considering research and publications internationally (Black et al., 2011; Sinha, 2011). Though requests can be made to the ONS for specific information and they can provide data on whether a person who defines as lesbian, gay or bisexual has experienced partner abuse, they do not ask participants for the sex or gender identity of the perpetrator. Additionally, data often combines statistics for lesbians and gay men into one figure, and thus accurate measures cannot be obtained. This lack of recognition of same-sex victims as a group of people who may have different experiences to heterosexual partner abuse victims (and in addition, different needs to each other) means SSPA victims' unique needs are lost in a sea of heterosexual data. Furthermore, as rates of same-sex partner abuse are not presented as a separate entity, prevalence of SSPA nationally

remains largely unknown. When the ONS data is used within this thesis for comparison purposes against SSPA data, it should therefore be perceived as a primarily heterosexual sample.

Similarly to problems with the CSEW, although police forces record data relating to reported partner abuse incidents, SSPA statistics are again not explicitly presented when national trends are reported. This could be for a number of reasons, such as data relating to SSPA are not collected in a way that makes it easy to report, or it is not deemed necessary to report SSPA statistics separately. As such, prevalence of police reported SSPA is difficult to ascertain. Difficulties with determining prevalence have further been noted by academics working in this area. When considering male-to-male partner abuse in 1997, Lehman stated

Considering the difficulty in establishing a sample within an invisible population we must also leave any discussions of prevalence of gay male domestic violence and abuse for a later date. At the moment we must conclude that incidents of gay male domestic violence are not infrequent and likely are under-reported due to the lack of adequate reporting mechanisms (p.3)

To date, only small steps have been taken to establish with any certainty the prevalence of partner abuse experienced by either men or women in same-sex relationships due in part to the same reason that Lehman highlighted in 1997. In addition to difficulties in establishing representative samples due to invisibility of the same-sex population, researchers considering partner abuse in same-sex populations have also extensively written about methodological difficulties such as the use of small, non-random samples. When combining this with the same-sex community's invisibility, researchers often struggle to recruit a representative sample of participants for research. As a result, they may find participants via known contacts such as friends and family, or commonly by snowballing; asking people to recommend others that they know (Rohrbaugh, 2006). Doing so can mean that biased, small samples are recruited and any findings may not be generalisable to the wider community (Calton et al., 2015; Younglove et al., 2002).

In addition to this, who is eligible to take part in a particular study will affect the findings. For example, whether as part of a research project participants are required to self-define their gender identity and/or sexual orientation compared to if the researchers define these terms. Similarly, whether researchers define what behaviours are classed as partner abuse compared to allowing participants to self-define will affect who is and is not eligible to take part. Calton et al. (2015) provide a discussion of literature relating to same-sex populations and outline the many ways in

which researchers assess sexual orientation and gender identity, such as asking if people have ever had a same-sex experience, ever lived with a same-sex partner, or if they identify as LGBT. This extensive range of potential problems with gaining representative samples could account for the wide prevalence rates of SSPA often reported by researchers working in this arena (Stiles-Shields & Carroll, 2014), and as a result of unrepresentative samples, data collected can only be an estimate of the phenomenon (Baker et al., 2013).

As a result of the difficulties in determining prevalence of SSPA due to the differences in methodologies and use of terminology, a discussion into prevalence within this thesis will not ensue. Recently, Donovan and Barnes (2017) explained how research in the field has moved on from needing to prove that SSPA exists, or explain its prevalence, due to a wealth of research which has already achieved these goals. This is the standpoint adopted by this thesis. However, it is important to recognise that prevalence of partner abuse in general, even when considering men's violence towards women, cannot be concretely ascertained, (particularly due to underreporting (Gracia, 2004)), but this does not decrease the importance of exploring this area. Regardless of problems with determining prevalence of SSPA, researchers working in the area agree that SSPA is a serious problem which is worthy of further attention (Irwin, 2008; Perilla et al., 2003; Tesch et al., 2010), particularly as ascertaining same-sex partner abuse as an issue worthy of research in its own right has been a long struggle.

2.2 Nature and characteristics of victimisation

In many ways, SSPA shares similarities with partner abuse in heterosexual relationships, in terms of its characteristics and impact (Kirkland, 2004). For example, Kuehnle and Sullivan (2003) state that people in same-sex relationships are likely to experience the same types of abuse (such as physical, psychological, financial and sexual) as heterosexual couples, abuse occurs in a cyclic manner (Elliott, 1996), they both experience abuse due to power differences (McClennen, 2005), and post separation abuse is a problem in both same-sex and heterosexual relationships (Donovan et al., 2006). When focusing on coercive and controlling behaviours, Donovan et al. (2006) found that victims in same-sex relationships experienced a gendered pattern of abuse, for example, women were more likely than men to have their children used against them and gay men were more likely than women to be physically threatened. These findings suggest that abuse is being played out using structural gendered norms dominant in society.

When considering structural inequalities around heteronormativity and homophobia faced by those in same-sex relationships, there are many factors which have been discussed within academia relating to power differentials between people in same-sex relationships. In the early 2000s it was suggested that not all domestic violence may be motivated by gender, and feminists must reconcile a gender-based model of violence alongside the fact that power and control operate in other relationships (Schneider, 2000). Stark (2007) illustrates these challenges, posing the question of how factors such as sexual inequality, power and control and homophobia contribute to abuse in both heterosexual and same-sex relationships. However, due to his assertions that coercive control is a highly gendered phenomenon playing on a victim's femininity and perpetrator's masculinity, he is less clear how coercive and controlling dynamics materialise when both partners of a couple are the same gender.

Whilst considering power differentials, it must also be remembered that in western societies, people are often socialised in a 'power-over' way (Girshick, 2002, p.1514) meaning that violence often achieves 'results'. When considering from this angle, it shows how women as well as men can resort to sexual and physical violence to exert power (Girshick, 2002). In order to explore power further, it is necessary to consider the different ways that men and women gain power within their intimate same-sex relationships, as although there are some similarities, there are also important differences. Though not deemed the only oppression, gender is central within the understanding of SSPA in this thesis, so I shall now separate men and women, in order that some of the uniquely gendered aspects specific to SSPA for men and women are not concealed (Kay & Jeffries, 2010).

2.2.1 Men: Sources of power in same-sex relationships

In Chapter One, it was suggested that gay men may be seen as violating hegemonic masculinity and thus possessing less cultural and social power. This could position them to be viewed as weak, and it may be believed therefore that a man in a same-sex relationship would not feel societal pressure to enact socially conditioned masculine traits such as violence. Conversely, it could be that due to lacking this power they may feel they need to 'prove' their masculinity, and, as such, be motivated to use violence and abuse (Calton et al., 2015; Island & Letellier, 1991). Barbour (2011) expands on this, stating that men in same-sex relationships may internalise homophobia as a result of hegemonic masculinity, and hence use violence and abuse in private settings against their partner in order to gain back some of the power that they lack in mainstream society. It has been suggested by some that men with the least amount of patriarchal power tend to be more likely to use violence

(Hunnicut, 2009). Though Hunnicutt explored patriarchy in a heterosexual context, it is possible that this understanding may also be applicable to gay men, as by lacking patriarchal power within mainstream society, using violence against a partner may allow men in same-sex relationships to gain some 'masculine credibility' back and move away from the feminine traits often assigned to them (Barbour, 2011).

In opposition to this view, there are researchers who believe that masculinity and the associated power does not make a man more likely to be abusive. Kelly and Warshafsky (1987) as cited in Richards, Noret and Rivers (2003) state that masculinity depicted by gay men does not bear relation to being abusive. Similarly Landolt and Dutton (1997) measured power balances between gay male couples asking 'who has the final say' (p.322) over various decisions. They found that even when couples disagreed on power dynamics in their relationship, levels of physical and psychological domestic violence were not higher. Landolt and Dutton's research suggests that even when gay men have perceived higher levels of power, this does not necessarily mean that they are more likely to be abusive towards their partner.

2.2.2 Women: Sources of power in same-sex relationships

Power imbalances have also found to be important within female same-sex relationships. Renzetti (1992) found that within her research with lesbians, when there was an imbalance of power between partners, such as social class or intelligence, there was more likely to be abuse within the relationship. Participants in Hart's (1986) research, as cited in Lockhart, White, Causby and Isaac (1994) also suggested similar, stating that they felt a power imbalance existed between partners in lesbian relationships when there was a difference in resource levels such as education and income.

Researchers have stated that lesbians may not be aware they are experiencing abuse within their relationships. This may be because the abuse is non-physical, or because they do not believe that it can happen between two women (Donovan et al., 2006; Donovan & Hester, 2010; Patzel, 2006) due to societal ideas of what domestic abuse is. Using this societal notion, female perpetrators may exert power over their partner by telling them that the abuse they are experiencing is normal within lesbian relationships (Chan, 2005). Although it has been found that heterosexual women can often (but not always) recognise that they are experiencing domestic abuse due to, for example, books they have read (Patzel, 2006), women in relationships with a woman often struggle due to lesbian relationships rarely being in the public eye (Bornstein, Fawcett, Sullivan, Senturia, & Shiu-Thornton,

2006). This means that perpetrators can convince their partner that what they are experiencing is a normal part of a lesbian relationship. This has been suggested to be particularly common for women who are entering a first time same-sex relationship. Women in this position have no experience of a relationship with a woman, lack of knowledge of what to expect, and will be unlikely to have a circle of gay and lesbian friends who they could turn to for support or view how same-sex relationships work (Donovan et al., 2006; Irwin, 2008). For example, in Hassouneh and Glass' (2008) research looking at risk and protective factors for women in same-sex relationships, one participant spoke about her abusive partner, who said 'Well, you'd better get used to it because this is the way lesbians are' (p.317). This lack of experience and knowledge of what a healthy lesbian relationship should be like may leave victims susceptible to further abuse and isolation.

2.3 'Public story' of partner abuse

Within society, a general narrative of what partner abuse is and how it materialises exists. Donovan and Hester (2011) explain how the prevalent societal picture of partner abuse, the 'public story', comprises a big, strong male inflicting physical abuse upon a smaller, weaker female. It is recognised internationally that male violence towards women makes up the largest proportion of partner abuse, and whilst of course men may often be larger and stronger than women, adopting this 'public story' as the only or 'correct' way that partner abuse occurs means other groups of people such as male victims, those who are in same-sex relationships and people who may not fit gender stereotypes and binaries may not see themselves reflected within this definition. Some researchers have suggested that by considering SSPA (particularly women's violence) there is a risk that this focus could be used to undermine and discredit the struggle to address men's violence towards women (Girshick, 2002; Irwin, 2008). On the other hand, others have argued that researching same-sex abuse validates the experiences of women experiencing abuse from women (Girshick, 2002), and viewing partner abuse through a same-sex lens can help us consider other cultural and systemic factors aside from gender which are at play in abusive relationships (see for example Baker et al., 2013).

A number of feminists who research SSPA stress that by examining this area they do not claim that partner abuse is gender-neutral as we all live in a world influenced by political and social frameworks centralising male domination, and, as such, our relationships and behaviours are influenced by this (Baker et al., 2013). However, it remains that the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) is still the most pervasive narrative in society, affecting the way that the general public and professional

services view partner abuse and allocate services. Using this 'public story' to their advantage, perpetrators of SSPA can also find additional ways to isolate and subdue their victims which set SSPA victims' experiences aside from heterosexual couples'.

One key way that those who abuse can use the 'public story' to silence victims in same-sex relationships is by threats to 'out' them to family, friends, children, work colleagues, and other people in their lives (Brown, 2008; Kirkland, 2004; Knight & Wilson, 2016). Being in a same-sex relationship is not the norm in society (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005) and many people may not have told those close to them that they are in a same-sex relationship through fear – whether that is fear of rejection, fear that key relationships will break down or worries over losing their children or jobs (Brown, 2008; Chan, 2005). In addition, some research has found that perpetrators do not use the victims' sexual orientation to control them, but their own, for example telling the victim that they do not want their parents to know as they are strict Catholics, or in some way making the victim feel that if people knew about them it would present a threat to their relationship (Donovan et al., 2006). It is vital that the threats mentioned are considered in the context of living in a heteronormative and homophobic society where same-sex relationships are devalued (Irwin, 2008), as this makes it easier for perpetrators to isolate their victims (Renzetti, 1992). As Knight and Wilson (2016) draw attention to:

These controlling behaviours would hold no power, of course, if it were not for the socio-cultural context that reinforces heterosexual assumptions (p.191)

Speaking about lesbian and bisexual women, Balsam and Szymanski (2005) mention that not being out means that women are less exposed to role models, and so may be more likely to tolerate abuse as they may feel that they lack other options. Linking to tolerating abuse, Donovan and Hester (2014) outline how the love that victims feel for their abusive partner can confuse victims as to naming their experiences as abusive. The researchers then go on to discuss 'relationship rules' which are reinforced by this love; the rules being that the relationship is on the abusive partners' terms and for them, and that the victim is responsible for the care of the abusive partner and maintaining the relationship. These rules are grounded within gendered understandings of roles within relationships, for example, the decision maker, linked to masculinity, and the caregiver, linked to femininity. Donovan and Hester (ibid) argue that these rules are tailored to the victim by using the abusive partner's knowledge of the victim to exploit their vulnerabilities, and then punishing the victim when they do not adhere to these rules. Given that victims are made to feel responsible for the relationship and care of the abusive partner, it can be difficult for victims to see these rules as

abusive, and they may instead be interpreted as love. This is particularly the case where though abusive partners are setting relationships rules (associated with masculinity) they may also be displaying acts associated with femininity (such as crying and needing emotional support from the victim). This can create further difficulties for victims, who may now be positioned as emotionally stronger than their abuser, and subsequently have trouble naming their experiences as abusive. It can be seen here that as abusive partners are setting relationships rules, a victim may become isolated from friends and families due to exerting energy into maintaining their relationship and caring for their family, in addition to adhering to these rules; such as needing to stay in to 'care for' an abusive partner.

Lesbian, bisexual and trans women in Bornstein and colleagues' (2006) research described isolation as central to their experiences of being abused, describing the various tactics used by perpetrators to ensure they were isolated. Overall, to understand how isolation is maintained and experienced, the context of being in a same-sex relationship within a heteronormative society needs to be taken into consideration, and heterosexual models of domestic violence would limit our understanding (Knight & Wilson, 2016).

A further way that perpetrators use the 'public story' to isolate victims is to tell them that abuse is normal in same-sex relationships; something which is particularly common when a victim is experiencing their first time same-sex relationship. Being in a first same-sex relationship can mean that there are particular ways in which abuse may be more likely to occur. For example, being in a same-sex relationship may affirm a person's identity as being LGBT (Donovan et al., 2006) meaning that somebody may tolerate abusive behaviours as the relationship is particularly important to their sense of self. Linked to this, as mentioned, the victim may be naïve via lack of experience as to how same-sex relationships 'work', and so may assume, or be told by the perpetrator, that abuse is normal (Donovan & Hester, 2011; Hassouneh & Glass, 2008). Perpetrators can therefore use the hegemony of heterosexuality as both a tool to abuse and as a way of explaining why they are carrying out (abusive) behaviours.

Due to the 'public story' pertaining a male perpetrator and female victim, when abuse occurs in same-sex relationships the perpetrator can use this story to tell the victim that they are just as much to blame for what is happening, known as mutual abuse. This is described as that where both people in the relationship are perpetrators and victims (Renzetti, 1992). If a victim fights back against the perpetrator, the perpetrator may convince them that they are just as much to blame (Pattavina et

al., 2007) and as a result, the victim may not speak out about what is happening. When considering gay men, research has been carried out suggesting that they do display mutual violence in their relationships, however, it has been suggested by others that research claiming these findings is likely to have taken place within a heterosexual framework (Baker et al., 2013). Knight and Wilson (2016) expand on this, stating that men are expected to be able to defend themselves against abuse from a male partner, and, as such, other ways that power can work within same-sex relationships are ignored. Assuming that men are violent and therefore mutual abuse between men is expected or normal, or similarly, assuming that mutual abuse between two women occurs because they are both women and hence one cannot have more power than the other is dangerous, and further isolates victims and discredits their experiences.

2.3.1 Transgender partner abuse

In addition to experiencing the above abusive behaviours, trans people can be subject to unique forms of abuse due to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Perpetrators can use many forms of abuse specifically targeted at exploiting someone's gender identity. For example, they may accuse the trans person of not being a real man or woman in line with what society sees as a valid representation of being male or female. This is similar to the way that gay men and women may be accused of not being a 'real gay' and how heterosexual women have aspects controlled such as how much makeup they are allowed to wear. When thinking of trans women, Goodmark (2012) puts forward the notion that some may tolerate such abuse as it validates their perceived (feminine) gender identity; women are supposed to be vulnerable and hence if they remain in the relationship it is external verification that they are 'like a woman'. Similarly to threats to out someone's sexual orientation in same-sex relationships, in trans relationships perpetrators may threaten to reveal someone's gender identity to many people including their friends, family and children. This is again a tactic to seek to isolate the victim and ensure they are dependent on the perpetrator, meaning they can continue to perpetrate abuse.

Financial abuse can also be used to control trans people who are in the process of transitioning. A perpetrator may refuse to allow their partner access to medication or to attend medical appointments (Goodmark, 2012; Roch, Ritchie, & Morton, 2010), leaving them vulnerable and dependent on the perpetrator. If the trans person is in a relationship with someone of the same gender, identity abuse may also occur where the perpetrator pretends to be the victim, which could lead to fraud such as having their bank account emptied (Lynn, Slavin, & Thomas Jr, 2012).

Taking into account these factors and others which trans people experience in terms of partner abuse (see Goodmark, 2012, for a more in-depth discussion) it can be seen how there are unique barriers related specifically to gender identity that aim to isolate trans people from support, and thus enable abuse to continue.

2.4 UK law and the relationship between police and the same-sex population

2.4.1 The Police response to domestic abuse

From 1997, New Labour Government began to lift the lid on domestic abuse, as it began to be viewed as a key policy issue (Donovan, 2010). Following this, as a result of the introduction of the Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act (2004), as well as offering police more power in terms of arrest, the police focus on responding to domestic abuse became more risk focused than previously (Hoyle, 2007). The profile of domestic abuse increased, with Laws expanding and more specialist domestic violence officers being trained across forces (Hoyle, 2007). For example, in 2005, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) produced specific guidance to accompany the 'Investigating Domestic Violence' guidance which outlined how to assess and manage risk (Hoyle, 2007). Within risk assessment tools, the focus within the UK relies primarily on information provided by victims and how safe they perceive themselves to be, compared with some risk assessments which gather information from a wider range of sources (Hoyle, 2007).

The policy response to addressing Violence Against Women and Girls continued with the new government. On 25th November 2010, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government built on previous Labour initiatives by developing a new strategy 'Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls' (Home Office, 2010), adopting a gender-based definition of domestic abuse for the first time. In 2018, in the UK, domestic abuse is defined via a cross-government (non-legal) definition as set out in Chapter One. This definition was refined in March 2013 to take account of the exertion of coercive and controlling behaviours used by perpetrators, and agreement that the age range needed to be lowered to include victims and perpetrators aged over sixteen rather than aged over eighteen (Monckton-Smith, Williams, & Mullane, 2014; Westmarland, 2015). This addresses previous responses that viewed domestic abuse as episodic and focused on physical violence.

When considering policy as relevant to LGBT people, as can be seen from the definition, domestic abuse is said to be able to happen regardless of gender or sexuality. This means that same-sex relationships are acknowledged within the UK understanding (Donovan et al., 2006). In addition, policies now reflect this understanding, for example the Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act (2004) was amended to award same-sex couples the same rights as married couples for non-molestation orders (Donovan et al., 2006). Furthermore, as knowledge about domestic abuse has increased, terminology has developed, for example, 'wife battering' is no longer used; recognising that heterosexual female victims may not be married to the perpetrator, and that men and people in same-sex relationships can also be victims of domestic abuse (Donovan & Hester, 2010). Younglove et al. (2002) do caution, however, that the inclusion of equal protection for same-sex relationships under law is only effective if laws are effectively implemented. In research by Donovan et al. (2006) within the UK, it was found that some participants stated that the law was not applied suitably to the perpetrator, even though they (victims) were lawfully entitled to protection.

Within the current risk-focused approach to domestic abuse, in addition to an understanding about the role of non-physical forms of abuse, a number of 'tools' have been developed as a result of the national domestic violence agenda which impact upon the police response to domestic abuse, which will now be discussed.

2.4.2 Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour-Based Violence (DASH) tool

In 2009, following endorsement from national policing leads (Myhill, 2016), the majority of police forces nationally began to use a risk-based model named the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence), to improve police response to domestic abuse (Richards, 2009). Developed by Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA, now Safe Lives), the DASH tool consists of 27 questions asked to victims designed to assess their level of risk and to ensure a more proactive approach by police officers (Richards, 2009), based on structured professional judgement (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2007). In addition to the majority of forces using the DASH, Safe Lives promoted the use of the CAADA-DASH for partner agencies, meaning there was consistency in risk assessment across agencies (Myhill, 2016; Robinson et al., 2016). Since then, the DASH has become a key part of the criminal justice response to domestic abuse, with forces who have adopted the DASH as their risk assessment tool being expected to submit a risk assessment after every domestic related incident (Robinson, Myhill, Wire, Roberts & Tilley, 2016). Responses to the DASH questions can assist police officers in identifying risk levels to victims, as follows:

Standard: Current evidence does not indicate likelihood of causing serious¹ harm

Medium: There are identifiable indications of risk or serious harm. The offender has the potential to cause serious harm but is unlikely to do so unless there is a change in circumstances, for example, failure to take medication, loss of accommodation, relationship breakdown, drug or alcohol misuse.

High: There are identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm. The potential event could happen at any time and the impact would be serious.

(Richards, 2009)

The risk ratings allocated by police are important as they determine whether the victim receives follow-up assistance such as emotional or practical support, and whether they are deemed high enough risk for referral to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC - see next section for further discussion). Victims can have their risk level raised if they meet specific criteria for the number of times they have come to the attention of police in a specified time-period, and similarly, risk levels can also be lowered if a victim is viewed to be less at risk than previously. College of Policing (2016) do stress, however, that the DASH should not be the only tool used to identify risk, and officers should also be using their professional judgement. Recent figures suggest that of the 43 UK police forces, only 28 routinely use the DASH (Myhill, 2016). As part of the HMIC (2014) inspection report, a recommendation was made to forces to consider the effectiveness of their current risk assessment tools, but also stated that they should continue to use their current risk assessment due to current lack of evidence that a change would be useful. For forces using the DASH, one piece of research found that compliance with submitting risk assessments following domestic incidents was rarely 100%, and the way it is implemented varied between forces (Robinson et al., 2016). For example, in some forces it was the responsibility of the frontline officer to provide a risk rating based on the DASH, whereas for others this decision was made by a specialist member of police staff (Robinson et al., 2016). Research also suggests that the way that police officers interpret information given to them as part of risk assessments can be variable (Hoyle, 2007). As such, it is unclear as to the suitability of the DASH to assess risk, and difficult to ascertain how accurate risk assessments are. The use of different risk assessments across forces also makes it difficult to gather

¹ Serious is defined as a life-threatening and/or traumatic risk which will have physical and/or psychological effects that are difficult or impossible to recover from

a realistic picture of what risk is and how it is assessed national, as though the DASH has been accredited by policing leads, policy which mandates its use is not in existence.

When considering the use of the DASH for LGBT victims, research has outlined how the original DASH model was designed based on cases involving heterosexual partner abuse (Robinson, 2010). Donovan (2010) suggested that professionals need training to be able to use the DASH in a way that is appropriate to LGBT victims, particularly giving their own professional judgement within the free text box if the DASH risk assessment outcome does not appear to reflect the true risk to the victim. This is particularly pertinent when remembering that LGBT victims may be calling as a last resort, and thus are likely to have been experiencing domestic abuse for some time, in addition to the fact that victims in general often minimise the impact of abuse when answering risk assessment questions (Robinson et al., 2016). Due to this, an LGBT victim may be classed as standard risk because it is the first time they have called police, but in reality the risk they face may be much higher. They could also fear speaking openly about risk they are facing, resulting in a lower score on the DASH than is reality.

The DASH also places most emphasis on incident-based, physical violence, and has been described as not wholly reliable when assessing risk (Donovan, 2013). As such, due to the nature of the DASH, LGBT victims (and indeed all victims) may be at a disadvantage of having their needs recognised by use of this tool, and thus serious risk may be missed. Finally, focusing resources only on those who are deemed to be at high risk means that victims who are not classified in this way may have their needs overlooked. There is therefore the possibility that victims who are incorrectly rated as standard or medium risk will not receive an intervention appropriate to their needs, such as referral to a MARAC.

2.4.3 Multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC)

With the first MARAC held in Wales in 2003, their purpose is to bring together agencies on a regular basis to share information about victims who are deemed high risk (Robinson, 2004), and MARACs are now held within all force areas in England and Wales. The goal of MARACs is to identify professionals from core agencies relevant to the victim's needs (such as housing, mental health, police and victim support) and to share information so that risk can be identified and resources allocated appropriately. Following this, a coordinated action plan is then developed to safeguard the victim (College of Policing, 2015c). The police play a central role in MARACs; often chairing the

conference, making the majority of referrals and being required to share information relating to the risk of the victim (College of Policing, 2015c; Donovan, 2010). This calls for a thorough understanding of domestic abuse and how risk operates within all types of abusive relationships. A recent inspection by HMIC (2015) found that MARACs are working effectively, with police taking an active role.

When considering the role of MARACs for victims in LGBT relationships, research has suggested that an unacceptably low number of LGBT victims are referred, with research in 2010 finding that less than 1% of the total number of people referred were LGBT (Donovan, 2010). Donovan's research suggested that this may be due to a number of factors, such as victims' lack of recognition that they are in an abusive relationship, lack of understanding from police and other professionals about LGBT relationships (and therefore domestic abuse within them), and a gap of trust between LGBT people and the police, which means victims are less likely to report to the police. Additionally, Donovan found that as a criterion for referral in one force area was that the victim had made four or more calls to the police in the previous six months, LGBT victims would be unlikely to meet this, as they have been found to be reluctant to seek police support. Reluctance to call police and calling as a last resort has also been reported by other researchers (Alhusen et al., 2010; Tesch & Bekerian, 2015). Figures from 2018 would suggest that slightly more LGBT victims were referred to a MARAC between April 2017 to March 2018, but numbers still remain low (1.2% of total number of referrals were LGBT) (Safe Lives, 2018).

2.4.4 Victimless prosecutions

A further way that police policy attempts to protect victims is by pursuing 'victimless prosecutions', that is, taking a case forward without the support of a victim. Doing so may enable a victim to feel safer as they are not required to be involved in the prosecution of their partner, and evidence can be gathered by the police independently of their support. Evidence for victimless prosecutions may include: 999 recordings, independent witnesses, photographs of injuries, police body-worn camera footage, signs of disturbance or bad character evidence. Though victimless prosecutions may enable victims to feel safer as they are not directly involved in taking action against their partner or ex-partner, using this method may also take away control from victims.

Demonstrating what victims want, research has found that victims are happiest when police take into account their preferences over what actions to take (Buzawa & Austin, 1993). Judith Herman (1992) also speaks about the importance of victims' wishes being respected and subsequently

reflected in decisions made during court processes: 'no intervention that takes power away from the survivor can possibly foster her recovery, no matter how much it appears to be in her immediate best interest' (p.133). Though she speaks here specifically about victims' wishes during the court process, these words are relevant to victim choice throughout their journey with the CJS. Should police decide to push for a victimless prosecution, the victim may be left feeling that their wishes were ignored and that they were not respected. On the other hand, a victim may want the police to pursue a prosecution but be filled with fear at voicing this. Police action, even if in line with victim wishes may also give rise to further complications; for example research involving interviews with female victims of male violence has suggested that victims are more likely to be re-victimised if they support the police to make an arrest (Hirschel & Hutchison, 2003).

Regardless of the law, policies and processes in place to support victims, there is evidence that these are not always applied, and victims are not always satisfied. Though there may be multiple reasons for this, fraught historical relationships between the same-sex community and the police may affect the ways in which SSPA is dealt with by the Criminal Justice System.

2.4.5 Historical mistrust of the police

Historically, the relationship between LGBT people and the police has been turbulent, with people in same-sex relationships experiencing harassment and discrimination from law enforcement (Donovan & Hester, 2011; Dwyer, 2014; Israel, Harkness, Delucio, Ledbetter, & Avellar, 2014). It is important that this history is taken into account when considering LGBT and police relationships in the present (Dwyer, 2014); however, not assuming that the present situation is markedly improved from the past. It has been stated that in fact that we do not yet know enough to ascertain whether or not historical mistrust of the police affects police and LGBT peoples' relations in contemporary society (Dwyer & Ball, 2012). Though steps have been taken by police forces in an attempt to improve the relationship with the LGBT community, for example, by attending Pride events and employing LGBT Liaison Officers (LLOs), recent research findings continue to report LGBT people's negative responses from the police. As Mallory, Hasenbush and Sears reported in 2015: 'discrimination and harassment by law enforcement based on sexual orientation and gender identity is an ongoing and pervasive problem in LGBT communities' (p.1).

Historically, gay men have often been on the receiving end of negative police interactions, viewed as 'potential criminals and deviants to be socially controlled and regulated' (Donovan & Hester, 2011, p.27). Consequently, most of the literature and discussion of historical police relationships with LGBT

people focusses on gay men's interactions with police. Until the introduction of the Sexual Offences Act (1967) which decriminalised sex between two men aged over 21, in private, in England (Stonewall, 2016), it was illegal and policed heavily. This ban was not overturned in Scotland until 1980, and 1982 in Northern Ireland. During this era, police raided places where LGBT people were known to congregate including LGBT bars and bathhouses, and used physical violence and weapons towards gay men, including with fatal consequences (Altman, 1971). Similarly, police entrapped gay men using covert surveillance within their private spaces to catch them 'in the act' (Dwyer, 2014), resulting in numerous arrests. Whether people received fines, an arrest, or worse, the death penalty, was decided by police, demonstrating that LGBT sexual activity was deserving of hard punishment (Dwyer, 2014). With UK policy and law later developing to award LGBT people the same rights as heterosexual individuals, the police were required to re-build their relationship with LGBT communities to attempt to close the 'gap of trust' (Donovan & Hester, 2011, p.27) that existed between them. As mentioned earlier, steps are being taken within police forces to do this, however, as Dwyer (2014) points out: 'we cannot just take away the history that emerged out of mistrust and pain' (p.149).

In addition to the fraught history with the police in terms of discrimination and over-policing based on sexual orientation, the LGBT community have also been under-policed in other areas where they required assistance, including domestic violence (Colvin, 2014). Due to lack of police interest, lesbian and gay people mostly refused to report crime or support police, and alongside police anti-gay attitudes this created an atmosphere of harassment and discrimination towards LGBT people (Colvin, 2014). This 'gap of trust' between LGBT people which meant that many people did not report crimes to the police will be explored in more detail in the next section, with a specific focus on reporting SSPA.

2.5 Reporting same-sex partner abuse to the police

The implications of the negative police relationship with LGBT people is still pervasive within the LGBT community worldwide, meaning that research studies looking at SSPA consistently find low levels of police reporting (Chan, 2005; Donovan et al., 2006; Donovan & Hester, 2008, Hester et al., 2012; Murray et al., 2006/7). The CSEW (2015) found that for the assumed heterosexual sample, the police were the second most popular source of support sought when seeking assistance for partner abuse, after telling friends, family or a neighbour (ONS, 2016b). In contrast, the most recent findings for those in same-sex relationships to compare to this were highlighted in Donovan and Hester's

(2008) findings, which reported that the police were the last source of support for those in same-sex relationships. The fact that those answering the CSEW chose police as their second source of support suggests that they had more confidence that police would be able to assist them compared to those in same-sex relationships who do not appear to have this confidence. However, it has been asserted that partner abuse overall still remains underreported (Gracia, 2004), suggesting that many victims have reservations about involving the police.

2.5.1 Barriers to reporting same-sex partner abuse

Hunt and Fish (2008) authored a report published by Stonewall which considered various health aspects relating to lesbian and bisexual women within the UK. From results of over 6000 lesbian and bisexual women, the report found that of those who had experienced domestic abuse, four out of five did not report the incidents to the police. Of those who did report, only half were happy with the response they received. A comparable report was carried out by Guasp (2011) on behalf of Stonewall, which focused on gay and bisexual men's health needs. The results in relation to domestic abuse and police reporting were very similar to those found in Hunt and Fish' (2008) report, with four out of five men having never reported an incident of domestic abuse to the police, and of those who had, more than half were unhappy with the response. The statistics from both reports may include abuse perpetrated by family members as well as partner or ex partners, and it is not possible to determine the percentage split between family and partner abuse. However, both reports illustrate a reluctance of SSPA victims to call the police about domestic abuse. Furthermore, research suggests that trans people in particular are reluctant to report to police (Guadalupe-Diaz & Jasinski, 2016; Langender-Magruder, Whitfield, Walls, Kattari, & Ramos, 2016).

In addition to the negative historical relationship between police and LGBT people, researchers have documented other factors which may intersect to influence whether victims may decide to call (or not call) police for assistance, which are henceforth discussed.

2.5.1.1 Isolation

First, there is the issue of perpetrators isolating victims from their family or friends and leaving them with no support network, which has also been found by feminist researchers such as Stark (2007) to occur within male to female perpetrated abuse. Bornstein et al. (2006) expressed the significance of isolation via research exploring lesbian, bisexual and trans women's experiences of domestic abuse,

reporting that participants described isolation tactics used by perpetrators as central to their experience of being abused. One area which increases a SSPA victims' risk of isolation is if they are worried about being 'outed', that is, having their sexual orientation revealed to others if they do not comply with the demands of the perpetrator. This has been suggested to have the potential for perpetrators to isolate victims to a more severe degree than is done to heterosexual women (Elliott, 1996), meaning it becomes more difficult for victims to reach out for support safely. To illustrate this, one problem for female same-sex victims if trying to access a refuge is that their partner can also gain access by masquerading as a victim, meaning they can continue to perpetrate abuse. In general, having access to the same support services may make it more difficult for a same-sex victim to access support without their partner finding out (Bornstein et al., 2006). Additionally, some people in same-sex relationships may be particularly reliant on their friends for support due to being estranged from their family due to their sexual orientation. Research suggests that LGBT people are most likely to seek support for partner abuse from friends rather than family (Donovan et al., 2006; Merrill & Wolfe, 2000), hence if the perpetrator has isolated the victim, they will be likely to experience complete separation from those who could assist them.

2.5.1.2 Fear of outing

Linking closely to victims being isolated, a significant amount of literature exploring SSPA discusses the concept of 'outing' (Calton et al., 2015; Irwin, 2008; Kirkland, 2004; Knight & Wilson, 2016). Normally referring to the perpetrator threatening to tell others about the victims' sexual orientation, or forcing a victim to remain silent about their sexual orientation due to the perpetrator not being out, this method of control can make it difficult for a victim to seek support when experiencing abuse, and victims may hide their identity from others due to fear of being outed (D'Augelli and Grossman, 2001). This tactic of using a victim's sexual orientation against them would not be possible if it were not for the structural existence of heteronormativity (Knight & Wilson, 2016) which values heterosexuality. The extent to which a person fears being outed is dependent on a number of factors. For example, Hardesty et al. (2011) found that 24 lesbian mothers who sought formal support were 100% out about their sexual orientation, and positive about their sexuality. For these women, they did not have any worries about others knowing their sexual orientation. On the other hand, some women in Irwin's (2008) research remained in abusive relationships for longer due to fear of being outed, suggesting that this fear held much stronger for them. It can therefore be seen that the effect that outing has on victims is dependent on their personal identity and circumstances.

2.5.1.3 Reinforcement of the 'public story'

A further way that perpetrators can work to ensure their partner is silenced is by reinforcing the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011), as outlined earlier. In addition to SSPA victims not seeing themselves reflected in the connotations attached to the term 'domestic abuse' due to being in a same-sex relationship, perpetrators can use this story to further isolate and coerce their partner into remaining quiet about the abuse. Donovan et al. (2014) conducted the first UK study to explore partner abuse within LGB and/or T relationships, and found that the most stated reason victims gave for not seeking help was that the victim did not believe the abuse was serious enough; a response given by over 50% of participants. Perpetrators may further embed this view by telling their partners this is 'just how it is' in same-sex relationships. This coercion is made easier for perpetrators when it is their partners' first same-sex relationship, as they will not know how same-sex relationships 'work' and may assume abuse is normal (Bornstein et al., 2006; Donovan & Hester, 2008).

2.5.1.4 Lack of recognition of domestic abuse

The 'public story' can also deter victims from seeking help if they do not conform to traditional gender expectations. A male victim experiencing SSPA may be physically larger than his partner, and based on physical attributes, people may assume that he is the one perpetrating abuse. As a result, he may be reluctant to seek help. Linking to this, ideas around masculinity and what 'makes a victim' may deter men from calling the police. Being abused as a man goes against cultural and societal norms of what a victim is, which may make it harder for a man to recognise they are experiencing abuse and see themselves as a victim (Ahmed, Alden, & Hammarstedt, 2013; Donovan et al., 2006), in addition to making it difficult for them to seek support (Barbour, 2011). Similarly, within a female partnership, male and female heterosexual roles may be assumed by onlookers, with the larger and more 'butch' (Phelen, 1998) of the two females thought to be the perpetrator, and the smaller more feminine partner, the victim (Chan, 2005; Donovan & Hester, 2008; Hassouneh & Glass, 2008). Nils Christie (1986), outlined the ideal crime victim: 'a person or category of individuals who – when hit by crime – most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim' (p.18). Within attributes that encapsulated this ideal victim status were: being a woman; being weak; carrying out a 'respectable' project at the time of victimisation; existence of a big bad offender (who is unknown to the victim); and being powerful enough to make the offending known to others. It can be seen from these attributes how all victims experiencing partner abuse do not fall into the ideal victim due to knowing the perpetrator. Furthermore, it can be seen how the matter may be complicated for

those experiencing SSPA due to factors mentioned earlier regarding size and strength (a 'bigger' and 'stronger' partner is not weak), gender (men do not fit the attributes), and not making the offending known to others (due to underreporting). As such, SSPA victims may not be viewed by others as legitimate victims.

Research has suggested that abuse within lesbian relationships is denied within the community (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Richards et al., 2003), and violence perpetrated by women is not viewed as serious (Calton et al., 2015). This is problematic as it means that partner abuse victims within a same-sex relationship may not report to the police or other agencies as they believe abuse can only happen to heterosexual women. Donovan and Hester (2010) carried out multi-method research which involved interviews with people in same-sex relationships, and concurrent with Hassouneh and Glass' (2008) findings, reported: 'most of the LGBQ respondents did not recognise their relationship experience as domestically violent at the time of the relationship' (Donovan & Hester, 2010, p.284).

Recent research has suggested that awareness of domestic abuse in LGBT communities is low and communities may not be ready to address the problem (Turell, Herrmann, Hollander, & Galletly, 2012). If LGBT communities are not able to recognise domestic abuse then they are unlikely to call the police for assistance. It may be that a lack of awareness of what domestic abuse is in LGBT communities prevents some victims from reporting. Alluding to the 'public story' of what partner abuse is, perpetrators can use this as a way to further ensure that their partner remains silent about the abuse they are experiencing, by reinforcing the victim's belief that nobody would believe them if they reported.

2.5.1.5 'Emotional abuse doesn't count'

In 2015, 'Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship' (Home Office, 2015) legislation was introduced into UK forces to recognise the ongoing, pervasive nature of domestic abuse (Stark, 2007). However, most research suggests that physical violence is viewed as the most serious form of abuse by victims and police (Henderson, 2003; Monckton Smith et al., 2014; Wolf, Uyen, Hobart, & Kernic, 2003), with same-sex victims most likely to call police for help when the abuse is physical, has escalated, or they fear for their life (Donovan & Hester, 2011; Henderson, 2003). Some research has suggested that when emotional abuse is considered, service providers are less inclined to view a lesbian woman as a victim compared to a heterosexual woman

in the same situation (Basow & Thompson, 2012). This suggests that service providers need stronger evidence (such as physical violence) to be able to place a lesbian woman as a victim, which may be due to the prevailing norm that male violence towards women is the most serious (Cormier & Woodworth, 2008). This finding also alludes to the notion that as physical violence is deemed as evidence that a woman is a victim; physical violence is viewed as more serious than emotional abuse.

Research by Wolf et al. (2003) indicated the same findings from a victims' point of view: women were more likely to call the police when they had sustained physical injury as they felt they needed 'proof'. Similarly, a gay man in Harvey, Mitchell, Keeble, McNaughton Nicholls & Rahims' (2014) research stated that he would not go to the police again as they told him there was nothing they could do for him until he was physically harmed. Other research suggests that police are more likely to make an arrest when physical abuse is present (Hoyle, 1998), despite emotional/psychological abuse reported as being the most common form experienced by victims (Donovan et al., 2006; Finneran & Stephenson, 2013; Henderson, 2003).

2.5.1.6 Fear of receiving an unsympathetic or homophobic response

Some researchers have found that fears over receiving a homophobic response from police will prevent victims from reporting SSPA (Calton et al., 2015; Finneran & Stephenson, 2013; Irwin, 2008). Victims may have concerns that they will not be believed (Donovan et al., 2006) or be anxious about the police reaction (Richards et al., 2003). Victims may also display internalised homophobia, or internalised homonegativity: 'negative feelings and attitudes about homosexual features within oneself and others' (Shildo, 1994, as cited in Pepper & Sand, 2015, p.658). Due to internalisation of these negative attitudes, victims may believe that they deserve the abuse they are experiencing (Peterman & Dixon, 2003; Stiles-Shields & Carroll, 2014) and as a result, may be less likely to seek help as they do not feel that they warrant it (Murray et al., 2006/7).

Looking specifically at LGBT people's experiences with the police, Donovan and Hester (2011) used data from Donovan and colleagues' (2006) research comparing domestic abuse in same-sex and heterosexual relationships. Aptly named 'Seeking help from the enemy', within the 44 interviews carried out with LGBT people, only four had reported to the police. Reporting was carried out in the context of fear that the abuse would escalate, or begin to involve physical violence. Donovan and Hester (2011) also found that reporting to the police was not carried out in isolation but was part of

a range of tactics used by the victim to keep themselves safe. The researchers concluded that participants generally did not think that reporting would help as they did not feel it was relevant to their needs or that they would receive a sympathetic response. Not feeling they will receive a sympathetic response if they report has been documented by a number of other researchers exploring victims' experiences (Baker et al., 2013; Calton et al., 2015; Guadalupe-Diaz & Jasinski, 2016).

2.5.1.7 Previous negative response from police

Some research suggests that people in same-sex relationships call police as a last resort for support with partner abuse (Alhusen et al., 2010; Tesch & Bekerian, 2015). Due to victims only calling as a last resort, police may only have one opportunity to provide a positive response, and if they do not, victims may be unlikely to call for support again (Monckton-Smith et al., 2014). Researchers have emphasised the importance of providing a positive response, with victims more likely to call again if they feel that the police are providing a helpful response (Johnson, 2007), and unlikely to call again if they feel blamed, coerced, or ignored (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2010). In addition, if people close to a victim have experienced negativity from police, this can also deter a victim from seeking help as they assume the police will be unhelpful (Calton et al., 2015). This finding links to the insular nature of the LGBT community and how one person's experience can influence others.

Research has suggested that LGBT people may not want to bring shame on their 'community' by speaking out about the abuse they are facing and risk an already stigmatised community being marginalised further (Alhusen et al., 2010; Barbour, 2012). The community may also emphasise the notion that partner abuse does not happen within LGBT communities, which again reinforces the need for a victim to remain silent (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Hamberger, 1996). Denial and isolation from individuals may therefore follow and a victim may not speak out about the abuse they are experiencing.

In addition to the many reasons outlined as to why a victim may be reluctant to seek police support, victims who occupy one or more oppressions may be even less likely to ask for help. Chan (2005) states that SSPA victims are less likely to report if they are from an ethnic minority background due to heightened fear of discrimination, whilst Harvey et al. (2014) propose that people within same-sex relationships who grew up in an era when equality was not as pronounced are also less likely to report due to lack of confidence in the police. Other research has suggested historically difficult

relationships between Gypsies and Travellers and the police, with similar themes of being over and under policed emerging (Martin, 2002; Mulcahy, 2011). For these reasons, most research has suggested that travellers experience the police as an enforcement agency rather than a system they can rely on for support (James, 2007).

In addition to barriers victims may face when deciding whether to seek police support for partner abuse, research has also been carried out considering how the police perceive SSPA and the ways in which they respond. The following section will explore these notions further.

2.6 Police perceptions of and responses to SSPA

Within the United Kingdom, SSPA victims are entitled to the same protection from abuse as heterosexual victims, under the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004). Nevertheless, academic research looking at how police respond to SSPA has found varied responses, with key variables relevant to this thesis being the gender and sexual orientation of the victim and perpetrator, and assumptions around masculinity and femininity. The next section of this review will outline research considering police perceptions of, and responses to, SSPA.

2.6.1 'Canteen Culture'

A traditional 'police culture' has been suggested to exist by researchers (e.g. Banton, 1964). Police culture, also described as cop culture or canteen culture, is described broadly as a masculine culture in which informal norms and values such as sexism and racism are displayed by police, despite the strict structure of police organisational systems (Reiner, 2010). These norms and values allow police to feel a shared social identity with colleagues, and Braiden (1994) explains that it is culture rather than organisational rules that determine action which is taken by police:

The structure is formal and represents the reality of what is supposed to happen. Culture is informal and represents the reality of what actually does happen (p.312).

Young (1991) outlines the relationship of police culture to domestic abuse, stating that traditionally, due to the values embedded within police culture, domestic abuse was seen as trivial and 'of no concern to police' (p315). In Stephens and Sindens' (2000) research, they also reported negative

findings, stating that victims of domestic abuse felt that the police minimised their situation, disbelieved them, and colluded with the perpetrator. For example, one victim overheard the police telling the perpetrator 'you should keep your women in line' (p.541), and another telling a victim 'hey, husbands kill wives all the time' (p.539). These attitudes reflect the police culture of masculinity and sexism: treating women as property and second class citizens, and domestic incidents as trivial. However, though some researchers have argued that police culture influences police practice and behaviour, others have proposed that the link is not straightforward. For example, Hoyle (1998) carried out interviews with officers about domestic incidents, and found that although many officers gave an initial negative comment about domestic incidents, this attitude was not reflected in the behaviour they carried out when responding, which was often thoughtful and caring. These differences illustrate a possible divide between police culture and police behaviour, and Hoyle states that ultimately behaviour is influenced by attitudes to some extent, but possibly not as strongly as claimed by some researchers.

2.6.2 Viewing abuse as 'mutual'

In addition to police culture underlying attitudes and behaviours, how police perceive same-sex relationships and gender roles may have an impact on the responses they provide to victims of SSPA. Harvey et al. (2014) found that participants within their research felt that if their same-sex relationship did not conform to the gendered pattern that police officers expected from a relationship, police would be unlikely to recognise whether partner abuse was occurring. Donovan and Hester (2011) mention that a reason for this may be that many professionals are not trained to recognise specific dynamics which are present in SSPA, and so are unable to respond appropriately. As a result of this lack of awareness, SSPA cases may be attributed as mutual abuse, in which the two people involved are classed as equally responsible, and partaking in a fair fight (Knight & Wilson, 2016; Peterman & Dixon, 2003; Renzetti, 1992; Ristock, 2002). This lack of understanding by police means that the victim may be arrested instead of or along with the perpetrator (Giorgio, 2002), and as Letellier, Hamberger, & Renzetti (1994) report, both people can be held in the same jail cell where the actual victim may be assaulted again.

Fear of SSPA being termed 'mutual' may prevent a victim from seeking help, and be used as another tool by the perpetrator to prevent their partner accessing support. Abusive behaviours in both same-sex and heterosexual relationships are reported by some researchers as being gender-symmetric. Studies reporting this finding often use the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), a quantitative

instrument developed to measure rates of violence via a series of questions (Straus, 1990). This scale, however, has come under criticism as it does not take account of contextual or motivating factors as to why someone would use violence (Kimmel, 2002). As such, it cannot be ascertained whether a person was acting with the intent of perpetration, or defending themselves from abuse.

2.6.3 Minimisation of seriousness

A key problem with interpreting abuse as 'mutual' is that police officers may make false connotations about the seriousness of abuse within same-sex relationships, due to attributing stereotypically feminine characteristics to the men involved, and classifying women as either feminine or masculine. For women in abusive same-sex relationships, research suggests that police may view partner abuse as trivial, a 'cat fight' (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008, p.320), and a breach of the peace (Barnes, 2007). This is due to stereotypes around gender that women are physically weaker than men, and therefore cannot cause serious harm to another woman. Within research carried out by Walters (2011), one woman interviewed said that she and her partner were told by police to 'act like ladies' (p.261); with police viewing the situation as disturbing the peace rather than domestic violence. Walters explained that as a result, the victim was not protected and the abuser continued the abuse, with police inaction reinforcing that she was not committing crimes. Other researchers have found similar findings of police downplaying woman to woman SSPA, for example, one research study found that an officer stated when responding to an incident: 'it's just a couple of dykes, whatever' (p.6) and another participant felt that the police response was almost as bad as the abuse she had received from her partner (Alhusen et al., 2010).

Partner abuse within male same-sex relationships has also been found to be viewed by police as mutual by some researchers (e.g. Bartholomew, Regan, White, & Oram, 2008), but for different reasons to abuse in female same-sex relationships. Similar to female same-sex relationships, it has been suggested that some police view men as equally matched due to their gender and physical size and strength (Knight & Wilson, 2016; Letellier et al., 1994). However, though police may view women as unable to perpetrate serious harm, they view men as able to do this. The perception of mutuality arises when, though police acknowledge that men can cause serious harm, they also believe that a male victim should be able to stand up for themselves due to gender stereotypes associating being male with being tough. Research has also suggested that male same-sex domestic violence is not viewed as seriously as male violence towards women (Seelau, Seelau, & Poorman, 2003). As an example, a gay man in Hester and colleagues' (2012) research explained how the

physical abuse he reported was dismissed by a police officer on the grounds that the only type of abuse a gay man could experience was buggery. There is also suggestion that some level of physical violence is viewed as normal between men (Brown, 2008), which contributes to minimisations of seriousness of male SSPA. When considering the stereotype of mutual abuse alongside its resulting problem of difficulty identifying the perpetrator and victim, this may account for why police often fail to intervene in partner abuse between members of the same-sex (Ristock, 2002; Stiles-Shields & Carroll, 2014), leaving the victim unsupported.

2.6.4 Influence of the 'public story'

In addition to classifying abuse as 'mutual', a further aspect which has been shown to prevent police from identifying victim and perpetrator is that the perpetrator may play on the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) in order to confuse police officers. Hassouneh and Glass' (2008) research with lesbian and bisexual women found that a female perpetrator could play the 'feminine victim' (p.321), so that when police officers arrived they would see the 'feminine' traits of being emotional and hysterical and assume this person was the victim. One participant reported how her partner used these tactics to evade arrest:

She knew the system.... when the police got there, she'd been smoking pot and taking something else . . . and she comes back and goes, "Your little friends are here." But as soon as she heard them say that there was a pot pipe out there, she started freaking out, saying, "Get out of my house, she tried to kill me." And it's like her whole tone—she was sobbing and she was saying, "You are going to give my dad a heart attack he just got out of the hospital," and they are all telling her to calm down. And it is like she worked them (p.321).

Hassouneh and Glass' research illustrates the difficulties that can occur when police are not aware of specific tactics used by SSPA perpetrators, but instead use their own stereotypes surrounding gender to make decisions. The pervasive view of women as weak and vulnerable and therefore incapable of causing serious harm contributes widely to police (and wider society's) perceptions of risk and harm.

2.6.5 Hypothetical scenarios

One method used by research to date to assess police perceptions of SSPA is by providing participants with hypothetical scenarios ('vignettes') which involve varying the gender and sexual

orientation of the victim and perpetrator. Participants are then asked to make various ratings such as seriousness of offence, how police should respond, and recommendations for further support.

Some hypothetical research scenarios involve manipulation of the sexual orientation of the people in the scenario. One such study by Bernstein and Kostelac (2002) found that male police officers held more negative views towards gay men than female officers, and a quarter of the entire sample admitted to carrying out disrespectful behaviour to a gay or lesbian person in the past. However, in the same year, Younglove et al. (2002) gave 82 police officers hypothetical partner abuse scenarios and found no significant differences in the responses the police said they would give, regardless of the couples' sexual orientation. The authors did mention, however, that it may be that discriminatory attitudes were not held to begin with by those who opted to take part.

Other scenarios manipulate the gender of the couple rather than sexual orientation. Gracia et al. (2014) found that of 308 male police officers, the majority said they were most like to apply the law when a woman was injured, regardless of whether the perpetrator was her partner, more so than for two men in a non-intimate partner situation. This suggests that male violence towards women was perceived to be the most serious, consistent with a large body of other research (Ahmed et al., 2013; Cormier & Woodworth, 2008; Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau et al., 2003; Seelau & Seelau, 2005). Cormier and Woodworth (2008) also found that police assess partner abuse situations differently depending on the gender of the victim and perpetrator, and in line with other research, male to female abuse was perceived as the most serious.

Overall when considering research which manipulates the gender and sexual orientation of a couple, it appears that it is the gender of the couple and the associated stereotypes rather than sexual orientation which police use to determine their response to an incident. For example, police preference to intervene when a female victim is involved suggests they view women as vulnerable; a common gender stereotype associated with being a woman. Additionally, viewing a male perpetrator as more likely to cause harm than a female perpetrator undermines the severity of SSPA in female relationships, and plays on stereotypes around men being strong and violent. Some of the research discussed illustrates that police's negative perceptions of SSPA may cause negative responses, such as attributing abuse as mutual, and arresting both parties. However, a key limitation of hypothetical scenario research is that how police say they feel and would respond to partner abuse may differ from how they would actually respond (Younglove et al., 2002), and there may not be a straightforward link between perceptions and behaviours (Hoyle, 1998). For this reason, it may

be more useful to assess police actual responses to partner abuse rather than using hypothetical scenarios.

2.6.6 Physical violence and coercive control

As described earlier, research suggests that victims are more likely to call the police when they have sustained physical injury (Henderson, 2003). When considering how police themselves perceive the role of physical injury, research findings suggest that police also believe physical violence is the most serious form of partner abuse (Monckton-Smith et al., 2014), evidenced by police being more likely to make an arrest when physical violence has occurred (Hoyle, 1998).

Though physical violence is clearly a serious crime and should be treated as such, research highlights two key ways in which the focus on physical violence is obscuring the picture of partner abuse as a whole. Firstly, this focus on violence and injuries leads to partner abuse being viewed as episodic; a series of discrete acts of violence (McCarry et al., 2008; Melton & Sillito, 2012), which can mean that police only respond to what they see at the time (Monckton-Smith et al., 2014), and also that police may therefore downgrade the risk of 'minor' incidents as they are not aware of the pattern of behaviour (Stark, 2006). If no physical violence has occurred when police respond to an incident, some research suggests they may record an incident as 'verbal only' (Monckton-Smith et al., 2014, p.16); a further illustration of the lack of seriousness associated with non-physical abuse. This leads to the second point; viewing partner abuse this way means that the ongoing, pervasive nature of the abuse is missed. As discussed in Chapter One, feminist academics place focus on the latter way of viewing partner abuse (McCarry et al., 2008), stressing the importance of taking into account the ongoing nature (Kelly & Westmarland, 2016; Melton & Sillito, 2012; Stark, 2007). Therefore, using physical injury to determine seriousness and risk is not appropriate (Stark, 2006). This focus on physical injury given by police is evident within literature despite evidence that emotional/psychological abuse is the most common form faced by SSPA victims (Donovan et al., 2006; Finneran & Stephenson, 2013; Irwin, 2008; Peterman & Dixon, 2003).

The introduction of the 'Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship' legislation (Home Office, 2015) into police forces allow police to criminalise perpetrators under this new legislation. An FOI request made in May 2017 to the Ministry of Justice found that in 2016 within UK police forces (excluding Scotland and Northern Ireland), 56 people were found guilty under the new legislation, with only 28 of these being given immediate custody and 19 being given a suspended sentence (Controlling and Coercive Convictions, 2017). These figures suggest that there

continues to be a lack of recognition of the seriousness of coercive and controlling behaviours, and the affect these behaviours have on victims.

2.6.7 Police role in further support for victims

In addition to how police officers respond to SSPA in silo, there is also a role for them in terms of specific SSPA provision provided within police forces, and ways in which police can foster communication with support agencies in order to assist victims further.

As discussed previously, research has suggested that some SSPA victims fear a negative response from the police if they report (Calton et al., 2015; Finneran & Stephenson, 2013; Irwin, 2008). In 2013, Stonewall made recommendations as to how police forces can improve their responses to lesbian, gay and bisexual victims of domestic abuse (Ashworth, 2013). Their recommendations (as relevant to this thesis) were:

- Raise awareness within the gay community that the police understand that domestic abuse occurs within same-sex relationships and is committed to addressing it.
- Target specific messages at male victims of domestic violence and distribute these materials in gay venues, at gay community events such as Pride and in other public places such as fitness clubs, pub toilets and on public transport.
- Include images of both same-sex couples and opposite-sex couples in campaigns to encourage reporting of domestic abuse and encourage other public services to display these resources, such as in GP surgeries, libraries and job centres.
- Record and publish data on incidents of same-sex abuse to send a clear signal that the force takes it seriously and is willing to be held to account on its performance.
- Identify national and local support services for gay victims of domestic abuse and make sure victims are referred to them. If none exist in the force area, work with other local partners to help set one up.

- Work with Police and Crime Commissioners to make sure that local support services are equipped to support gay victims of domestic abuse.
- Have police officers visit lesbian, gay and bisexual tenants' associations and patient groups in the force area, and equivalent user groups for other public services, to find out what more the force can do locally to support victims of domestic abuse.
- Include content (within training) about the experiences of gay victims and the additional barriers to reporting in generic training on domestic abuse.
- Train officers how to ask 'open' questions when interviewing victims, such as "Can you tell me who hit you?" rather than "Did your husband hit you?", and to avoid making assumptions about the gender of the perpetrator.

(Ashworth, 2013, pp 13-15)

At the time of writing, it is unclear whether police forces have implemented these recommendations. Though individual forces may be making efforts to improve their provision and liaison with other services, to my knowledge no national data exists to assess provision provided by forces overall. It is particularly important that alongside victims' experiences, this information is also known; a view supported by existing research suggesting that victim and professionals' perspectives need to be aligned to build a better response to domestic violence (Monckton Smith et al., 2014).

When considering existing research exploring some of the issues mentioned by Ashworth (2013), findings are primarily negative. For example, research has suggested that victims do not see themselves reflected in the definition of domestic abuse (Donovan & Hester, 2011), and reporting levels to the police are low (Donovan & Hester, 2011; Henderson, 2003). The lack of recognition and reporting may suggest that SSPA victims are either not reporting because they are not able to see themselves as victims, or because they do not believe the police can assist them. Either way, this suggests that police (and other agencies) may not be doing enough to help SSPA victims to name their experiences as partner abuse or giving them the confidence to seek support. In recent years, researchers have explored the effectiveness of anti-abuse campaigns in the UK (Gadd, Corr, Fox, & Butler, 2014; Stanley et al., 2016), with mixed findings as to their effectiveness. Though not specific to LGBT people, Stanley et al. (2016) found that the young people and experts in their research

suggested that preventative campaigns were focused towards heterosexual people. Though limited research exists with a focus on the effectiveness of help-seeking, their research suggests that where campaigns do try to address SSPA victims' needs, they need to be focused exclusively on this population rather than on abuse in heterosexual relationships (Stanley et al., 2016).

Many victims who seek support from the police report unsatisfactory experiences. Whether acting confused about a same-sex relationship (Alhusen et al., 2010), labelling abuse as a cat fight (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008), or actually making derogatory remarks (Alhusen et al., 2010), research suggests that police responses to SSPA are primarily negative. Findings such as these suggest that police are not equipped, whether through lack of training or personal prejudice, to respond sensitively to victims experiencing partner abuse from a same-sex partner. One criticism voiced by participants in Hester and colleagues' (2012) research was that LGBT people were critical of services where the staff were not skilled enough, and feared homophobia when contacting services. Taking this into account, officers who hold specialist knowledge about SSPA may be better equipped to provide a positive and informed response to victims.

One role which exists in UK police forces is that of LGBT Liaison Officers (LLOs); employed to represent an LGBT person's interests. Though not generally working solely within the field of domestic abuse, LLOs have specific training about the needs of LGBT people, and are generally viewed to possess more specialist knowledge about the intricacies they face in terms of oppression. However, existing research by Dwyer, Ball, Bond, Lee, and Crofts (2017) has suggested that LGBT people may be reluctant to access support provided by LLOs as a result of worries as to how they would be treated by police officers in general. One possible reason for this was suggested as due to the historically negative relationships between LGBT people and the police (Dwyer, Ball, Bond, Lee, and Crofts, In Press). This suggests that LGBT people may have an idea of how the police will treat them, and not see the LLOs as being different, but rather, just as 'police'. A piece of research carried out by Robinson and Berman (2010) in Australia found that only 4% of victims in their sample sought support from LLOs, despite 70% of LGBT communities being aware of them. The findings also suggested that victims had concerns with LLOs such as their lack of training, being assigned large geographic areas and high turnover of staff. The small pool of research exploring LLOs, however, is not conclusive as to whether SSPA victims find LLOs useful when accessing support.

Another area mentioned by Stonewall was to ensure police officers are aware of local and national support services where LGBT victims can be referred to. To date, there is very little research

exploring the police's relationships with external support agencies in the field of SSPA, and whether police are aware of existing specialist provision. Research has, however, considered victims' experiences of help-seeking from support agencies. It has been suggested by some researchers that few services addressing SSPA exist due to lack of demand (Renzetti, 1996), however, Alhusen et al. (2010) claim that many people in abusive same-sex relationships will not contact services because they do not provide tailored services. Consequently, victims and specialist services may be stuck in a 'catch-22' situation.

When victims do access services, some research has suggested that many of these services use a heteronormative framework to underlie their practice (Basow & Thompson, 2012; Irwin, 2008). Hassounah and Glass (2008) highlighted that due to many women in same-sex relationships believing that women are non-violent, in addition to difficulties in recognising their experiences as domestic violence, they struggled to find domestic violence services relevant to their needs. If a woman does decide to seek support from a service, she may also be faced with service providers who minimise claims of abuse due to working from their own assumptions about lesbian relationships, or be faced with a sub-section of a non-specialist organisation who are not fully integrated, which can further silence victims (Giorgio, 2002).

Chan (2005) also cautioned how gay men may be even more silenced than lesbian women in relation to domestic violence. This may be due to societal beliefs that men cannot be victims and therefore do not need help (Kirkland, 2004), ideas that violence between men is normal (Brown, 2008), or male victims' own perceptions that if they fight back they are responsible for the abuse too and do not deserve help (Letellier et al., 1994). Hence, accessing services which fully meet their needs can prove difficult for those in same-sex relationships, and police may be in a position to assist by providing knowledge of suitable services to victims.

Finally, Stonewall recommended that police visit LGBT groups to gather their opinions on how they can improve their responses, and to target campaigns (particularly towards gay men) in appropriate places. Doing so may help to close the gap of trust (Donovan & Hester, 2011), and enable victims to view police as able to support them rather than as there to police them. Additionally, targeted campaigns may help women to be able to label their experiences as abuse (Patzel, 2006), which I would also argue is applicable to men in same-sex relationships. To date, research has not explored the extent to which police liaise with LGBT groups and the effect this has on their relationships with SSPA victims. However, research suggesting that victims may view the police as overly masculine,

hostile, and LGBT victims' last source of support with an abusive relationship (Donovan et al., 2006; Guadalupe-Diaz & Jasinski, 2016; Stephens and Sinden, 2000) indicates that there is still work to be done to engage LGBT victims.

2.7 Summary of chapter

This chapter has provided an overview of literature pertaining to the nature and extent of SSPA, victims' reporting practices, how the police perceive and respond to SSPA and specialist provision which exists for victims.

Though difficult to determine the prevalence of SSPA due to lack of available national statistics, problems with ascertaining representative samples of participants, methodological differences between studies, and differing definitions of SSPA and LGBT people, SSPA is recognised by most researchers in the field as an area worthy of further attention. Furthermore, though we know that LGBT people have a fraught historical relationship with the police, and may be reluctant to seek their support (Dwyer et al., in press), we do not currently have access to a national picture outlining the number of victims who do seek police support, and the ways the police respond to their cases.

Research exploring barriers faced by SSPA victims when deciding to report have also been explored. There is a small pool of research exploring reasons why victims may or may not choose to report, with many of the reasons specific to being in a same-sex relationship, such as fear of outing, not fitting into the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011), and fear of receiving a homophobic response.

When considering research about police perceptions and responses, though hypothetical scenario 'vignette' research has given us an insight into how police say they would respond to particular situations, we know little from the point of view of police officers about how they actually respond, based on their real-life experience. 'Canteen culture' research suggests that the police are a highly masculine organisation who may minimise the seriousness of partner abuse. However, some research has suggested that police attitudes and behaviour do not necessarily relate, and therefore it is important that real experiences are examined to assess actual police responses rather than relying solely on perceptions.

Finally, research exploring specific provision within police forces such as employing LLOs or building rapport with LGBT people was considered. Additionally, an exploration of the police's relationship with other support organisations was examined. There exists a very small pool of research in this area with a large number of gaps. To date, research relating to the provision provided to SSPA victims by police forces in England and Wales has not been considered. Similarly, an exploration of police forces' knowledge of and relationships with other support organisations is scarce within the literature. This thesis will begin to address these gaps.

Chapter 3: Methodology, methods and ethics

3.1 Introduction

Within this chapter I discuss the main areas involved in the process and construction of the research. The chapter begins with a reminder of the aims and objectives underpinning the research. I then engage in a discussion of the ontological, epistemological and feminist methodological approaches adopted for the research, with attention to using feminist methodology when working with victims in same-sex relationships. Next, I explore the stages of empirical data collection. Within these stages, I reflect upon using different types of methods for the research, and how a mixed methods approach was most suitable. Within this section I consider sampling and recruitment, methodological and ethical considerations, and conclude with reflections on conducting interviews with the different groups of participants.

3.2 Aims and objectives

Before moving on, it is useful to recap the aims and objectives of this research. The research considered four overarching aims:

1. To consider the nature and extent of police recorded SSPA crime in England and Wales.
2. To explore the help-seeking decisions victims face when deciding whether to call the police about SSPA.
3. To examine how police perceive SSPA and what responses they provide to victims.
4. To consider the extent to which police are aware of, and provide, specialist provision for victims experiencing SSPA.

From these research aims, six specific research objectives were developed:

1. To use FOI requests to consider the extent of SSPA crime as recorded by the police over a 1 year period within England and Wales.
2. To use FOI requests to consider the nature of SSPA crime as recorded by the police over a 1 year period within England and Wales, including gender of victims and perpetrators, types of violence and abuse used, outcomes of cases, and risk levels assigned by police.
3. To explore police, professionals' and victims' views on victims' help-seeking decisions.
4. To explore police, professionals' and victims' views on police perceptions of and responses to SSPA.
5. To explore whether specialist support exists within police forces to assist victims of SSPA.
6. To explore police knowledge of, and liaison with, specialist agencies.

3.3 Methodological Approach

The overall aim of the research is to explore police responses to same-sex partner abuse. To begin, it was necessary for me to consider my theoretical perspective and how this related to my research, beginning with a discussion of ontology, epistemology, and finally, methodology.

A person's ontology describes whether they believe that reality exists independently from human practices and conceptions, or believe that they cannot be separated (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and is the starting point for research. Ontological assumptions vary along a continuum, with realism, critical realism and relativism being the primary three. Realism, broadly speaking, is 'the belief that there is a world existing independently of our knowledge of it' (Sayer, 2000, p.2), and that methods can be applied to the social world to investigate the truth of what is out there (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In contrast, relativism assumes that there are multiple realities that change across culture, context and time, and as these realities are constructed, there is no one truth, only the knowledge that is generated in a specific moment (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Between these two extremes is critical realism, 'the philosophy that can be summed up as accepting that there is a 'reality' out there but we can at best view it through an infinite regress of windows' (Howitt & Cramer, 2014, p.344). The approach taken in this research was a relativist perspective; the belief that each individual constructs his or her own reality, meaning there can be multiple interpretations of what this is. I assumed that cultural and societal factors would affect these 'realities', as well as the context and time-period in which same-sex partner abuse was occurring/being responded to; aligning with the belief that these factors all influence each other. I therefore made sense of what individuals were saying in the context that they were saying it (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001). The research primarily looked in-depth at the lived experiences of the individuals who took part in the research, whilst being aware that these views may change over time and context (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and I was aware that any knowledge gained via this research reflected my perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Once my ontological position was defined, epistemology and methodology followed logically. Epistemology, '... a framework or theory for specifying the constitution and generation of knowledge about the social world' (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p.188) follows ontology in that it allows researchers to then propose what it is possible to know. Epistemological positions align with ontological assumptions. Positivism, aligning with realism, assumes that hard truths can be found by using scientific methods and controlling the environment for extraneous variables (Braun & Clarke, 2013). At the opposite end of the spectrum lies the position adopted for this research, constructionism; an epistemological stance arguing that rather than being objective, knowledge is produced as a result of the social world we live in: a 'non foundational view of knowledge' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.30). Adopting a constructivist stance allowed multiple interpretations of phenomena to be valued equally, and recognised that there was no one truth.

3.3.1 Feminist methodology and values

My ontological and epistemological assumptions linked in with my methodological approach. Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) state that 'methodology comprises rules that specify how social investigation should be approached' (p.11). In order to study and give value to the subjective, individual experiences of research participants, my research is informed by a feminist approach, as outlined in Chapter One.

Throughout the research process, I endeavoured to use feminist values to apply to research methods. The adopted relativist approach allowed primarily qualitative information to materialise with focus on the context, feelings and experiences of individuals taking part in the research and not simply hard facts. Hepburn (2000) succinctly describes this link:

What the feminist researcher 'sees' from a relativist perspective is not the way the world is, but rather its arguable 'up-for-grabs-ness' (p.102)

Feminist scholarship focuses on the study of women living in a sexist and patriarchal society, and the social conditions surrounding them (Stanley & Wise, 1983). It is important to note that feminism is not a research method, but a perspective, and feminist research is guided by this perspective (Reinharz, 1992). There is not just one feminist perspective (Westmarland, 2001) and much debate exists between feminists who have different viewpoints and opinions (Clarke, Ellis, Peel, & Riggs, 2010). Regardless of differences in branches of feminism, what all feminists do have in common is 'their strong commitment to changing the status of women in modern societies' (Sarantakos, 2013, p.66), believing that research is dominated by men at the expense of women and that women view their lives differently to men due to their social positioning in society (Sarantakos, 2013).

3.3.1.1 Feminist research with men in same-sex relationships

Traditionally, one of the perspectives was that feminist research should be carried out by women, with women and for the benefit of women, where possible (Reinharz, 1992). With a slightly different view, Corsianos (2009) purports that feminist research does not have to be on topics about women, but instead about recognising the need for equality and social justice, whilst still identifying the impact of gender. Within the current research, there are two groups of people who it is hoped will benefit directly from the research: women in abusive same-sex relationships (both as being a

woman and a sexual minority), and men in abusive same-sex relationships (as a sexual minority). Therefore, honouring women's voices was a priority of the research, but an equal priority was honouring the voices of men who suffer abuse from men. As women and men in same-sex abusive relationships are a minority group in a heteronormative society, it may be that research findings pertaining from interviews with men and women within this research also benefit others in same-sex relationships via being a member of a sexual minority group. Therefore, this research aims to benefit all those in same-sex relationships, regardless of gender.

Doing feminist research with men, and though less widely discussed, gay men, is an issue of contention for some. Douglas-Bowers (2013) speaks from the viewpoint of an American male and states that even though gay men may be oppressed due to their sexual orientation, they still benefit from being male in a society that values masculinity. He also makes specific reference here to race, and the benefits of being a white male. Douglas-Bowers continues by stating that even the gay rights movement was generally focused towards men (and in opposition to feminism) meaning gay men had more in common with heterosexual men than they may have first believed. However, as discussed within Chapter One, the idea that gay men violate ideas of hegemonic masculinity may mean that they are side-lined within constructions of masculinity, and hence do not share experiences of being a man with heterosexual men in the same way.

It has been suggested that when using a feminist framework to study partner abuse in male-male relationships it can be difficult to situate them within this framework due to the heteronormative nature of feminism (Stiles-Shields & Carroll, 2014), in contrast to lesbians who more easily fit into the feminist paradigm due to their gender (though still with problems). This illustrates the importance of taking gender into consideration during the current research by considering differences between men and women, but at the same time being aware of their sexual minority status and the role this plays. Intersectionality theory has also more recently expanded from its initial focus on women to also explore experiences of men occupying subordinated positions such as being gay or from an ethnic minority background and how these oppressions intersect to affect experiences (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), which is useful for the current research.

In addition to considering how gay men fit into the feminist framework, thought was also given to being a female researcher conducting research with men, and how this aligns with a feminist approach. Gatrell (2006) felt she made a difficult decision when deciding to interview men as well as women as part of her research, feeling that it did not align with her political views and the woman-

centred aims of her research. In addition, she had heard horror stories about a female researcher being sexually assaulted by a man during fieldwork, and men displaying anger and aggression during interviews. However, after carrying out her interviews she stated that despite detailing her feminist aims to the men in her research, she had no problems when interviewing them and found that they accommodated her well, for example, by leaving office doors ajar to make her feel more comfortable whilst they were in their meetings. Stanley and Wise (1993) also expressed that men can be spoken to as part of feminist research especially when taking account of the role they play in women's oppression. For this research, it was decided that speaking with gay men did not deter from the feminist aims of the research, but instead would provide a different perspective as to the oppression of gay men due to both their gender and sexual orientation.

3.4 Mixed method methodology

To address the research aims and objectives, a mixed qualitative/quantitative framework was used. Traditionally, due to how they have been situated historically, qualitative methods have been particularly associated with feminist approaches (Hester, Donovan & Fahmy, 2010), with quantitative methods potentially viewed as sexist and exploitative, which 'at best misunderstood women and at worse misrepresented them' (see Letherby, 2004, p.177). In the 1970s and 1980s, it was thought that feminist epistemologies could lead to the development of feminist methods (Pease, 2013). By the late 1980s, however, this view was challenged and it was generally accepted amongst feminists that feminist methods and methodologies were not in existence, but rather that feminists were simply carrying out good quality research (Doucet, Mauthner, & Peck, 2006). As some researchers realised that some questions could not be answered purely by qualitative methods, they struggled with the thought of incorporating quantitative methods, and on occasion were disowned by feminist colleagues (Finch, 2004). As Stanley and Wise (1983) stated, it was the confusion between methods and epistemology which led to the uncertainty with what qualifies as feminist research. More recently, researchers are combining qualitative and quantitative methods within social research (Ritchie & Ormston, 2014), and it is generally accepted that researchers should set aside views on qualitative versus quantitative research and use the most appropriate method for the specific avenue being researched (Letherby, 2004a; Oakley, 2000; Westmarland, 2001) in a non-sexist and appropriate way (Letherby, 2004a; Merrill, 1996; Oakley, 2000).

Jennifer Mason (2006) outlines six strategies for carrying out mixed methods research: to gain background knowledge or a close up of a bigger picture; to ask/answer separate questions; to ask

questions about connecting parts of a whole; to triangulate; to ask distinctive but intersecting questions, or mixing methods opportunistically. This thesis primarily used mixed methods for the purpose of answering different questions about the same topic, and thus views the value of both qualitative and quantitative methods as equal (Ritchie & Ormston, 2014); quantitative methods in order to gain a greater understanding of the nature and extent of SSPA, and qualitative methods to examine experiences in more detail and depth. However, though the methods were used to answer different questions, it was important that the research did not become fragmented and the methods detached. For this reason, some of the information gained from the quantitative data collection was then used later to inform some of the qualitative interview questions. It was recognised, however, that due to the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the research (and the way these differ from those underpinning traditional quantitative research) that using mixed methods within this research did not provide a more certain picture of police responses to SSPA, but rather a fuller picture, taking into account multiple perspectives gained via use of the different methods (Ritchie & Ormston, 2014).

A mixed methods approach was most suitable for this thesis to address the research aims due to the focus being on exploring both police recorded statistics and people's experiences. Quantitative methods were used to first examine the nature and extent of police recorded SSPA crimes, and then qualitative methods were adopted to examine in-depth experiences of victims who had reported SSPA to the police, police experiences of responding, and professionals' views of police responses to victims. FOI requests were the form of quantitative data used for this research, and have been suggested not to be tied to any ontological or epistemological assumptions (Savage & Hyde, 2014). As a result, FOI requests were easily able to be used alongside qualitative methods using a feminist approach.

3.5 Collecting and analysing quantitative data

Within this research, quantitative data was collected using FOI requests by contacting 43 police forces in England and Wales to ask about reported cases of SSPA over a one year period. A one year period was chosen to allow comparison with data collected as part of the CSEW (data collected yearly), and because a one-year period was viewed as a representative time frame, as opposed to collecting data on specific months which may fall over periods where crime is more likely to occur, for example, Christmas and New Year. Additionally, when considering possible difficulties with collecting FOI data from police forces (discussed later in this section) I was keen to ensure that my

requests would not be rejected due to asking for too much information which could not be provided within FOI timescales. This section of the research relates to research aim 1: To consider the nature and extent of police recorded SSPA crime in England and Wales.

3.5.1 Using police crime data in academic research

Within the UK, it is difficult to monitor crimes committed towards LGBT people. Alongside other factors, people's lack of willingness to disclose their sexual orientation because of fear of prejudice means that data is variable, and, as such, trends are difficult to analyse (Knight & Wilson, 2016). In addition, UK police force technology systems vary on a local level, meaning there can be independent systems for 999 calls, incident recording, crime recording and details of perpetrators. Information from these systems may not be able to be easily linked, and hence difficulties and inconsistencies may occur when police attempt to retrieve specific data (Brimicombe, 2016a).

Due to individual police systems being used, there is no detailed central recording system for police to record incidences of partner abuse. A Police National Database (PND) exists in which all forces are required to send operational policing and intelligence information to so that it can be collated nationally. However, although this system holds some information about offences, the information is not in substantial detail, and there would be a requirement to approach an individual force to ask for detail about specific cases. Due to the unsuitability of using the PND to collect information for this research, each police force was approached individually to ask about data held on their system relating to SSPA. As mentioned by Brimicombe (2016a), 'the granularity of police-recorded data is the highest available' (p.72), suggesting that using police recorded data will give in-depth information. Though each force records data on different systems, Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) set out national standards for recording data to ensure consistency and accuracy, and it should therefore be possible to gain credible data from forces. In addition, the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) - which was proposed following a critical review of how some forces in the UK recorded data (HMIC, 2014b; 2016) - mirrors the HOCR aim of providing consistent recording between forces.

In relation to recording domestic abuse on police systems, 'domestic abuse' does not exist as a statutory offence in England and Wales (Brimicombe, 2016b). Instead, incidents are recorded and crimes are charged in relation to notifiable offences, for example coercive and controlling behaviour, assault with injury or stalking and harassment. Flagging an incident as being linked to domestic

abuse on the system relies on officers identifying it as being so, and marking a box on the system to identify it this way. For this reason, it can be seen how there may be inconsistencies in police recording, and what is classed as domestic abuse may vary depending on the interpretation of the officer who records the incident (Seelau et al., 2003).

When a victim reports domestic abuse to the police, the police's first priority is to ensure the safety of the victim, by taking positive action (College of Policing, 2017). This may involve taking action towards a perpetrator such as a caution or arrest, finding temporary accommodation for the victim, and ensuring any children are safe. The police complete the DASH risk assessment (or their own in-force risk assessment), as outlined in section 2.4, to aid decision making as to the next steps for the victim.

Once police have collated evidence on a case, the final decision as to whether a perpetrator is prosecuted for an offence lies with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). For a prosecution to take place, an evidential stage and a public interest stage of a test must be considered. For the evidential stage to be passed, there must be enough evidence collected to satisfy the CPS that the defendant has carried out the offences; if there is not enough evidence at this stage, the case will not progress. If there is deemed to be enough evidence, the CPS then decides whether it is in the public interest to take the case further and prosecute the defendant. Aspects which effect the CPS decision of whether it is in the public interest to prosecute include: whether children are involved, the seriousness of the offence and whether it is a first offence (Crown Prosecution Service, 2011).

Within this thesis, I was interested in looking at the number of SSPA cases reported to the police over a year-long period, between the dates of 01 Aug 2014 to 31 July 2015. Due to difficulties as discussed in Chapter Two around lack of available statistics relating to SSPA, it was deemed that the most useful way to gather the information needed for this thesis would be to contact police forces through the Freedom of Information Act (2000), which allows any member of the public to request information from public authorities, such as the NHS, state schools, and police forces. Asking police forces for data directly meant that up-to-date data could be collected relating to every recorded incident involving same-sex partners (where forces were able to provide it).

Within the UK, there are two Acts that members of the public can apply to for information; the Freedom of Information Act (2000) which covers authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the Freedom of Information Act (2002) for authorities in Scotland (Information Commissioners

Office, 2016a). If a person requires information from a public authority, they can apply under these Acts, and the organisation is required by law to provide a response within twenty working days. There are, however, limits to the information that organisations are required to provide, which fall under a number of exemptions that exist as part of the Acts. If the information asked for does not fall under one of these exemptions, however, the organisation is required to provide it in full to the requester.

There are twenty-three exemptions under the Act which mean that an organisation can refuse a request. These are split into absolute and non-absolute. Absolute exemptions mean that the organisation is not required to carry out a public interest test and can outright refuse a request. Eight exemptions (section 40 has two parts) fall into this category, and can be applied when information relating to the following is asked for²:

- Section 21 – information already reasonably accessible
- Section 23 – security bodies
- Section 32 – court records
- Section 34 – parliamentary privilege
- Section 36 – prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs
- Section 40(1) – personal information of the requester
- Section 40(2) – data protection
- Section 41 – confidentiality
- Section 44 – prohibitions on disclosure

(Information Commissioners Office, 2016(b))

Non-absolute exemptions mean that a public interest test must be carried out, and if it is deemed not in the public interest to reveal the information, the request will be refused (Savage & Hyde, 2014). If the public interest test is applied and the organisation then refuses to provide the information to the applicant, they must provide reasons why, and give details of the Information Commissioner who the member of public can complain to if they are unhappy with the decision.

3.5.1.1 Using Freedom of Information requests as part of a mixed methods approach

² Section 37 – communications with the royal family and the granting of honours is absolute should somebody enter into conversation with the heir to the throne, the monarch or second in line to the throne

Using FOI requests for data collection is an overlooked method by many researchers, including criminologists (Walby & Larsen, 2012). Though FOI requests have been used to an extent by some academic researchers, for example, within healthcare (Fowler, Agha, Camm & Littlejohns, 2013); for criminological research they have scarcely been used, with notable recent exceptions (Bows, 2017; Westmarland, Johnson & McGlynn, 2017) as rather than utilising them, some researchers may assume that they are for journalists and hence do not benefit from what FOI disclosures can offer. For this thesis, the view of Savage and Hyde (2014) was taken: 'Data gathered using FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] can have great academic value provided that the researcher has an appreciation of the pros and cons of this method' (p.308).

In 2012, Bourke, Worthy and Hazell created a guide to assist academic researchers in making FOI requests, which outlined their usefulness, how to go about requesting data, and when not to use requests. This guide was used within the current research alongside guidance from Savage and Hyde (2014), particularly in terms of suggestions for making timely requests and preparing for delays, in addition to sending 'round robins' (p.9), that is, sending the same request to multiple organisations. Similarly, Savage and Hyde's (2014) guidance on using FOI requests as part of mixed methods was taken into account, as they outlined, similarly to the current thesis' methods, how alongside FOI requests they also carried out semi-structured interviews and distributed questionnaires. Walby and Larsen (2012) also discussed using FOI requests alongside qualitative methods, in their case, sequentially as part of a qualitative interviewing process, using information gathered as part of FOI requests to inform prompts for interviews. They asserted that by using FOI data as part of interview questions, data can be triangulated. Within the current thesis, data from multiple methods was used in a similar way to build a bigger picture of the phenomenon. As such, some of the findings from the FOI requests were used to develop questions for police and professionals during the interview stage of the research. Collecting data in this way has been termed as 'smart mixed methods' (Lather, 2010, p.65, as cited in Walby and Larsen, 2012, p.32).

3.5.2 Working with and analysing Freedom of Information Requests

As suggested within guidelines set out by Bourke, Worthy and Hazell (2012), and as utilised within recent research (Bows, 2017), before sending the FOI requests out to police forces, I carried out a pilot. This consisted of two stages. First, in order to assist with question wording and ensure that the requests were presented in a way that would make sense to police forces, I arranged a meeting with an information compliance officer and a data analyst at a local police force. The information

compliance officer is responsible for receiving requests and making a decision as to whether they will be complied with in accordance with the exemptions described earlier. If they decide they can be complied with, they then forward the request on to the relevant department; in the case of this research, data analysts. The role of the analyst is to check the appropriate systems and retrieve the data asked for, and then send it back to the information compliance officer who will send it to the requester. Although police forces all record data differently as previously discussed, it was deemed that it would still be useful to have early stage input from an information compliance officer and data analyst in relation to question wording, layout and content. This meeting was beneficial, with suggestions made with regards to what the systems could and could not access, in addition to advising on timescales for retrieving the data asked for.

The second stage of the pilot involved sending out the FOI request to three forces (including the one where I had attended the meeting) to assess whether the questions were able to be answered. The forces for the pilot were selected at random. When receiving information back, one force provided the information in full, and one provided partial information due to the exemption of cost, set out in section 12(2). The third force, which was the force where the meeting was attended, also did not provide the information in full, stating that the way that their systems worked meant that data could not be filtered usefully. It was decided following the pilot that due to the variation in what forces could offer, I would continue to send out the FOI requests in their current form, whilst being aware that some police forces may not be able to provide this information due to system variability.

The requests were sent to 43 forces via excel spreadsheet and involved two pages; the first asked for quantitative information held within police systems relating to SSPA cases (Appendix I) and the second page for qualitative information about support provided by police forces (Appendix II). The Police Service of Northern Ireland was excluded from the research as a conversation with them revealed that as same-sex marriage is illegal in Northern Ireland, police recording of SSPA incidents was unlikely to be accurate. Scotland was also excluded from the analysis, as police forces there have recently integrated so that one force now covers the whole country. Therefore, due to the large size of the newly integrated force, Scotland could not provide the specific level of data needed.

To address research aim 1 (to consider the nature and extent of police recorded SSPA crime in England and Wales), 43 forces were asked to provide information about incidences of same-sex domestic abuse over a one year period from 1st August 2014-31st July 2015. The data gathered via the process of FOI requests was primarily quantitative, and the quality varied widely. Overall, just

under half (19/43, 44%) of forces provided most or all of the quantitative data asked for, either in the form of individual case data (information on each person whose data fit the criteria), or collated case data (e.g. 21 individual cases had an outcome of 'Caution'). A large number of forces (23/43, 53%) initially rejected the request on the basis on exceeding time/cost (Section 12), and so the requests had to be refined as to only providing the qualitative information asked for. Following the refinements, 39/43 (91%) of forces responded with the qualitative information.

When considering replies within the mandatory timeframe of twenty working days, 28/43 (65%) forces replied within this time limit. Nine forces replied between twenty-one and thirty days after the original request was made, and the remaining six replied any time after thirty-one days, with one force replying after ten months. For forces who did not reply within the mandatory timeframe, a reminder e-mail was sent to ask forces to specify when they envisioned the requested data being made available.

Not all of the data sent by forces was in full (as per the request) and able to be used. Some forces could only provide part of what was asked for due to not being able to use their systems to filter the specific information requested. For example, one of the questions asked was about the 'main type of abuse'. Some forces responded and said that they could not answer this because they did not have a filter which specified abuse type, and to provide the information would mean reading through each case file which would exceed the time/cost set out in Section 12 of the FOI Act. Others had varying definitions of what it means to be a 'repeat' victim (Brimicombe, 2016b), in addition to some forces not recording whether victims were repeat (HMIC, 2014a). For these reasons, some forces were able to answer this question in terms of how their force defined 'repeat', whereas others could not because they did not have a filter, and to find out would have required searching for individual names within the systems, which again would have led to a rejection based on Section 12 of the FOI Act. For these reasons, the quality of data provided varied between forces, with some variables being omitted when police systems did not allow it to be easily searched for.

3.5.2.1 Crimed versus non-crimed data

One key aspect that was considered when receiving FOI responses was the nature of the data provided. Of the nineteen forces providing most or all of the quantitative data asked for, sixteen provided information on both crimed and non-crimed incidents, two provided information on crimed only incidents and one force gave information for non-crimed incidents. Crimed incidents were those where a crime had been committed by a perpetrator (for example, they had physically

assaulted their partner), and the police had recorded the incident as a crime on their system. Non-crimes incidents were those where the police made a decision that a crime had not taken place (for example, the incident was classed as an argument between two people), and hence it was recorded as a non-crime.

A decision was made only to consider crimes data within the thesis as most forces providing data had provided this type. By only considering crimes data, data from one force was excluded as they could only provide information on non-crimes incidents, leaving a total of eighteen forces' data.

3.5.2.2 Individual level versus collated data

Crimes data was provided by forces on either an individual case level (as asked for in the FOI request), or collated. Individual level data was data where forces provided information on each incident separately, whereas collated data considered a number of cases together, and it was not possible to determine details about a specific incident. The most common reason that forces provided data on a collated level was due to Section 30(1)(a)(b) which relates to 'Investigations and Proceedings Conducted by Public Authorities'. This meant that the force considered the public interest test when applying the exemption. Two forces that provided collated data used this exemption, stating that to provide individual level data may mean that individuals could recognise themselves, and hence undermine their trust in the police force. Others stated that within the time frame set out by the FOI Act, collated data was all that they were able to provide. The problem when considering using collated data was that there was no way to follow the trajectory of an individual case and see what the crime, outcome and risk levels were, meaning it could not be analysed. Unfortunately, all collated data was therefore excluded from analysis (aside from in Chapter 4.3), due to being unable to compare it with individual level data. This meant that a total of six forces' data were excluded from analysis, leaving a usable quantitative data set of twelve forces that provided crimes, individual level data. Within this thesis, all discussion relating to quantitative police data from here on will relate to data received from these twelve forces³, consisting of 916 individual cases of SSPA.

3.5.2.3 Freedom of Information data analysis

³ With the exception of Chapter 4.3, where the excluded collated data is also used to provide a wider picture of police recorded crime.

Within the 916 cases, four variables were analysed relating to the cases: crime type, outcome, risk level, and whether the victim was classed as repeat. Data was assigned to nominal (e.g. crime type) measures, and entered into SPSS. Variables that made up less than 1% of total cases were combined and placed into an 'other' category, to reduce margins of error in SPSS. For example, when looking at crime types, kidnapping, possession of weapon and false imprisonment each made up less than 1%, and were combined within the 'other category'. Any variable that made up more than 1% was given its own discrete category.

All categories were entered into SPSS, and descriptive statistics, cross tabulations and independent samples tests were used as appropriate to consider relationships between variables.

3.5.2.4 Methodological considerations with FOI data collection

As is evident from the above discussion, gaining information from police forces via FOI requests is not a straightforward process. When requesting information from the forces about SSPA, identical requests were sent out to each police force. However, when responses were being received, it was clear that not all forces could provide the information asked for. Within England and Wales, all police forces use different systems to record their data, and search for and retrieve information in different ways. For forces who refused the request to provide statistical data, the primary reason was that it would take too much time, and cost too much to retrieve the data. When enquiring further about this, it was apparent that many forces did not record sexual orientation of victims and perpetrators, or similarly, some did not record whether a domestic incident involved partners/ex partners, or family members. For this reason, forces could not conduct a quick search for data involving SSPA only, as it would have also brought up cases which were not relevant to this research (e.g. father and son domestic incident), which would have taken time to filter through. This is an interesting point, as it means that the information relating to SSPA cases may be held by forces, but they are unable to access it swiftly and accurately. As a result of these difficulties, only twelve forces were able to provide the information asked for.

A further consideration is that although organisations are required to respond within twenty working days, if they reply with a query to the requester, the twenty working days begins again from when the requester responds. This means that if there are many queries, it can take a long time to receive the information asked for. One force during the process of this research did not reply until ten months later, despite reminder e-mails being sent, stating that they had received 'an extremely

high number of requests'. This reiterates Bourke, Worthy and Hazell's (2012) notion of making timely requests, as the wait for information may be lengthy, or in some cases (as with this force) may not be provided at all.

A final consideration as with all police data is that the data provided as part of the FOI request is only a reflection of what is recorded by the police. In addition to only representing a small proportion of assumed prevalence of SSPA, the data is open to inaccuracies. A particular consideration when looking at data relating to SSPA is that some incidents may not have been recorded as a 'domestic', but instead as altercations between friends/acquaintances, and consequently, this data would not have been provided as part of the requests. This is likely if the people involved in the incident did not reveal they were in a relationship and hence the police were not aware of this when logging the incident. Therefore, whether these incidents were flagged with a domestic marker is subjective, and so some cases may have been missed. In addition, Brimicombe (2016a) mentions that when personal and sensitive data is being recorded by police in highly tense situations, this can also give rise to recording inaccuracies. This could be due to victims giving inaccurate information, or inaccurate police recording. For these reasons, police recorded data should be interpreted with caution.

Despite the potential methodological issues with using FOI requests, using this approach provides a current, assumed (mostly) accurate picture of police recorded SSPA incidents between specific dates. Due to the lack of national available data pertaining to police reported SSPA, FOI requests were viewed as the most accurate and up-to-date way to collect this data. In addition, collection of data via this method allows data previously held by large institutions and hitherto inaccessible to become available to the public (Savage & Hyde, 2014), increasing its visibility.

3.6 Collecting qualitative data

The next stages of data collection involved qualitative interviews with police, victims and professionals, and related to research aims 2, 3 and 4, considering experiences of victim help-seeking behaviours; police perceptions of and responses to same-sex partner abuse; and an exploration of specialist provision provided by police forces to support victims of SSPA. For these stages, a total of thirty-five interviews were carried out: twelve with professionals from eleven different support organisations, nineteen with police from four forces (of which fifteen were first responders and four were those who had other roles), and four people who had experienced SSPA

and a police response. Qualitative data collected from FOI requests relating to specialist provision was also explored.

3.6.1. Sampling and recruitment

The participants in the qualitative research consisted of three groups: victims (four), police (nineteen), and professionals from support organisations (twelve). The recruitment and sampling of these are discussed separately below.

3.6.1.1 Professionals

Professionals from support agencies were eligible to participate in the research if they had worked with those experiencing SSPA in arenas such as counselling, advocacy or other support services. They were recruited in a number of ways. In order to identify organisations to approach, I began by approaching personal contacts that work in the field of domestic and/or sexual abuse, and asked if they would be willing to promote the research via word of mouth or by circulating my flyer (Appendix III) to their contacts. Following this, I carried out a manual search of key LGBT organisations within the UK using the internet, starting with those locally, and then branching out nationally. In addition, I contacted all 46 Rape Crisis Centres across the UK (excluding Scotland) via e-mail to explain the research. Similarly, I used a list of fifty-seven organisations who took part in 'The Coral Project' (Donovan et al., 2014) to identify any relevant organisations. The list of professionals who participated in 'The Coral Project' was deemed useful as the research explored abusive behaviour in LGBT relationships, and so using this list of organisations aimed to identify professionals who work in the field.

A further method used was to promote the research via Twitter, and asking others to share the research with their networks, as well as including the flyer in the conference pack for the 2016 'North East Sexual Violence Conference' which I organised around the topic of same-sex sexual and domestic violence.

Within this research, the method which reaped the highest number of professionals was by e-mailing organisations individually explaining the purpose and nature of the research, and asking if anyone within the organisation would be interested in taking part (Appendix IV). Two further participants were recruited via personal contacts, and two via networking at a conference and sharing the research details. One participant was recruited via snowball sampling (Braun & Clarke,

2013); having been suggested by another participant. This method worked as professionals were likely to know others who worked in the area of supporting SSPA victims, and so were able to suggest organisations and practitioners who had not come to my attention previously. I utilised this method in that when participants had taken part in the research, they were asked if they would be willing to promote the research to their networks.

3.6.1.2 Victims

Interviews were carried out with four victims who self-defined as having experienced SSPA, and experienced police response as a result. For victims to be eligible to take part in the research, they were required to meet the following criteria:

- had been in a relationship with a partner of the same sex AND
- experienced violence or abuse from that partner AND
- experienced police response in relation to the violence or abuse AND
- were no longer in the relationship (Barnes, 2013).

Participants were eligible to take part in the research regardless of how they defined their gender identity or sexual orientation so long as they fulfilled the above criteria. Focusing on Barnes' (2013) point above, this criterion was implemented to attempt to safeguard victims from potential harm. For example, if they were still in an abusive relationship and participated in the research, they may be at risk of harm from the perpetrator if they found out. However, it was also not assumed that people who were no longer in an abusive relationship may not continue to be at risk, illustrated by research considering post-separation abuse (Sullivan & Cain, 2004).

Researchers have distinguished between how a person identifies versus the behaviours they partake in; in this case, someone may engage in same-sex sexual behaviours and relationships but not identify as LGBT (Baker et al., 2013; Meyer & Wilson, 2009). In addition, the authors state how identity can change over time, and hence how a person identified at the time of an abusive relationship may be different than their current identity. Mason et al. (2014) argue that it is important that how sexual orientation is defined is clearly set out by researchers to aid comparison across studies, and hence I ensured that the research correspondence stated that any person who had experienced SSPA could take part regardless of how they defined their sexual orientation (or gender identity).

For victims, recruitment was carried out in a similar way as for professionals; primarily via e-mail to domestic abuse and LGBT organisations, and by social media to distribute the flyer. Using social media to promote research has emerged over the past decade as a common way for researchers to recruit participants, and has been used by those researching violence and abuse in LGBT populations (Barnes, 2013; Donovan et al., 2014). However, it has been argued that sampling in particular ways such as by using organisation's mailing lists or sampling via Facebook may recruit a biased sample who are already using communication methods such as these, and possibly receiving external support (Langenderfer-Magruder, Whitfield, Walls, Kattari, & Ramos, 2016). Baker et al. (2013) indicate that due to problems with sampling LGBT populations overall, achieving a representative sample is not possible and hence all data of this kind can offer only an estimate of a phenomenon.

Initially, it was decided that I would recruit approximately ten victims to take part. However, as research discussed earlier in this thesis suggests, SSPA is hugely unreported to the police. As a result, recruiting participants who had reported SSPA to the police and were willing to speak about it was a challenge. I was aware during recruitment and by speaking to professionals that victims who had reported SSPA to the police may not be engaging with support organisations, and so the question of how to reach them was difficult to address. Professionals often told me that they support a minority of people who have experienced SSPA, and of these, support a very small number, or more commonly, nobody, who has reported to the police. Accordingly, I therefore focused on distributing my flyer using social media to attempt to reach victims who may not be seeking support from organisations. Again, however, though the flyer was shared widely, this method was not successful. The limited success of social media has also been experienced by other researchers attempting to sample hard to reach groups, such as Bows' (2017) attempts to reach older women who had experienced sexual violence and McCormack, Adams and Andersons' (2012) efforts to reach bisexual men.

For the final sample, four victims took part in the research. One person was recruited via a personal contact, and three via an LGBT charity. For these victims, I relied on a support professional to introduce the research to them, and so reaching them directly without these key contacts would have been extremely challenging. Though the victim participant group was smaller than originally anticipated, this reflects the difficulties with recruiting minority groups (Barnes, 2013; Bows, 2017; Fish, 1999).

Overall, victims within this research represented a small subset of the total number of assumed SSPA victims. Only those who had experienced police response and were willing to speak about their experiences to a researcher took part in the research. Also, due to the hidden nature of SSPA, the research will have been unlikely to reach victims who were not engaging with support services, or who did not feel comfortable discussing their experiences. Similarly, victims who were not 'out' may not have been reached by the research, or if they were, may not have wanted to discuss their experiences. This research nonetheless contributes to a very small pool of qualitative research with SSPA victims exploring police responses.

3.6.1.3 Police

Police were eligible to participate in the research if they had ever responded professionally to SSPA. Recruitment of police worked in a different way than for victims and professionals. In order for the research to be promoted to police officers, I had to gain access via a gatekeeper; usually a management level officer within each individual force. For one of the force areas visited, this was enabled via a personal contact held by my supervisor, and the research material was circulated within the force with relative ease. For another force, I was introduced via a contact from a previous force I had been working with, who vouched for the research. Having this professional contact meant that I could work with the force to enable the research material to be distributed. For other forces, I searched online for those who worked in an area relevant to the research, and contacted them via e-mail or telephone. This proved successful in all but one case, where there was no response. In order to gain access to police forces, some required there to be a tangible benefit to them in return, and it was agreed that once the thesis is completed, I would return to present my research findings to forces to help improve their practice. On overall reflection, it appeared that existing relationships were the most successful way of being able to gain access to a police force. Nineteen individuals from the police were spoken to in total, with eleven being recruited by e-mail, seven via snowball sampling, and one by personal contacts. More police than support professionals were recruited via snowball sampling, which may reflect the police culture of lack of trust in outsiders (discussed later in this Chapter).

3.6.2 Research tools and process

All participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix V for an example) outlining what the research would involve prior to meeting (this was not possible in one case within the police where via snowball sampling a participant was suggested and met with me

immediately after that interview), and given the opportunity to ask any questions. Participants were all made aware that taking part was voluntary and they could withdraw at any point, up until data was analysed, which was initially until the end of September 2016, but then lapsed to the end of February 2017 to give participants enough time to consider if they wanted to continue to participate. The information sheet was reiterated to participants both before and after the interview, outlining the confidentiality and anonymity of their data.

3.6.3 Demographics

Demographics forms were given to participants at their interview which were voluntary to complete (Appendix VI). Every participant who was offered a demographics form consented to fill one in and for their data to be used anonymously to give an overall picture of who took part in the research.

Collecting demographics information was particularly important for this thesis as research has suggested that domestic abuse and help-seeking in same-sex relationships can be affected by factors such as gender, age, and ethnicity (Parry & O'Neal, 2015). The intersection of these factors has been proven to be particularly important for those in same-sex relationships, as forcing someone to only identify with only one of them may not result in the full picture of different forms of oppression they may face (Parry & O'Neal, 2015). Within this thesis, demographics information was collected in relation to: gender, age range, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, education, children, and employment status. Four police and three professionals did not fill in the demographics form.

Categories relating to gender and sexual orientation were based on Hester and Donovan's (2009) research which considered a feminist epistemological approach to survey development, providing closed potential responses and an 'other' option. In addition to participants' individual differences, the way that same-sex relationships are viewed as socially acceptable by society can also differ. For example, within England and Wales, same-sex couples were only granted the right to marry in 2014 (Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013).

Table 1 shows demographics of the participants who took part in the research:

| Table 1: Participant demographics | | Police | Professionals | Victims |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|---------------|---------|
| Gender | Female | 6 | 5 | 2 |
| | Male | 9 | 4 | 1 |
| | Genderqueer transwoman | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Age Range | 16-24 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 25-34 | 7 | 4 | 2 |
| | 35-44 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| | 45-54 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| | 55+ | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sexual orientation | Gay | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| | Lesbian | 0 | 5 | 2 |
| | Queer | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| | Heterosexual | 10 | 0 | 1 |
| | Bisexual | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | Pansexual | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Ethnicity | White British | 14 | 7 | 3 |
| | White Irish | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| | Other white background | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | Other mixed Background | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Disability | No disability | 13 | 7 | 2 |
| | Speech/hearing | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Intellectual | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | Not answered | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Education | Completed high school | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| | Some college | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Completed college | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | Foundation degree | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | Undergraduate degree | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| | Masters/MPhil | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| Employment status | Full-time | 13 | 7 | 1 |
| | Part-time | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| | Self-employed part-time | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| | Homemaker or unable to work | 0 | 0 | 2 |

For the sample of police who completed the demographics form, 60% were male and 40% female, with most participants aged 25-34, closely followed by 35-44. 67% of the sample identified as heterosexual, all but one was White British and 87% said they did not have a disability. One third of the sample had an undergraduate degree. Nearly all those in the police worked full time.

For professionals completing the demographics form, 56% were women who identified as lesbian, and 44% were men defining primarily as gay. Similarly to the police, the most common age group was 25-34, however the next most common was 45-54; slightly older than the police sample. The majority of this sample was White British with no disability. Most of the sample had an undergraduate or Master's degree, and most participants were employed full time.

The victim sample was incredibly diverse as illustrated by Table 1. A summary of each victim's case is as follows:

3.6.3.1 Lucas

Lucas is a white British male aged between 25-34 who defines as gay. Lucas was in a relationship for ten years with a man named Johnny who was abusive psychologically throughout the relationship, and physically abusive towards the end, with Lucas requiring hospital treatment for his injuries on two occasions. Lucas did not report the violence and abuse to the police himself, the call was made by a family member and third party who witnessed him being subjected to physical harm. He did, however, support the police to take action, and Johnny was found guilty at court. Overall, Lucas is happy with the police response he received. Due to the partner abuse, Lucas became homeless and at the time of interview was living in temporary accommodation. He is unable to work at the moment.

3.6.3.2 Anna

Anna is a white British female aged between 35-44 who defines as lesbian. She is employed full-time and has three children. Anna was in a relationship with a woman named Carol for eleven years, and was subject to psychological abuse from approximately six years into their relationship, and physical abuse on and off throughout the relationship. On two occasions Anna has had to seek medical attention for her injuries, and suffered further injuries which she has not sought attention for. Anna first contacted the police when one of her children witnessed her being pushed down the stairs by Carol. Her experiences with the police have been negative, including not being believed, being judged and on one occasion police mistakes leading to Anna's partner absconding with the children. Anna stated that she would not call the police again if she were faced with a similar situation, and would instead seek support from other organisations.

3.6.3.3 Charlie

Charlie is a queer trans woman aged between 25-34 who defines as heterosexual. Charlie transitioned from male when she was fifteen and was living in a traveller community. She is from a mixed ethnic background and is a homemaker. Charlie first contacted the police when she was in her first marriage and experiencing psychological and physical abuse from her husband, and subsequently called again, resulting in her husband being sent to prison for the violence and abuse he inflicted on her. Charlie does not have faith that the police can help her which is primarily due to an intersection of her gender identity and cultural background, and most of the help Charlie has received has been from an LGBT specific support organisation. At the time of interview Charlie was living away from her family and community.

3.6.3.4 Amil

Amil is a male aged between 25-34 who defines as gay. Amil is from a mixed ethnic background and was not born in the UK. For six years Amil was in a relationship with Bradley who used coercive and controlling behaviours to abuse him. For a long time Amil did not recognise these behaviours as domestic abuse and so did not reach out for support. In addition, Bradley has threatened to out Amil to his family back in his home country which would have left Amil ostracised. After one particular incident which left Amil incredibly distressed, he sought support from domestic abuse charities and was then subsequently supported to report to the police. Amil was very happy with the response he received from the police, and felt believed and listened to. Along with support from the charities, the police helped Amil to be able to safely leave his partner. At the time of interview Amil had moved to his own home in an area away from Bradley and was in full-time employment.

In addition to using interviews, addressing research aim 4 also involved data pertaining from the qualitative component of the FOI request. For this, police forces were asked about any specialist provision for SSPA victims within their force, such as: LGBT liaison officers, focus groups with LGBT people or specific campaigns highlighting SSPA, as can be seen in Appendix II. Findings pertaining to this data can be found in Chapter Seven.

3.7 Qualitative interviewing and data analysis

To address research aims 2, 3 and 4, in-depth face-to-face⁴ qualitative interviews were conducted with participants. In-depth interviews are a core qualitative research method, allowing the generation of rich, meaningful knowledge (Bornstein et al., 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Yeo et al., 2014). Feminist interviewing in particular aims to be 'reflexive and interactive' (Yeo et al., 2014, p.180), and endeavours to avoid objectification of the participant by aiming to create a non-hierarchical relationship. In this way, and particularly when speaking with victims, I attempted to overcome this hierarchy by informing participants that the interview would form more of a conversation than an interview, and they should feel free at any point to mention anything that they would like to. Oakley (2000) subscribes to this idea, stating 'interviews imitate conversations; they hold out the promise of mutual listening' (p.47). Though semi-structured interviews can allow for a more equal relationship between researcher and participant, hence increasing validity, Westmarland (2001) emphasises that within feminist research this is not the primary reason why these interviews are used, but instead the aim is not to further oppress women. Also, whilst interviews can take on the form of a conversation, it has been noted that the researcher plays an active role in the interview, and, as such, researcher reporting of conversations will be subjective; a 'construction' (p.7) and 'partial' (p.7) (Stanley & Wise, 1993) based on the ontological and epistemological views held by the researcher.

Interviews in social research take three primary forms: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Braun & Clarke, 2013), with semi-structured being the most common type used by social researchers as they give a balance between guiding the interview and leaving scope for elaboration from participants. Semi-structured interviews have also been used with success by researchers looking at SSPA (Bornstein et al., 2006; Hardesty et al., 2011); and were also used during this research, with a slight variation for interviews with police (discussed later in this section in 'Police interview schedule'). As part of the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked open

⁴ Aside from two interviews with police which were carried out over the telephone

questions which they could answer in their own words, a key feature of this type of interview (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Asking open questions helps to break down power dynamics within the interview situation and aims to empower the participant (and as a result the community they are part of), by giving them a voice and direction over the interview trajectory (Yeo et al., 2014). Hoffman (2007) used open ended interviews to collect her data on workplace grievances, and stated that power exchange during interviews is something that is often not explored by researchers, with it being 'multifaceted and sometimes difficult to assess' (p.321). She asserts that the researcher starts with the knowledge as they decide on the topic and create an interview schedule, but that the participant holds the power as they can decide how much they want to reveal to the researcher. She then continues to explain the 'interview dance' (337); how power shifts between researcher and participant throughout the interview process; such as deciding when and where to meet, which topics are to be spoken about, and navigating confidentiality and anonymity.

There are ways to try to mitigate the influence of power relations during the interview setting. Hoffman (2007) stated it can be positive for interviewers to position themselves as the learners, and look to respondents as expert; an idea which is not so far-fetched if we consider that as we as researchers are seeking information we already lack some power. Doing so gives the researcher 'freedom to ask what might seem to the informant as stupid questions' (p.329) and places the participant in a position of knowledge. Following the interviews carried out during the current research, participants were offered the option of having their transcripts sent to them before they were used for analysis, so they could check for inaccuracies and to ensure that they were happy with the way their data had been anonymised. Though this offered some control over the process, it has been suggested that ultimately it is the researcher who possesses the power, as they are the ones who decide which pieces of information to include in reports, and the way in which this information is presented (Richardson, 1997, as cited in Hoffman, 2007).

During the interview process, I fully acknowledged and was aware that I was a part of the interview process, and embraced this rather than trying to avoid it, but at the same time held an awareness of the influences I had on the interactions. Stanley and Wise (1993) expressed the importance of the researcher being aware of the influence they have on research. These influences will have varied depending on the individual interview but some of the ways I will have had an impact on the interactions will have been related to my age, gender, sexual orientation (and whether participants knew this prior to interview) and my style of interviewing. Above all of this, it has been suggested that participants may see a researcher as an expert in the topic area over and above any shared commonalities such as sexual orientation (Clarke, Kitzinger & Potter, 2004), and I ensured that this

was held in mind throughout the process. As Fish (1999) stated when discussing how participants may view a researcher: 'A lesbian identity in itself is not necessarily a 'passport' into the welcoming arms of 'lesbian community' just waiting to participate in research.' (p.233). Similarly, the fact that I had worked in collaboration with a police force before during the KTP project did not automatically mean I was accepted by all police, as is discussed in more detail in the next section.

3.7.1 Interviews with police

Gaining access to police forces can be a difficult task, taking time and often requiring assistance of personal contacts. One of the areas focused on by the College of Policing (COP), a professional body who identify best practice for policing in England and Wales (College of Policing 2015b), is working with academic researchers to use an evidence-based approach to inform policing practice, which in turn can lead to increased legitimacy and trust in the police (Davies, 2016). However, despite academic collaboration being a clear structural aim via the 'What Works Centre for Crime Reduction' (College of Policing, 2015a), when I was speaking with police officers and staff on an individual level during the course of the research, it became clear that a number of people were wary of external research. As mentioned previously, one of the most successful ways of recruiting police was via snowball sampling. It seemed apparent that when somebody from the police had met me and completed their interview, if they decided that I was a 'safe' person to speak to, they would be more likely to recommend their colleagues to take part.

3.7.1.1 Police interview schedule

To consider their views and experiences around SSPA, an interview schedule was developed for police. Originally, I planned to use semi-structured interviews so that I had some direction over the interview, but to also allow police to expand and mention areas which they felt were important, however, this changed slightly following a pilot interview. Prior to carrying out any formal interviews, a police officer not taking part in the research agreed to be a participant in a pilot interview, to enable me to test the questions and ask for feedback. Following the interview, he suggested that as police are used to a very formal interviewing style as part of their job role, they would probably feel more comfortable answering more structured questions, rather than the space being open for them to speak. Hoyle (1998) also advocates officers being asked about specific situations and decision making rather than more general questioning. The participant from the pilot suggested that this relates to police being trained around only answering directly what they are asked and not offering additional information.

Following further discussion, I designed an interview schedule consisting of five sections which between them contained twenty-two individual questions/prompts (Appendix VII). The questions involved asking: background information about the participant e.g. job role/length of time in role; decisions victims face when deciding whether to call the police; how police respond to victims; perceptions of SSPA, and general questions relating to improving reporting levels by victims - including asking questions about some of the findings from the FOI requests (Savage & Hyde, 2014). Though the pilot interview suggested that police may prefer to be asked questions more directly, the interviews did follow a semi-structured style, in that most of the questions still incorporated an open element, giving opportunity for elaboration. The interviews differed from more traditional semi-structured interviews in the sense that all twenty-eight questions were often asked, rather than acting as prompts. However, I made sure to mention prior to the interviews that participants should feel free to mention anything they felt was relevant, and reiterated this at the end of the interviews by asking if there was anything further they wished to add. It is also worth noting that in some cases there were participants who seemed happy to follow a more open dialogue, and in these cases I amended the interview schedule in that I used the questions as prompts, enabling participants to contribute any information they wished to.

3.7.2 Interviews with professionals

Interviews with professionals were carried out in a similar way to those with police, however, they followed a more traditional semi-structured trajectory (Appendix VIII). As professionals had worked with SSPA victims in some capacity, I began with opening questions about their role and background, and then asked them if there were any cases that they remembered that they would like to talk about. For those who did, prompts were then used to dig deeper into what they were saying and to explore the police response in those situations. For other professionals, when certain prompts were used, they remembered details from particular cases. For example, when I asked whether they thought there were any differences in police responses to SSPA between men/men and women/women, this often prompted professionals to remember specific cases where this had happened, and enable them to explain the circumstances. Similarly to police interviews, I was able to adapt the interview schedules as needed based on how comfortable professionals appeared to be with answering the questions, and also in relation to the nature of their organisation. For example, one organisation only supported male victims, so I did not ask specific questions about female victims in that interview.

3.7.3 Interviews with victims who have experienced same-sex partner abuse

Interviewing victims directly about their experiences can provide 'freshness and reality' (Rubin & Rubin, 2011, p.60), which can lead to richer data than speaking to others about someone else's experiences. Hester et al., (2007) also state that knowledge around domestic abuse is 'rooted in the accounts of victims/survivors' (as cited in Donovan & Hester, 2014, p.37), and those experiencing a phenomena are the best people to learn from rather than experts (Hoffman, 2007). For this reason I carried out interviews with victims to explore their views and experiences first-hand. Three victims were identified via support organisations, and one via a personal contact. Participants were asked where they would like the interview to take place; one participant chose to have the interview at their workplace, two in their homes, and one was arranged in a neutral location in a city centre.

A researcher safety protocol was developed to ensure that interviews were conducted safely. All but two interviews were conducted in public places such as participants' workplaces or local community centres. Of the two interviews taking place in participants' homes, one home was a flat with a doorman, and I ensured that I signed in so that they were aware that I was in the building. Another was in the participants' home. My supervisor was aware of when these interviews were being conducted, however my partner was also present within the locality and I ensure I sent a text message to her every half an hour during the interviews to 'check-in', with a final phone call at the end so she was aware the interview had finished and I had left safely.

The interview schedule used with victims was more open than that used with police and professionals (Appendix IX). It was important to give victims the opportunity to tell their stories, and following this I was then able to follow up on aspects which were of particular interest using prompts. In order to help victims feel more comfortable during the interview, I began by asking if they would like to tell me a little bit about themselves and why they were interested in taking part in the research. Where appropriate, this was then followed by me telling them a little about myself and why I was researching this topic. Hoffman (2007) mentions how the researcher revealing something personal about themselves can help to shift the power balance between researcher and participant and enable rapport to be built. After victims had the opportunity to tell their story, the remaining questions/prompts focused on their decisions around help-seeking, their views on the police response they received and some general questions about their views on their local police force in terms of their interaction with the LGBT community.

3.7.4 Qualitative interview data analysis

Until the late twentieth century, many qualitative researchers did not outline the process of analysis, meaning it was difficult to assess how findings had been produced from qualitative data (Spencer, Ritchie, Ormston, O'Connor, & Barnard, 2014). This section aims to provide an exploration of the process of data analysis, in order to make transparent the steps that were taken. All interviews were recorded by dictaphone (with permission of participants) and transcribed verbatim, meaning that the spoken words and other associated sounds were transcribed; a method suitable for Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I felt it was important to transcribe the interviews myself to engage with the data on a deeper level, as well as upholding my promise to participants that I would be the only person to hear their spoken interview. Similarly, as an interview transcript is two steps away from the original interaction (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and thus begins to change, transcribing myself meant that I could remain as faithful to the original interaction as possible. Transcribing was, as Braun and Clarke outline, a messy process, with interviewees (and me) sometimes jumping back and forth between topics, starting sentences and stumbling over words. This was in fact highlighted by a participant when returning their transcript to me:

'I'm reading the transcription, god, did I talk and talk and talk. It's slightly embarrassing to read myself, I often don't answer your questions and go on a tangent, and then on another one' (Professional)

All but two participants (both police) were happy to have their interviews recorded and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity around this. For the two who did not wish for their interviews to be recorded, handwritten notes were made during interview, with attempts to ensure that these were as close to verbatim as possible so that the participants' narratives could be accurately reflected. For those who did have their interviews recorded, when they were transcribed, each interview was listened to a second time to check for inaccuracies, and then read through and any identifiable information anonymised; such as people's names and places. Following this, if participants had asked, they were sent a copy of their transcript via an e-mail address they had provided, and asked if they would like to read through the transcript. Participants were asked that if they had any comments or changes to make if they could do so and return the transcript within two weeks. Four participants asked if specific pieces of information could be changed, and following this, all participants were happy for their transcripts to be used for the research. There was the risk that by sending transcripts to participants to read that they may have felt worry or concern at seeing

their interviews written down, and decided to withdraw from the research. However, it was more important ethically during the research to be open and transparent with participants, and hence it was decided that sending participants their transcripts was the most ethical option.

3.7.4.1 Thematic analysis

Interview data from police and professionals (n= 31) was analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA), which involves reporting meaning and patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Spencer et al., 2014). This approach focuses on *what* is said within the data, rather than *how* it was said (Harlow, 2010); seeing data as windows into participants' worlds (Spencer et al., 2014). Due to adopting a feminist approach, TA was deemed a suitable method of analysis as it allowed both police and professionals' voices to be heard and patterns to develop across datasets. Braun and Clarke (2006) state how researchers must make their theoretical positioning clear so that assumptions can be made about the nature of the data; and this advice was followed. This was particularly important as they later purport that if TA is not used within an existing theoretical framework, it has been said to have limited interpretative power (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Finally, the use of TA enabled data to be presented in a clear and concise form which can be easily understood by a wide range of practitioners who may wish to use the findings to further develop their services.

Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a six stage recursive method outlining the process of TA. Rather than being linear, the process acknowledges that researchers often move back and forth through the stages throughout analysis. To begin to analyse the data within the current thesis, I used the stages proposed by Braun and Clarke as a guide. As I conducted and transcribed interviews, I began analysis immediately – reading through transcripts and highlighting particular areas of interest relating to the research aims, described by Braun and Clarke (2006) as 'codes'; 'a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst' (p.19). Codes were developed using data from the interview transcripts and my own notes made after interviews; with the assistance of qualitative computer programme NVivo 10, which allows a visual representation and organisation of data sets. Coding was initially descriptive, whilst ensuring that the context in which the data were spoken within was maintained, so as to avoid falsely representing a person's ideas. For example, if a participant mentioned that one part of police process was negative but the rest positive, I did not purport that the participant overall felt that police process was negative. The coding framework was adapted throughout the process of analysis, with codes (known as Nodes in NVivo) being added for

new areas of interest which I had not asked about within interviews but which had become important, and other codes becoming more or less significant as more data was analysed.

By coding using NVivo I was able to see links between nodes and build these up into overriding themes. Relationships between nodes emerged and hierarchies and links between codes became more apparent as the analysis progressed further. In addition to using NVivo, I also found it useful to use the more traditional way of coding – using pens and post it notes to manually sort and organise nodes in order to visually see links between them. Utilising this method in addition to using NVivo allowed creative stimulation and I was able to see more links than by using the computer alone. As an example of how one theme was coded, Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between nodes for the theme ‘Well-founded fear’, as part of an exploration as to why victims may not call the police:

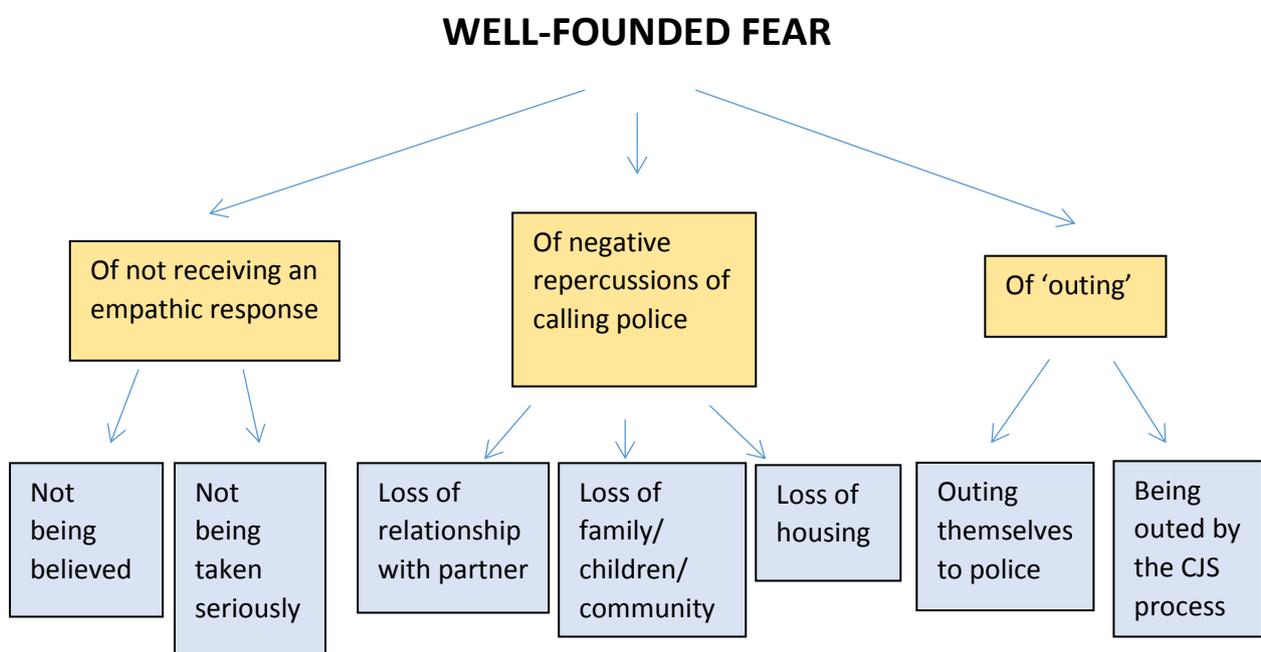


Figure 1. Relationship between nodes for the theme ‘Fear’

Figure 1 illustrates how ‘well-founded fear’ was defined as the overarching theme; emerging from the nodes coded within the transcript data. The three nodes below well-founded fear illustrate the next level down, and they each have their own ‘child’ nodes, which look at the finer detail of their ‘parents’. The nodes were all inductive, that is, they came directly from the data. Although due to my existing knowledge of this area I was aware of broad topics such as ‘outing’; until I collected and analysed the data I was not aware of some of the finer detail of this, such as victims’ fears of being outed by the criminal justice process. In addition, I did not approach the data with a predetermined vision of what I was looking for in terms of specific existing topics or themes, but instead focused on coding in relation to being open to what emerged from the data, and addressing my research aims.

I decided to present my research findings within four chapters which each answer one of the four research aims, and, as such, themes were developed using data relevant to each chapter. This process was not straightforward as much of the data overlapped between chapters, and the process of organising data into the most appropriate chapters was challenging. Initially, I decided to have a separate chapter to represent each of the three participant groups; victims, police and professionals; however, during analysis I realised that by splitting the data this way would mean a large amount of repetition, as the participant groups had overlapping views and experiences. Thus, organising the chapters by research aims and presenting the views of all participants within each chapter was eventually decided as the best way to accurately represent the data and ensure smooth navigation for the reader.

3.7.4.2 Case Studies

Due to there only being four victims who had experienced SSPA taking part in the research, more in-depth interview data was collected from these participants, which was analysed using a case-study approach rather than by TA. Case studies are a qualitative method used to carry out in-depth exploration of phenomena within a particular context (Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2014). Although comparison between cases can be useful within qualitative analysis, within this research, extracts from the cases were presented individually alongside data from police and professionals with the interest being in understanding what each person was saying, rather than to try and compare cases (Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2014). Green and Thorogood (2014) purport that one way that a case study can be carried out is to establish a life history of a particular person, which means that in-depth information can be collected with regards to a particular phenomenon which would be difficult to collect any other way. For this research, experiences and views of SSPA victims were gathered via semi-structured interviews and then presented individually and in-depth within the findings chapters to enhance the interview findings of police and professionals. Wolcott (2002) suggests that case studies may be best viewed as 'a form of reporting than as a strategy for conducting research' (p.101); a view which was adopted for this thesis.

To analyse the case studies, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used; an ideal method for focusing on individuals' lived experiences and how they make sense of them, as well as being useful for analysing individual cases (Braun & Clarke, 2013). With a focus on people's experiences in context, this method allowed me to analyse victims' experiences of police responses to SSPA whilst at the same time allowing for interpretation. Due to its roots in contextualism, IPA

aligned effectively with my theoretical underpinnings and framework. As stated by Bows (2017), using IPA fits particularly well within a feminist framework when researching violence and abuse within marginalised groups due to its focus on individual experience and how experience is constructed. The additional element of interpretation meant that experiences could be analysed at a deeper level than purely descriptively. When using IPA, as individual participants describe and make sense of their world, the researcher is also trying to make sense of how the participant sees their world, described as double hermeneutic (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). By using this method of analysis, it was my aim to stay as true as possible to participants' own interpretation of their experiences.

To begin to analyse the case studies, each interview transcript was read through on a number of occasions to enable familiarisation with the data. Whilst I was reading the cases, I began to organise the data, beginning with general background information about each case, and then organising information according to the following structure to ensure a full understanding of each case:

1. Background information about the person
2. Thought processes around help-seeking for SSPA
3. Responses received from police for SSPA
4. Experiences of engaging with other support organisations
5. Gaps in police support for SSPA victims

Due to the interview topic guide following a similar structure for police, professionals and victims, many of the same areas of interest were discussed within all of the interviews. As a result of this, victims would often describe experiences which related to themes that were found within the police and professional interviews. To ensure that victims' voices were heard clearly within the thesis, their experiences are presented throughout the findings chapters, signified by a blue text box to signal to the reader that the information within it arises from a victim's case. Though victims' experiences did not always concur with the views of police and professionals, their cases have been used to enrich the findings from the police and professional interviews in a way that brings real life experience to the various issues and topics which arose within them.

3.7.5 Methodological and ethical considerations of qualitative data collection

Conducting qualitative interviews with SSPA victims, police and professionals poses some challenges; both methodological and ethical. In addition to the challenges discussed earlier relating to the

recruitment and sampling of SSPA victims, there were other considerations taken into account when carrying out interviews with this group.

Interviews focusing on the nature of the police responses to SSPA covered a range of topics, including partner abuse and sexual orientation. Sieber and Stanley (1988) describe this type of research as socially sensitive: 'studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research' (p.49). Downes, Kelly and Westmarland (2014) contend this notion in relation to violence and abuse research, arguing that classing research as sensitive, and participants as vulnerable, removes their autonomy by not deeming them 'capable' of taking part in research. Instead, the researchers speak about empowering participants by ensuring they have enough information to decide whether they would like to participate, as well as considering the wider impact of disallowing particular marginalised groups from participating in research. I agree with this notion, and whilst ethical and methodological considerations should always be taken into account when carrying out any research, research looking at topics such as violence and abuse (in addition to other 'sensitive' topics) does need to be carried out, as it provides an insight into important issues in society which otherwise would remain hidden, as well as improving the lives of those affected by violence and abuse.

As discussed earlier in the thesis, a feminist approach to interviewing was used with participants. This style of interviewing aimed to break down any hierarchy between interviewer and participant by being reflexive and not objectifying participants (Yeo et al., 2014). However, there remain criticisms on using interviewing as a method, which must be acknowledged. Silverman (2011) has criticised constructivist interviews on the grounds that they cannot claim to uncover any reality wider than that of the interview itself. I would argue, however, that the depth of knowledge gained from interviews within this thesis allows a meaningful insight into people's lived experiences, and thus generalisability of content is not a key aim. A further rationale for using interviews within this research is that they have been used with success in a large body of existing research considering SSPA (Bornstein et al., 2006; Donovan et al., 2014; Hardesty et al., 2011) and are described as particularly suitable when investigating under-researched topics (Clarke et al., 2010), when the people being interviewed hold a personal stake in a topic (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and when speaking about sensitive issues (Braun & Clarke, *ibid*). Additionally, research published during the life of this thesis has suggested specifically that future research considering intimate partner violence should

use interviews to explore same-sex abuse victims' views on police interactions (Guadalupe-Diaz, 2016).

Some researchers have suggested that methods other than interviews (such as surveys) may be better suited to carrying out 'sensitive' research due to participants being able to remain more anonymous (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This was considered during planning for this research project due to concerns about whether SSPA victims would feel comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation and details of their abusive relationships in an interview setting. However, it was decided that interviews were the most suitable method to use due to being more flexible than a survey, allowing for context and background (Guadalupe-Diaz, 2016), in addition to being able to recognise participant distress by terminating the interview or changing the questioning (Letherby, 2004), which using survey methodology would not allow.

3.7.5.1 Informed consent

In addition to methodological considerations, there were also ethical considerations to be taken into account whilst planning and conducting the research. One important ethical consideration was to ensure that participants could give informed consent. This meant that participants needed to be provided with as much information as possible about the purpose, procedure and duration of the research, possible risks, benefits and limits to confidentiality (Howitt & Cramer, 2014; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). By being given information about these issues, participants were able to make an informed decision about whether they wished to partake in the research.

Some researchers have suggested that full informed consent cannot be given, as the direction of research and potential findings cannot be foreseen (Wise, 1987) and that researchers can never state exactly how they will use the data generated (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The latter researchers suggest that the process of informed consent is not static, but ongoing, and researchers should continue to check that participants are happy with the research process as it progresses. Doing so helps to ensure that participants can continue to make a decision about their participation with as much up-to-date and relevant information as researchers are able to give. In addition to sending participants their transcripts following the interviews as discussed in the previous section, I also ensured that during interviews participants were reminded of their right to withdraw, in addition to being prepared to ask if they were happy to continue should they become distressed. One victim became emotional when recounting part of her story, but expressed that she wished to

continue. Following interviews, victims were offered details of support agencies, for example, helplines or local domestic abuse agencies. However, as participants were already receiving support from an agency, they all declined. Police and professionals were also asked how they felt after the interviews, and though they all responded that they were happy at the time, they were given the option to contact me any time after the interview and I would assist them with details of any further support they needed.

Within the current research, participants were asked to give informed consent to take part in qualitative interviews. As semi-structured interviews were used, this also meant that there was room for participants to bring up topics that I had not anticipated (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and so I could not indicate to participants exactly what topics would arise in the interview. However, participants were provided with as much information as I could give before the research started in the form of an information sheet and consent form. This form was sent out to participants prior to their interview so that they had a chance to read the information and formulate any questions they had before the interview day. Participants were also free to contact me prior to the interview to discuss any concerns about the research. I felt that this was important so that participants could digest the information on the form and have time to decide if they wanted to take part and the opportunity to ask questions beforehand without feeling pressured. For the victim group in particular, it was important to make ethical information such as confidentiality and anonymity as transparent as possible (Williams & Robson, 2004). As SSPA victims are part of a minority population, if they were identifiable via the research this could have made them vulnerable to abuse or discrimination (e.g. if others reading the research could recognise them). Therefore, I made sure to outline how they and their information would be protected as far as possible. Amongst the information included in the form was: what the research was aiming to find out, the length of interviews, how data would be stored, what it would be used for, how long it would be kept, and the limits to confidentiality in the interviews (Appendix V).

3.7.5.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

The next aspects of research ethics which were considered were the anonymity and confidentiality of participants and their data. Anonymity refers to:

Concealing the identity of the participants in all documents resulting from the research, therefore actively protecting the identity of research participants (King & Horrocks, 2010, p.117)

Braun and Clarke (2013) discuss that anonymity of participants can be positive as it protects them, but that it can also leave them without a voice. Doing so is not in line with feminist research, as it can treat participants as though they are travelling along a conveyor belt rather than as individuals. However, for the partner abuse victims who partook in the research the decision was taken to use pseudonyms (giving participants a fake name), as if their real details were used they may have been identifiable which could have placed them in danger. For police and professionals, their names were not used but their job titles were, as this was important to give context to their voice. They were made aware in the information sheet that their job titles would be used; however, they were asked which title they would like to be used, with some offering more specific titles than others. For all interviews, when participants mentioned other information which may have identified them or someone else e.g. place names or names of other people, I also anonymised this information.

Confidentiality covered the participants' data being kept secure, only being seen by the researcher and the research team, and identifiable information being removed (King & Horrocks, 2010). When considering confidentiality within the current research, participants were all informed via the information sheet about the limits of confidentiality; for example, that it may need to be broken if they disclose that they or someone else is at risk of harm. Aside from this clause, which did not need to be put into practice, every effort was made to protect the identity of the participants and their data. Participant interview transcripts were identified with a number only, and personal information attached to these was stored on a secure database separately from the transcripts. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) expressed how it is also important to only use participant data for purposes explained and consented to by participants so that they are aware at all times about the usage of their information. I ensured that I explained within the information sheet how I intended to use the data in as much detail as possible.

Another important element with regards to police participation was that they felt that participation in the research was voluntary, and did not feel coerced by line managers to take part. When carrying out interviews with police officers as part of the KTP project, I sent out a circulator (an internal message within the police sent directly to officers' inboxes) explaining the research. This was effective as it meant that police officers could read the information and decide freely whether they

wanted to take part, rather than me approaching their managers who may have put pressure on them (Stockdale, 2015). I attached a copy of the information sheet to the circulator and ensured that police officers were aware that they would remain anonymous and I would not divulge to their manager that they had taken part in the research. This was important as it was highlighted during the KTP project that officers may not have volunteered to take part due to fears over their interview content being fed back to their managers, or saying the 'wrong thing'.

For this research, recruiting for participants from other police forces proved more difficult in terms of ethical considerations, as often the only route into a police force was via a gatekeeper who was often holding a managerial position. When this was the case I ensured that police were given as much information about the research as possible, including reiterating that participation was voluntary, and that I was independent from the police.

3.7.5.3 Ethically sensitive research

In addition to the methodological and ethical considerations relating to carrying out 'sensitive' research, there were also some related ethical issues directly linked to working with same-sex populations. Meezan and Martin (2003) state that research with LGBT communities occurs in a context where LGBT people are at risk of discrimination, as well as being socially marginalised (as cited in Clarke et al., 2010, p.75). Braun and Clarke (2013) add to this by advising how it is important when carrying out ethically sensitive research to consider the effect the research will have on the population who are being researched.

As the current research considered those who have experienced partner abuse as well as been in same-sex relationships, this adds another layer to this marginalisation, meaning participants may be at risk of greater harm by participating than non-LGBT participants. For example, participants are having to 'out' themselves by taking part in the research, both in terms of their sexual orientation and revealing that they have experienced partner abuse. The LGBT community is also fairly small, meaning there is a greater likelihood of participants being identified within the research by others in the community. In addition, by researching same-sex partner abuse, a hidden issue within the LGBT community, any 'negative' findings which arose from the research could be used maliciously by others against the LGBT community which may perpetuate issues of social marginalisation. Taking these issues into account I ensured that I set out exactly what I wanted to find out and was clear why this research is important and beneficial to SSPA victims. I ensured that I honoured the voices of the

people who participated (Braun & Clarke, 2013) as accurately as possible, and throughout the research process I undertook measures to protect participants, such as being aware that participants I interviewed may know each other, and ensuring that my research findings did not 'other' the LGBT community by being aware of sensitivities surrounding the issues discussed.

3.8 Reflections on conducting interviews

Carrying out research means researchers and participants both arrive with their own pre-existing knowledge, assumptions, values and experiences, which undoubtedly affect the knowledge produced during interviews. In order for good quality qualitative research to be produced, it has been argued that it is essential that qualitative researchers are reflexive (Green & Thorogood, 2014). During research, reflexivity refers to 'the process of critically reflecting on the knowledge we produce, and our role in producing that knowledge' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.37). This section will focus on personal reflexivity; that is, how who I am as a person and a researcher contributed to and affected the knowledge produced by interviews.

3.8.1. Interviews with police

In order to interview police as part of this thesis, I was required to embed myself into their world to gain a thorough understanding of their views and attitudes. At the same time, it was important not to collude with them when they expressed particular views or attitudes during interviews. Horn (1997) writes about being a female researcher interviewing police officers, and reflects on many of the same issues that I faced when carrying out interviews. For example, she mentions needing to be viewed as trustworthy by the police. This was particularly evident during the research process when recruiting for participants. Two officers expressed a desire not to be tape recorded, and others asked in-depth questions about how the recordings would be used. In addition, despite the large potential pool of officers who could have participated, only a relatively small number volunteered to be interviewed. This suggests that there was at least some suspicion of the research, and about what would happen with their comments, particularly if they expressed negative views (one officer who declined to be tape recorded expressed particularly negative views of the gay community).

In order to attempt to alleviate this, I assured officers that their interviews were confidential and that information would not be passed onto anyone else within the police force; however, it was perhaps inevitable that at least some suspicion remained. I did find, however, that once the first few questions had been answered, officers tended to settle into the interview and seemed happy to

express their honest views and opinions. It was mentioned by Horn and Hollin (1997) that participants, and particularly police, may give the researcher answers they think they want to hear to avoid criticisms and being accused of prejudice, but I found that within the current research that most participants seemed open to expressing negative views of police practice and other topics associated with the research if they felt it was warranted.

Relating to needing to be viewed as being trustworthy, Horn (1997) explained that due to having an existing relationship with management level officers, this may have meant that other officers saw her as a spy for management. I had a similar issue, in that in order to recruit participants from police forces I had to seek approval from the force and ask higher ranking officers to distribute the research material. It is not known whether this affected who decided to come forward to speak, but it is possible that it may have had an influence. As this was the procedure that was required to gain access, I attempted to reach out to more officers using the snowball method; by asking officers if they were willing to pass on my details to their colleagues after the interview. This turned out to be successful, which may have been because once officers had completed their interviews they were less suspicious of me and the process, and so were happy to recommend others to me. This may also link in with Horn's (1997) research suggesting that police often position a woman within stereotypical gender roles such as being harmless and non-threatening, and, as such, would feel safe talking to them.

3.8.1.1 On the inside or the outside?

Following from the latter section, a discussion of being an insider versus an outsider follows logically. Jennifer Brown (1996) outlined four categories that the researcher may occupy in relation to the police: 'inside-insiders' (research done by police within the police); 'outside-insiders' (academics who used to be police officers); 'inside outsiders' (academics employed by police); and 'outside outsiders' (researchers with no ties to the police force). In terms of my placement within the research, I occupied a fairly unique position, which lay somewhere between Brown's insider-outsider and outsider-outsider. For example, although I was based with a police force for the KTP project, I was not a police officer, which people typically imagine when they visualise 'police'. This meant when interviewing police officers for the KTP that they were aware of my 'half police, half university' position. This was also interesting when considering police officer versus police staff status, and similarly to Stockdale (2015), by taking a more 'police staff' role I did not sit within the police officer culture and share the same cultural bonds (see Loftus, 2009 for a discussion of police culture). It may have been that during interviews, police officers were suspicious or unclear about whether my role

was police staff or researcher, and this subsequently affected how they related to me. However, when carrying out the interviews with police officers as part of the KTP project, I found that if I was open, honest and non-judgemental, this tended to be reciprocated.

For this thesis I worked with different police forces to the one I worked with for the KTP. This meant that although I may have been a partial insider to the KTP police force, I was an outsider-outsider to the new police forces, and so ties and rapport were not present. However, due to my experience gained via the KTP of working with police, I was in an advantageous position and was able to build rapport with most participants interviewed. Regardless, it was still important that I remained aware that I was likely to be perceived as an outsider to police, and would be viewed with at least some suspicion (Horn, 1997).

3.8.1.2 Young, female researcher

A further avenue to be explored is my role as a young feminist woman working within a highly structured, masculine environment. Horn (1997) mentioned how police officers may often see women within stereotypical gender roles such as being harmless and non-threatening. She suggests that as a result of this, women can often enter environments such as the police force with an element of invisibility, which may be of benefit when interviewing people within it; if police see a female researcher as non-threatening, they may be more likely to be honest with their responses. Contrary to this, being a young, female researcher may mean that police (especially older male officers) feel they need to protect the researcher from the harsher side of policing, and so may give them less access to information (Horn, 1997). This was evident during my research, with officers sometimes apologising for swearing, for example, or sometimes pausing for a while before giving an answer to a difficult question, possibly deciding how to word their response in a non-threatening way. Additionally, Braun and Clarke (2013) mention that when a young researcher interviews people who occupy a higher societal status they may feel vulnerable and lose control of the interview. During this research when interviewing police in management positions, however, it did not feel that this was the case, and all participants were respectful of the professional relationship. It is likely that the lack of feeling vulnerable was due to my existing experience of working with police during the KTP, however I was aware that the environment may be perceived as threatening for a person who had not previously been exposed to police forces.

In addition to how police perceived my role, I also had to decide how to respond to them. Similarly to Horn (1997), I was aware that during interviews that I gave a greater impression of naiveté around the subject of SSPA. Having studied the area of SSPA prior to carrying out interviews, and listening to the views and opinions of police officers during the research, some areas mentioned by police were repeated by others. However, when information I already possessed was mentioned to me, I was aware that I responded as though the information was somewhat novel. Nonetheless, I feel that the decision to react this way was important to maintain the interview relationship, as if officers felt that I already possessed all of the information they were offering (which of course I did not) they may have felt that their time with me was futile. Showing my 'confessions of ignorance' (Shakespeare, 1993, as cited in Horn, 1997) and abandoning some of the traditional power associated with being a researcher (Hoffman, 2007) meant that police would be less likely to see me as an expert on SSPA but rather position themselves more as expert (Hoffman, 2007), and hence will have felt more confident and useful providing me with their insights. It is also worth noting that whilst I was aware of some of the information that police revealed, much was new and hence each interview played a valuable part in increasing existing knowledge.

3.8.1.3 Responding to uncomfortable comments and situations

A final area which needed to be negotiated when working with police officers was how I responded when officers made comments which were sexist or homophobic, or responded in other ways which did not align with my values as a feminist researcher. Within the interviews, this did not happen often (maybe due to police 'protecting' me, or fear of where the information would be passed on to, as discussed earlier). However, on occasion this did happen, and I was required to respond spontaneously. In order to explain how I dealt with those situations, I will use the example of when one officer referred to heterosexual people as 'normal people', thus insinuating that those in same-sex relationships were abnormal. The comment was, to me, politically and morally inappropriate, and should this have been mentioned outside of the interview process, I would have engaged in conversation with that person about the reasons behind their use of such terminology. However, as the purpose of the interviews was to explore what police officers' thought and felt, I felt it was unnecessary and counter-productive to mention this to the officer, as they may then have been embarrassed and closed up for the remainder of the interview. Horn (1997) also explained the difficulty she faced with her decision to remain quiet in the face of sexist remarks, but explains how it was necessary to retain rapport and maintain the delicate research situation. My stance for this research was that I was there to listen, not to lecture, and hence I had to sit with occasional feelings

of being uncomfortable, for the purpose of the research. Additionally, I also recognised that whilst I did not agree with some of the language used by officers, they were not necessarily intentionally being disrespectful, and may simply have struggled to find appropriate language to express their views.

3.8.2 Interviews with victims who have experienced same-sex partner abuse

When interviewing SSPA victims, I was in a similar position as I was with the police in terms of insider-outsider positions. When interviewing women, I had aspects in common with participants, such as gender, experience of a same-sex relationship and knowledge of partner abuse. These factors were also true when interviewing men, aside from gender. This meant that we had quite a large amount in common on face value and these shared characteristics may have helped establish rapport. However, domestic abuse and sexual orientation have such wide scope that I could not claim to understand every participant's experience, especially when taking into consideration individual factors such as age, race, class and previous life history (see Reinharz & Chase, in Gubrium & Holstein (2002) for a discussion regarding some of these factors).

There were positives and negatives to my position when interviewing people about SSPA. I hoped that as we were all part of a sexual minority that participants felt that their experiences would not be judged. Similarly, I hoped that as I possess some knowledge of partner abuse within same-sex relationships, participants would feel more able to be open about their experiences without fear of shocking, upsetting or having to explain terminology to me. However, I was aware that the same-sex community is relatively small, and participants may have been worried that I would know them or someone they were talking about, or worry that I may break confidentiality. They may also have been suspicious of my motives for the research, and may have believed that I was trying to place the same-sex community in a negative light. These issues were all taken into account whilst conducting the interviews by being open and honest about my motivations for the research, and attempting to allow participants as much control as possible over interview content.

Barnes (2007) suggests that the 'insider' and 'outsider' dichotomy runs the risk of homogenizing the experiences of individuals, and suggests that though we may share certain characteristics with people we are never armed with sufficient understanding to claim insider status. I understood that whilst I may have similar aspects in common with research participants, it is unlikely that I have all aspects in common (e.g. age, race, class), and even if we shared all of these characteristics, our

outlooks may still not be the same. For this reason I concluded that I can never speak for someone else, because I can never fully be an 'insider' to their situation, but instead I can attempt to know, whilst acknowledging the effect that my outlook will have on the interview relationship. Therefore, I did not assume that my insider-outsider status with the same-sex community would directly influence my relationships with participants and subsequently my findings, but ensured that I was aware of the role it may play.

3.8.3 Interviews with professionals

Conducting interviews with professionals about their views and experiences of police responses provided numerous interesting insights. The ways that professionals worked with victims varied widely: from helplines, to face-to-face counselling, to practical support with housing. As such, they brought to the interviews a vast amount of experience and knowledge about working with victims experiencing SSPA and their experiences with the police. Whilst this knowledge was valuable and interesting, it was important to be aware that I was asking professionals to report on how they felt the police responded to SSPA. To do so, they were drawing on experience from victims they had worked with who had accessed police support, and were therefore reporting about vicarious experience in most cases. Professionals were not the people directly experiencing the phenomena (i.e. the police response), which are suggested as being the most crucial views to gather (Hoffman, 2007). Nonetheless, many professionals had excellent relationships with their clients and hence I felt that the information professionals provided about how victims experienced the police response was likely to provide fruitful insight. Additionally, carrying out interviews with police and victims alongside professionals meant that comparisons could be drawn between the views and opinions of the different groups, and any similarities or differences examined.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach taken for the research, including a consideration of how to adopt a feminist methodology and values. The use of mixed-methods as a research method has also been discussed, highlighting the role that quantitative and qualitative methods play when combined together. An in-depth description of how FOI requests were carried out has been outlined, including some of the specific methodological considerations involved. The chapter also covered the process of collecting qualitative data, and methodological and ethical considerations of collecting this type of data when working with police and SSPA victims. In addition,

the method of data analysis for both quantitative and qualitative data was explored. Finally, reflections on conducting interviews with the different participant groups were discussed, particularly when working within police forces and conducting interviews with same-sex partner abuse victims. The chapters that follow present the research findings pertaining to each of the four research aims and are presented in light of existing literature. The first of these chapters (Chapter Four) uses the findings of FOI requests to explore research aim 1: To consider the nature and extent of police recorded SSPA crime in England and Wales.

Chapter 4: The nature and extent of police recorded same-sex partner abuse crimes in England and Wales

4.1 Introduction

Prevalence of heterosexual and same-sex partner abuse is difficult to determine (Perilla et al., 2003). Researchers have claimed that the full extent of partner abuse generally is largely unknown due to reasons such as lack of consensus on what a 'case' of abuse is (Stark, 2006), the use of a violence based model definition, and the fact that most abuse remains unreported (Gracia, 2004).

When considering SSPA specifically, ascertaining prevalence uncovers unique challenges. As discussed within Chapter One, many researchers studying violence and abuse within same-sex relationships have suggested that different definitions of domestic violence used by researchers in addition to methodological variation means that prevalence cannot be ascertained (Richards et al., 2003; Younglove et al., 2002). In addition, samples used by researchers tend to be small and purposeful (Rohrbaugh, 2006; Stiles-Shields & Carroll, 2014), and thus cannot be said to represent the LGBT population. For these reasons, researchers often arrive at different figures of prevalence influenced by their choice of definition, and/or their methodology and sampling; making prevalence findings from different studies problematic to compare, and hence only an estimate (Baker et al., 2012).

This chapter explores findings from Freedom of Information requests sent to 43 Police Forces in England and Wales to consider the nature and extent of police recorded SSPA crime, and answers research aim 1: To consider the nature and extent of police recorded SSPA crime in England and Wales.

Similar to issues highlighted by existing research exploring prevalence, there are hurdles when assessing the accuracy and validity of police recorded data. As discussed in Chapter Three, police forces record domestic abuse incidents on force-specific recording systems. This means that systems do not necessarily have the facility to indicate via a 'tick-box' that an incident involves partners of the same-sex, and hence if police do not record this information within free text boxes on systems, it will not be obvious who was involved in the incidents, and may subsequently be assumed that the people involved were heterosexual. In addition, domestic incidents may be recorded as an

altercation between friends if it is not ascertained whether the people involved are in a relationship, and as a consequence these incidents will not be recorded as domestic abuse at all. In spite of these potential issues, FOI requests were deemed the most appropriate method to collate police recorded SSPA crime for this research, and although findings should be considered in the light of potential recording problems, they do provide an insight into police recorded SSPA crime.

Of the 43 Forces receiving the FOI request, twelve forces across the country responded and provided individual level crimed data (as discussed in Chapter Three), and hence this chapter will focus on data from these forces. Please note all data presented in this chapter is rounded to the nearest whole number, and thus, percentages may not total 100%.

4.2 Twelve forces recorded a total of 916 SSPA cases over one year

For the first part of the FOI request, forces were asked to provide the total number of SSPA crimed incidents that had been recorded by their force over a one year period. Table 2 shows the total number SSPA crimes recorded by the twelve forces:

Table 2

Number of crimed domestic incidents involving same-sex partners

| <i>Incidents recorded between 1 Aug 2014-31 July 2015</i> | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Gender</i> | Female to female SSPA crime | Male to male SSPA crime | Total number of individual cases |
| Total number of crimed incidents | 419 (46%) | 497 (54%) | 916 |

It can be seen from Table 2 that from the twelve forces providing data, there were a total of 916 individual crimed incidents recorded on police systems over the year long period, made up of 46% involving female to female SSPA and 54% involving male to male SSPA. Police recorded statistics therefore suggest that roughly equal levels of perpetration are recorded within female same-sex relationships and male same-sex relationships; though still more crimes involving male same-sex partners. The 916 incidents shown above are those which are used to form the data for this chapter, with the exception of section 4.3, where collated data was also used.

4.3 Most police forces recorded fewer than 100 crimes over the year

To utilise the largest amount of data provided from the FOI requests, data from forces that provided collated crimed data is also included within this section, alongside individual level data as utilised in section 4.2. As such, data from the twelve forces providing individual level crimed data and the six forces providing collated crimed data were used, giving a total of data from eighteen forces. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the number of crimes recorded by eighteen forces between 1 Aug 2014-31 July 2015.

Table 3

Same-sex partner abuse crimes recorded by police compared to population size

| Force | Approximate number of people within force area | Crimes involving same-sex females | Crimes involving same-sex males | Number of SSPA crimes recorded overall |
|--------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1 | 582,600 | 28 | 62 | 90 |
| 2 | 1.7 million | 28 | 28 | 56 |
| 3 | 500,000 | 11 | 8 | 19 |
| 4 | 1.6 million | 21 | 27 | 48 |
| 5 | 1.1 million | 56 | 56 | 112 |
| 6 | 1.7 million | 113 | 120 | 233 |
| 7 | 1.5 million | 7 | 13 | 20 |
| 8 | 1 million | 16 | 9 | 25 |
| 9 | 2.5 million | 169 | 181 | 350 |
| 10 | 7.4 million | 125 | 384 | 509 |
| 11 | 800,000 | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| 12 | 710,000 | 33 | 51 | 84 |
| 13 | 675,700 | 47 | 19 | 66 |
| 14 | 1.4 million | 72 | 75 | 147 |
| 15 | 1.3 million | 11 | 16 | 27 |
| 16 | 1.6 million | 129 | 188 | 317 |
| 17 | 2.8 million | 38 | 63 | 101 |
| 18 | 625,000 | 35 | 25 | 60 |
| Total | | 943 | 1328 | 2271 |

It can be seen from Table 3 that there was large variety in the number of crimes recorded by the forces, ranging from 7 at the lowest to 509 at the highest. Eleven forces recorded less than 100 crimes over the course of the year, and seven forces more than 100, with forces collectively recording more crimes involving male same-sex couples than female same-sex couples. Figure 2 illustrates the correlation between the number of people in each force area and the number of SSPA crimes recorded:

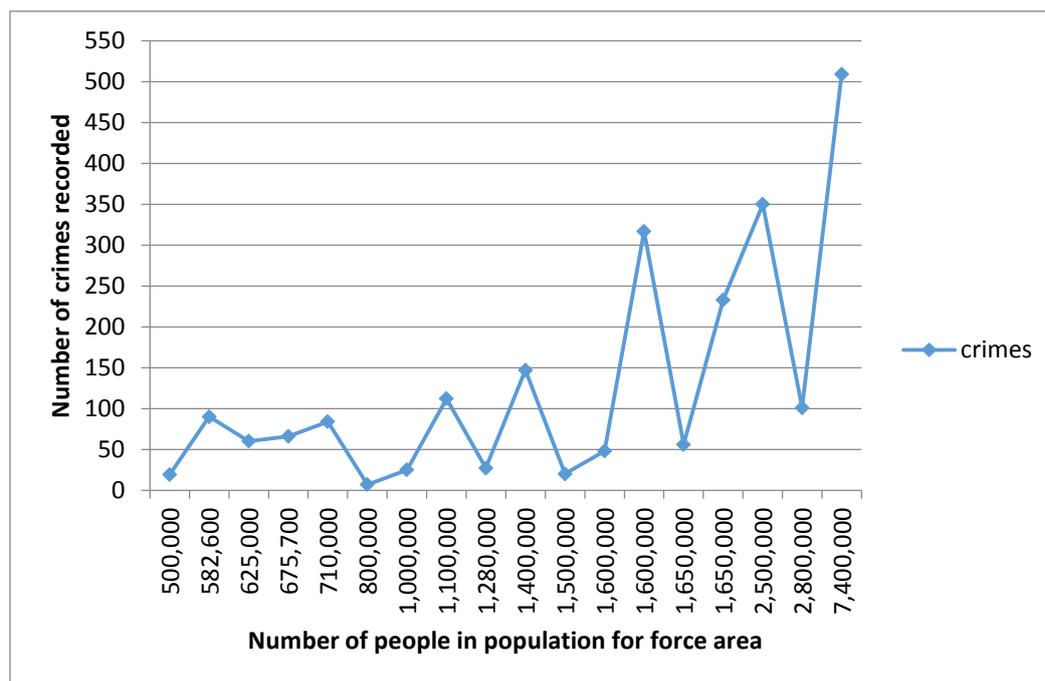


Figure 2. Number of SSPA crimes recorded versus number of people in population

It can be seen from Figure 2 that there is a weak correlation between the number of crimes recorded and the size of the overall population within each force area. Generally, the larger the population size, the more crimes are recorded. Though it is not possible to ascertain the size of the same-sex population in each area, the three forces recording the highest number of crimes are areas well known within England and Wales for large same-sex populations. The points on Figure 2 where there is a large population but low recorded SSPA crime may represent areas where there is a smaller LGBT population, more reluctance to report, and/or police inaccuracies in recording.

4.4 A similar number of same-sex and heterosexual incidents were crimed

In addition to the total number of crimed incidents it was also interesting to consider what percentage of all SSPA incidents reported to forces were classed as crimes. Nine of the twelve forces were able to provide this data. Table 4 shows the percentage of total SSPA incidents that were crimed, and compares this to ONS (2016c) data relating to primarily heterosexual statistics (see Chapter Two for discussion):

Table 4

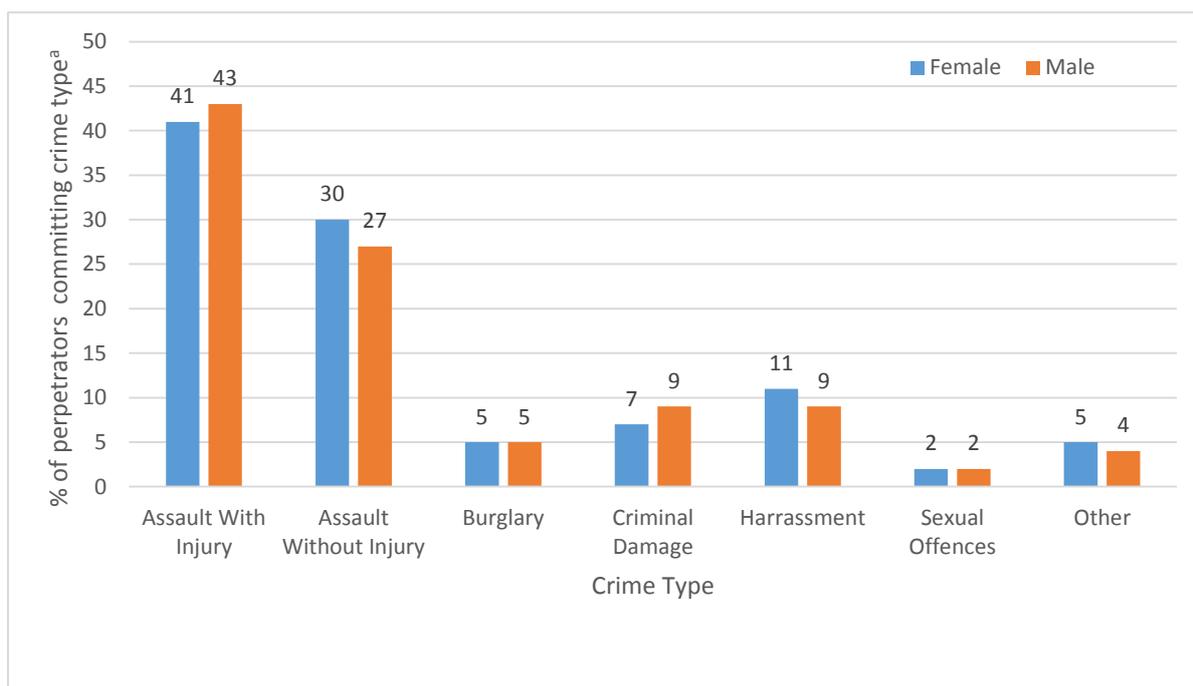
Percentage of total incidents classed as a crime (ONS and FOI data)

| Force | Total number of domestic incidents (ONS) year end March 2016 | % crimed overall (ONS) | Total number of domestic incidents (same-sex) year end July 2015 | % crimed overall (same-sex) |
|----------------|--|------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 1 | 11075 | 42 | 215 | 41 |
| 2 | 4440 | 48 | 40 | 47 |
| 3 | 18780 | 34 | 336 | 33 |
| 4 | 12414 | 47 | 108 | 47 |
| 5 | 14125 | 48 | 218 | 38 |
| 6 | 32135 | 27 | 96 | 39 |
| 7 | 11292 | 42 | 132 | 47 |
| 8 | 52042 | 36 | 662 | 15 |
| 9 | 10744 | 45 | 125 | 48 |
| Average | | 41 | | 39 |

It can be seen from Table 4 that overall, incidents involving same-sex partners were slightly less likely to be crimed than those primarily involving heterosexual couples (39% vs 41%), though the figures were similar. This suggests that overall, the police crimed roughly 40% of all reported partner abuse incidents, regardless of the sexual orientation of the victim and perpetrator.

4.5 Crime types committed by men and women were remarkably similar

The next piece of information provided by the FOI requests were the types of crimes that were recorded on police databases committed by a perpetrator; for example, assault with injury or sexual offences. Figure 3 shows these crime types split by gender, and Table 5 considers whether there were any significant differences between men and women in terms of the types of crimes recorded.



^a male cases n= 497, female cases n= 418

Figure 3. Crime types committed by men and women

Table 5

Test for significance of crime types committed (by gender)

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 2.909 ^a | 6 | .820 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 2.920 | 6 | .819 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .023 | 1 | .879 |
| N of Valid Cases | 915 ^b | | |

^a 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.68.

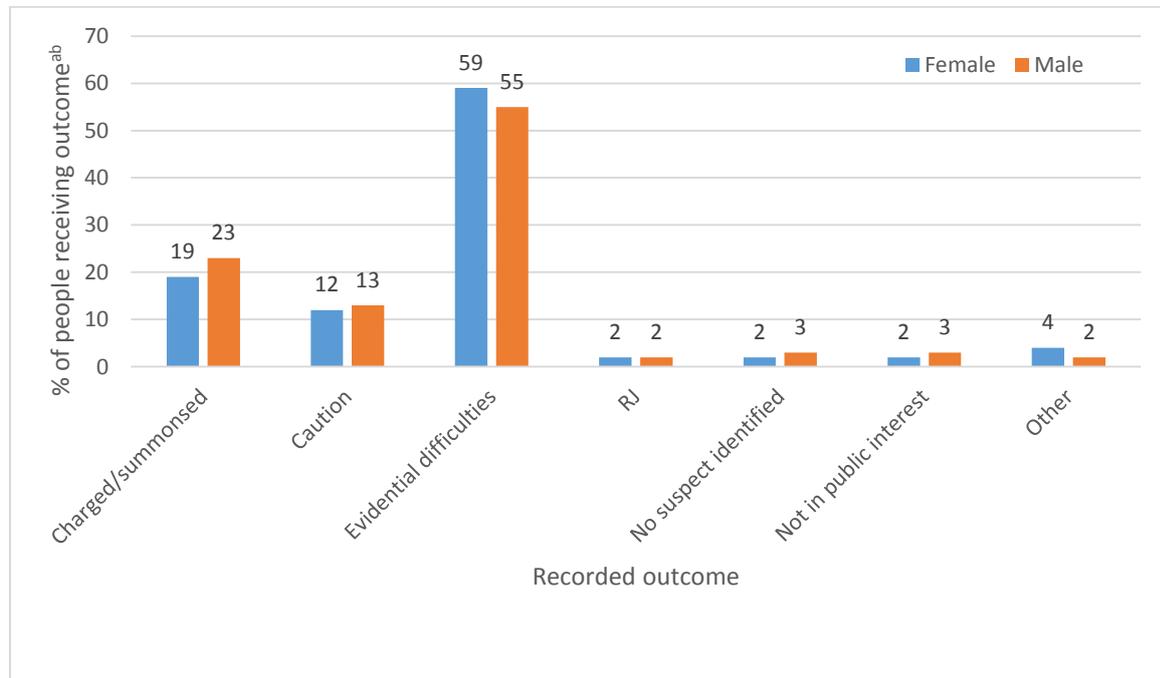
^b male cases n= 497, female cases n= 418

There were no significant differences between recorded crime types committed by men and women perpetrators. $X^2(6, N=915) = 2.91, p = 0.82$. In fact in contrast, it can be seen from Figure 3 that

crime types committed by men and women were remarkably similar. Assault with injury was the most common crime committed by men and women, making up almost 43% and 41% of total crimes committed respectively. Assault without injury was the most common second crime type committed by men and women, followed by harassment. Although no significant differences were found in terms of crime types between men and women, women were found to be slightly more likely to perpetrate harassment and men slightly more likely to commit criminal damage. The 'other' category consists of crimes which made up <1% of the total crime types and hence were excluded from analysis.

4.6 'Evidential difficulties' was the most commonly recorded outcome

The next consideration as part of the FOI requests was to establish what the outcomes were for individual crimed cases; for example, whether perpetrators were cautioned, or undertook restorative justice. Figure 4 outlines the outcomes assigned to the crimes, and Table 6 considers whether there were significant differences between men and women in terms of outcomes of their cases.



^a above 1% of total outcomes only, all other outcomes are included within the 'other' category

^b male cases n= 497, female cases n= 418

Figure 4. Recorded outcome of crimes for men and women

Table 6

Test for significance of outcomes of cases (by gender)

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 5.111 ^a | 6 | .530 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 5.121 | 6 | .528 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1.301 | 1 | .254 |
| N of Valid Cases | 813 | | |

^a 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.73.

It can be seen from Figure 4 that ‘evidential difficulties’ was noticeably the most common outcome for men and women, making up 59% of total outcomes for women and 55% for men. Evidential difficulties means that either the police or the CPS could not gather enough evidence to take a case forward, the victim decided not to support the case, or the victim dropped out from proceedings at a later date. There were no significant differences between men and women in terms of outcomes of crimes, $X^2(6, N=813) = 5.11, p = .53$.

4.6.1 People in same-sex relationships are less likely to support police action

Due to the high number of outcomes recorded as evidential difficulties, it was decided to explore the reasons why this category was so high. Amongst ‘evidential difficulties’ is a subcategory of ‘victim does not support police action’. Table 7 shows the proportion of ‘evidential difficulties’ that was made up by ‘victim does not support police action’.

Table 7

Percentage of evidential difficulties consisting of 'victim does not support police action'

| Gender of couple | % of outcomes overall classed as evidential difficulties | % of evidential difficulties consisting of 'victim does not support police action' |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Women | 59 | 64 |
| Men | 55 | 69 |

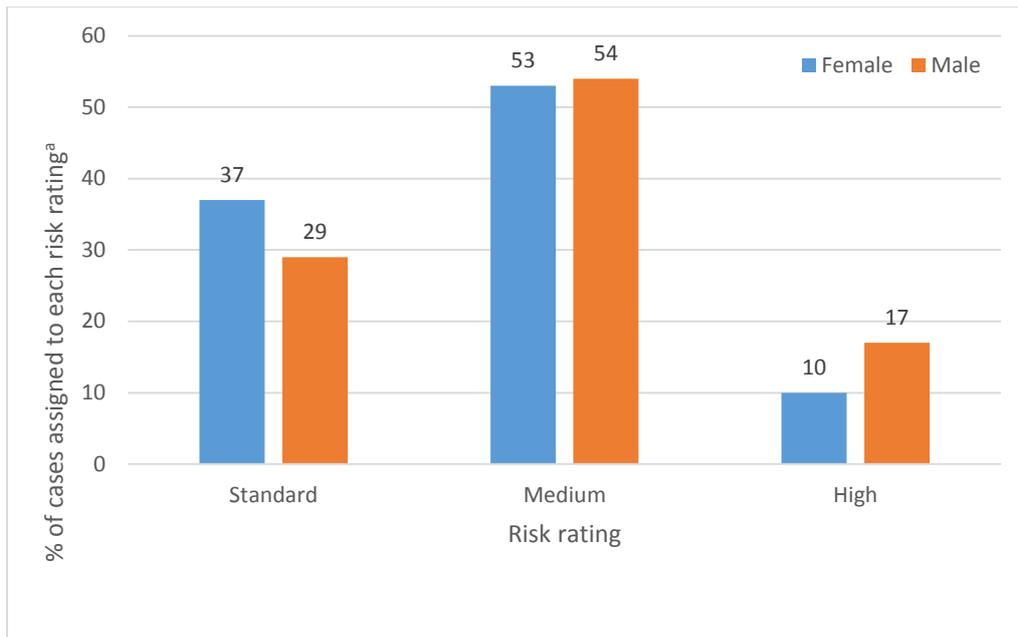
Table 7 illustrates that from the variable 'evidential difficulties', 'victim does not support police action' made up 64% for women, and 69% for men, suggesting that approximately two thirds of men and women who had an outcome of 'evidential difficulties' did not support the police to take action. It can be seen that slightly more men than women did not support the police to take action. The next most common outcome for cases was that the perpetrator was charged/summonsed, making up 19% for women and 23% for men within the sample. This outcome was, however, much less frequent than that of evidential difficulties, as can be seen in Figure 4.

4.7 Risk ratings recorded by police

The next section considered via the FOI requests was risk ratings assigned to incidents by police, based on the DASH risk assessment of standard, medium or high as discussed in Chapter Two.

4.7.1 Men were significantly more likely to be recorded as high risk than women as victims

Figure 5 illustrates the risk ratings assigned to SSPA crimes within the sample for men and women, and Tables 8a and 8b consider whether there were any significant differences between these ratings related to gender:



^a male cases n=263, female cases n= 221

Figure 5. Risk ratings assigned to crimed cases

Tables 8a and 8b

Tests for significance between risk levels assigned to cases (by gender)

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 6.650 ^a | 2 | .036 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 6.730 | 2 | .035 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 6.499 | 1 | .011 |
| N of Valid Cases | 484 | | |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 31.05.

Symmetric measures

| | Value | Approx. Sig. |
|--------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Nominal by Nominal | Phi | .117 ^a |
| | Cramer's V | .117 ^b |
| N of Valid Cases | 484 | |

^a Not assuming the null hypothesis.

^b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

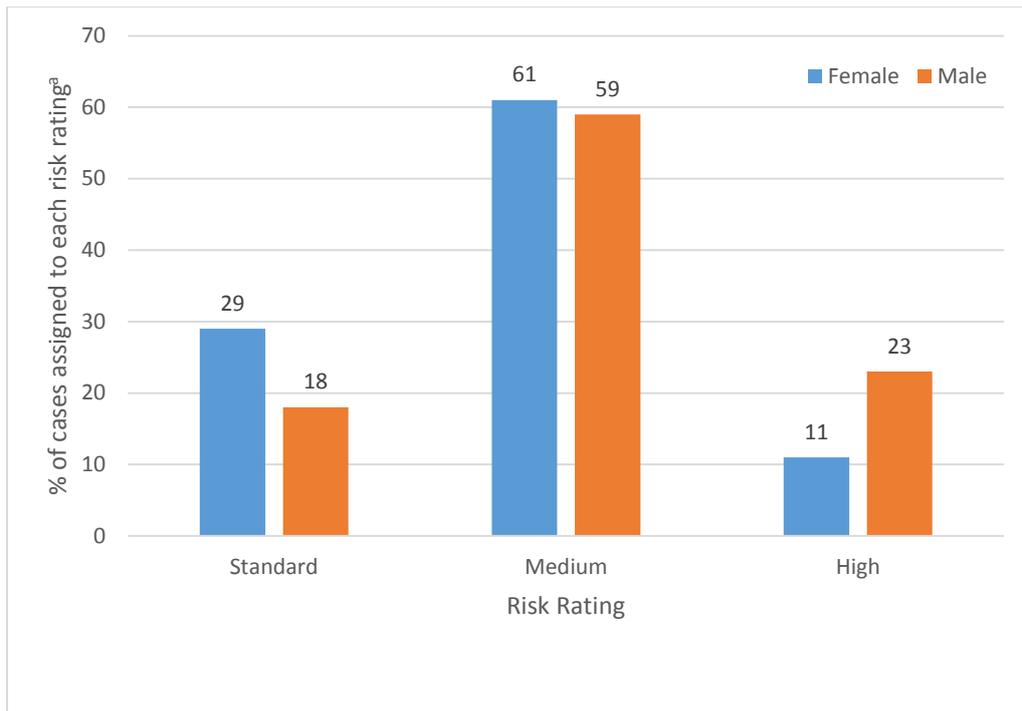
It can be seen from Figure 5 that medium risk was most commonly assigned to male and female victims within the sample, making up 53% for women and 54% for men. Tables 8a and 8b show that there was a significant difference between men and women in terms of risk ratings given, $X^2(2, N=484) = 6.66, p = .04$. Cramer's V suggests a weak association between the variables. It can be seen that men are significantly more likely to be rated high risk than women (17% vs 10% respectively), and women are more likely to be rated standard risk than men. However, almost half of the 916 individual cases provided via the FOI requests had the risk information missing, and hence this data is based on a smaller sample of 484 incidents. Nonetheless, it still suggests a large difference between men and women in terms of risk levels assigned to incidents by police.

4.7.2 Crimes committed by men and women are similar but risk levels are not

As it has already been established that police recorded data suggests that crimes committed by men and women perpetrators are similar in nature, it may be assumed that risk levels associated with said crime types would also be similar. As this was not the case and a significant difference was found between risk ratings given to men and women, each crime type was compared individually alongside gender and risk ratings to establish which crime types intersect with risk and gender to produce significant differences. It is important to note that crosstabulation could only be carried out on cases where the force had provided both the crime type and risk ratings, and cases which omitted one of these were excluded. Of all crime types, only assault with injury produced significant differences when considered alongside gender and risk; considered within the next section.

4.7.3 Men were recorded at significantly higher risk than women as victims for assault with injury crimes

Figure 6 illustrates the risk ratings assigned to assault with injury crimes. Tables 9a and 9b consider whether there were any significant differences relating to gender:



^a male cases n=263, female cases n= 220

Figure 6. Risk ratings assigned to men and women for assault with injury crimes

Tables 9a and 9b

Tests for significance between risk levels assigned to assault with injury cases^a (by gender)

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 7.611 ^b | 2 | .022 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 7.878 | 2 | .019 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 7.408 | 1 | .006 |
| N of Valid Cases | 211 | | |

^a Crime Type = Assault With Injury

^b 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.49.

Symmetric measures

| | Value | Approx. Sig. |
|------------------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Nominal by Phi ^b | .190 | .022 |
| Nominal by Cramer's V ^c | .190 | .022 |
| N of Valid Cases | 211 | |

^a. Crime Type (Above 1% of total cases only) = Assault With Injury

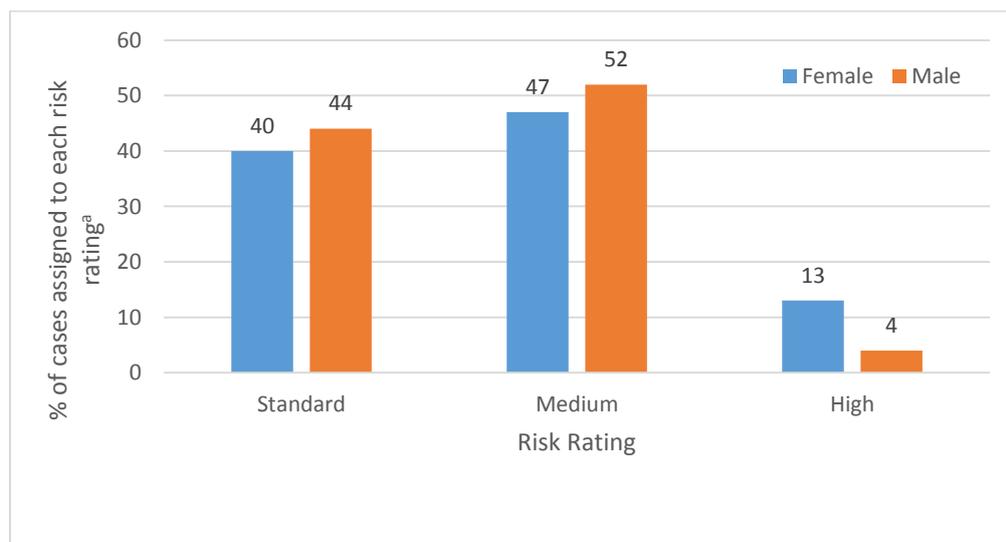
^b. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

^c. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Figure 6 demonstrates that female and male victims of assault with injury crimes were most likely to be rated as medium risk (61% and 59% respectively). It can also be seen that male victims were more likely to be rated high risk than female victims, and female victims more likely to be rated standard risk than male victims. Tables 9a and 9b show that there was a significant difference between men and women in terms of risk ratings given for assault with injury crimes overall, $\chi^2(2, N=211) = 7.61, p = .02$, with a weak association between the variables.

4.7.4 Women were recorded as higher risk than men as victims of harassment

Figure 7 illustrates risk ratings given to men and women as victims experiencing harassment, and Tables 10a and 10b consider whether there was a significant difference in risk ratings relating to gender:



^a male cases n=25, female cases n= 30

Figure 7. Risk ratings assigned to men and women for harassment crimes

Tables 10a and 10b

Tests for significance between risk levels assigned to harassment cases^a (by gender)

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.438 ^b | 2 | .487 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.553 | 2 | .460 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .592 | 1 | .442 |
| N of Valid Cases | 55 | | |

^a Crime Type (Above 1% of total cases only) = Harassment

^b 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.27.

Symmetric measures

| | Value | Approx. Sig. |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Nominal by Nominal | Phi ^b | .487 |
| | Cramer's V ^c | .487 |
| N of Valid Cases | 55 | |

^a Crime Type (Above 1% of total cases only) = Harassment

^b Not assuming the null hypothesis.

^c Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Figure 7 illustrates that medium risk was most commonly applied to incidents of harassment for men and women. Compared to assault with injury crimes, however, more harassment crimes were rated as standard risk. Tables 10a and 10b suggest that there were no significant differences between men and women in terms of risk ratings given for harassment crimes, $\chi^2(2, N=55) = 1.44, p = 0.49$. Though not significant, women were more likely to be rated at high risk for harassment than men (13% of women's sample versus 4% of men's sample).

There were no significant differences found for any of the remaining intersections between crime types, gender and risk ratings, suggesting that male and female victims are recorded as similar risk when considering all other crime types as displayed in Table 11:

Table 11

Non-significant outcomes of tests exploring relationships between gender, risk and crime type

| Variable tested alongside gender and risk | Non-significant outcome |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Assault without injury | $X^2(2, N=124) = .160, p = .92$ |
| Burglary | $X^2(2, N=23) = 1.22, p = .54$ |
| Criminal Damage | $X^2(2, N=42) = .107, p = .95$ |
| Sexual Offences | $X^2(1, N=9) = .032, p = .86$ |

4.8 Discussion

The findings from the FOI request examined police recorded SSPA crimes over a year long period between 1st August 2014 to 31st July 2015. Information was requested from 43 forces in England and Wales and usable data was provided by twelve forces in the form of individual, crimed data. Though only based on data from twelve forces (with the exception of section 4.3), the geographical spread of the twelve forces and the sample of 916 individual cases provided a large enough sample of data to assess police recorded SSPA crimes across England and Wales. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that the FOI data reflects police recorded data only, and taking into consideration existing knowledge that SSPA is largely underreported, the data may not be reflective of the extent of SSPA within society, which is likely to be higher.

Most forces could not provide the statistical information asked for as part of the FOI request. As discussed in Chapter Three, police systems rarely had filters within their systems to be able to search for incidents that involved SSPA incidents, instead often only being able to search by gender, which would also highlight cases involving family members of the same sex. As police use the Home Office definition of domestic abuse (Home Office, 2013) to inform their practice, it seems rational that as family abuse is included within the definition, it should be recorded in the same way as partner abuse. However, I would argue that by doing so, the specific, differing dynamics of partner abuse (and family abuse) are rendered invisible due to being merged together within one definition; this has also been suggested by other feminist researchers (Kelly & Westmarland, 2014). From the point of view of police forces, as most of their systems cannot distinguish between partner and family abuse without a time-consuming manual search, they may also be unaware of the nature and extent of each type of abuse. This means that forces are therefore unable to determine prevalence of

different types of abuse quickly and accurately, and may as a result have difficulty allocating appropriate resources to respond. During the period of this thesis, Greater Manchester Police became the first police force in the UK to use a specific 'code' to record domestic abuse committed by an LGBT perpetrator on their systems, allowing them to easily identify these incidents ("Greater Manchester Police recording LGBT domestic abuse", 2017). Using a recording system such as this would allow police forces to become more aware of the extent of LGBT partner abuse within their area and allocate resources appropriately.

From the eighteen forces that provided data for section 4.3, the findings suggested that most forces recorded a low number of crimed cases involving SSPA over the year. Similarly to heterosexual relationships, research suggests that SSPA is underreported to the police (Donovan & Hester, 2011; Henderson, 2003). This can occur for a variety of political, cultural and individual reasons such as associating police with negative historic connotations (Parry & O'Neal, 2015); which is particularly true for older gay and lesbian victims (Peterman & Dixon, 2003), lack of recognition from same-sex victims that what they are experiencing is abuse (Donovan et al., 2006), and fear of homophobia from police (Alhusen et al., 2010; Calton et al., 2015). Recorded figures varied between force areas and were sometimes surprising. As an example, a force with no known established same-sex population recorded the fourth highest number of SSPA crimes, and a force with the second largest population of people recorded only 101 crimes. These findings suggest that some forces who recorded a high number of SSPA crimes are not necessarily in areas well known for large same-sex populations, or have a larger overall population. Whilst on the one hand it may be that these forces are receiving more SSPA reports and hence the statistics reflect this, it may also demonstrate that some forces are recording incidents more accurately than others. Forces have been criticised for inconsistent crime recording (HMIC, 2014b; HMIC, 2016) and therefore, reliance on police recorded data must be done with caution.

The data suggests that roughly the same number of men and women in same-sex relationships were recorded as committing crimes over the year long period. In addition, the data suggests crime types committed by men and women were very similar; with assault with injury the most common. These findings do not strongly support statistics suggesting that men perpetrate more crime than women, and are more violent (NRCODV, 2007). The findings also refute claims that women are non-violent, or if they are violent, they lack physical strength to cause harm (Hassounah & Glass, 2008). One explanation for the high assault with injury rates perpetrated by women suggested by the data may be due to the influence of living in a gender-unequal society; women are mimicking a heterosexual

relationship, meaning one person takes on the 'masculine role, and as a consequence, perpetrates violence to exert power. From this perception, it may be that women in same-sex relationships are perpetrating an equal amount of physical violence as men in same-sex relationships.

However, though the statistics suggest similar rates of assault with injury perpetrated by men and women, this must be viewed with caveats. First, via the FOI requests I did not have access to a detailed analysis of each case. For this reason it is not possible to determine the context that the violence occurred within, or the proportion of cases that included a victim who acted in self-defence. As it is important to this thesis to consider the context that abusive behaviours occurred within, and in opposition to research using the CTS alone (Straus, 1990), using non-contextual statistics in isolation (such as FOI data) to determine the extent of perpetrated violence is not sufficient to claim equal rates of perpetration between men and women (Kimmel, 2002). Claimed equal levels of perpetration by men and women must therefore be viewed cautiously and consideration of contextual factors such as which groups of people may seek support from the police and their reasons for doing so must ensue.

Some research has suggested that women are more likely than men to call the police, particularly when physical injury has occurred. Within the CSEW survey (ONS, 2016b), which is to be assumed a predominantly heterosexual sample as discussed in Chapter Two, 26% of women and 10% of men reported partner abuse to the police; a trend mirrored by some SSPA research which suggests that lesbians are more likely to call police than gay men (Kuehnle & Sullivan, 2003). In addition, research with same-sex populations has suggested that some of the reasons why victims are more likely to call the police for assistance are if they are injured, or when a weapon is used (Buzawa & Austin, 1993; Henderson, 2003; Kuehnle & Sullivan, 2003). Taking both of these assertions into account, if women in general are most likely to call the police, and more likely to call when they are seriously injured, this could explain the apparent equal levels of assault with injury crimes found by the FOI request. In other words, it may be that the suggested equal levels of violence perpetrated by men and women reflect women's willingness to call the police when they have experienced physical injury, rather than being a reflection of women committing more crimes. However, some research looking at SSPA has suggested that men are more likely to call the police than women (Donovan & Hester, 2011; Henderson, 2003), and so further research would need to be carried out to make more concrete assertions.

Linking to this, another aspect to consider as part of this finding was the high number of assault with injury crimes reported to the police compared to other crimes. The high percentage reported may reflect victims' beliefs that physical violence will be taken seriously by police, as has been found by existing research (Letellier et al., 1994; Monckton Smith et al., 2014; Wolf et al., 2003). This also links to the 'public story' of domestic abuse (Donovan & Hester, 2011) – that domestic abuse consists of physical violence, suggesting that victims are being influenced by this story when making decisions around reporting. As such, men and women may be more likely to report that they have been physically assaulted over other crimes. Combining this with women being more willing to report in general, this increased propensity to report physical violence may mean that the extent of woman to woman perpetration for assault with injury crimes appears inflated within police data when compared to men's. Again, figures would therefore reflect willingness to report particular kinds of crimes rather than reflect actual occurrence.

In summary, though the statistics within this thesis suggest that crimes committed by men and women in same-sex relationships happen in roughly the same proportion, they must be viewed with caution and the factors outlined must be taken into consideration.

When comparing SSPA reported crime to that recorded by the ONS (2016c), the figures suggested that a roughly equal proportion of crimes were recorded by police relating to those in both same-sex and heterosexual relationships. This may mean that a similar proportion of people in same-sex and heterosexual relationships are reporting to police, and/or that police are recognising the types of incidents that are crimes regardless of the sexual orientation of the perpetrator and victim within a couple. Though only 40% of incidents overall were classed as crimes, suggesting that the remaining 60% of reported incidents were not viewed as occupying this category, positively, these figures suggest that there is little bias shown by police officers based on the victim and perpetrator's sexual orientation when criming incidents.

The FOI data suggests that an overwhelming majority of reported incidents result in evidential difficulties; most commonly, 'victim does not support police action'. It is not possible solely from the data to determine reasons why SSPA victims did not support police action as access to individual cases was not available, but there are many possible reasons for this outcome. First, it may not have been the victim themselves who called the police. If someone else called on their behalf it is possible that the victim did not want police support from the outset and so 'victim does not support police action' may have been recorded by the police. Another reason why victims may not support the

action of police is that they may want the police to come and calm a situation down in the immediate moment, but have fears over how they or their partner may be treated by the police due to their sexual orientation. Additionally, they may fear their partner's reaction if they support police action (Chapter 5 discusses how perpetrators 'pre-emptive coercive tactics' and fear of a 'coerced response' disrupt help-seeking).

When considering reasons why incidents resulted in 'evidential difficulties' being recorded (and particularly 'victim does not support police action'), existing research has highlighted a number of avenues which may begin to explain this. Stating that victims may fear how they will be treated by police, Mallory et al. (2015) purported that discrimination from the police based on sexual orientation and gender identity was still pervasive in 2015, which can prevent effective police responses towards the LGBT community. Research involving lesbian and bisexual participants who discussed seeking support from law enforcement found that some women said that they would not call the police for help as they did not want their partner to be subject to discriminatory interactions (Bornstein et al., 2006), and other researchers have found that victims fear a discriminatory response towards themselves (Richards et al., 2003) which can be due to an intersection of factors such as sexual orientation and race (Waldron, 1996).

Participants may also fear repercussions from their partner if they continue cooperating with the Criminal Justice System. Carrie Brown (2008) stated that perpetrators may discourage victims from reporting violence and abuse to the police, telling them that they will bring shame on the LGBT community if they do. In addition, victims may also fear that their situation will get worse if they involve police. One participant interviewed for the thesis said that she called the police when she had been assaulted but then changed her mind and hung up fearing that she had 'opened a can of worms' and was in fear of what her partner would do. This meant that by the time the police arrived she no longer wanted intervention (see Chapter Six: Anna's case study). Ways of disrupting help-seeking relating to sexual orientation which were found within this thesis and prior research highlight challenges to using a feminist framework without a focus on intersections, and indicate the importance of doing so to provide an accurate picture of experiences.

The factors described illustrate why a victim may not support police to take action, and could begin to explain the FOI data. However, current police guidelines now exist in relation to 'evidence-led cases' (also known as victimless prosecutions), meaning that if police are able to gather enough evidence about a case, they can still prosecute without the victim's support. The College of Policing

recommend that police should be proactive in building a case for victims as it is not the victims' responsibility to do this, or to ensure the perpetrator stops the abuse. This is particularly important when considering that the victim may be in fear of supporting police to take action. Though more difficult to pursue than when a victim does support police action, victimless prosecutions have been used at court and guilty verdicts have been ascertained, including for one participant interviewed within this thesis. It is not possible to determine from the statistics provided via FOI requests whether victimless prosecution was used in any of the 916 cases, but due to a high number closed as 'evidential difficulties: victim does not support police action' it may be that this avenue was not followed in a large number of cases. Decision making around courses of action are complicated, however, and some existing research suggests that victims' wishes relating to CJS procedures should not be acted against, even if it appears in their best interests (Herman, 1992).

When considering risk levels assigned to incidents by police, incidents involving two men were rated significantly higher risk overall than incidents involving two women. When breaking this down by crime type to assess specifically where these differences in risk levels were, it was seen that for assault with injury crimes male victims were significantly more likely than female victims to be viewed as high risk. This finding suggests that police felt that men were at higher risk from assault with injury from another man than women were from another woman, perhaps upholding the societal belief of the 'public story' that men are stronger than women and can cause more harm (Donovan & Hester, 2011). Alternatively, it could have been that for these cases, the physical harm caused by men was more severe and posed more risk to victims than that caused by women.

Existing research has considered the role of injury in relation to perceived seriousness. Pattavina et al. (2007) found that in order for police to treat a domestic incident involving two men seriously, a serious offence needed to have been committed such as an aggravated assault. This would suggest that when men are rated as high risk by police, a serious (probably physical) offence has occurred. Linking to research that views incidents involving a man as perpetrator as the most serious (along with those involving a woman as a victim) (Ahmed et al., 2013), it could be suggested that men are perceived by police as being the most dangerous and most likely to cause harm, hence raising the risk level of the victim. In contrast, women, viewed as non-violent, may not be viewed as able to cause a significant amount of harm, and hence their victims' risk ratings are lower. These findings link to the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) of partner abuse, as discussed in Chapter Two. Using this 'public story' as a framework for responding to partner abuse is problematic as it could lead to misidentification of risk within intimate relationships, placing victims at further risk of harm.

Though not a statistically significant finding, it was found that female victims were more likely to be rated at higher risk for harassment from another woman than male victims from another man. The reasons for this cannot be established from the data, however, drawing on existing literature, there are several explanations as to why this may be the case. First, it may be that gender stereotypes are at play, with police viewing harassment as a 'women's offence', and thus, men should be able to stand up for themselves if they are being harassed. The common depiction in television and film that women who stalk and harass are crazy and obsessed (Beck, 2016) may also be at play here, with women who harass being viewed as causing more harm than men who harass. As was mentioned in more than one interview with police officers, men will physically fight if they are unhappy with something and then the disagreement is viewed as resolved, whereas women refuse to 'let things go' (see Chapter Six for a discussion of this). For these reasons, the FOI data suggests that police may view women who harass as the most likely to cause harm. It appears that it is the gender of the *perpetrator* and associated gendered risk (crazy, obsessed), which could primarily influence police's decision making around risk to a victim. For male victims, however, there is also a possible inclination to assume that they should be able to 'deal with' this non-physical type of offence; however, as mentioned earlier, reasoning behind police decision making can only be speculated at from statistics alone. Harassment crimes overall were also more likely to be rated as standard risk than assault with injury crimes, again reflecting the 'public story's' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) focus on physical injury as constituting domestic abuse.

No significant differences were found when considering risk ratings given to men and women for other crime types: assault without injury, burglary, criminal damage and sexual offences. This suggests that the risk to male and female victims experiencing each of these crime types was assessed as roughly similar. Again, individual incident circumstances cannot be assessed, and research which assessed the more granular details of a case would be needed to draw conclusions around reasons for these findings.

4.8.1 A note on risk ratings

As outlined in Chapter Three, risk ratings are intended to be primarily based on the outcome of the DASH risk assessment carried out with victims. However, College of Policing (2016) are clear to mention that risk ratings should not purely be based on the DASH risk assessment, and professional judgement should play a large part in addition. This means that police should have discretion over

how they view risk to a victim, and hence personal views and opinions are likely to affect the risk rating assigned to an individual. In addition, risk levels can also increase based on the number of reports of partner abuse made within a particular timeframe. For example, if a number of incidents are reported by the same individual in close succession, risk levels will be increased, even if the criteria for each individual incident would not have been assessed as highly.

A further thought on risk ratings is whether police officers are assessing the risk to the victim, the risk posed by the perpetrator or the risk of the incident as a whole. The DASH is completed with victims to assess the risk they are facing, which would suggest that risk ratings should apply to the victims' risk of further abuse. During interviews with police officers', this view was upheld, and they generally stated that it was the risk to the victim that was being assessed. However, there were occasions when police officers were not clear, or asked me to clarify. There was also indication that risk may be measured differently depending on the circumstances of the incident. For example, one officer felt that for cases which resulted in injury, officers may consider the risk that the perpetrator posed as the primary factor, compared to harassment cases when the risk a victim was facing was deemed as more important. These differences suggest that there needs to be more clarity and consistency over exactly how officers should be identifying, recording and reporting risk in order to ensure victims are protected.

4.9 Comparison of same-sex and heterosexual data

It is difficult to access data to provide a true comparison of the above issues between SSPA and heterosexual partner abuse, not least due to police recording issues, missing data and unrepresentative samples. However, to provide some comparison I explored data provided by the HMIC (2014a & 2015) in which police forces were inspected to assess how they respond to domestic abuse. Concrete comparisons between this data and the FOI sample must be made with caution, however, as the sample gained by the HMIC consisted of all domestic abuse in line with the Home Office definition, which means that in addition to considering partner abuse, the statistics also involve abuse by family members. However, as Westmarland (2015) who also used a sample involving all domestic violence to estimate partner violence points out, comparing data this way still provides a general picture of incidents that are reported to and recorded by police. For this thesis, comparing samples provides a partial picture of some of the similarities and differences between

police recording and response to SSPA (SSPA is illustrated by the FOI sample) and heterosexual⁵ and family domestic abuse (illustrated by the HMIC sample). The HMIC (2015) sample consists of data recorded by the police over a one year period to March 31st 2015.

4.9.1 SSPA perpetrators less likely to be charged and more likely to be cautioned

The HMIC (2015) report states that across England and Wales the most common outcome of domestic abuse cases is to charge or caution, followed by evidential difficulties with victim support, and finally evidential difficulties where the victim does not support police action (HMIC, 2015). These statistics differ to those within same-sex relationships as illustrated by the FOI sample where cases were more likely to be closed as evidential difficulties than for the perpetrator to be charged or cautioned. Looking at the charging figures side by side, within the HMIC sample, 27% of perpetrators were charged, compared to 21% within the FOI sample. This suggests that police are more likely to charge for heterosexual domestic abuse compared to SSPA. Similarly, caution levels differ between the samples, with 9% of the HMIC sample being cautioned, and 13% of the FOI sample. HMIC (2014a & 2015) found when inspecting police forces that there was an unreasonably high level of cautioning used by officers, which they stated was not appropriate for domestic abuse cases. They said:

If there is sufficient evidence to caution, then there is sufficient evidence to charge (HMIC, 2014, p.100)

The higher caution rates in the FOI sample suggest that inappropriate cautioning is being used in more cases involving SSPA than in the HMIC sample. This could be for a number of reasons. Walters (2011) carried out qualitative research looking at the experiences of lesbian intimate partner violence victims. She found that one woman who had experienced a police response a few times had been told alongside her partner to quieten down and 'act like ladies' (p.261), with the incident being treated more as a breach of peace than domestic abuse. Alhusen et al. (2010) found similar police attitudes, with one woman victim stating that the police arrived and said 'it's just a couple of dykes, whatever' (p.6) and just walking off. These experiences suggest that when partner abuse occurs between two women it may not be taken seriously; possibly relating to gender stereotypes as to how women should act, and heteronormative views that violence and abuse between two women is

⁵ Though the HMIC sample may include data relating to SSPA, it is assumed to be primarily heterosexual due to the much higher number of reports made involving female victims and male perpetrators

not serious. Similarly, links to the 'public story' can be made here (Donovan & Hester, 2011), with women viewed as non-violent. This may account for why more cautions than charges are given to abusive women in same-sex relationships.

When considering men in abusive same-sex relationships, some research reports that partner abuse is mutual (Bartholomew et al., 2008). This research did however rely on measurement from the Conflict Tactics Scale so did not take into account contextual factors which may have influenced why men were using violence and other forms of abuse in retaliation. Additionally, research has suggested that a serious offence needs to have been committed for a domestic incident between men to be taken seriously (Pattavina et al., 2007). This suggests that some level of violence is perceived as normal between men, and it needs to reach a particular threshold of 'seriousness' for an arrest to be made, again suggesting that gender stereotypes about how men are expected to behave are at play, and the 'public story' viewing men as violent is being drawn upon (Donovan & Hester, 2011).

If police conform to the 'public story' outlining that women are not capable of violence and that some level of violence from men is normal, men and women experiencing SSPA may not receive equal protection from the law; which may begin to explain the higher level of cautioning than for the heterosexual sample. Heteronormative societal norms, gender stereotypes and the 'public story' will undoubtedly influence police's views (as they do general society), in addition to influencing how police respond to SSPA (discussed further in Chapter Six).

A further point relating to why fewer SSPA perpetrators are charged than cautioned may also be related to achieving victim satisfaction. Within UK police forces, victim satisfaction ratings are routinely collected by police forces for different types of crimes. However, it was highlighted by the HMIC (2014a) report that due to domestic abuse covering a range of crimes, police forces were routinely not collecting satisfaction data from domestic abuse victims, in part due to the sensitivities of doing so. A recommendation was put in place that by the start of 2016 forces should collect data from domestic abuse victims in an appropriate and sensitive way. As victim satisfaction views are now being collected, and as a result are more transparent in relation to domestic abuse, police officers may be more aware of this and hence want to listen to victim's wishes in order to achieve high levels of victim satisfaction. This means that if victims request for perpetrators not to be arrested, police may act upon these wishes.

Hoyle (1998) found that police were more likely to take action (arrest or removal of perpetrator) when the victim wanted it. She found that police were aware that they could take action without victim support, but stated that they would prefer to respect the victim's wishes. Other researchers such as Buzawa and Austin (1993) have also found that police are more likely to arrest if it is what the victim wants. Though not arresting may be in line with a victim's wishes, there are other factors to consider when making this decision. On the one hand, listening to victim's wishes is positive as it means they will be likely to report more satisfaction with police response (Buzawa and Austin found that victims were happiest when the police acted upon their preferences). However, it must be taken into account that even if victims state they do not wish for the perpetrator to be arrested, they may be speaking under duress and in fear of what will happen if they support the arrest. A further consideration is that regardless of whether the victim does want the arrest, they or their children may be at danger of further harm from the perpetrator, and so the police have a safeguarding duty. There are complicating factors, however, such as research which has asserted the notion that victims who support the arrest of the perpetrator are more likely to be re-victimised (Hirschel & Hutchison, 2003). Taking into account all of these factors in addition to those discussed previously may explain the low charge rate for perpetrators of SSPA. If police perceive SSPA victims to be low risk, and victims do not support the police to take action (for whatever reason) it follows logically that the number of perpetrators who will be charged is lower.

4.9.2 SSPA victims less likely to support police action

In addition to comparing charging and caution rates, the percentage of cases with the outcome 'evidential difficulties: victim does not support police action' also differed between the two samples, with the HMIC sample ranging between 1% in one force to 46% in another, and the FOI sample 67%. These figures illustrate that the FOI sample were much more likely to have their cases closed as 'evidential difficulties: victim does not support police action' than were the HMIC sample. This suggests that people reporting abuse in same-sex relationships are less likely to support the police to take action than those reporting abuse in heterosexual or family relationships, which may be for reasons such as those discussed throughout this chapter relating to fear of being outed, fear of discrimination towards themselves or their partner, and fear of repercussions from their partner if they support police. These specific factors relating to sexual orientation highlight the importance of using a feminist intersectional approach to explore the influence of sexual orientation alongside gender on SSPA. The high number of SSPA cases closed as 'victim does not support police action'

also suggests that victimless prosecutions are being used in fewer SSPA cases than heterosexual partner abuse and family cases. The ways which police perceive and respond to SSPA may also be linked to this, and will be explored within Chapter Six.

4.10 Summary

This chapter has presented and discussed the findings from Freedom of Information Requests completed by twelve of the 43 police forces in England and Wales. Data was collected relating to SSPA crimes over a one year period for: gender, crime types, outcome of crimes, and risk ratings; data was analysed by gender. Analysis of the data finds some similarities with existing research into police responses to SSPA; particularly highlighting prior research findings into why SSPA victims do not support police to take action. The chapter also highlights significant new findings such as most police forces recorded less than 100 SSPA incidents within the year, crime types committed by men and women perpetrators are remarkably similar, and gender stereotypes and the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) are likely to influence police decisions relating to risk ratings. Ambiguity over how risk ratings should be applied was also discussed within this chapter, followed by a comparison of police actions within a SSPA sample compared to a heterosexual/family abuse sample. The next chapter addresses research aim 2: To explore the help-seeking decisions victims face when deciding whether to call the police about SSPA. It discusses findings from interviews with nineteen police officers and staff, twelve professionals, and four victims to explore their views around the help-seeking decisions faced by victims.

Chapter 5: Seeking police support for SSPA: Victims' help-seeking decisions

Within the UK and internationally, people experiencing partner abuse seek support from a wide range of people and places, including friends and family, voluntary organisations, and statutory services. For this reason, those who work within such organisations have experience and knowledge about partner abuse, such as why they believe services are accessed, and the quality of support they feel services provide. They also often hold real-life examples of situations relating to interactions between those seeking help and those providing it, either first-hand or vicariously through experiences of colleagues, friends or other professionals in the field. Police views and opinions of providing a service in particular are rarely seen within existing SSPA literature, meaning there is a gap in knowledge to be filled. For this research, alongside police views, those of professionals and victims help to build up a broader picture of police responses to SSPA. This chapter addresses research aim 2: To explore the help-seeking decisions victims face when deciding whether to call the police about SSPA.

5.1 Decision making around calling police is multi-faceted

When considering factors that influence whether a victim chooses to seek police support, three key themes emerged from the interviews, which will now be discussed in turn:

- Well-founded fear
- What constitutes 'serious' abuse
- Existing knowledge and assumptions about police

5.2 Well-founded fear

Well-founded fear was identified as a primary theme that police and professionals felt influenced whether or not victims decide to seek police support for SSPA. This fear was not related to one specific concern, but rather spanned a wide range of areas such as fear of not receiving an empathic response from police, fear of the negative repercussions of calling, and fear of being outed via the process of involvement with police. Each of these subthemes will now be discussed further.

5.2.1 Victims are worried they will not receive an empathic response

The first area that police and professionals felt would be feared by victims was around whether they would receive an empathic response from the police, including being believed and taken seriously. Within professionals' interviews particularly, these factors were discussed within the context of being in a same-sex relationship. In relation to being believed, two participants discussed this within the context of the police identifying who the perpetrator and victim were:

'Knowing that they will be believed is a big thing and not to be accused of being the perpetrator when they are really the victim.' (IDVA)

'If a male rings saying that he has been assaulted by a female that is a bit of a stigma that we are trying to overcome, I don't know whether that's the same case with female female or male on male, but I think sometimes maybe whether they will be believed.' (Detective Constable)

Police and professionals felt that worries over being taken seriously would affect a victim's decision to call. There was particular discussion from professionals that victims may fear that SSPA would not be taken seriously by police due to stereotypes around sexual orientation, masculinity and femininity:

'I think there is a fear that it won't be taken as seriously, two blokes are going to be told well "man up just sort it out" and clients have said that they'd had these sorts of responses.' (Senior Project Worker)

'Because it's same-sex they don't think it will be taken as seriously because there is that kind of general opinion that it's always men assaulting women, that couldn't possibly happen.' (Counsellor)

'Like you can't really be a victim of an incident if it's same-sex because you should've you know stopped the person or just yeah fought back or something I think there's that particular concern about it not being taken seriously or not being seen as sort of domestic violence and similarly sometimes people might think they won't understand how serious it is because it might be viewed as say a falling out between friends.' (Service Coordinator)

It can be seen that fear of not being believed and taken seriously relating to sexual orientation was a key factor for participants, who felt that as victims do not conform to the prevailing 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) of male perpetrator and female victim this was an added layer for them when making their decisions around calling the police. Compared to professionals, police tended to discuss the influence of sexual orientation to a lesser extent. Only two police mentioned the influence of sexual orientation as a potential factor affecting being believed, one of these being an LGBT liaison officer who had specialised knowledge about same-sex issues. This suggests that the role of sexual orientation in victims' decisions around help-seeking was not viewed by the majority of police within this research as being a barrier.

Anna's narrative illustrates how she felt disbelieved by the police; linking to notions of femininity and what it means to be a mother:

5.2.1.1 Case Study: Anna – Nobody will believe that I am a victim

A large proportion of Anna's story focused around the influence of her and Carol both being women and mothers, and how she felt that this contributed to the police not believing that Carol could perpetrate abuse. Carol spent time during their relationship telling Anna that the police would not believe that she was a victim (due in part to Anna being physically stronger than Carol) and instead would remove the children and see Anna as an unfit mother if she reported to the police. Carol would also intermittently report to services that she was the victim, so that information was 'stored' to deter Anna from reporting. Additionally, when Carol physically injured Anna, Anna explained how she felt that the police held an idea of what a perpetrator and victim should be like (male and physically strong), and, as a result of not fitting into this image, felt that the police did not believe that she was a victim; instead asking her to describe in great detail how she was injured, which led to Anna feeling disbelieved.

Anna: She's stormed out of the house saying she's going to take everything in the world away from me you know and that's what you get told is that no one will believe you no one will believe you no one will believe you and one of the things that I used to get told a lot is that people out there think that you cope and that you manage and that you're a good mum and that you function basically but they don't really know what a piece of shit you are, what an absolute, and if anybody came into this house and saw what you were really like then it would all be over you know and your front would all be gone and the kids would be taken and this would happen and that would happen so for the police to then come in, almost very much like you have to be able to sit down and calmly say 'oh this is exactly what happened and I fell down three steps or four steps' or whatever and 'how did you break your fall' and this and that and the other you know and I just thought what they expect of you and actually my subsequent experience with the police was much better, but I was in a very different place

Case Study: Anna (continued)

Kate: Yeah

Anna: We had separated

Kate: Okay

Anna: And I'm coming to collect one of the children for something, Carol got annoyed and lost her temper and shoved me and I fell and injured myself, and I went to the school to do the school drop-off and it was commented on that my eye was swelling up you know, and it was subsequent to that that I contacted the police so I sort of did it with encouragement but when I say I was in a different place it was still bad but I was able to go and be interviewed and sit there and describe exactly what had happened, and I think partly I'd had that experience before with the police so I felt like they're going to want to, but even then they were like what was it, 'it's very hard to push someone backwards' because basically she pushed me backwards and I lost my footing and fell, 'it's very hard to push someone that hard in the chest that they fall backwards' and I remember thinking what do they do they just have this I dunno do they set up at police stations in the training do you like shove people and see how far they fall it just didn't I wasn't sure how you would come to that, how can you on what basis can you make that judgement?

Kate: And again it was disbelieving what you'd said because you're saying 'but that did happen and this is how I got this injury'

Anna: But again it's more believable that I hit myself in the face, punched myself in the face despite the fact that it wasn't a punch mark you know even, I would've had to get something and shove it, you know so that was very much I thought on what basis do you make that judgement and yeah it was disbelief and I think the other thing is that less so the first time but in my interviews with the police they make you feel like they're taking everything very seriously but they must in their heads be thinking, because the subsequent notes you read when you get police disclosure is basically like well you know I remember and I think there's a belief as well that perpetrators are male and also strong, physically strong and that's one of the things Carol used to say was that no one would believe because she was physically weaker than me you know, and in an abstract yes but you know I've known subsequently known of other perpetrators and people who are very slim built not necessarily like you know so, and some of the things she said subsequently just didn't make any sense you know like to anybody else and I don't feel she ever but maybe she did I don't think she ever got questioned to like okay 'so how did Anna manage to do this to you when she was eight months pregnant' oh no that doesn't come into the fact that I couldn't do anything and you just think one of the things I remember thinking 'well even if it wanted to I couldn't have done that' I couldn't tie my own shoelaces so

Kate: Yeah

Anna: There was no sense of that.

5.2.2 There were many negative repercussions of calling police

A further issue discussed by participants was that victims feared the negative consequences of calling the police; particularly around loss of an important relationship with their partner, but also

touching upon loss of financial security, housing or children. Generally, police and professionals felt that police understood these complexities that victims may face when deciding to call the police, and the different areas of their lives victims were risking when they decided to seek help:

‘If that's the only person in your life, the person who is abusing you, you are not going to want to go and report them because if you lose them then you've got nothing.’ (Project Manager – LGBT Organisation)

‘There's lots of risk from individuals, not only in terms of personal harm and physical harm but in terms of finance, housing, the children and everything else and it's so complicated all the different elements you know in my experience victims are very cognisant of the different things they will have to consider and they consider it before they ever pick up the phone.’ (Detective Sergeant)

‘In most types of crime it's quite straightforward for someone to say “well there's been a crime so I'm just going to tell the police about it”, if they have confidence in the police, to do something about it but when it comes to domestic abuse there's a whole massive element of other stuff that actually doesn't have much to do with crime, it's more to do with relationship issues so any relationship issue you can think of suddenly is gonna come on top of you in making the decision to tell the police.’ (Detective Chief Inspector)

A number of police and professionals stated that they felt that victims were aware that making a call to the police would mean that their relationship would be unable to survive. This was discussed in the context of calling the police as a last resort when victims’ attempts to ‘save’ the relationship had failed:

‘They know as soon as they call the police on their partner that's going to make it worse if they choose to stay with them, that pretty much if you call the police on your partner it's a death knell in your relationship... there are very few relationships that will survive and be healthier after you've called the police on your partner so I think most people are aware of that.’ (LGBT Liaison Officer)

‘It is often a last resort and it is when they feel they've exhausted all other options because there is still that fear that the police won't take them seriously and won't believe them.’ (Senior Project Worker)

In relation to calling the police as a last resort, there was suggestion that if someone has made the decision to leave their partner then they may be more inclined to call the police:

‘Are they thinking about staying with that person number one because I guess if they're not then they might be more inclined to call police and actually reach out for help.’ (Detective)

This comment highlights that if a person has made the decision to leave their abusive partner, it may be easier to reach out for external support due to fewer potential losses within their lives being at risk. During interviews with victims it was apparent that they each had a number of aspects to their lives that they would risk losing if they reported to the police, such as children, housing, relationships with family and, in Charlie’s case, her whole community. Charlie and Amil’s cases highlight some of the repercussions of calling the police as discussed by police and professionals, and explore how they intersect with their identities:

5.2.2.1 Case Study: Charlie – I fear being hurt or killed by my partner and losing my community

Charlie comes from a travelling background where there are strong community ties and calling the police for any reason is perceived as unacceptable. Charlie’s primary concerns with calling the police were around fear of harm from her partner (including fear of being killed), and being shunned from her community. Charlie experienced severe coercion and control in her relationship which heightened the anxieties she faced about contacting the police, and the harm her partner could cause her. It can be seen from her experiences that her culture largely intersected with her experiences of abuse, and influenced her decisions around help-seeking:

Kate: So before you called [police] for the first time, you've explained a little bit, but were there any really specific worries that you had about calling that you haven't mentioned already?

Charlie: Yes in terms of, just in terms of because I've had involvement with social services but then later on like now, how I look now, and the second time I think the worries that I had was there was no police support, you can't get moved, the moment you actually tell you're shunned, blacklisted, or literally what my partner, my ex-partner would do to me, who you know we were engaged I was going to marry him and everything but you know it was just awful, it was really awful you know being in your teenage years and sometimes even now I look at teenagers and they're going to college or they're doing different things and I think God bless you and I think God I was that age and I think when I was that age like literally I was married

Kate: So different?

Charlie: Yeah just absolutely awful and even things like, even things like eating he would take food off me or he'd be that paranoid even if I went to the corner shop he'd check in my underwear to see if I'd been sorry again it's probably a cultural thing to even say it but to see if I'd been do you know what I mean?

Kate: Sure

Case Study: Charlie (continued)

Charlie: He followed me it was just awful but then obviously because I'd seen the same thing with my mother culturally even with him his family were travellers from (city) and when you see how strong they are and you've lived around them like that even before I transitioned when I was 15 I was paving driveways and doing everything with my brothers, my uncles and obviously I knew I was different and that's when I transitioned but literally because the culture is so different and even with the police and everything else it's like the type of men that we'll go for are either providers or alpha males and everything else that is like you're just really scared at the time you know so it was awful just being killed actually and that cos that can happen.

5.2.2.2 Case Study: Amil – I'm not from the UK so will receive a poorer police response

Amil, who moved to the UK from Northern Africa feared a negative response from the police due to not being born in the UK. His other worries all intersected with this, and he feared many negative repercussions from calling the police. For example, Amil was reliant on Bradley for housing and if they separated Amil would be left homeless, unable to find new housing. In addition, Bradley told the police that Amil was a terrorist due to his country of origin, and Amil was worried that the police would believe this:

Amil: I'm international in this country if he kicks me out I'm not allowed to go to the Council, they don't give me a house or anything I am not allowed any benefits in this country so that was an issue

Kate: So you were very reliant on him?

Amil: In the house, in the house yes. If he kicks me out that same day I'll have nowhere to go and we [support worker] had to come up with a plan to secure that problem for me to find a place to live before I can decide to leave

Kate: So you mentioned how you were really worried for what your partner would do, did you have any worries about how the police would react?

Amil: Yes I did

Kate: Can you talk a little bit around that?

Amil: I thought the police from my idea of police if you go to them they will action immediately but because we asked them not to do that and for my own safety they decided not to go for him immediately, apparently my partner has previous relationship with a woman and it was domestic abuse involved and he didn't tell me much about it but I found out later from the police she reported him a couple of times yeah he's got a couple of reports before me so the police were just worried about my own safety so every time I talk to them and everything they would make sure I am okay and everything I had two amazing police officers I was surprised myself when I got that kind of help because I'm an international in this country, I've never approached the legal side of anything no lawyers no I just deal with immigration and I never had to go to the police ever so I was worried about how they're going to react and you hear some stories about the police not being helpful but they were extremely helpful, I was emailing the police they would e-mail me back whenever I wanted a response back and I never thought I would get that service (laughs).

Anna described very specific concerns about not seeking police support due to simply wanting to 'get by', as a gay person and not to risk having her care of her children questioned. She explains how as a gay parent, she feels she is expected to meet higher expectations than heterosexual parents, and this contributed to her not speaking out about partner abuse. In addition, she believed that the police were not equipped to deal with the manipulation shown by perpetrators:

5.2.2.3 Case study: Anna – I just wanted to get by

Anna: I just think you grow up wanting as much of your life to be private as possible and thinking you need to keep things private because one of the things I think you learn as a gay person is not to be in people's faces, not to be out there, not to be because that's how you get by you just assimilate, you slip under the radar, so that goes very much against the grain of kind of opening up and being out there, and I think there's pressure and I think particularly being a lesbian mum, worried that this will start to trigger concerns about my kids and I feel like the threshold you have to meet as a lesbian parent is higher than a heterosexual parent so you know and even in a relationship that what you have to portray to the outside world is higher so then you're not in a perfect...I mean I'll never forget when everything kicked off at the school I was talking to the headmaster because he was in a panic with a pack this thick (hand gesture showing thickness) on parental responsibility trying to work out who had parental responsibility for the kids and in a panic and he said 'oh it's such a shame you are our first two mum family' and I just thought 'oh fuck off', you know that I'm not flying some flag at the moment it's not really that high on my list so there was that kind of element of like so it wasn't forefront but it was there it was a factor

(later in the interview)

Anna: It's so traumatic to be interviewed and then basically I feel like they hand it to the abuser on a plate to say they've said all this stuff about you and then they give the good, a lot of these people obviously you have got your really thick drunk angry white men right but that's not all domestic violence perpetrators by any stretch of the imagination, and you will have a lot of people particularly when you're coming down to controlling and coercive stuff who can talk and charm people, charm and going 'oh me? Oh no' and so on and so forth and I just feel the police are ill-equipped to deal with those.

5.2.3 Victims fear being outed via the process of reporting

A further fear highlighted by interviews was that of outing. Participants suggested that victims may fear revealing their sexual orientation to the police, or fear having their sexual orientation revealed during CJS processes, and, as such, may be deterred from reporting to the police. Professionals were most aware of this potential issue, with only a minority of police discussing implications of outing. One police participant who did mention outing spoke about the fear victims may have of telling a professional that they are in a same-sex relationship, particularly when they may not be out to others in their personal life, or do not identify as LGBT:

‘They've got “nobody knows I'm gay, I don't want anyone to know I'm gay I don't identify possibly as gay I don't want anyone to know I'm in this relationship and I'm not sure how that looks to other people so the last thing I want to do is call the police and then have it all over a crime report that could be found by the press or whatever.”’ (LGBT Liaison Officer)

In addition to outing via sexual orientation, there were specific issues discussed with regards to trans people in terms of having their gender identity made public and having to explain their identity to police. Participants discussed how trans people may have their identity questioned by police, be asked personal questions about their lives, and risk professionals not understanding what they are telling them:

‘Have you been known by previous names' and 'what is your gender', and say for example a trans woman even if they look really passable do they sound like a bloke.’ (LGBT Diversity Consultant)

‘Reporting something because obviously you're going to have to talk about your sexuality, and again if you are transgender you are going to have to kind of go through the whole rigmarole of talking about your gender identity, your transition, whereabouts you are in your transition, will people even understand what you're talking about?’ (Project Manager: LGBT Organisation)

The fear that by calling the police victims would be outed to professionals and potentially friends and family via police presence or media outputs came across strongly during interviews; primarily from interviews with professionals and to a lesser extent interviews with police. In opposition to discussions by police and professionals, however, victims interviewed were generally not concerned with outing themselves to police, but were worried about being outed as an *implication* of reporting. Amil's case highlights some of these implications:

5.2.3.1 Case Study: Amil – He threatened to tell my family I am gay

Amil was controlled by Bradley over a long period of time via a wide range of coercive and controlling behaviours such as having his food withheld, being accused of being a terrorist, and being forced to live in a tiny area of their house. As his relationship with Bradley was the first relationship (with anyone) he had been in, Amil had no comparisons to draw upon and was unsure what ‘normal’ behaviours within a relationship were. Initially, Amil interpreted Bradley's behaviours as love and affection, but following Bradley's threats to out Amil to his parents, Amil realised something was not right and sought support from domestic abuse charities.

Case study Amil (continued)

Due to Bradley's constant threats to out Amil if he did not do what Bradley asked, Amil was worried that if he reported to the police that Bradley would call his parents to tell them he was gay. In this way, Amil was not concerned about outing himself to the police, but feared Bradley's threat of outing him to his parents:

Amil: And yeah that's just an example of controlling of what I was dealing with then there is the threatening there is a threat as well that has been involved recently is 'if you don't do this I will do that' so

Kate: And what was it, because you said that you didn't realise for a while, that you thought it was more of an affection, what was it that made you realise that it was actually not that?

Amil: Yeah, it happened gradually because he lived in (city) and I lived here so I was moving back and forth so every time I moved here I think 'let's give us a chance it'll work', doesn't work and I move back and the same problem being controlled and this time when I was here I lived for quite longer with him and whereas basically it's the threatening side of it 'if you don't do this I will call your family back home and tell them that you're gay' they don't know that I'm gay so that's what triggered the alarm in me that's not normal why would you call my family he knows for a fact that if my family knows that I'm gay I will not be allowed back home at all and I know that for a fact as well my family is quite strict so he was playing on that he said a phone call he can make to my mum or my dad well my mum my dad's not here my mum he would call her to say 'hi your son is gay'

Kate: So there's that threat

Amil: There was that threat that trigger yeah

(later in the interview)

Kate: Okay. And you said that before you didn't want the police to be involved, you said that your partner was a powerful man. What were you worried was going to happen if the police got involved?

Amil: Just call my family and tell them that I'm gay.

In addition to victims' fear of having their sexual orientation revealed, some professionals were also aware of specific issues trans victims may encounter relating to fear of having their gender identity outed via police reporting. Charlie drew upon previous interactions with police and members of the public relating to her gender identity to draw conclusions around her reluctance to call police regardless of the fact that she felt that she mostly 'passed' as a woman due to her appearance. She expressed fear of being discriminated against due to having a male ID despite presenting as female, and worry over her voice sounding too 'male'. She also explained that those who are in early stages of transition or do not pass as easily may experience a more negative response from the police:

5.2.3.2 Case Study: Charlie – Police will be confused about my gender identity

Charlie: But even now, even before you came the (inaudible) guy who was here that's why I was also delayed too, because I'm not able to change all my documents yet until I get a gender recognition certificate so he was really confused he was like 'who is this person?' and it's got like a full Catholic name and he was so confused and then I was like 'it's me' and he was even more confused and you can imagine having all of that with documents and then the police so it just puts me off from dealing with the police altogether you know

Kate: So do you think that the police would respond differently or the same if you think of a cis woman in a heterosexual relationship who is experiencing domestic violence?

Charlie: No because of how I look and also I believe that how a woman dresses and looks and everything else she is not defined by her you know attire or makeup or all of that those things don't constitute the woman but I think the people who are in early transition or they really, they really bend the gender binary that can be difficult, that can be difficult and even with myself I look how I look but I've still got a male ID sometimes my voice might go deep so there's things like that where if I was to bring those things to the police or whoever else they would probably laugh at me or, I'll just give you an example do you want to know an honest example

Kate: Sure

Charlie: I haven't seen my mother since Easter this year, I went to see her, she was drunk, she went to attack me, and she's slowly finally getting her head around the whole transgender thing. She went to attack me, charged at me I grabbed her by the hair she's a big woman, and we roughed and tumbled and then the police got called but she said that it was her son called (name) that was attacking her and this was in like (area of country) honey where it's just hillbillies travellers and rednecks so I'm sorry, (laughs) and then five vans came and they all stormed the house and as soon as they got into the lounge and I was sat there like this smoking a cigarette and they looked at me and they were like 'who are you love?' and I was like 'I'm (name) I'm her son that's apparently attacked her' and there were like six foot five like three police officers and they were so confused and they were like literally they said 'look in the bathroom look in the kitchen' because they just couldn't get their head around it

Kate: They didn't believe you

Charlie: So even things like that in dealing with the police it just puts me off and I think if those people don't know that you're transgender you just get an easier ride but if they do know and they start to slowly cotton like the postman here, some of the things before he associated this with my address he would say 'morning love' but now he's seen my name he's like 'there you go sir' so like subliminal things like that I have to deal with

Kate: Yeah

Charlie: Because then that brings in what stops me from kind of reacting and I don't get you know I only get subliminal things like that, if people know, but what stops me from really acting out is prison because obviously I will be sent to a male prison because they are not so I just yeah so that kind of just doesn't you know, doesn't you know with the police.

5.3 What constitutes 'serious' abuse

The second area discussed by police and professionals affecting whether a victim may seek help from police related to how seriously victims perceived the partner abuse to be. If victims were at risk of serious injury, that is, if the partner abuse had escalated and involved physical violence, police and professionals felt that victims were more likely to call the police. Linking to this was the notion that whether victims perceived what was happening to them as a crime would influence their decisions to call the police, and this was more likely when there was clear 'evidence' as a result of physical violence:

'I think if it's physical, you would probably be more likely to call, I know from experience if it's emotional or like mental abuse you are probably less likely to because it's harder to prove isn't it, and you are just unclear whether that is a crime or not unless someone is hitting you.' (Project Manager – LGBT Organisation)

'That's really hard sometimes for the police to grasp that people don't think that what happens in their relationship is a serious crime, they see it as a relationship, it might be a scary relationship, it might be an unhappy relationship but it's how they see it. I think if they do identify what is happening as a crime, which is much more likely to be for more serious assaults than say coercive control they are more likely to call the police.' (LGBT IDVA)

In addition to discussing how victims viewed physical injury, there was also a perception amongst police and professionals that physical injury *was* the most serious form of partner abuse warranting police action (discussed further in Chapter Six), and that police would take this form of partner abuse more seriously. One professional said that they recommend to their clients that they call the police especially when there is physical violence. This was explored further during the interview:

Kate: 'I just wanted to pick up on something you said actually, you said you would recommend that they call the police and you said especially when it's physical, is there any particular reason why especially when it's physical?'

Senior Support Worker: 'Yes I mean I've said that like also because they're more likely to be supported by the police if there is injuries or evidence or at least the person needs the police advice, like the police if you tell them "she's insulting me every day" again I'm talking generically that's why I think that in general if there is danger of being injured.'

Police and professionals' interviews suggested that victims believe they will receive a more positive response from the police if they can 'prove' the abuse with physical injuries. Additionally, identifying abusive behaviours as a crime seemed an important factor when deciding to report, suggesting that there is a perception that police will treat physical violence the most seriously. Experiencing non-physical coercive and controlling behaviours where there was no 'concrete evidence' was viewed by one professional as something which victims would not identify as a crime, but rather a relationship problem. Language used by victims during their interviews also suggested they had concern over 'proving' the abuse had happened, and justifying how serious it was: 'how can you prove domestic abuse, he's not beaten me it's more mental' (Amil); 'it was pretty obvious to be honest what had gone on because there was blood and things down the walls and stuff' (Lucas).

Police involvement due to serious physical injuries was evident for three of the four victims interviewed, and calling at the point of desperation was also evident for three. However, for Lucas and Anna, there were times when they experienced serious physical injuries but did not seek help from the police. During interviews they discussed feeling like they could make things better and so did not need help from external agencies. Anna and Lucas also described their injuries on a continuum relating to perceived seriousness, again supporting the notion that physical injury is the most serious form of abuse, and the more severe this injury is, the worse the abuse is:

5.3.1 Case study: Anna – I have experienced different levels of seriousness of abuse

Anna: I'm very aware that it doesn't fit a typical pattern of domestic abuse, but on and off for about 11 years. But there were long gaps within that where there wasn't any violence and I would say the controlling behaviour probably about six years slowly when I look back slowly but surely building up and the last two and a half/ two years of our relationship things got a lot worse you know but there wasn't a lot of times where there was physical violence that caused injury, so things might get broken and my ex-partner particularly had things about food getting thrown or things like that you know so those sorts of things but in terms of I mean I only, the first two incidences of domestic violence 11 years ago, 11 and 10 years ago were the only time I had to seek medical attention for injury, yeah and then there was quite a long gap and the most recent wasn't ever at a level, I might have had I did have bruises on occasion but nothing that required yeah kind of medical intervention whereas initially I have had stitches and things like that.

Linking to physical injury was the notion of escalation of incident seriousness and requiring immediate action from the police. Police and professionals discussed how when incidents escalated to serious physical violence, victims would feel 'justified' in calling:

'Well often it's been a very serious incident, and often we're looking at longer term relationships with a pattern where the escalation has increased and the seriousness of the injuries or the incident the attack or assault that has occurred has driven desperation really.'
(LGBTQ IDVA)

'I think that most people call because they have to because they're in an emergency situation and I think that's why they call 999.' (DA Caseworker)

Contrary to police and professionals' views, Lucas' case highlights how experiencing serious physical injury does not always lead to seeking police support, and suggests that barriers such as self-blame and fear may be at play which prevent help-seeking even in the face of extreme violence:

5.3.2 Case Study: Lucas – I didn't call because I was thinking about my safety

Lucas experienced severe physical abuse and coercive controlling behaviour perpetrated by his partner at the time, Johnny. Johnny had threatened to kill Lucas, beaten him until he was unconscious and hospitalised him on more than one occasion. As Anna did, Lucas also described the levels of violence and abuse he had experienced, placing incidents along a continuum of seriousness and attributing violence that did not require medical intervention as less serious. For example, due to Lucas experiencing violence to a level where he has been left unconscious, he described another incident as 'it wasn't the worst beating'. Lucas did not call the police on any of the occasions where he experienced partner abuse due to fears over how Johnny would react. In addition, Lucas felt he was to blame for the situation, which silenced him further

Kate: So I suppose about exploring this really because we know that a lot of people don't call the police, what was it that kind of, did you ever think about it or did it just not cross your mind about ringing them?

Lucas: I never thought about it

Kate: Never thought about it

Lucas: No. I think in those situations you have to balance your safety, I don't think you realise what's actually going to happen, is it going to make the situation worse in the long run? I think if there was nobody else there he potentially would have killed me this time, it's scary the way he responds, or the way he acts not even responds I hadn't done anything, but I don't know if he thinks he's in a computer game or something but it's just completely vicious and it's actually very sad to see somebody be like that regardless of whether it's against you or not but like somebody completely lose their mind. I never considered calling the police when he slapped me on (area of city), I never considered calling the police the night I ended up at the hospital because I guess at that stage you're just thinking, 'I need to make the change you know it's me who needs to make this change it doesn't involve anybody else' erm in fact when that was happening it was the guy the third party who said to my mum 'I think we should call the police he's stamping on his head' I think my mum was in shock and didn't know what to do either yeah, so if they hadn't I don't think I would have done I think I would have been more interested in getting out of that situation like you know just escaping and then leaving it be because he scares me when he's like that so that's the true answer, I'm glad that the police were called and it kind of put a final nail in coffin for want of a better word.

5.4 Existing knowledge and assumptions about police influences help-seeking behaviours

The final theme mentioned by participants exploring victim help-seeking behaviours related to the idea of victims' existing knowledge and views about police. Discussion about this theme revolved around: Previous police interaction, victims' existing knowledge about police, and perceptions of usefulness. Police and professionals discussed how victims' prior experiences with the police would be likely to affect future help-seeking, as mentioned by the senior support worker:

'I remember a call from a woman who wouldn't call the police because she had a bad experience in the past, she was in a same-sex relationship, her partner had been violent to her several times and she felt that the police didn't support her, that they kind of brushed it under the carpet "come on girls you need to sort this out you know this has been going on for a while, if you call us again we might have to arrest one of you". We get that from many people.' (Senior Support Worker)

In addition to personal experiences, it was highlighted that the responses that other people in similar situations had received from the police would also shape a victims' decision around help-seeking. One participant who coordinates a women's group for those in same-sex relationships explains this:

'I think it's down to the response that they may have had in the past, because even the other women who are in the group if they say that they haven't had a good response then they're not likely to use them again, they're more likely just to handle it themselves or to tell a friend.' (IDVA)

These discussions illustrate how the potentially insular nature of the LGBT community may affect what actions others within the same community choose to take. Due to the LGBT community historically being discriminated against, it seemed that if one person had a negative experience with an outside agency and discussed this with others, other people may be likely to form their decisions around seeking help based on these experiences.

Aligning with past experiences and others' experiences, interviews suggested that victims may also have general perceptions of how the police work, which could influence their help-seeking behaviours. Police use process-driven targets, meaning a victim being in control of criminal

proceedings can get lost, and their needs may be overlooked. If victims perceive they will have a lack of control over criminal justice proceedings, this could deter them from calling for help, or if they do call, feel as though they have opened a 'can of worms' and want to disengage. A detective sergeant illustrated this view:

'I think certainly the general view outside of policing is that they lose all control...you know that they [officers] model it very much on what is the criminal offence, who to arrest, who to prosecute and traditionally that has been the way that has been a performance target with policing as well and I think that doesn't help because victims and control get lost in all of that so I think perceptions based on whatever information they have available is really a key component really of actually contacting the police.' (Detective Sergeant)

Linking together these two strands was a discussion within interviews around how useful victims believed police to be in terms of being able to support them. Some police discussed this as a factor victims would take into account, but it was not mentioned by professionals. Police felt that before a victim calls them, they would decide whether realistically there was anything the police could do to resolve the situation:

'I think people probably are gonna ask themselves "what could the police do?" And have some really legitimate questions about what ways the police can actually help them.' (LGBT Liaison/Hatecrime Coordinator)

'Do they feel as though there's something that the police can do to help alleviate their particular problem.' (Police Constable)

Police interviews revolved around what victims felt the police could do to help them, which is likely to be linked to who the victim attributes blame to for the abuse, and what they expect from calling the police. The LGBT liaison officer highlighted this notion of blame:

'So you know those people that kind of see as "it's my communication problem maybe and I need to sort this out because what's the point in calling the police because ultimately that's not going to help let's communicate this through.'" (LGBT Liaison Officer)

Victim interviews reflected police and professionals' views, in that their decisions around help-seeking were influenced by a variety of factors. For Lucas and Anna, their initial thoughts around seeking police support were put off due to believing that the abuse was a relationship problem and

they should work to make it stop. Lucas' thoughts around self-blame arose particularly as he used to drink, and so felt responsible for the abuse. For both Anna and Lucas, after the initial belief they could make things better, they began to realise the manipulation they were experiencing and the danger they were in:

5.4.1 Case Study: Anna – I can sort this out

Kate: Because I was hoping to explore a little bit about that so we spoke a bit about why you called the police for the first time, what was it if anything that stopped you from reaching out to anyone, not necessarily the police during this time?

Anna: Shame I think more than anything and just a real belief that I think initially a real belief that I could make this better, that I can make this work and that it would stop and it did stop or things changed as well, the nature of things changed and I wouldn't call the police to say 'I've been locked out of the house' or I'm not allowed to you know 'she's stopping me from leaving this room' or whatever, or not even necessarily the police I wouldn't even think, I mean I might have done but I wouldn't even think of that, and most recently I think I knew, well I did know that things weren't going to get any better and I did really fear, I did you know I did fear for my life at times actually because she was much less contained and much less controlled.

5.4.2 Case Study: Lucas – I need to change

Lucas: I'm from a (occupation) background, had my own company, that was dissolved because of addiction with my ex we both ended up making too much money and then we just became massive cokeheads and we split up last year, we moved to (country) to open an office I had to get away from (city), my brother lives over there within the first week he had, he was always cheating and stuff, we'd been together 10 years but it was fine it was just something I kind of learnt to deal with, it wasn't fine I guess, so we moved to (country) and I was just like, my brother is also gay and I was just like 'don't do it with my brother because you're going to ruin the biggest chance we've got here' and within a week he had done it and he told me and then beat me up, it was the first severe time, he hit me with a chair a few years ago, about four years ago, I was drinking, and so I thought it was my fault and went into Alcoholics Anonymous, gave up drink for 18 months you know making sure that we weren't in that position again, but through those 18 months of not drinking you kind of start realising the cracks in your relationship, the manipulation that was going on

(later in the interview)

Lucas: I never considered calling the police when he slapped me on (area of City), I never considered calling the police the night I ended up at the hospital because I guess at that stage you're just thinking, I need to make the change you know it's me who needs to make this change it doesn't involve anybody else.

When considering help-seeking overall, victims described how professionals rather than police were the key source of agency support, and any police contact was aided by the support of these professionals. Victims described support received from their key professional workers as 'an immense support' (Anna), 'he's been a great help following my abuse' (Lucas), and 'he's literally saved my life' (Charlie). In all cases, professionals helped victims to navigate through the CJS process, and became their primary support.

5.5 Discussion

Help-seeking for partner abuse amongst the LGBT community has recently been suggested as an area that requires further research; particularly help-seeking from within justice systems (Calton et al., 2015). Researchers have also suggested that future research should explore unique barriers faced by LGBT people when help-seeking and consider how they reach out for help (Parry & O'Neal, 2015). To explore these avenues, the feminist approach adopted for this research acknowledges the multiple positioning's of victims, and how they interrelate to affect experience. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the findings relating to victim help-seeking behaviours, whilst also considering existing literature. Though experiences of police, professionals and victims varied widely, there were also some common themes within their narratives which will be explored.

Victim well-founded fear of reporting partner abuse to the police emerged as a common theme amongst professionals, with most alluding to or explicitly mentioning this. Professionals felt that victims may be deterred from calling the police in relation to being in a same-sex relationship, with fears over how they would be perceived and treated, worries over being believed and taken seriously, and what the response would be from the perpetrator. This theme, however, did not run through narratives with police, suggesting that police did not view these fears as primary factors which may affect help-seeking. There was an underlying current throughout police interviews that suggested 'we treat everybody equally' which may explain the absence of these fears as a concern. However, the fact that these themes arose within interviews with professionals and were to some extent married with victim experiences suggests that these factors are of concern to victims, and police need to be aware of them. The term 'well-founded' fear was adopted, as it was clear from interviews that victims' fears around the various subthemes was based on a substantiated belief that should they report to the police, they would face serious negative repercussions. These well-founded beliefs were based on either past negative experience with the police, threats from their partner which victims believed would be carried out, or perceptions as to what would happen if they

decided to report. As an example, Charlie feared that she would be hurt or killed if she reported to police, based on her knowledge that this had previously happened within her community. As such, her fear was 'well-founded', and based on the very real probability that she could lose her life should she decide to report.

The theme of fear has been explored within existing research (Calton et al., 2015; Donovan & Hester, 2011; Irwin, 2008). Research suggests that victims consider aspects such as whether they will receive a homophobic response in relation to not fulfilling stereotypes around what it means to be a 'victim', whether they will be believed, and whether they (the victim themselves) view partner abuse as a private matter, which may arise out of a sense of loyalty to their partner. Within the current thesis, rather than victims worrying that the police would be homophobic towards them, their concerns were primarily around two areas: 1) That perpetrators had pre-empted their help-seeking by positioning themselves as a victim to help-providers and/or declaring consequences if victims broke relationship rules (pre-emptive coercive tactics), and 2) As a consequence, victims felt that if they reported to help-providers that they would receive an unfavourable response (coerced response) based on perpetrator's pre-emptive coercive tactics.

To unpick this further, pre-emptive coercive tactics were employed by perpetrators as an arm of coercive control, used to disrupt victims' help-seeking practices and to ensure that they were reluctant to speak out for fear of consequences. Using Donovan and Hester's (2014) notion of relationship rules, perpetrators ensured that victims knew what pre-emptive actions they had taken, and what the relationship rules were, for example, the perpetrator reporting that they were the victim to a help-provider, or threatening to 'out' the victim. As such, when victims did consider seeking help, they were concerned that they would receive a 'coerced response' from help-providers based on the prior coercive tactics employed by perpetrators – one where the perpetrator was believed. They were left ultimately feeling that seeking help would hold negative consequences for them, both from help-providers, and from what perpetrators would do. It should be noted that even if victims did seek help, perpetrators in some instances still continued to attempt to 're-set' relationship rules (Donovan & Hester, 2014) and disrupt any future help-seeking.

As an example of pre-emptive coercive tactics and coerced response, Anna was not concerned about the police knowing she was in a relationship with Carol, but was anxious that police would not believe her due to Carol's prior coercive tactics of feeding lies to the police and other services, claiming that she was the victim, and telling Anna that police would view her as a bad mother if she

reported. This example illustrates that due to Carol's pre-emptive coercive tactics, Anna was fearful that she would receive a negative 'coerced response' from help-providers – a response that would not place Anna as the victim based on Carol's lies. In Amil's case, he had no problems telling the police he was gay, but was concerned that they would act immediately to arrest Bradley who could then 'out' Amil to his family. It can be seen that Bradley's pre-emptive coercive tactics around threatening to out Amil to his family if Amil did not act as Bradley wished impacted on Amil's help-seeking, by ensuring he was reluctant to seek help. When Amil eventually did seek help, Bradley asserted coercive tactics by telling the police that Amil was a terrorist – attempting to re-establish relationship rules (Donovan & Hester, 2014) and prevent Amil from seeking help again in the future. These persuasive and intrusive tactics displayed by Bradley may highlight the pervasiveness of the strive towards hegemonic masculinity; Bradley is attempting to assert himself as 'masculine' by subordinating Amil. This suggests that regardless of Bradley's sexual orientation, the fact that he has still been socialised within a society that values 'being a man' means he is still able to assert these tactics, highlighting the inescapability of the influence of heteronormativity in society.

Accordingly, rather than fears over homophobia or negative police attitudes towards themselves, fears over a coerced response based on pre-emptive coercive tactics was the primary concern held by victims when deciding whether to call the police. Apprehension over these areas arose particularly with regards to worries that police would believe manipulative perpetrators which may result in children being removed, victims would be wrongly accused, and that police lacked recognition of coercive and controlling behaviours. The two terms coined in this thesis are of relevance not only to people experiencing SSPA, but all victims experiencing abusive relationships where the perpetrator disrupts victim help-seeking and manipulates help-providers via the use of coercive and controlling tactics. However, many of the specific ways that perpetrators attempted to assert control over SSPA victims as found within this thesis suggest that an intersectional framework must be used to consider how gender and sexual orientation intersect, and using a feminist framework with a sole focus on gender would overlook some of these unique aspects.

All participants expressed the risk of loss as being a deterrent to calling police – loss of relationships, housing, children and financial security. Professionals and police were broadly aware of these issues and how they may deter a victim from calling, and victims themselves discussed these losses within their narratives. However, though police and professionals discussed losses generally, there was little discussion around how they intersect with other aspects of a person's identity, and how help-seeking would therefore be experienced. As an example, for Amil, a non-UK National who is not out

to his parents and who relies on Bradley for housing, the ramifications of leaving Bradley would mean potential homelessness and being outed to his parents. For Amil and the other victims who were interviewed, their unique positioning and intersecting identities affected how losses were weighed up and experienced, and are therefore important considerations when observing help-seeking behaviours, again illustrating the importance of intersectional frameworks.

For victims who decided to leave their partner before calling the police, police and professionals felt that the emotional ties and potential losses from the relationship would not hold as much impact, and hence it would be easier for a victim to reach out for external support. In terms of the interviews with victims, their experiences supported this. For example, when Anna and Amil called the police they had already decided they wanted to leave their partners and had safety plans, and so were more able to call the police than Lucas, who separated from and reconciled with Johnny a number of times – and did not call the police. Charlie also delayed calling the police as she knew that doing so would sever ties with her partner and wider community.

Some existing research has concluded that people believe it is easier for victims in same-sex relationships to leave an abusive partner than for women abused by men (Brown & Groscup, 2009). Though Brown and Groscup's research did not explore the reasons why this was so, their participants reported that they felt that SSPA was less serious than men's violence towards women and hence it could be assumed that a victim would be able to leave more easily. In addition, participants in Brown and Groscup's research may have taken into account other considerations, for example assuming that SSPA victims had fewer material ties to their partner, or did not have children together, suggesting there is less to lose by leaving the relationship. Findings from the current thesis refute these views, however, as victims, police and professionals were broadly aware of the emotional, financial and legal losses which may occur if police are called, and SSPA victims experienced many of the same worries and ties as heterosexual couples (Peterman & Dixon, 2003).

Linking to the risk of loss if calling the police, interviews highlighted another prominent sub-theme: calling police was viewed to be a last resort. Due to the potential losses of calling the police, victims would often try to 'save' the relationship themselves first. Victims within the current research were either married to or in long-term relationships with the perpetrators and had ties such as housing or children, which contributed towards them wanting to remain in their relationships. When taking into account these potential losses and the risks of calling the police, it can be seen how when victims do call as a last resort it is just that: a last resort - a factor which has also been mentioned in existing

research (Alhusen et al., 2010; Tesch & Bekerian, 2015). Police discussed this within interviews and were aware that many victims do not call them until their situation is deemed beyond their control. As a result, they mentioned that often by the time the police are made aware, the victim has suffered many years of coercive control and/or physical abuse. Therefore, when police become involved, this might be the only chance they have to intervene (Monckton-Smith et al., 2014), and so it is vital that they provide a positive response. A negative police response when a victim is already calling out of desperation as a last resort may mean they will be very unlikely to call again for support.

A sub-theme which featured strongly amongst professionals was that of victims being 'outed' via the process of reporting their abuse to police. Though largely mentioned by professionals, only a minority of police discussed this as a concern. This theme exists within existing SSPA research (Calton et al., 2015; Irwin, 2008; Kirkland, 2004), and is commonly mentioned as a reason why victims do not report partner abuse to outside agencies. For three victims within the current research, outing themselves to the police was not a concern, however, outing came into play in other ways. For example, Bradley threatened to reveal Amil's sexual orientation to his parents if Amil did not conform to relationship rules (Donovan & Hester, 2014) as mandated by Bradley. For this reason, Amil was reluctant to involve police due to substantiated fear that Bradley would act out his threats. So, although telling the police he was gay was not of concern, the consequences of reporting to the police for Amil may have meant that his sexual orientation was disclosed to his parents, which was enough to make him give careful consideration to involving the police (see earlier discussion of pre-emptive coercive tactics and coerced response). This suggests that for Amil, the tangible fear of Bradley outing him and being ostracised from his family was a key factor in his decisions around calling the police. Existing research has discussed how isolation is often at the centre of LGBT people's experiences of partner abuse (which can be due to the threat of being outed) and how this is made easier for an abuser due to the existence of a heteronormative society (Bornstein et al., 2006; Brown, 2008; Peterman & Dixon, 2003). Knight and Wilson (2016) argue that threats of outing would not hold power if the societies we lived in were not heteronormative. In the current research, Bradley was able to use heteronormativity as well as Amil's cultural background to his advantage to maintain control over Amil.

Anna had no concerns about revealing her sexual orientation to police and other professionals, but felt that as a lesbian woman the service she would receive would be worse compared to if she were heterosexual. In addition, Anna's concerns were very much related to what would happen to her children if she reported. Existing research has considered the experiences of lesbian mothers who

have been subject to partner abuse. In one study, 24 lesbian mothers were spoken to, and researchers found that those who sought formal support were 100% out about their sexual orientation; suggested by the researchers as possibly being because as a parent it would be difficult to remain fully closeted (Hardesty et al., 2011). This may have been the case for Anna, who, by the nature of having a female partner and children, was visible as a lesbian mother. The researchers also found that mothers who did not seek help for SSPA believed that if they let another woman abuse them they were weak, or believed that women are non-violent; suggesting they were influenced by the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011). Initially, Anna felt that she could deal with the situation herself and did not report, however, later decided that she needed to seek help for the welfare of her children, and her decision to call the police initially was sparked by the fact that her child had witnessed Carol assaulting her. Anna's situation suggests that a critical point was reached where outside help was needed in order to attempt to keep her children safe; a last resort.

Anna expressed how for her, the easiest way to live as a gay person was to try and blend in with society and not to do anything that would draw attention to the fact that she was in a same-sex relationship. Therefore, reporting partner abuse would go against this aim. Anna's experience highlights how the prominence of heteronormativity contributed to her silence, and how those in same-sex relationships can feel like they are different, and need to keep their lives private so as not to draw attention to their differences. In line with Anna's experience, existing research suggests that partner abuse may be viewed as a private issue (Irwin, 2008) and those experiencing it may not want to bring attention to an already stigmatised community (Bornstein et al., 2006; Donovan et al., 2006). Rather than drawing attention to the LGBT community, Anna's narrative suggests that she wanted to blend in to 'get by', suggesting that her identification as a lesbian woman caused her to feel different from mainstream society. This difficulty of trying to assimilate to get by alongside considering seeking support highlights the impact of a heteronormative society for people in abusive same-sex relationships.

Within interviews with police and professionals, eight professionals and two police mentioned issues that trans people may face when deciding whether to seek help; though trans issues were discussed much less frequently than same-sex help-seeking behaviours. Participants described the unique ways in which trans people may experience reluctance to seek police support such as experiencing fear of being mis-gendered, having to reveal their trans status, and being required to discuss in-depth details about their transition. Research suggests that trans victims of SSPA are unlikely to report to the police (Langender-Magruder et al., 2016), and a small body of recent research has explored specific issues that trans people may face when help-seeking (Guadalupe-Diaz & Jasinski,

2016; Tesch & Bekerian, 2015). Within the current research, police and professionals who mentioned trans issues within interviews appeared to have a good understanding of the factors which may be present when trans people are deciding whether to seek help. However, those who mentioned trans-specific issues were in a minority; trans issues were not discussed by most participants.

For Charlie, the decision to seek support from police was difficult, and influenced by a variety of intersecting factors. She highlighted how certain aspects of herself may have meant that she fell 'between the cracks'; such as being transgender, from a traveller background, being separated from her parents, and running away from home. Deciding to seek help was not a straightforward process for Charlie, and there was an underlying narrative within her story that she did not feel that she fitted within any mainstream support agencies. As such, the first time she decided to seek support was when the violence and abuse in her relationship had escalated to a severe physical level. Charlie's case exemplifies the importance of considering intersecting factors related to a person's identity when exploring why victims do or do not decide to seek help, and for ensuring that the response is sensitive and useful to victims' needs. Charlie was fearful of the fact that if she called the police her partner may harm her, and she was aware that reporting to the police meant she would be 'blacklisted' and 'shunned' from her community. Making a decision to seek support from the police therefore came with significant risks which police need to be aware of.

One of the considerations for Charlie when help-seeking in addition to being trans was that she was a traveller. Overall, Charlie described how her traveller identity meant that the police responded differently to her. As an example, the first time she called the police she was too afraid to speak, and consequently, the police did not arrive to assist her. The second time she called, she described how multiple police cars surrounded her location. Such contrast has also been described by previous researchers, who state that the police either do not intervene to support travellers, or over-police them (Martin, 2002; Mulcahy, 2011). Research from the UK and Ireland has considered the relationship of gypsies and travellers and the police, which is historically and currently negative (James, 2007; Mulcahy, 2011). Mulcahy described some positive interactions between the police and travellers within their research, but these were individual in nature, with the systemic relationship between the two remaining strained. Though there has been some effort within the UK to build more positive relationships with ethnic minority groups via community engagement agendas, most travellers encounter police via enforcement rather than engagement (James, 2007). Gypsies and travellers may therefore be reluctant to engage with police, as was the case for Charlie. Her cultural

mistrust of the police in addition to being transgender compounded to make her extremely reluctant to involve the police until she felt it was a last resort.

In addition to well-founded fears experienced by victims when considering seeking help from the police, participants also discussed the ways in which victims justified calling the police. A strong theme arose around physical injury being viewed as the most serious and worthy of police intervention, consistent with existing historic and more recent literature (Letellier et al., 1994; Monckton-Smith et al., 2014; Wolf et al., 2003). This finding was also linked to the 'public story' – viewing physical violence as the primary component of partner abuse (Donovan & Hester, 2011). As an example of the 'public story' at play, Anna, Lucas and Charlie had experienced serious physical violence at the point when the police became involved, suggesting their situations were deemed 'worthy' of police intervention. Then again, as explained earlier via Lucas' case, physical injury alone was not enough for him to warrant calling the police, as other factors such as feeling he was to blame, that he could deal with the situation himself, and preserving his safety, inhibited him from calling for help. Lucas' case suggests again the importance of viewing help-seeking as a series of intersecting factors rather than seeing victims' decisions to seek help as straightforward. Amil called the police under different circumstances, in that he experienced severe coercive control in the absence of physical violence. However, due to the lack of physical violence, he had to 'check out' with professionals whether what he was experiencing was a normal part of a relationship or was in fact abusive. This suggests that identifying coercive and controlling behaviours as abusive can be difficult, as has been put forward by existing literature (Donovan et al., 2006), and due to coercive and controlling behaviours not fitting into the 'public story'.

A final factor that police and professionals felt that victims take into account when deciding whether to call the police was their knowledge and expectations of, and previous experience with the police. Police felt that if victims had received a previous poor response from the police they may not call again, a finding also supported by victims within the current research and within existing literature (Monckton-Smith et al., 2014). Existing research emphasises the importance of a positive police response, with Johnson (2007) reporting that participants in her research said they would be more likely to call the police again if police appeared interested and helpful. This was echoed by most participants within interviews, with police and professionals emphasising that they felt that victims would be likely to call again if they felt believed, listened to, taken seriously and that the police could help them. However, it is important to note that even if a victim reports being happy with the police response, as in Lucas' case, there may still be uncertainty as to whether they would call the police in

the future. This could be due to a number of factors as previously discussed such as whether a victim feels their incident is worthy of a response, their current relationship status, fear of ramifications, and at what point the abuse in their relationship reaches 'last resort' status. As Guadalupe-Diaz & Jasinski (2016) reported, previous police experience (amongst other factors) only made up a small part of whether victims would report partner abuse to the police, suggesting that other factors such as type of partner abuse may play a bigger part.

In addition to basing help-seeking decisions around previous experiences, interviews highlighted that victims also made assumptions about how police would respond. One way this could occur was hearing about other LGBT people's experiences (Calton et al., 2015), highlighting the insular nature of the LGBT community and how responses to one person from a minority group can affect other group members' views of how they may be treated. This highlights the importance of considering help-seeking using an intersectional framework and taking into account the contextual factors surrounding sexual orientation faced by victims. Police felt that victims were also influenced by whether they thought the police could do anything to help their situation. This may be in part related to where victims place blame for the abuse – if they see it as a relationship problem, they may be less likely to call, compared to if they see themselves as a victim. Seeing abuse as a relationship problem may contribute to ensuring it remains private, and, as such, a victim may not feel the police need to be involved, as was the case initially for all victims interviewed. The LGBT community have also historically been reluctant to accept that partner abuse happens within their community, in an attempt to mitigate any further negative connotations about LGBT relationships (Bornstein et al., 2006; Brown, 2008; Irwin, 2008).

Due to these factors, SSPA victims may struggle to identify and accept their relationship as abusive and reach out for help, believing that it should be dealt with privately. If someone does choose to reach out, they may fear they will lose control over the process; mentioned by victims, police and professionals within the current research. Influenced by previous or vicarious experience, victims may fear that once they have reported abuse to the police, their situation will be made worse due to the police taking it out of their hands. Being unsure about police process was key for victims, particularly Amil, who thought that if he reported to them they would act immediately to arrest Bradley, which would not have been helpful for Amil. Police officers also mentioned that victims sometimes do not know what to expect from police process, which can lead to surprise or dissatisfaction when police do respond.

Finally, professionals and victims discussed the importance of victims having a key external professional to support them, including to navigate the CJS. Professionals interviewed were based within LGBT or domestic abuse organisations external to the police, and played a key role in assisting victims to contact police and support them with proceedings; often explaining what would happen and what to expect. They were also able to assist with practical measures such as arranging or attending multi-agency meetings or aiding with sourcing housing. Despite victims' explanations of how important having this support was, police did not mention support organisations' roles in helping victims seek support within their interviews. This suggests that there is a gap of understanding within police as to the role that external professionals can play in helping a victim to seek police support, in particular, dispelling any myths and enabling victims to make an informed decision about whether they would like to report. Police being aware of the key role external professionals' play could mean a more joined up service for victims, and ultimately lead to more successful experiences and outcomes.

5.6 Summary

This chapter has explored the help-seeking decisions faced by SSPA victims when deciding whether to report to the police, from the point of view of victims, police and professionals. Victims face fear of reporting to the police for a number of reasons, particularly around being believed, fear over loss of relationships with those close to them and concerns over being outed by the process of reporting. Victims were also particularly concerned about perpetrators' pre-emptive coercive tactics and help-providers' coerced response, and the negative implications help-seeking could have for them. Due to these and other reasons, participants felt that victims were reluctant to call police, and often only did so as a last resort. Linking to this, participants felt that victims were more likely to call if they had physical injuries and if their perceptions of police were positive. Physical injuries being viewed as most serious meant the significance of other types of abuse were minimised and there was evidence that this affected how seriously victims viewed their situation, linked to the prominence of the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011). Finally, the importance of a key support professional was highlighted by victims and professionals, but there was little understanding as to the value of this within police interviews. Police and professionals sometimes disagreed on the extent to which certain issues were a concern for victims, and thus, increased training around specific dynamics of same-sex relationships may be useful for police.

The next chapter will address research aim 3: To examine how police perceive SSPA and what responses they provide to victims. It will present and discuss findings from interviews with the same nineteen police officers and staff, and twelve support professionals to explore their views and experiences of police responses to SSPA. It will include a discussion of police perceptions of SSPA, the role of gender in determining victim and perpetrator status, and opinions on the FOI findings relating to risk. Experiences of the four victims interviewed will also be used alongside police and professionals' thoughts.

Chapter 6: Police perceptions of and responses to same-sex partner abuse

In addition to exploring victims' help-seeking behaviours, interviews also considered police perceptions of SSPA and the types of responses given to victims, from the point of view of police, professionals and victims themselves. This chapter will address research aim 3: To examine how police perceive SSPA and what responses they provide to victims.

6.1 Gender of victim and perpetrator affected how seriously abuse was perceived

In order to begin to explore perceptions of SSPA, police and professionals were asked to rate on a scale of 1-5 (1=not serious at all, 5=extremely serious) how seriously they thought the police perceived SSPA where the gender of victim and perpetrator was varied, for example, male perpetrator, male victim; male perpetrator, female victim. They were not given any contextual information; simply the gender of the two people involved. Figure 8 illustrates perceptions of SSPA compared to male to female partner abuse from the point of view of police:

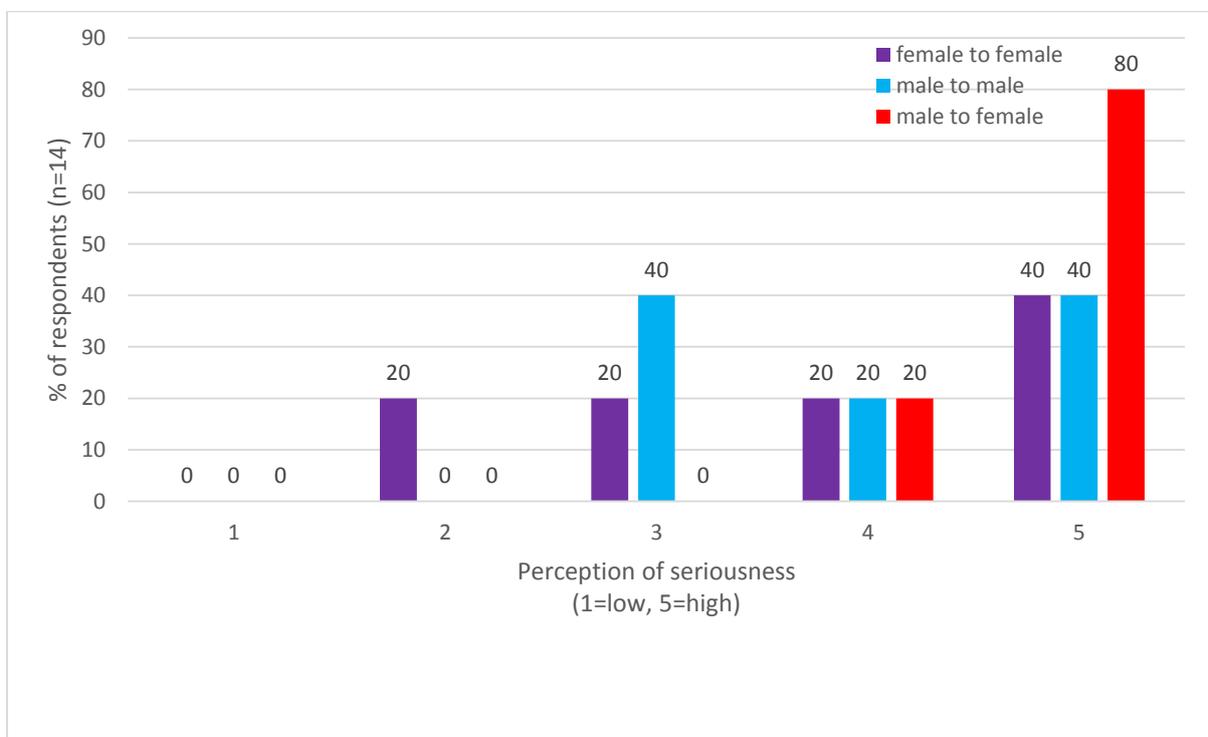


Figure 8. Police perceptions of seriousness of SSPA

It can be seen from Figure 8 that police viewed male to female partner abuse as more serious than female to female and male to male partner abuse. 80% of police rated male to female partner abuse with the highest score of five, and ratings for male to female partner abuse did not fall below a rating of four, suggesting it was consistently viewed as very serious. In contrast, only 40% of police rated the seriousness of both male to male and female to female partner abuse as five; there were also scores of four, three and two, suggesting that SSPA is not viewed to be as serious as male to female partner abuse. In particular, female to female partner abuse was viewed as the least serious of the three types.

Professionals were also asked to rate how seriously they believed police perceived SSPA based on their experiences of working with victims. Figure 9 shows the findings:

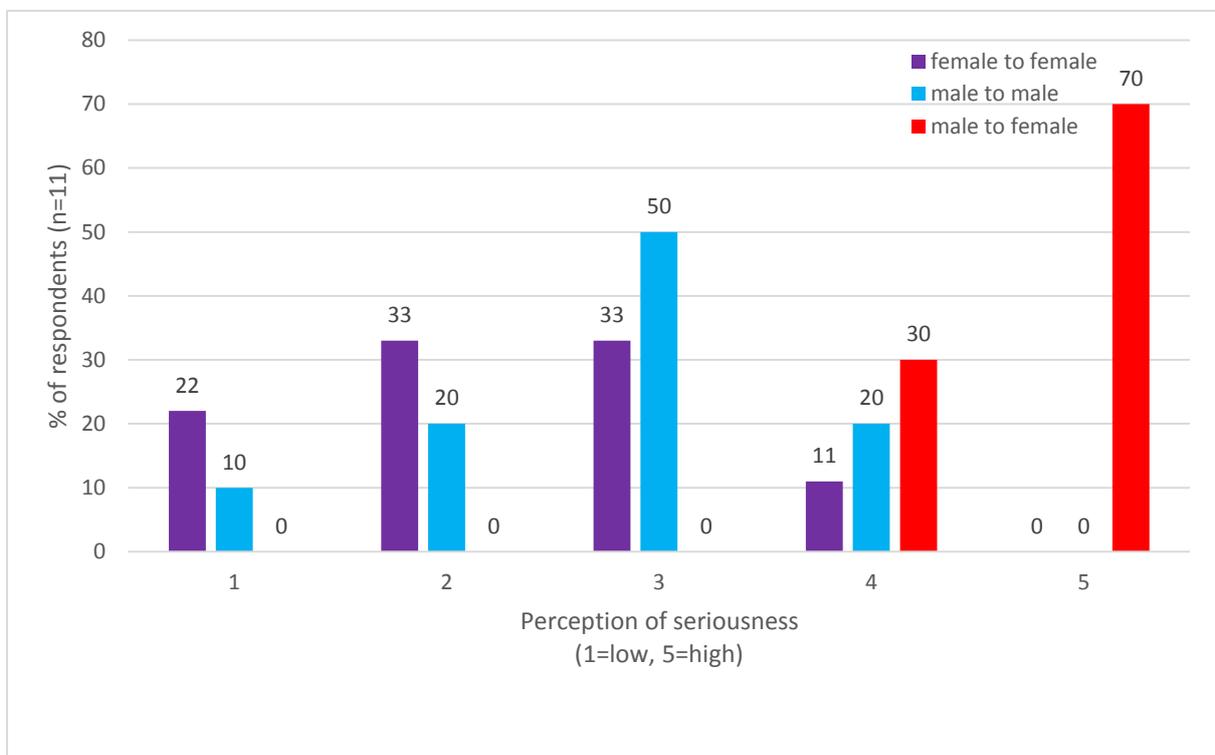


Figure 9. Police' perceptions of seriousness of SSPA according to professionals

In line with the findings reflected by police, professionals felt that police perceived male to female partner abuse as the most serious, with scores of four and five. However, professionals felt that police perceived SSPA much less seriously, with no ratings of five given for either male to male or female to female partner abuse. Similar to the police findings, professionals felt that female to female partner abuse was perceived as the least serious by police.

Interviews with victims produced mixed findings relating to how seriously they believed police perceived their situations based on their gender and sexual orientation. For Anna, she felt that being in a relationship with another woman meant the police did not take her situation seriously, and the police let her down in terms of safeguarding her and her children and assisting her in accessing appropriate further support. In opposition, Amil felt that the abuse against him was taken very seriously, and described how the police worked alongside him and his key support worker to safeguard him and arrest Bradley; with Amil feeling that gender and sexual orientation did not influence the police's response. Charlie felt her response was negative, which she equated as an intersection of her identity as a traveller and a trans woman. Finally Lucas' physical injury was taken seriously by police; however, Lucas stated that as he sustained physical injury, this gave the police 'proof', and so this response was anticipated.

6.2 Men are more likely to cause serious physical injury

Following their ratings of seriousness, police and professionals discussed the reasons why they had assigned them. Throughout the discussions, there was a theme of how victim and perpetrator gender can influence perceptions of seriousness, encapsulated by the following quote:

'The whole narrative, conversation around masculinity, around gender and femininity and all this stuff really does influence how these situations and groups are policed and how we respond to that.' (LGBTQ IDVA)

As discussed in Chapter Five, victims may be more likely to seek police support for partner abuse if they have experienced physical violence. When explaining their reasons for seriousness ratings in Figures 8 and 9, physical violence again was the primary factor in police and professionals' assertions of what constituted a serious incident, more so than any other form of partner abuse. This was interesting, as it suggested that although participants were not given any context about the 'incident' they were rating, most assumed it involved physical violence; suggesting physical violence is viewed as encapsulating the term 'partner abuse', as well as being the main type of abuse that involves risk. When considering gender, participants felt that men are regarded as most dangerous and more likely to be able to cause physical harm. This was linked in with a female victim being most vulnerable due to their gender, and thus, male to female abuse was deemed most serious:

‘So I think our highest concern is when we have a male perpetrator and a female victim we think there is that dynamic that perhaps represents the greatest danger I don't know whether there's any research to support that but we certainly behave in that way.’
(Detective Sergeant)

Due to participant beliefs that men pose more physical danger than women, male victims in a same-sex relationship were also seen to be at high risk from a male perpetrator, though not as high as a female victim would be, as is represented by the perceptions illustrated in Figures 8 and 9:

‘I think what I get from the callers is if there's a man involved there is an assumption that the man is violent and the man can hurt or kill.’ (Senior Support Worker)

Following seriousness ratings within interviews, an exploration of notions around risk associated with male violence pursued, linking to a key finding pertaining from the FOI requests: *Why do you think male to male assault with injury (AWI) crimes were rated as higher risk by police more than female to female assault with injury crimes?* Responses to this question surfaced similar assumptions around the gender of the perpetrator and their capacity to cause physical harm as a key indicator in determining the level of risk a victim faced:

Detective Sergeant: ‘I accept that there could be all sorts of assumptions and prejudices behind this view but I think that in general terms men have a greater capacity for serious and potentially lethal violence than women’

Kate: ‘So even though they were both being crimed as assault with injury are you saying that you think the injuries were probably more, the person was at risk of higher injury in a male relationship?’

Detective Sergeant: ‘Exactly, so I think the evidence for assault in a relationship in which a man is a perpetrator to my mind signals greater risk because I think not only is there already violence but also the capacity for worse violence is greater where the perpetrator is a man.’

Though expressed by a majority, this view was not unanimous, and a number of participants felt that the assertion that men are capable of causing more severe physical harm than women was sexist:

‘It might just be some sort of sexist perception that we've got and we're like “he's going to hurt more because he's a male” instead of “she's going to hurt her more because she is a female.”’ (Neighbourhood Officer)

‘There is a bias that men are too capable of hurting each other, and there's a higher risk just because someone's male it edges it up.’ (LGBT Liaison/Hatecrime coordinator)

‘It might just be a sexist view that men are stronger and able to cause more injuries sadly like it might be that.’ (MARAC Coordinator)

Via the FOI requests, it was not possible to determine the exact nature of each case, for example, how the injuries to victims were caused, and the severity. As one officer explained during his interview, AWI crimes cover a breadth of offences which range in severity. For this reason, a possible explanation as to why more male to male AWI crimes were recorded as high risk than female to female AWI crimes may be that the physical harm caused by men was in fact more severe than that caused by women, and the risk levels reflect this. Alternatively, as suggested by some participants, police officers may use gender stereotypes which portray men as violent and women as not capable of being violent, and thus risk levels are raised when a male perpetrator is involved.

6.3 Physical injuries were paramount in determining victim and perpetrator status

In addition to discussions around using physical injuries as markers as to how risky an incident was deemed to be, police and professionals also suggested that injuries were used as a primary factor to determine who the victim was when arriving at an incident:

‘Quite often who's got the most severe injuries.’ (Detective Constable)

‘Injuries would be largely what will make that decision; you know whether someone has got much more substantial injuries than another one.’ (DA Caseworker)

How police identify victims and perpetrators is evidently important, as it then affects subsequent decision making, such as who is arrested:

Police Constable: ‘So like one that comes to mind we turned up he had, one male had assaulted another male with a kettle and a pot as well’

Kate: ‘Right’

Police Constable: 'There was evidence of all of that one male was bleeding from the head in multiple places the other is absolutely fine, so we speak to them gather the evidence you know and it was clear, that is a clear sort of thing about who is what.'

Identifying a victim based primarily on injuries indicates the key role injuries play in police decision making. This finding corroborates victims' beliefs that they need to have been physically injured in order to be taken seriously by police, as discussed in Chapter Five. The police's focus on physical injuries was clear for Anna, who said the police were checking her for bruises when arriving, despite her distress and the incident having only just happened.

Though most police stated that they used physical injuries to determine victim and perpetrator status, there were a minority of police officers who demonstrated awareness that the person with injuries is not necessarily the victim:

'I personally am critically aware of obviously victims lashing out really when it all gets too much but they're not necessarily offenders in the strictest sense' (Detective Sergeant)

Police Constable: 'So a lot of the time injury will sway to one side or the other as it's quite easy to sort of fall into that trap of "well that person's got a black eye and that one hasn't so that one's punched that one; they're the suspect, they're the victim"'

Kate: 'Yeah'

Police Constable: 'But you don't know the full story.'

Looking for physical injury as key evidence of identifying risk and victim status was central within interviews. This is despite the 'Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship' (Home Office, 2015) legislation, which was being embedded into forces at the time of interviews. Though this legislation highlights the importance of the ongoing, non-physical signs of partner abuse, which Charlie described as being 'a prisoner without being behind bars', police rarely mentioned any of these signs as important when determining victim and perpetrator status or assessing risk. For all four victims interviewed within this research, but particularly Amil who did not experience any physical violence, police being able to recognise coercive and controlling behaviours was paramount. In Amil's case, the officers were able to recognise Bradley's behaviours and correctly position Amil as the victim. However, based on the interviews with police and professionals, it appears evident that coercive and controlling behaviours are not at the forefront of

police decision making around assigning victim and perpetrator status, suggesting that not everyone without injuries will receive a positive response, as Amil did.

6.3.1 Case Study: Amil – The police believed me even though the abuse wasn't physical

Amil: If we decided to go for lunch and I would say 'oh I would love some Chinese today' he will be like 'no we're having Indian' there is no discussion about that, if I want to, if I go out if I want to go out 'where you going, who you going with', that's the controlling bit he always makes the decisions even at home so if I come from work and there is dinner on the table I can see there is fish on the table but if I say 'I'm going to go have some burger' he's like 'no the fish has been made it has been cooked and you have to eat it' and it could have been sitting there for like hours and hours because I came back from work a little bit late and I have to eat it otherwise there is nothing for me to eat he wouldn't allow me to go to the fridge he wouldn't allow me to go so it's this kind this is the severe part of it

(later in the interview)

Amil: The fact that they [police] believed me was important for me because that would affect their actions later on so that's why I felt relieved that they were going to do something about it because I'm at the police station telling the story and I'm like 'this is what I'm going through this is like a movie' so I was giving them examples of what's going on but they were taking notes they were taking it very seriously so I was happy that day they interviewed him and the police officer when she says 'I can see the control' cos he was arguing with me, 'I can see from the tones' you know she does this a lot she knows from the tone aggressive tone that he talks and everything that he is a controlling man.

6.4 Harassment is a 'female crime'

In opposition to discussions around physical violence being viewed as more severe when perpetrated by men, harassment was generally classed as a 'female crime'. Police and professionals gave their thoughts regarding the second finding of the FOI request: *Why do you think female to female harassment crimes were rated as higher risk by police more than male to male harassment crimes?* The primary reasons discussed related to the stereotypical perception of police viewing women who harass as 'crazy' and 'obsessed'. Both police and professionals asserted that stereotypes of women as not letting things go may be at play when considering the higher risk ratings given to female to female partner abuse:

'Females tend to be more verbal and emotionally angry in terms of that and they just will not leave it so I can imagine that statistic a lot more than the males.' (Police Constable)

'Part of me wonders if we've sort of got this idea in our kind of society and culture that like whilst we do generally think women are less likely to be violent that the idea of women being kind of obsessed and being stalkers that we have that out there and that's in films isn't it this image of that, I wonder if there's something about that that we understand this idea of this kind of crazed obsessed woman and we understand that can be scary.' (LGBT IDVA)

'I suppose there is that stereotype of almost the bunny boiler type thing of harassment fits more female perpetrator, and I think that repeated thing mentally, the cliché is probably more often a woman.' (Service Coordinator)

Relating specifically to the ways in which conflict is dealt with, there was a perception that men will 'fight' to deal with disagreements and then leave them, whereas women will continue to let disagreements drag on. As such, harassment was seen by a number of participants as a 'female crime', using negative gendered stereotypes around femininity such as women being 'devious', 'manipulative' and 'obsessed' – leading to the police viewing female to female harassment as high risk:

'I mean historically men have kind of once an incident has happened that's it they don't sort of see you know what I mean it's like when you see fights round the town centre, males just tend to fight and then that's it it's over with and they roll their sleeves down and they walk away, I think when females fight it kind of leads on and on and on and they'll end up arguing the next week and the next week and next week.' (Police Constable)

'Women are more manipulative, men just have it out, women are more devious and insistent whereas men have a fight and it's over with. It is more thought out with women.' (Domestic Abuse Officer)

'The level of emotion, so men generally cut off don't they, they will cut people off, can't be arsed, not interested in what they're doing anymore, whereas females because of the emotional attachment can become obsessed and maybe that's where the harassment and stalking.' (Volunteer Coordinator)

There were, however, frustrations expressed at this view:

'This is like stereotype frigging city this isn't it, because like in all the films you see and the media and Jeremy Kyle and all that crap women are seen as these like desperate individuals who if they get dumped or something would harass their partner. Is it true? Apparently.'
(Project Manager: LGBT Organisation)

An alternative view was expressed by a minority of both police and professionals, in that they felt that the reason men were not rated as highly as women for harassment was due to them not feeling that they could express fear, as not to appear 'as a victim'. Those with this view felt that when risk assessments were carried out by police, men may be marked as lower risk than they actually were. These views suggested that gender stereotypes surrounding the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) place women as victims and men as being able to cope with adversity; particularly non-physical behaviours, and that men may feel that expressing fear would mean they appeared weak:

'I wonder if with something like sort of stalking and harassment if actually it's hard for men to convey the level of fear they experience and maybe it's a little easier for women to?'
(LGBT IDVA)

'Maybe men don't report as they don't feel comfortable because it's not violent, they would need to explain to someone else that the bin has been moved. At what point do they report? They need a black eye to feel able to' (DA Officer)

Police Constable: 'Probably because men probably look at it as, I'm just trying to think of the questions for harassment, "does this affect you in your daily sort of business?" Women might look at it and go "well actually yes it does" and again they're thinking sort of logically, "yes it is yes, it has affected me" whereas men will be like "no whatever, it's not affected me"'

Kate: 'Ok'

Police Constable: 'It has but they're just answering it because they don't want to be perceived as like weak or a victim, again that comes into effect there so I think that's probably where those, why the statistics have come out the way they have.'

6.5 SSPA is viewed as 'mutual' based on lack of gendered markers

Building on the ideas of men as able to cause physical harm, and women as weaker and vulnerable (yet able to cause fear via stalking and harassment), a number of participants discussed the idea of partners in same-sex relationships being more equally responsible for partner abuse, with assertions that they are more equally matched in terms of power dynamics and physical build/strength and therefore should be able to defend themselves, or fight back. Partner abuse was therefore in some cases described as being viewed by police as mutual, or a 'fair fight':

'I think sometimes it's just seen as more of a fair fight because it's two women or it's two men so it's again they're kind of faced with who do you take "let's take them both because they're both as bad as each other", and I've certainly experienced that with the men that we've worked with "they're both as bad as each other, you should be able to protect yourself", you know, it's the kind of response that they've had.' (IDVA)

Professionals generally felt that police struggled to identify the victim and perpetrator in same-sex relationships due to lack of gendered markers associated with being male or female. As demonstrated earlier when discussing police perceptions of seriousness, partner abuse involving two women was viewed as the least serious due to beliefs that women are not capable of causing serious physical injury, and hence the victim is not viewed at risk of serious harm. On the other hand, it was acknowledged that men do have the ability to cause serious physical injury, but that their male victim should be able to defend themselves against this (due to being male), thus resulting in male to male abuse being viewed as less serious than male violence towards women. When faced with two people of the same gender, police described being unable to use gendered markers in order to identify victim and perpetrator. This was particularly the case when police held connotations relating to gender and power i.e. men hold most power, as this meant that they were unable to determine where the threat lay:

'I think when we respond to same-sex male domestics then it can be confusing because you're not quite clear who might represent the danger.' (Detective Sergeant)

'I co-chair the MARAC [Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference] and when we get LGBT cases I think you do see this difficulty that police or perhaps other professionals dealing with situations which are less apparently abusive because there is less of a power differential, or they're making some assumptions around power.' (Local Commissioner)

'It is sometimes harder to work out the dynamic kind of who is doing what to whom and you can't use gender in the same way to inform that.' (LGBT IDVA)

When carrying out interviews with victims, Anna's case particularly illustrated the problems she experienced due to being in a same-sex relationship in terms of being identified as a victim:

6.5.1 Case Study: Anna – The abuse was not taken seriously because we are both women

Anna felt that being in a lesbian relationship influenced the ways in which the police responded to her; namely, that the abuse she was experiencing was viewed as more mutual than it would have been if her abuser was male, which is in line with the findings from the perceptions of seriousness questions asked to police and professionals. There were three areas relating to her and Carol's gender and sexual orientation that Anna felt contributed to the police's poor response: their decision making, their manner and understanding of abuse dynamics, and understanding of risk. Anna had tried telling the police that she felt her children were unsafe with Carol on two occasions, and both times had not received any help or support. On the second occasion, despite Anna's objections, the police allowed the children to be left with Carol, and that evening Carol absconded with them. In addition to their actions, Anna felt that the police's manner was 'brusque' and that she was not believed from the get go; which was further cemented when Anna was not offered any support she felt she was entitled to such as assistance with non-molestation orders. On top of this, Anna described how although she encapsulated many risk factors such as being pregnant, a new mother and thinking of leaving her partner, the police did not take these into account as risk factors for further abuse, and she feels they would have been if her abuser was male:

Anna: I think the fact that it was a lesbian relationship was an added layer for me and I often think a lot of the things that have happened to me just wouldn't have happened if I was with, with a bloke basically

Kate: Can you talk a bit more around that?

Anna: Well, erm, when the police came to the house that night I was hysterical and I had phoned them, I knew that (name) my oldest son had seen, so I hung up, I settled him back to bed, (ex-partner's name) had gone out into the street and so they came and they had taken her outside, they were speaking to her outside anyway, they came in so I was really upset, really hysterical and I had regretted ringing the police then I didn't want them in my house I just wanted them to go I thought 'oh my god it's going to happen now it's going to happen what am I going to say I've just told (son's name) that I've fallen down the stairs' you know and I've settled him back to bed, the kids are all asleep the police are in the house they can't be what if they wake up and the police are here

Kate: Mmm

Anna: And they were just very firm what's the word like quite brusque

Kate: Like abrupt

Case Study: Anna (continued)

Anna: Yeah abrupt that's the one just very kind of matter-of-fact and they checked me for bruises well there was nothing there and it was like 'well this happened like 20 minutes ago whatever I'm not going to have bruises or marks or whatever' and so that was one thing and then they checked on the kids and that was fine they did a welfare check and then they said to me you know I kind of thought it makes no difference but that it's a lesbian relationship, it's a same-sex relationship, but I felt that from the get go they didn't believe me, maybe that would have been the experience as a heterosexual woman, but I feel if you walk into a home and there is a woman there with three young children who are asleep upstairs and you can see they're well cared for who is telling you this and a male who is saying 'actually I'm the one that suffered abuse' I don't think it would have had the same effect

Kate: Yeah

Anna: You know I don't think her story would have been given any credence really and also when they asked about and this may have been the same again when they asked about 'do you want to contact' because they said 'do you want to proceed?' and I said no and then they said 'do you want to contact any like local agency, any of these kind of agencies do you want information?' and I was like no and there just wasn't any they were kind of like 'okay, fine' you know and I had earlier that evening been on the phone to broken rainbow and you know and they were sort of saying about non-molestation orders and things like that and I was just there was a real disparity I think between and the police were like good to go and then afterwards because on the advice of broken rainbow I did contact them, the police again

(later in the interview Anna mentioned the influence of being in a lesbian relationship again when discussing her and Carol's separation)

Anna: And the other thing is I think if it was heterosexual relationship they would have thought what are the risks of separation because you know it's all out there separation increases the risk, pregnancy, new birth increases the risk, all of that was glossed over it was never taken into account in their factoring you know how likely is it in a lesbian relationship that the person that's pregnant is the perpetrator, I'm not saying it would never happen but how likely is it, it's much more likely to be the other way round, but they never, those factors they never took into account having such a young baby and I think they would have done if it was a heterosexual relationship I think it would have been forefront of what they were doing but because there were two women

Kate: Yeah

Anna: It completely blindsided them to us both being mothers and therefore good, caring, kind people.

6.5.1 Assigning 'mutual abuse' status means victims may also be arrested

Assigning abuse as mutual or being unable to determine the victim and perpetrator is problematic as it effects actions taken by police, such as who is arrested, or taking no further action, which would leave the victim at risk of further abuse. There was discussion within interviews that if police cannot determine victim and perpetrator they may arrest both parties:

'If there's been an assault and you can't identify who is the assailant, who started it or anything like that you would probably lock them both up.' (Police Constable)

'Sometimes both get arrested because it can't be ascertained at the time and that's in order to preserve the evidence in order to actually work out in a bit more slow time.' (Detective Constable)

As well as arresting both parties, there was a narrative within the interviews that if the police cannot identify a victim or perpetrator, they 'choose one' to remove or arrest:

'It just seems totally random sometimes we've had incidents where I'm thinking how on earth did they come to that decision, I think often if maybe I think the perpetrator can be quite charismatic or convincing, I've definitely had cases where the perpetrator has been believed to be innocent.' (Senior Project Worker)

A police officer echoed this:

'If it's difficult to ascertain who's right and who's wrong you've basically just got to pick one.' (Police Constable)

Though police spoke about arresting both parties, it was recognised by some that this was not always the best course of action due to the effect on the actual victim, and the perpetrator being able to use this to continue a pattern of control:

'It's not ideal actually because you probably are arresting a victim.' (Detective Constable)

'They're obviously mortified to be arrested and it was clear with these two guys when one got arrested he was being removed from the house and the other guy was in front of him going downstairs and he kicked him in the back, he could have fallen down the stairs and broken his neck.' (IDVA)

Police appeared under pressure to determine who the perpetrator and victims were when responding to situations due to expectation to take positive action. This led them to sometimes seemingly make 'random' decisions when it was difficult to ascertain victim and perpetrator. Throughout interviews with police and professionals there was acknowledgement that it was a difficult job for police to have to do:

‘Sometimes you’re faced with two people that look like they've both had a right go at each other and you're thinking ‘how do I work out who is the victim in all this?’” (LGBT Liaison Officer)

‘So if I can't spot it I dunno how they’re gonna spot it.’ (Project Manager LGBT Organisation)

6.6 Professionals think police find responding to SSPA the most difficult: police disagree

Police and professionals were asked overall if they felt that police found responding to SSPA easier, harder or about the same as responding to male to female partner abuse. Their responses are shown in Figure 10:

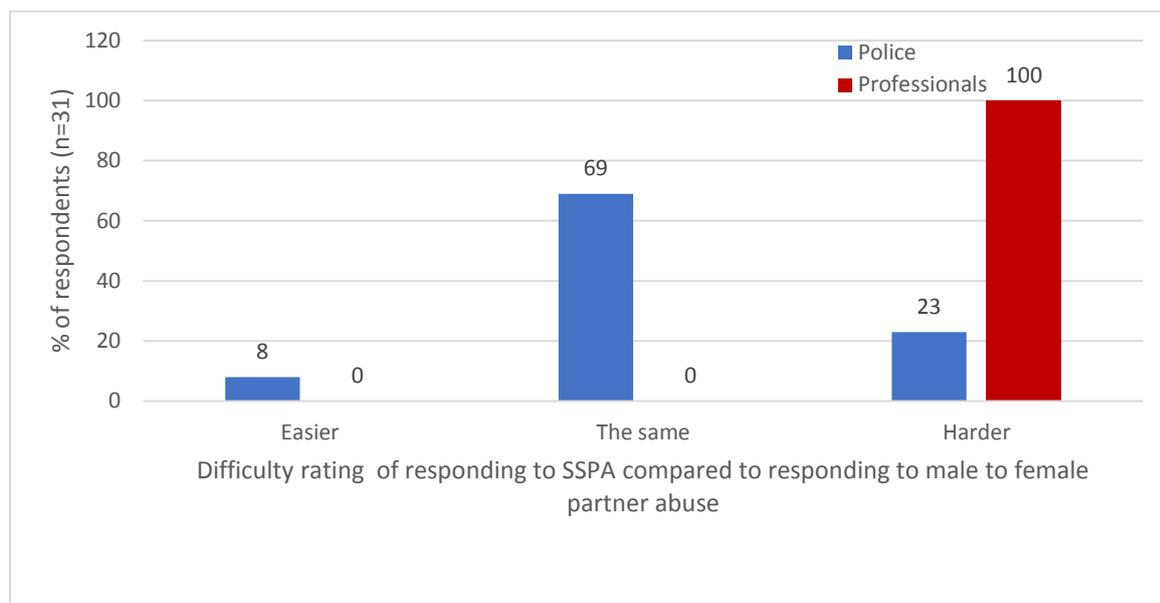


Figure 10. Police difficulty with responding to SSPA

It can be seen from Figure 10 that 100% of professionals felt that police find responding to SSPA harder than responding to male to female partner abuse. In contrast, the majority of police (69%) said that they viewed the difficulty of responding to all partner abuse the same regardless of sexual orientation of the victim and perpetrator, though almost a quarter did say they found it more difficult. For police who found the difficulty the same across all partner abuse cases, there was a narrative that police responses are process-driven; the same policies and procedures are followed for all partner abuse cases and so the level of response difficulty should be the same:

‘It would be the same because the same policies and procedures would apply.’ (Detective)

‘I think generally it would just be the same as dealing with every incident.’ (Police Constable)

‘They only saw it as far as their police duties were concerned which was “I turn up I arrest whoever has done it I you know take a statement I leave, that’s police work.”’ (LGBT Liaison Officer)

This process-driven approach meant that police felt that incident seriousness and subsequent response was influenced by the dynamics of the incident rather than the sexual orientation of the couple:

‘It purely is on the situation and the extent of the injuries, other risk factors such as kids and weapons...each individual incident has its own sort of factors that you have to take into account before you can make those decisions. To make them all generic or fit them into one basket will be very difficult.’ (Police Constable)

6.7 Police awareness of same-sex relationship dynamics was limited

Though there was general agreement amongst police that responses would be the same to all victims as policies and procedures were followed, it was mentioned that there may be specificities to same-sex relationships that could mean that the service was not as good as provided for heterosexual women, suggesting that there may be a lack of understanding of some dynamics specific to same-sex relationships:

‘Where it would fall down is on the added value stuff, whereby you can sense when somebody is uncomfortable with the situation or not happy asking the right questions or inappropriate words are used, it's that kind of added value that just leaves maybe a little bit of a sour taste in your mouth.’ (Detective)

Police and professionals discussed specific dynamics relating to same-sex relationships and how these affect police responses to victims. Approximately three quarters of police did not feel that there were any dynamics that they needed to be aware of, in contrast to all professionals who felt there were dynamics which needed to be taken into account. For police who felt there were factors, they fell into three broad categories: the insular nature of the LGBT community; awareness of whether people were ‘out’ about their sexual orientation and understanding of masculinity and

femininity.

6.7.1 Insular nature of the LGBT community

Professionals and a minority of police discussed ways in which people in same-sex relationships navigate relationships with their friends, family and ex-partners, and the influence that their sexual orientation has on these relationships. Professionals particularly stressed the importance of police being aware of these intricacies which they may not have experienced when responding to people in heterosexual relationships. For example, there was awareness within interviews that some victims in same-sex relationships may not have family support due to discrimination, or lose touch due to perpetrator isolation tactics. As a result, their friends become the closest people to them. Two police recognised that there was a difference between responding to same-sex and heterosexual relationships in terms of who a victim may turn to for support:

‘I’ve never taken them [same-sex victim] into a family’s house but then like I say the ones I’ve come in contact with have got a lot less links than normal situations when you sort of say “have you got any family can go to?” and they go “yeah I’ve got my brother or I’ve got my sister or I’ve got my mum and dad” it’s normally they say “I’ve got a friend in the area” rather than family.’ (Police Constable)

‘They might not necessarily have a next of kin that’s their parents to go for support or their siblings because maybe they’ve got a really bad relationship or no relationship with their family because of the whole process of coming out and things like that.’ (LGBT Liaison/Hatecrime Coordinator)

Linking to people’s relationships, professionals discussed how it was common for people to stay in touch with their ex-partners due to often sharing the same group of friends, and how this can be perceived by police as being obtrusive and unhelpful:

‘People are more likely to stay in contact with their ex-partners, more likely to have close-knit groups of friends, that should be understood, and actually for someone to completely sort of divorce themselves from any contact with an abusive ex-partner requires perhaps more loss than you might see for other people in terms of losing all social support and things like that and I think that kind of needs to be understood because there can be a bit of the feeling of “well some of the people don’t help themselves you know they sort of continue to go to pubs that they know their ex-partner will be at” things like that.’ (LGBT IDVA)

One member of police staff acknowledged the difficulties which may be faced by those in same-sex relationships because of this:

‘The links between friends and there is quite a close community, if they are all friends together that must be so difficult if you're in a relationship and then everyone's kind of on your partner's side and you're left even further isolated.’ (MARAC Coordinator)

For those in same-sex relationships who may be living away from their family of origin and hence rely very heavily on social support from a group of friends they share with their ex-partner, to sever contact with their ex-partner would also mean losing their group of friends, leaving them isolated from sources of support. There was little mention from most police as to this issue, which differs greatly from most heterosexual relationships where victims can rely on their family of origin or close friends for support when a relationship terminates. Within victim interviews, it was seen that Amil lived away from his family and could not rely on them for support due to not being out to them, and Charlie had lost contact with her family and community due to being transgender. As such, awareness of possible lack of social support from family needs to be taken into account when police are responding to victims in abusive same-sex relationships.

In addition to relationships with friends and families, professionals strongly emphasised the difficult history between LGBT people and the police (and other services), and how this could have an effect on the ways in which LGBT people interact with the police now:

‘I think it's really really important to like not lose sight of the fact that we do have this massive history in terms of like kind of laws and also in terms of sort of the medical services that sort of directly impacted and discriminated against gay people, and whilst those largely now don't exist, that actually it wasn't that long ago in terms of things like age of consent been different, and homosexuality being diagnosable and section 28 and all of these things so I feel like it's important for police to understand that like a kind of level of distrust and reluctance to engage with them is kind of normal, that is really kind of that's fairly fair enough that that is going to happen.’ (LGBT IDVA)

The impact of this negative history was viewed particularly in terms of older LGBT people:

'More so with older LGBT people is that the police are the enemy because if you have experienced homophobia and so they're viewed as likely to be homophobic, biphobic or transphobic so people don't want to report.' (Service Coordinator)

In contrary to professionals' views, police tended not to see the history between LGBT people and the police as important, and felt that this was not an issue in the present day:

'I think maybe in the past there may have been sort of the fear that there's going to be prejudices against them but I think I mean society has moved on from that and I think I think they are more comfortable now to phone us, you still might have relationships where they still feel as though there are prejudices against them because of their sexuality but I think it's becoming less and less as time moves.' (Police Constable)

'They've got nothing to be concerned about, it's getting past their own perceptions of the police, but I think I think it's probably pretty good now, obviously in the past things were different.' (Police Constable)

6.7.2 Awareness of whether people are 'out'

Professionals and a minority of police discussed whether people are 'out' about their sexual orientation as a dynamic specific to same-sex relationships that needed to be taken into consideration when responding. One police constable felt that due to police confidentiality this should not be a problem, and the person's sexual orientation would not be revealed further than the police. Though an important consideration, this view does not acknowledge the difficulty that a victim may have revealing their sexual orientation to the police in the first place:

'I think the fact whether or not they're out is again comes under the regular sort of confidentiality with everything else, there wouldn't be a reason to disclose somebody's sexuality I don't think.' (Police Constable)

An LGBT liaison officer explained how someone's sexual orientation could be revealed to others during routine police enquiries, and care should be taken with this:

LGBT Liaison Officer: 'I think we're not very careful a lot of the time when we've gone to same-sex domestics when you do that we have to go and knock on doors of the neighbours to ask if anyone else has seen anything'

Kate: 'Right okay'

LGBT Liaison Officer: 'And often you will be like "did you hear anything?" and we have to be very careful about what you say to the neighbours because you don't want to out your neighbours...and then immediately their little spider senses are tingling so they're far more likely to pay a bit more attention to the neighbours as well so I think there is that risk that we put people in danger when we do those kind of extra enquiries.'

It could be that routine processes such as speaking with witnesses could inadvertently lead to the victim and perpetrator being outed which may put them in more danger; something that police do not generally need to consider when responding to partner abuse within heterosexual relationships. An LGBT liaison officer explained how sometimes police are unaware that they may have outed someone due to following police processes without taking the person's individual circumstances into account:

"Well I dunno I did what I got told on the fact sheets to do, you know I followed that I put a risk assessment" or "I arrested them I took a statement what's the issue?" Well you know cos you've outed them to their neighbours and you didn't pass on support details.' (LGBT Liaison Officer)

Another participant who commissions services also recognised the difficulty that some professionals have in recognising specific difficulties faced by LGBT people, including fear of being outed:

'I don't think they necessarily many of our professionals necessarily recognise the unique things that worry male or female same-sex DV survivors or could be a barrier to them, so things like safety within the community, threats to out, or just generally the kind of social capital available to someone.' (Local Commissioner)

6.7.3 Influence of masculinity and femininity

There was discussion amongst police and professionals about being aware that appearances may be deceptive, and the person who presents as most 'masculine' is not necessarily the perpetrator. One professional discussed how myths and stereotypes influence officers' decisions:

'It's easy to make a lot of assumptions about who is the victim and who is the perpetrator, and masculinity gender roles so the kind of thing around women don't fight, and gay men are all sat at home doing interior design so they don't fight, many different myths and stereotypes that responding officers will be walking into that situation with and that will prejudice their decision-making and their response to the situation.' (LGBTQ IDVA)

A detective did, however, purport that there was an awareness of this when responding:

'Appearances can be very deceptive and I don't think it's any different within a same-sex relationship, perhaps you would think that the relationship dynamic was naturally more equal, more of a balance of power was equalled out but not necessarily, there could be the same power, control and coercion and you know violence horrendous things going on whatever sex the participants are.' (Detective)

6.7.3.1 Case Studies: Anna and Lucas – 'We don't "look like victims"'

Both Anna and Lucas referred to worries over the police not believing they were victims due to gender stereotypes relating to them and their partner. Between them, Anna and Lucas described themselves as the stronger, taller and more 'hyperactive' partner, and assumed that this meant they would not be believed to be victims by police:

Anna: I think there's a belief as well that perpetrators are male and also strong, physically strong and that's one of the things Carol used to say was that no one would believe me because she was physically weaker than me you know.

Lucas: We used to share clothes we're about the same build he's slightly shorter so and I have always been the kind of hyperactive one he's pretty quiet so you'd always if you were going to look at a couple you'd go 'oh it will probably be Lucas because he's drinking' and stuff like that and yet I've never laid a finger on him and it was quite the reverse so you kind of have this preconceived idea that they will be like 'how is that possible' you know like 'we don't believe him.'

Specific difficulties for trans people around masculinity and femininity when police are responding were also discussed by some professionals, which were seen to be problematic particularly when the victim did not identify as male or female:

'One of the things I would say about the cops at the moment I think they're getting there for people who are straightforward trans masculine trans feminine identity. I think they would struggle with someone that is non-binary so let's say you've got someone there who is basically saying they're gender queer or gender-neutral - well what does that mean do they know what that is?' (LGBT Diversity Consultant)

The professional explained the difficulties faced for trans people if they do not identify as male or female in terms of police understanding. In addition, another professional discussed whether or not resources used by the police such as the DASH risk assessment are inclusive for those who do not identify as male or female. The issues illustrated suggest that a process-driven 'one size fits all' response is not suitable for all victims:

'I'm not certain if the assessment forms that people do are inclusive for LGBT people like it's just male-female what if someone is non binary would the resources kind of reflect inclusion, because I know the MARAC [Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference] form doesn't, so how are we supposed to kind of get statistics, how are we supposed to prove that this happened, you know what I mean, domestic abuse is actually happening?' (Project Manager: LGBT Organisation)

6.8 Discussion

Throughout interviews, there was an overriding assertion that SSPA is not perceived to be as serious as men's violence towards women. Sometimes, this view was explicitly stated by police and professionals, most often in the context that men can cause more physical harm; particularly towards women, and other times it ran as an undertone within narratives. When police and professionals were asked to rate how seriously they perceived partner abuse between the various mixed gendered couples, a large majority of participants (both police and professionals) felt that the police viewed male to female partner abuse as the most serious. This finding relating to perceptions of seriousness based on gender is not unusual; existing research has concluded the same (Brown & Groscup, 2009; Harris & Cook, 1994; Seelau & Seelau, 2005), including when police officers were participants (Cormier & Woodworth, 2008; Gracia et al., 2014). In addition to viewing male to female abuse as most serious, police and professionals interviewed within this thesis also felt that the police viewed female to female perpetrated abuse as the least serious. Again, viewing female to female partner abuse as less serious is not a unique finding (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Taylor & Sorenson, 2005). Both of these findings link strongly to the 'public story' of domestic abuse, highlighting that men are the perpetrators and cause physical harm, whereas women are vulnerable and do not have the same propensity to cause this harm (Donovan & Hester, 2011).

A large amount of research exploring perceptions uses hypothetical partner abuse scenarios where the gender of the victim and perpetrator are varied and participants are asked to rate various

aspects such as whether they would recommend police are called, or if they would intervene. The current thesis did not provide participants with scenarios, but instead relied on them using their own, their colleagues', and victims' real-life experience to form their ratings. It was hoped that this method provided a more accurate representation of participants' beliefs based on their real experiences, rather than an expression of their perceived responses based on fictional scenarios.

When speaking to police and professionals about why they had drawn conclusions relating to seriousness, there were two factors that determined their responses: a primary factor of 1) The presence of a male perpetrator, and a secondary factor of 2) The presence of a female victim. Their responses suggested that it was primarily the gender of the victim and perpetrator rather than the sexual orientation that affected their perceptions of seriousness, suggesting they drew upon gendered stereotypes and constructions related to the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) of what it means to be a man or a woman. Hence, male to female partner abuse was rated as the most serious due to fulfilling both above assumptions. The fact that male to male abuse was viewed as more serious than female to female abuse illustrates that police were likely to be drawing upon gender stereotypes and the 'public story' viewing men as able to cause severe physical harm. So, even though female to female partner abuse involves a female victim, which police viewed as high risk, a female perpetrator was not perceived as able to perpetrate a serious level of injury, and so a situation involving two women was not rated as seriously as that involving a male perpetrator. In addition, the findings suggest that presence of a male perpetrator (and harm they could cause) was viewed as a more important factor to determine seriousness of incidents than the gender of the victim (and levels of defence they could exhibit).

Minimisation of the seriousness of women's use of violence and abuse within relationships has been discussed within existing research, which suggests that violence perpetrated by women may be seen as a 'cat fight' (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008, p.320), a breach of the peace (Barnes, 2007; Walters, 2011), and as a joke by police (Hardesty et al., 2011). Police views within this thesis that female to female abuse was the least serious of all types support existing research, alongside Anna's case suggesting that the fact that she was experiencing abuse from a woman (who was also a mother) meant her allegations were not taken as seriously as if the perpetrator was a man.

The reliance on gender rather than sexual orientation to determine seriousness of partner abuse incidents has also been found within existing research, however, some has different findings. Pattavina et al. (2007) found that in the USA, a mandatory-arrest law meant that same-sex female

perpetrators were more likely to be arrested than same-sex male perpetrators. This suggests that female victims are seen to be more at risk than male victims. This differs to the finding within the current thesis which found primarily that it was perpetrator gender rather than victim gender that determined seriousness levels. Pattavina et al. (2007) did find, however, that when a serious physical offence had been committed by a male same-sex perpetrator, arrest was much more likely, again highlighting the role of physical violence by men on perceived offence seriousness. Seelau et al. (2003) also found that participants in their research were most concerned when there was a female victim, regardless of perpetrator gender, suggesting an influence of victim gender rather than perpetrator gender or the sexual orientation of the couple.

The forefronting of physical violence as the most serious form of abuse was highlighted within Chapter Five as a primary concern faced by victims. As was described, victims held a perception of 'worthiness' around experiencing abuse that needed to be severe enough to warrant police intervention; this worthiness was most often viewed as serious physical injury. Police perceptions of seriousness discussed within interviews corroborate this view; that physical injury is taken the most seriously by police. It was apparent from interviews that most participants used their own views on gender and associated danger to make assertions around seriousness, with little mention of police force policy and procedure, and what was required as 'evidence'. This finding suggests that police were drawing upon their understanding of the 'public story', and associated risk. Though physical injury clearly indicates a crime has been committed and should be taken seriously, there was a distinct lack of awareness around coercive and controlling behaviours, and what these mean for victims. It is likely that the prevailing cultural view around physical violence constituting 'real' domestic abuse Donovan & Hester (2011), and non-physical forms of abuse as being less serious influenced police's thinking. Though psychological forms of abuse have been highlighted as the most difficult to identify (Irwin, 2008), they are also reported to be the most frequent (Donovan et al., 2006; Finneran & Stephenson, 2013; Henderson, 2003) and so police need to be aware of how they manifest within the lives of victims, and respond appropriately.

When drawing upon literature exploring police responses to non-physical forms of partner abuse, there is also suggestion that they are not taken as seriously as physical violence. For example Monckton-Smith et al. (2014) found that police would sometimes record incidents which did not involve physical violence as 'verbal only' (p.16), suggesting downplay of non-physical abuse. Recording incidents as 'verbal only' fails to take account of the ongoing, pervasive nature of partner abuse and instead views incidents on an episodic basis (McCarry et al., 2008; Melton and Sillito,

2012). As a result of this, some incidents which should be used to help build a picture of the pattern of partner abuse may be downgraded to minor incidents (Stark, 2006), and their seriousness may be overlooked. Stark suggests that victims experience ongoing entrapment which is more damaging than isolated incidents; therefore, injury is not appropriate to assess risk. However, within the current research, injury was used as the primary mechanism by police to assess risk and seriousness of incidents, and a number of police stated that they respond to what they see at the time at each incident; the issue being that in isolation an incident may not seem serious (Monckton-Smith et al., 2014). The lack of police focus on coercive and controlling behaviours was also evident despite the introduction during the interview period of the 'Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship' legislation (Home Office, 2015) which attempted to account for the ongoing, cumulative effect of partner abuse. Following the implementation of this legislation, research should continue to be carried out to explore police understanding of the law and how it is being used within policing.

Similarly to the key role of physical violence in determining the risk that male perpetrators pose, gender stereotypes were also used when describing why the FOI findings suggested that female same-sex victims were more likely to be deemed high risk for harassment than male same-sex victims. Participants within interviews described a multitude of reasons for this such as women being perceived as 'crazy and 'not letting things go'. Monckton-Smith et al. (2014) mention how the media conflates these stereotypes of women, making stalking appear as though it is about love and lust; underemphasising its seriousness. Stereotypes of women in television and film were also mentioned by participants within the current research, suggesting the influence of media on perceptions. There is a dearth of research exploring woman to woman harassment, and none to my knowledge around how police view and act upon risk relating to woman to woman harassment; an area worthy of further attention.

When considering male to male harassment cases, one view was that men were rated as lower risk than woman to woman harassment cases as they were perceived by police to be able to 'deal with it', due to their gender. Some participants, however, felt that men were rated by police as lower risk due to feeling unable to express the fear they actually felt from being harassed. These views suggested that when there is no physical evidence, such as injury, men may not feel that they can report to police due to worries about how they will explain the harassment that is happening. In addition, respondents with this view felt that men may be reluctant to tell officers about the effect the harassment has on them due to being perceived 'as a victim', and so risk ratings may be lower

for these men. Research suggests that seeking help is not perceived as masculine (Knight & Wilson, 2016; Letellier et al., 1994; Parry & O'Neal, 2015) and gay men may perceive police to be hypermasculine and not sympathetic to their needs (Guadalupe-Diaz & Jasinski, 2016). From victim interviews, despite Lucas experiencing severe coercion and control and physical violence over a number of years, he still did not reach out to police. Though Amil did seek support, he was concerned about 'proving' he had experienced non-physical partner abuse, suggesting reluctance to report and explain non-physical incidents. These experiences highlight how victims are drawing upon the 'public story' of domestic abuse, and when they feel that their situation does not fit this story, this results in them being reluctant to seek help. This highlights the problematic nature of the 'public story' for victims who have experiences outside of the parameters (Donovan & Hester, 2011).

As discussed in Chapter Three, most police forces use the DASH risk assessment to assess risk to a victim. However, as some participants suggested that men may downplay risk when answering these questions, caution should be taken when using the DASH as the only tool to assess risk. If men are struggling to state that they are in danger and feel fear, police should be aware of this and ensure they are taking account of other factors such as body language, as well as the contextual information surrounding a victims' case. The DASH is one tool within a 'process-driven' approach as discussed previously, and though it includes a free-text box, it primarily appears to be focused on risk assessing based on the answers to the questions. The DASH also does not have questions specific to LGBT relationships, such as focusing on victim fear of being outed, fear of homophobic or transphobic hate crime, or trans specific factors such as having medication controlled. The DASH is therefore not fully suited for assessing risk to LGBT people, indicating a need for it to be amended so that officers have the tools to ask LGBT specific questions, if appropriate.

In addition to police perceptions of seriousness being based on gender stereotypes, participants discussed the idea of SSPA being mutual. It was felt by a number of participants that a lack of being able to refer to the 'male perpetrator, female victim' model of partner abuse could leave police unsure as to where the blame lay. The discussions indicated that mutuality appeared to work differently for men and women. Male victims were 'expected' to be experiencing physical violence due to the presence of a male perpetrator, but due to being a male victim and hence assumed to possess some power, should be able to fight back or defend themselves. For women, all types of abuse were viewed to be mutual in nature, alongside assumptions that women cannot harm each other and are just having a 'spat'. Some existing research has found similar; that people perceive SSPA as mutual due to both parties being the same gender, and that police may be reluctant to intervene in SSPA due to difficulties determining a perpetrator and victim (Stiles-Shields & Carroll,

2014). Both parties may be seen to be at fault, equal, and having a fair fight (Knight & Wilson, 2016). In Anna's case, it appeared that stereotypes around her and Carol both being women and mothers were at play when the police made the decision that it was safe to leave Anna's children with Carol, despite Anna's objections. As a result of assuming there was no risk to Anna, the abuse continued, and Carol absconded with the children; highlighting the serious consequences of police inaction due to gender stereotypes and the influence of the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011).

Struggling to identify victim and perpetrators, or downplaying risk due to gender can lead to grave complications. Firstly, if police cannot identify that two people are in a relationship with each other, the domestic incident may not be recorded as such on systems, skewing police recorded figures and meaning the victim (and perpetrator) may not receive appropriate interventions. There were assertions within interviews that police may feel pressure to arrest someone if there is a disturbance, which may be exacerbated by the police's 'positive action' policy (College of Policing, 2017); stating that the police must take some form of action. Second, if police are incorrectly identifying the victim and perpetrator, this may mean that the victim is arrested either instead of or alongside the perpetrator. Research in the mid-nineties looking at gay and bisexual men's experiences of domestic violence suggested that sometimes a victim is arrested and held in the same cell as the perpetrator (and then consequently re-assaulted) due to police's assumptions around mutual abuse (Letellier et al., 1994). Finally, assuming mutual abuse and hence being unable to identify victim and perpetrator may mean police are reluctant to intervene (Stiles-Shields & Carroll, 2014), thus leaving the victim in further danger from abuse, in addition to undermining their faith in police support.

Police amalgamated their thoughts and experiences by discussing whether they found responding to same-sex partner abuse easier, the same or more difficult than responding to male to female partner abuse. Most police said they found it the same, whereas 100% of professionals said they thought police found it harder. When speaking to police as to their reasons for finding it the same, it materialised that due to assertions that their responses were process-driven (and therefore the same for everyone), responding to any victim regardless of gender or sexual orientation should be of equal difficulty. A number of police stressed that domestic abuse is the same no matter who it happens to, and that they would respond in the same way to everyone. However, the problem with responding to all victims in the same way is that dynamics specific to same-sex relationships (such as terminology/asking specific questions) may not be fully understood or responded to by police. Overall, only one quarter of participants felt that police were aware of specific dynamics, which one

detective termed, 'added value stuff', suggesting that this understanding is not something which is viewed as essential within the police process. Victims and professionals tended to disagree, feeling that dynamics specific to same-sex relationships need to be wholly understood and respected during police response, such as using a person's correct pronouns. This finding strengthens the importance of using an intersectional framework to guide the research and consider the intricacies specific to sexual orientation.

For Charlie, the worry that police would mis-gender her played a large part in her considerations about involving police, leaving her worried that they would not understand transgender identities and she may be discriminated against because of this. Though police generally stated that the service provided would be the same regardless of sexual orientation, existing research has highlighted specificities unique to SSPA that should be taken into consideration, such as threats of outing, use of homo/bi/transphobia and threats to infect with HIV (Calton et al., 2015; Pattavina et al., 2007). Researchers also suggest that whilst there are parallel forms of abuse between the heterosexual and same-sex community, professionals should be aware of specific tactics that may be used by perpetrators in same-sex relationships, and respond appropriately (Donovan & Barnes, 2017; Rohrbaugh, 2006). An awareness of the ways in which SSPA differs means that a tailored response can be given to SSPA victims rather than the experiences of heterosexual victims being viewed as the norm and being applied generically to SSPA (Brown, 2008). In addition to considering sexual orientation as a separate entity, other research has suggested that men and women in same-sex relationships experience police response differently to each other, suggesting it is gender rather than sexual orientation at the centre (Pattavina et al., 2007; Seelau et al., 2003). I would make a similar assertion based on findings pertaining to how police perceive male to male compared to female to female partner abuse. If police are responding to incidents holding pre-existing assumptions relating to seriousness and risk based on gender of the couple, victims will therefore experience differing police responses. Further research looking specifically at the needs of men and women in same-sex relationships based on gender would help increase knowledge in this area.

Though interviews focused heavily around a 'process-driven' approach as discussed, approximately one quarter of the sample mentioned dynamics specific to same-sex relationships that they felt police should take into consideration when responding. These dynamics fell around three areas: insular nature of the LGBT community, awareness of whether people are 'out', and influence of masculinity and femininity.

Considering the insular nature of the LGBT community, most police felt that the negative history between the police and LGBT people does not act as a barrier for SSPA victims to call the police, whereas professionals disagreed. There appeared to be a tension between police and professionals' views, with professionals stressing the importance of the historic connotations LGBT people may associate with the police, and the police not feeling that this is a problem as they now deem themselves to be inclusive. This lack of faith LGBT people may have in the police has been described by Donovan and Hester (2011) as a 'gap of trust' (p.27). They suggest that because of this negative history and regardless of improvements in policy and legislation which aim to create more equality, this gap of trust still exists. Findings from the current thesis would agree, and suggest that this gap of trust is still apparent for many victims working with the professionals interviewed, yet police do not see it as a particularly significant barrier for LGBT people. It may be so that the police are much more inclusive than historically, however, there may also be an issue with if and how this message is spread by police, whether this message is received by LGBT people, and whether it is believed. Parry and O'Neal (2015) recommended that police are trained to understand the historical relationships between LGBT people and the police so that they can empathise with the community. I would draw a similar conclusion based on findings of this thesis, in addition to suggesting more research which explores the prevalence of this gap of trust and the extent to which it affects LGBT people's reporting of partner abuse. As it was suggested that this gap is more prevalent for older LGBT people, an exploration of age within the discussion may also be useful.

Another area discussed relating to a same-sex relationship dynamic was around who victims can rely on for support. Two police participants stated that they had taken victims to a friend's house rather than a member of their family, something which they said differs for heterosexual victims. Another two police participants were also aware that victims often stayed in touch with their ex-partners due to having friends in common. For these police, there was an understanding that victims may be estranged from their birth family, and consequently, their family consists of close friends. Due to these close friendships, these police participants understood that when a relationship breaks down, the victim may still be in contact with their ex-partner due to their shared friendship group; something which is less common when a heterosexual relationship breaks down. Donovan and colleagues' (2006) research found that LGBT people were more than twice as likely to seek help from friends about partner abuse rather than family. Similarly, Merrill and Wolfe (2000) found that 85% of gay men sought help from friends, whereas 60% sought help from family. Though a few individual police participants did possess an understanding of these dynamics, existing research and professional's views within the current thesis suggest that police as a whole need a deeper

understanding of the dynamics of family and relationships for same-sex victims experiencing partner abuse, and how these dynamics affect help-seeking. Possessing a greater understanding would allow the police response to be more tailored and focused on the needs of the victim.

Awareness of whether victims were 'out' to others about their sexual orientation or gender identity was similarly only understood and discussed by a minority of police. There was particular discussion by a few as to how routine police processes such as speaking to witnesses or neighbours could mean outing a victim inadvertently; again highlighting possible problems with using a process-driven approach without grasping a full understanding of same-sex relationship dynamics. As discussed in Chapter Five, victims may fear the implications of outing via the process of reporting partner abuse to the police; however, it was mainly professionals rather than police who were aware of these implications. Existing research has uncovered victims' fears over outing. D'Augelli and Grossman (2001) said that LGB people may hide their identity from others to protect themselves from harm. Girshick (2002) also found that women living in rural areas tried to hide the abuse that had happened to them by only reporting partner abuse when they moved to a larger city, which may be in part due to fears over confidentiality, and worries that what has happened to them will spread amongst neighbours. These examples suggest that outing an individual to those around them could potentially put the individual at risk, and contribute to silencing the victim from seeking help.

Finally, participants discussed masculinity and femininity, how these notions may materialise within same-sex relationships, and what they meant in terms of responding. A large proportion of discussion focused around 'looking' masculine and feminine, and how this related to being a victim or perpetrator. Professionals said that victims tended to worry if they did not 'appear as a victim'. For both men and women, this generally meant that they were physically larger or stronger than their partner, louder, or had been drinking alcohol. In line with Nils Christie's (1986) 'ideal victim', this image can present problems for most victims of partner abuse, but there are particular issues when considering SSPA. A major problem is that the perfect victim is portrayed as a woman facing victimisation from a man; something which those in same-sex relationships immediately controvert. Similarly to those in heterosexual relationships, victims of SSPA may use alcohol, have mental health problems, and display erratic behaviour. As a result, they may appear unravelled and irrational to outside agencies including the police; diluting their victim status. As Lucas mentioned, he felt that he would be viewed as the perpetrator because he had been drinking, illustrating how he himself was attributing drinking as a characteristic of a perpetrator. Anna also spoke about the trauma she was facing when the police arrived, making her appear 'hysterical'. Expecting a victim to be calm in the

face of trauma materialised as something that Anna was expected to do, however, this is an unreasonable expectation that most people understandably will not live up to. As Judith Herman (1992) stated: 'traumatized people feel and act as though their nervous systems have been disconnected from the present' (p.35).

In addition to this, the notion of there being a 'big bad offender' as proposed by Nils Christie (1986) is complicated when both victim and perpetrator appear of similar size and build as illustrated in Lucas' narrative. Two police interviewed for the current thesis suggested that the size and appearance of the victim and perpetrator does affect their decisions around who is the most likely victim; suggesting that victims may not be believed if they are larger than the perpetrator – this again links in with assumptions made by the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011). Existing research supports this, with one victim in Alhusen and colleagues' (2010) research saying 'they were looking at my size and treating me like I was the guy' (p.452). For men in same-sex relationships it has been argued that they face double discrimination– both in terms of their sexual orientation and being a victim of abuse (McLennan, 2005; Perilla et al., 2003). In addition I would argue that men in same-sex relationships are not only facing the issues mentioned above but also problems associated with being a *male* victim of abuse in a society where only women are viewed as embodying victim status. Trans victims face further problems, particularly around gendered notions of masculinity and femininity. In Guadalupe-Diaz and Jasinski's (2016) research, trans victims discussed 'walking the gender tightrope' (p.11) and how traditional notions of what it means to be a victim are problematic. Charlie's narrative in Chapter Five illustrates this via her worries of how the police would perceive her due to her 'masculine' traits and the ways in which this would influence her status as a victim. Tesch and Bekerian (2015) stated when referring to police's views of trans people: 'police have a sense of who a 'worthy' victim is, and this does not usually apply to minority groups' (p.402) providing further confirmation of Charlie's worries.

Though only two individual police participants discussed using physical appearance and size to influence who was perceived as the victim, the difficulties police face when assigning victim and perpetrator status, and the focus on physical injury and 'just picking one' when it comes to arrest, would suggest that notions of physical size and appearance may be used more regularly than this by police when responding to SSPA. Furthermore, some professionals purported how the police rely on masculine and feminine traits to such a degree, that when they are absent (such as for someone who is non-binary), police struggle to 'place' an individual as a victim or perpetrator. Again, the connotations around gender appear to be largely influencing perceptions surrounding what it means

to be a victim, and the influence of the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) to guide responses is prominent.

6.9 Summary

This chapter explored the ways that police perceive and respond to SSPA, using qualitative interviews with victims, police and professionals. A number of key findings emerged which support existing literature, such as male to female abuse perceived as being the most serious by police, and female to female the least. Participants also felt that police were more likely to view men as being able to cause more serious harm, which was linked to the centrality of physical violence as the defining factor of partner abuse. Due to this, physical violence and injury was one of the key ways that police determined victim and perpetrator status. In opposition, police viewed harassment as a 'female crime' playing on gender stereotypes of women as 'obsessed' and 'crazy'. There was also evidence that some police struggled to identify victims and perpetrators as they were relying on gendered markers used within a heteronormative framework (and the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011)), and, as such, viewed some cases of SSPA as 'mutual abuse'. The notion of mutual abuse opened up implications for further academic research exploring how masculinity and femininity affect police perceptions and actions relating to assigning mutual abuse status. The final findings chapter (Chapter Seven) follows on from this chapter by addressing research aim 4: To consider the extent to which police are aware of, and provide, specialist provision for victims experiencing SSPA. It explores specialist provision for SSPA victims within forces and the ways the police liaise with external agencies.

Chapter 7: Specialist provision within forces and police liaison with other support organisations

In addition to exploring help-seeking, police perceptions of, and responses to SSPA, interviews also considered whether specialist provision exists within police forces to support victims of SSPA, and how the police work with other support organisations. This chapter addresses research aim 4: To consider the extent to which police are aware of, and provide, specialist provision for victims experiencing SSPA.

7.1 Existing specialist provision within police forces: Interviews and FOI findings

Within the interviews, the police discussed any specialist provision they had within their forces for those experiencing SSPA. They also considered other ways their force reached out to LGBT people such as campaigning and attending events. As outlined in Chapter Three, in addition to interviews, qualitative information was also collected as part of the Freedom of Information requests to explore whether forces provided any specialist provision for people experiencing SSPA (Appendix II). 43 forces were asked for the information, and 39 forces provided it, giving a response rate of 91%.

Figure 11 illustrates that almost half of forces who responded to the FOI request currently provide low levels of specialist provision for victims of SSPA (see Appendix X for criteria).

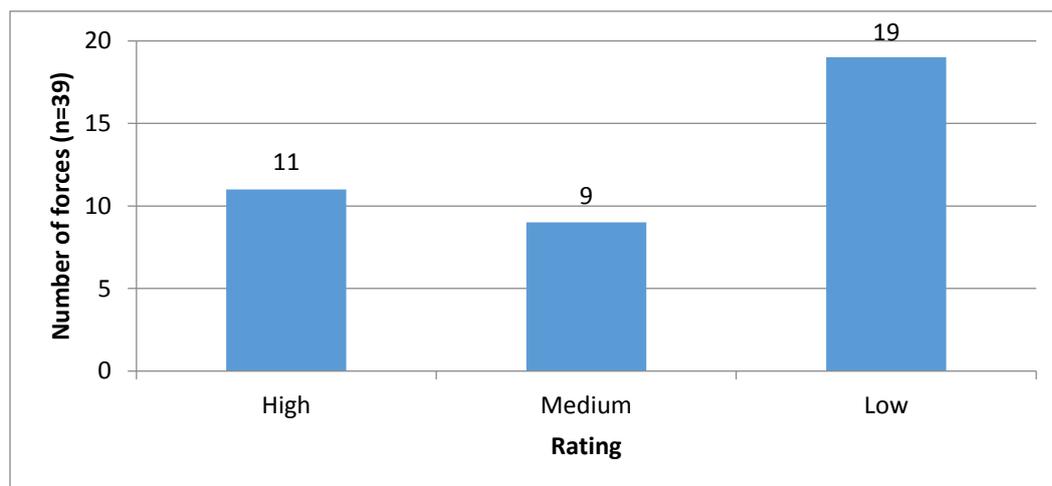


Figure 11. Level of provision provided by forces

When considering the FOI and interview data, it could be seen that specialist provision was provided relating to two major areas:

- LGBT Liaison Officers (LLOs)
and
- Engagement with the LGBT community

7.1.1 Less than half of forces had LGBT liaison officers

From the forces that responded to the FOI request, 16/39 (41%) forces said they employed LLOs; whose roles are outlined in Chapter Two. A further three forces said they employed officers who occupied specialist roles such as hate crime officers or family liaison officers, who also worked with those experiencing SSPA. These figures suggest that the majority of forces do not employ LLOs to assist with SSPA. It was also apparent from the FOI data that LLOs do not deal solely with domestic abuse, but with all issues affecting the LGBT community, and are often based within the Hate Crime section of the force.

Police and professionals discussed the ways in which LLOs worked within forces and with SSPA victims. One of the key benefits of LLOs was that they were active within the LGBT community:

‘I think our LGBT officers are really good actually at getting out into the community and have built really good relationships, and I think that is so key.’ (MARAC Coordinator)

‘I found that over 10 years you'll get one or two that are brilliant, and do become focal points, they go to local community meetings, there will help set up hate crime panels, they will go to the libraries and the clubs and the bars whatever they will actually get out there a bit.’ (LGBTQ IDVA)

‘I know that the LGBT liaison officers they do like columns in (local gay magazine).’ (Police Constable)

In addition to the wide range of activities carried out by LLOs, it was deemed important that the officers had specialist knowledge about issues faced by the LGBT community:

'I think it is important that they [victims] know that there is someone that has got that specialist knowledge within the police.' (MARAC Coordinator)

'So if there was a victim that needed some specific advice or follow-up then actually that representative could also contact them in line with the investigating officer or the investigating officer could consult with them and say "I've got this victim is there any other advice that you would give?" You know because they've just got a bit more expertise in that area' (Detective)

There were, however, problems highlighted during the interviews with the role of LLOs. When speaking with police participants, they discussed how LLO roles were generally undertaken by police on a voluntary basis in addition to their usual duties. As such, police officers may be expected to carry out the role in order to secure promotion; suggested by one professional to mean that officers may not be fully committed to the role:

'I've worked in other areas of the country where it was more of a tick box exercise and people were being told that they had to do it to get their promotion.' (DV Training Officer)

During the interview phase, I attended a drop-in with an LLO in one force area to find out more about their role. Within our conversation, he seemed unmotivated about the role, telling me that he "didn't really want to do it but no one else would". This lack of drive to carry out the post was also reflected in one of the interviews:

'Then they fill the post with a heterosexual officer who you can tell probably really isn't that keen or aware and then that one will go and it will be empty for a while, they definitely aren't putting as much into preserving those LGBT police liaisons as they used to.' (LGBTQ IDVA)

In addition to the LLO post sometimes being filled with people who are not motivated about the role, the notion of lack of resources being invested into the post was discussed in a further interview, with one professional stating that within their local area the officers who fill the role are trained for a day, with no follow up training:

‘I was one of the two people who trained them two years ago and I think from my perspective we trained them and they got the day they got a skim, and then there was no continued development and off they went to boldly be LGBT Liaison Officers.’ (LGBT Diversity Consultant)

The lack of training for liaison officers was reflected in the FOI findings: although forces said that their LLOs received extra training around LGBT issues, no forces mentioned that this training was refreshed on a regular basis.

In addition to training, police and professionals discussed how the LGBT community perceived LLOs. One professional spoke of the benefit of having specialist officers to work with the LGBT community:

‘They’re seen as being on the same side almost or someone who is not going to come and expect them to just like judge the community, and so that removes that barrier.’ (Service Coordinator)

However, one liaison officer who was interviewed said that the community were sometimes still reluctant to engage with them as they were still viewed as being ‘police’. They expressed further frustration that force policy meant that they could not distinguish themselves from ‘just another copper’, by wearing a tabard or rainbow⁶ band, meaning that members of the LGBT community may not have known about their role as an LLO. As a result of this lack of visibility they felt that engagement from the community was poorer.

7.1.2 Engagement with LGBT people was varied and broad ranging

In addition to the role of LLO’s, participants also discussed other ways in which police forces engaged with the LGBT community. Levels of engagement varied across forces; a finding which was supported by both the interviews and FOI findings.

A primary area mentioned by police and professionals was the police’s involvement in attending Pride events (an annual celebration of the LGBT community held across many areas of the world). Police involvement with Pride was generally viewed as positive, particularly when the police were involved in the celebration, for example, by marching in the parade rather than simply being there to police the event:

⁶ The rainbow is a symbol of LGBT pride and social movements

'We have a big pride in (city) you know the pride event and again it's something that we've engaged with very proactively so senior police officers march in our pride and they have done for a long time.' (Detective Sergeant)

'They always attend pride so they have a big thing at pride they always do a big parade and they have a big stall in the park and all that kind of thing, so yes that's really good.' (MARAC Coordinator)

It can be seen how the role the police play at LGBT-specific events is important to participants. However, for the LGBT liaison officer at one force, strict rules about the way in which officers were permitted to act whilst participating at Pride events caused frustration:

'But then they tell you know you've got to remain professional so there's a certain code of conduct, you've got to march it you're not allowed to sort of dance or walk it, it's very much a sort of disciplined thing so again it doesn't feel like fun and you get booed.' (LGBT Liaison Officer)

For the LGBT liaison officer, not being able to participate in the 'fun' aspect of pride meant that they believed that they could not fully engage with the community. In addition, as previously mentioned, force rules which do not allow individuals to visually identify themselves as an LGBT liaison officer led to another officer believing that the community would view them with distrust; 'just another copper'; the opposite effect of what was intended. Linking to this, one officer made a comment which suggested that the police's presence at pride was primarily one of policing the event rather than being involved in the celebration:

'We have a presence at pride and things like that because we police those sorts of events anyway to make sure that they're kind of peaceful and things like that.' (Detective)

The comments from the Detective discuss the *policing of* Pride, rather than officers attending to be part of the celebrations. A service coordinator mentioned the importance of police being involved in events with the LGBT community rather than simply 'policing' them, so the community can see that the police care about them and are not simply there to police them when something goes wrong:

'I think stuff where being proactive at things like Pride is good because what we I think don't want is the perception that the police only care about the LGBT community when things are going wrong, because then I think that leads into the whole like "oh people think LGBT relationships are less" so I think what we find is we get a really positive response with things like police presence at, well negative from some people, but a lot of positive response from police presence at prides and community events.' (MARAC Coordinator)

This comment links to that made by another professional, who, when asked whether police engage with the LGBT community, stated that police campaigning and involvement only tends to happen when something negative has happened:

'They do, less than they used to do and often off the back of a serious incident so take (town) with their serial killer and killing people with G and stuff so suddenly they're all over the local community like you wouldn't believe.' (LGBTQ IDVA)

Police interaction and celebration with the LGBT community rather than simply 'to police' may be particularly important due to the historically negative relationships between the LGBT community and the police, as discussed in Chapter Two.

In addition to celebrating with the LGBT community, it was also expressed by a minority of participants that decisions over where police target campaigns and focus resources are important in order to reach people, including in areas frequented by LGBT people, and using TV and social media:

'We've got a cafe just by (local train station) and I've seen one poster for the LGBT liaison officer, but it's quite an expensive middle-class cafe and they're probably missing a whole sector of the population who can't afford to go and pay you know 3 or 4 pounds for a coffee.' (Senior Project Worker)

7.1.2.1 Case Study: Lucas – Police need to target specific areas

Lucas: Yeah I mean raising awareness is obviously really important and probably places like Grindr, dating sites which you know tend to have, you know Grindr tends to have a lot of drug users on there which then leads to instances of people that are probably more vulnerable because of the chaotic kind of environment that is you know I think places that you are likely to use when you're in weird situations because it's not acceptable regardless you know.

7.1.2.2 Case Study: Amil – Use television and social media

Amil: After my experience I have met (local Police and Crime Commissioner) so she was doing a campaign for gay men and sexuality and we had an interview with her and everything and I didn't see much campaign on TV, I think TV and radio should be really the main platform not just for advertising products but for everything it wouldn't hurt for me to see advertising about (local police force) on (local news) just telling people and with the (TV channel) I had an interview for the (TV channel) about my case and everything it wouldn't hurt to see an interview on BBC from a policeman saying 'there is domestic abuse' doesn't matter if it's gay but I think I'm in dreamland I will never see that it's always crap on TV

Kate: Yeah

Amil: Social media as well should be used as a platform for that

Kate: Social media?

Amil: Yeah that's how we reach out to people these days sadly enough, it's how we reach out to people, social media and TV and radio is it's not all just about music and products and buying insurance and all that.

7.2 Police liaison with services

In addition to raising awareness and providing provision within forces, some police and professionals mentioned ways that they liaised with other services to provide a more inclusive service for LGBT people. This was viewed as important for many reasons, including ensuring the police are covering equality issues in their promotion, helping police to aim for Stonewall ⁷rankings, and building up positive relationships between police and other organisations:

'A lot of my confidence has increased with the police and I never thought at one time it would, it has come from one to ones you know like showing interest "let's have a look, let's see what your counselling rooms are like, let's see this", coming to things that we run, and I think now our faith has built up in them a bit more.' (Counsellor)

There were, however, professionals who felt that there was no relationship between them and the police, and that the police are not committed to responding to SSPA. Not being able to offer a joined up service alongside the police was frustrating for the project manager below; they felt that there was only so much they could do as an organisation before requiring assistance from the police, but did not believe that that assistance was available:

⁷ An organisation who campaign for equality for LGBT people across Britain

‘Until the police get out there and say, keep drumming into people's minds that we are going to take this seriously, then we can't really do as much because we're not the police, we can't arrest the perpetrators, we can't keep you safe. We can give you a safe space but we can't guarantee your safety like the police can. They're not massively invested in it but they could have a domestic abuse unit you know with this one person, this significant person but they don't.’ (Project Manager: LGBT Organisation)

From FOI responses, 15/39 (39%) forces mentioned that they specifically interact with external support organisations and/or the LGBT community. 13/39 (33%) of forces stated that they do not have any specialist provision for victims experiencing SSPA, with the remaining forces providing some provision but not stating that they liaise with support organisations or the LGBT community. There were also some excellent examples of partnership working between police and support organisations (including in one case being co-located), and of communication with the LGBT community; both in person, via social media, and using radio campaigns on a local LGBT radio station:

‘Last year, specific LGBT domestic abuse training was provided with input from a specialist group.’

‘The Police have a specific independent advisory group which seeks to gain direct views from members of the LGBT community, identify what issues need further work and what areas are the police doing well. This group is independently chaired by a member of the LGBT community’

‘We provide information at engagement events that I attend, such as (city) Pride, Trans Pride and similar. E.g. leaflets/flyers about (support organisation) and Broken Rainbow⁸ as well as literature aimed specifically at lesbian and bi women, gay and bisexual men, and trans people. We also engage with people in the way we would with non LGBT people about the Force’s commitment to domestic abuse and encourage people to make reports to us.’

‘Police teams work closely with partners, often co-located to provide joint services.’

⁸ No longer in existence, helpline currently provided by Galop
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'LGBT DA campaigns - Through social media (Twitter & Facebook), Radio Campaigns (adverts 6x a day on [LGBT radio station] for example).'

Amil's case also illustrates the benefits of the police and support organisations working together. For him, advocacy from a support professional enabled him to not only report to the police, but to be guided through the CJS as well as being offered assistance with his well-being such as help to form a safety plan:

7.2.1 Case Study: Amil – The support service and police worked together to help me

Amil: So that evening it was just all building up on me because I was like 'I haven't done anything wrong' because I was crying I've never had a mental breakdown and cried that much up until I had it that night, so I went to my room and then it just hit me like 'this is not okay what am I doing this is not ok' so I called, no I didn't call, I google, I had no idea what coercive control means what domestic abuse means I know the words I know the factuality of what they entail I'd heard of domestic abuse and everything so I started googling things like I'd literally googled 'partner is aggressive with other partner' things like that and then charities came to me the first one that came was Terrence Higgins it's HIV related, I called and they said to me 'you have to get out from there immediately this is not normal', I was giving them the example for that night only because I was crying and everything so they said 'why don't you Google that and Google that' so I googled like charities and I made a standard email just giving pure examples and a bit of back story about how I met my partner, what's going on and I send it to all these charities and got replies and took it from there

Kate: So it really got quite intense then quite quickly

Amil: Yeah

Kate: What happened from the charities, did they respond?

Amil: They all responded, some of them called yeah it's them who linked me with (regional) domestic abuse services

Kate: Okay

Amil: And we took it from there and that's when I met (support worker) from (charity) and that's how I came out with the plan to leave and we had to build a plan I couldn't just leave tomorrow I had to find a house I had to find a job in like three months

Kate: And any point did you have any contact with the police?

Amil: Yes so the police came later on so I've met (support worker) and I was telling him my story basically and he was telling me 'we need to tell the police' I was like 'no no no no' because I was so scared, in my head my partner is a powerful man, not anymore so he was like 'we'll go to the police' and I was like 'no there's no way', took about two or three sessions with him to convince me to discretionally we can go to the police report what's going on and we went to the police and reported it they didn't do anything because we asked them not to do anything (inaudible) report so we met the police a couple of times and the plan was to report every incident to the police or to (support worker) so every week I was reporting sending reports very discreetly yeah to the police to build up a good case against him and when I left that's when they went for him.

7.3 Police are not aware of specialist LGBT support services

In addition to the findings of the FOI requests, police were asked within interviews if they were aware of LGBT specific support services within their force area, and if they referred victims to them if a victim asked for this specialist support. Bar a few exceptions, there was indication from police that they were unaware of specific provision for LGBT people experiencing SSPA:

‘I don't know of any specific agencies for same-sex couples.’ (Police Constable)

‘I'm not aware of any individual specialist thing for gay and lesbians.’ (Police Constable)

‘Off the top of my head I have no idea.’ (Neighbourhood Officer)

For some police, their general protocol was that they would refer victims on to a non-specialist domestic violence agency, with the expectation that the agency would signpost victims on to any specialist support:

‘You could just direct them to them [non-specialist DV service] and they can pass them on to the other agencies.’ (Police Constable)

Police Constable: ‘We normally say that if you need to talk to somebody they [non-specialist DV service] will be a good place to start and if they contact that group they will have contact details for any other group that victim needs to speak with, so there will be people there’

Kate: ‘So everyone can be referred to the same ones and they can refer people on to someone else?’

Police Constable: ‘Yes it's like a big umbrella.’

Within approximately one third of police interviews, there was indication that they felt that it was ‘someone else’s job’ to refer victims to specialist support, and that they did not need to be aware of agencies, or, that they did not think specialist agencies existed. Other police were aware that there was specialist support, or that there ‘probably was’, but could not recall names or organisations, and a minority were aware that specialist provision existed, could name organisations and did refer onto

them directly. Of the victims interviewed, only Lucas and Anna were offered further support by police, with Anna only being offered it once during a time of trauma. Even so, Anna did not feel as though her situation was taken seriously enough to be offered thorough advice on what further support she could access. For the victims, support from other agencies which they sourced themselves was generally the most beneficial to them.

Linking to lack of knowledge of specialist agencies, there was also frustration from professionals who worked with the LGBT community that their services were not being recognised and utilised by police:

‘We've been in the area for 10 years and I personally for the last five years have been waving this like “we are a hate crime service refer to us” and they're still not doing it.’ (Project Manager: LGBT Organisation)

‘We actually did some training about two years ago with the police because the police would offer (service name) on their screens but they didn't actually know what (service name) was, so they would say to a victim “you can go to (service name)” and the victim would say “well what's that?” then the police would say “well we will refer you and then they can tell you.” (IDVA)

‘I think we feel the biggest kept secret in the area for about 10 years, and I think they will generally still refer to others such as (local organisations) because they are the domestic abuse organisations.’ (Volunteer Coordinator)

There was indication from interviews that the police were generally either not referring directly to specialist services initially, or, as mentioned by one professional, police would refer but would not have knowledge about the services that the agency could offer to a victim. Contrary to this, there were occasions where, though police did not have knowledge, they were proactive in finding out information for victims, such as the neighbourhood officer who said if asked for information about a specialist support service they would check on their phone and say ‘this is what it says on Google I'll find out and I'll get back to you’. This comment suggests that they would not simply pass on information about a support service that they were unaware of, but would make enquiries first before giving details to the victim. One professional gave a possible reason as to why police may not be aware of existing specialist services, stating that they were few and far between, and it is difficult for the police to be aware of them:

‘There are so few LGBT specific services and they’re often not widely publicised or known about even in the LGBT community so I think police might feel ill-equipped to respond.’
(Senior Project Worker)

Contrary to negative views about partnership working, there was some evidence that in some areas police were working well with local support organisations and were aware of the services offered. In addition, where the police force had an LGBT liaison officer, there was evidence that officers liaised with them if needed to offer the victim further specialist support:

‘We have a very good relationship with the police, very very good and they know what we do.’ (Service Coordinator)

‘They were really good at like if they ever dealt with anyone that was LGBT and they thought they might need a bit more support they would contact me they would send me an email and say “can you get in touch because we think they might need more support.”’ (LGBT Liaison Officer)

7.4 ‘Specialist support services should not be necessary’

Police and professionals discussed whether or not they believed LGBT specialist support services were needed, or whether non-specialist domestic violence agencies should be able to meet the needs of all victims. Opinions were mixed, but generally erred towards not needing specialist agencies. However, most participants with this view felt that non-specialist services still needed to possess specialist knowledge regarding SSPA:

‘The independent domestic abuse service (name) as is called, they are very well versed on same-sex domestic violence and in fact their literature does specifically refer to support in that area.’(Detective)

‘I went to a MARAC [Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference] meeting last month and these two guys were being spoken about and they asked me to send them to (LGBT-specific support agency) and I was kind of like “well why? Why should I send them to (LGBT-specific support agency)?” They said “well the specialist support” and I was like “but they should be able to come into any service and receive a tailored safety package.”’ (IDVA)

Most participants felt that SSPA victims should be able to receive the support they need from any domestic violence service. In addition, some participants mentioned that the non-specialist service local to them had a worker who specialised in working with LGBT people, and they could provide any specialist support the person may need. Whilst this provision being available was generally viewed as positive, there was concern that LGBT provision within a non-specialist service could materialise as an 'add on' rather than being fully integrated into the service:

'I think there is very much a divide between those services that want to do it and the services they have been told that they've got to do it, and I think those that want to do it are accessing training, they are accessing advice and support about how they can make their services more LGBT inclusive, and those that have been told that they've got to do it for funding reasons are I would say putting a bit of an add-on on the service and it [sic] becoming something that's sort of slightly separate and disjointed.' (DV Training Officer)

Another participant mentioned that services promoting themselves as inclusive for LGBT people was positive, but if their practice did not reflect this, LGBT people would be discouraged from accessing support:

'Probably the biggest cause of LGBT not accessing the services is that if you say it, fine, but if you then try to experience you go along and they say "yeah we accept LGBT people" "but you haven't spoken to me as a person, and you haven't taken into account my same-sex relationships" or any of that kind of stuff so yeah I think by having LGBT services within generic ones it helps increase the understanding across the entire service and it means there's broader scope for the right kind of measures to be put into place for someone rather than just an underfunded, under resourced LGBT service trying to do everything.' (LGBT Liaison/Hatecrime Coordinator)

7.4.1 Case Study: Anna – Support agencies need specialist LGBT knowledge

Anna felt that due to the specifics of dynamics relating to being in a same-sex relationship, specialist support organisations need to exist. She expressed some of the same concerns as professionals in that non-specialist services do not respond adequately, in addition to feeling that SSPA victims would be more likely to contact a specialist service due to the implicit understanding about their sexual orientation:

Kate: Do you think it's important that there are LGBT specific services out there or do you think that mainstream services should be able to respond to everyone that would access them?

Case Study: Anna (continued)

Anna: I think they should be able to respond but I think we live in the real world and they don't respond adequately and I think that it's hard enough to contact services and I think you're more likely to contact an LGBT service than a mainstream service however much they tell you they're there for everybody, you've got that difference and you feel it acutely when you're going to put yourself out there in the public arena and you want certain things understood and maybe unspoken things about your, I mean it's a very diverse community so it's not like everybody is going to feel the same

Kate: Yeah sure

Anna: But there will just be some understanding you know because I felt as well that I have even though logically lots of heterosexual women will be in a similar position you know I felt more judged because I felt that a mainstream organisation would partly be thinking 'you've chosen to have children with this person' you know, 'and gone out of your way to have children with this person' and therefore judge me more harshly because clearly my children weren't an accident so you know I just felt like oh whereas you feel that judgement you know why shouldn't you have kids kind of thing

Kate: Yeah

Anna: Yeah just an understanding I think of some of the dynamics as well.

7.5 Local Commissioner's views: What is important when commissioning services?

A Local Commissioner (LC) from one authority area who was responsible for making decisions regarding commissioning of domestic and sexual violence services was spoken to in order to gain insight into what is taken into consideration when commissioning services for LGBT people. One primary area emerged from the interview: non-specialist services being able to support all victims whilst having a clear understanding of, and provision for, SSPA victims:

'Within the specification what we were really clear is that we wanted a generic service, single point of contact... but that equality was really essential to that and that service really had to think about what was required to speak to and serve the LGBT community.'

The LC felt that non-specialist services should be aware of and equipped to respond to LGBT people, rather than simply stating they are available to all and then not providing an equal service. As a result of this vision, within the LC's local area, a service was created for all victims of domestic violence. The service had a specialist section for LGBT people, with key workers such as an LGBT IDVA. The LC also stated how it was important to recognise specific needs of the LGBT community and how an individual may or may not want to speak to a specialist worker:

'If I'm an LGBT victim I might want an LGBT worker or I might want to access a bit of the service that is LGBT specific, equally of course I might not, and I don't want to talk to someone who is LGBT because the community is tiny and I think it's going to get around or it might be I've turned up today and I need help and I really don't care if you're LGBT or not but I just really just want you to give me advice so I think it's about balancing those different tensions within the service.'

Speaking specifically about services that are provided, the LC mentioned that due to the history of gay men being at the centre of the LGBT movement, most services are geared towards them, linking with the view from another professional who felt that police engagement is better with gay and lesbian people than bisexual or trans people due to services which are provided:

'It's probably the classic situation isn't it, that you have within a community you have a hierarchy and I think you know gay men have a higher profile and then it kind of trickles down from there.'

'I think the engagement with the LG community is good because you've got more, you've got a much more structured LG community with services built around those communities and for those communities, then you've got a little bit of bi trying to creep in there on the margins and edges that kind of filters in with that, and then you've got the trans-stuff which isn't provided on any statutory level.' (LGBT Diversity Consultant)

7.6 How can police forces encourage more reporting of SSPA?

As illustrated by the FOI requests and previous research, reporting of SSPA to the police is low. For this reason, police and professionals were asked about their thoughts on how the police could encourage more victims to come forward and report to them.

7.6.1 Community engagement and promotion

Forging positive relationships based on trust and engaging with the LGBT community was the most commonly mentioned way that police could encourage more reporting of SSPA. Participants mentioned that police should attend community events such as Pride, but also carry out partnership working with schools, colleges and support services, help break down the image of police being a 'masculine' organisation, and have members of staff who possess specialist knowledge about SSPA.

Some participants discussed the prevailing view of the police as a 'masculine' and 'homophobic' organisation, and the impact this may have on interacting with the LGBT community:

'I think first of all the way we present ourselves is dire, we do you know all the imagery around policing are men in uniforms.' (Detective Sergeant)

'I imagine that in other areas of the country the LGBT community would say "I'm not reporting to the police because they're a bunch of homophobic you know."' (DA Caseworker)

'Well for me joining the police when I first became a special which was in 2005 I had a view that I thought the police was a bit macho and a bit sort of I suppose probably a little bit homophobic in certain areas...I didn't know how well it will be received by everybody and for me seeing the police march at pride and I watched a couple of years that was probably the tipping point that made me think "you know they all look happy and content and having a whale of a time marching in uniform" and all the rest of it and recently seeing the chief officers joining in with that as well you know that made a huge difference to confidence for me to join the police and that the police weren't this you know, this old fashioned monster, you know.' (Police Constable)

Police discussed how they felt that it was important to have a presence both on the gay scene and within the general public, in order to break down barriers and increase people's confidence to report to them:

'A big presence in the gay scene, in the gay press and encouraging really that we are here and approachable and we're not going to judge you and I think that's the way forward really is just to try and be out in the gay world and visible and encouraging to try and build confidence.' (Police Constable)

'I think it's just it goes down to trust ultimately, it is about building relationships with the community and being engaged with them, there's something about you know people being confident to report domestic abuse.' (Detective Chief Inspector)

A further area that police and professionals discussed in terms of encouraging more reporting was to ensure there were officers with specialist knowledge of SSPA within the force, such as LLOs; and ensuring that the LGBT community know these officers are there. One detective mentioned that the police needed to be better at engaging with LGBT people to let them know that policing was on their

side. Having LLO's may assist with this goal; however, as discussed earlier, victims may still view them as 'the police' and be reluctant to engage. This again emphasises the lack of trust that some LGBT people may feel towards the police, and suggests that there remains work to be done to build people's confidence to report.

Participants felt that one way of encouraging people to report was for the police to work in partnership, both within forces and with external organisations; the importance of which was highlighted earlier. Police and professionals discussed a number of ways this could be done such as attending colleges, launching campaigns in partnership, and forging stronger links internally within police between hate crime and domestic abuse teams so expertise can be shared:

'Well the best thing that they could do which is what we're doing, I've been meeting with (three support organisations), anyway those three and what we're doing is going to put a campaign together we're going to get (local PCC) it to launch it so he knows, so basically we are going to launch the fact that we are all working together, there's a service here for you and the police are on board.' (Project Manager – LGBT Organisation)

In addition to the majority of participants feeling that there was more that the police could do to encourage reporting, a small minority of police felt that it was not the police's responsibility, feeling that the victim should take responsibility for deciding to call the police:

'There has to be some personal responsibility there as well, we can assist people in getting out of situations, we can't do it for them.' (Detective)

'It's getting past their own perceptions of the police.' (Police Constable)

'I mean I don't know really because it's got to be something that comes from them, I think everybody has their own threshold I suppose in relationships don't they you maybe get to a point where you think well "actually that's not acceptable" and it depends on what you think is where your bar is in terms of what you would put up with.' (Detective)

These participants did not feel that the police could do anything to encourage victims to report, believing that the onus lay with each individual to make that choice, whether based on when they reach their 'threshold' of what they can deal with or when they get past their perceptions of the police.

Another participant said that they would not encourage people to report to the police, but rather to seek support from a support organisation, and then make contact with the police via the support organisation if they decided they would like to. Her comments reiterate the importance of partnership working:

LGBT Liaison Officer: 'Personally I would much rather someone went to a third party support agency, got educated in what, that that is an abusive relationship that they're in'

Kate: 'Yes'

LGBT Liaison Officer: 'That there is ways that they can escape and then the IDVA pass it over in some way so I would encourage like third-party reporting maybe.'

These comments again reiterate what the interviews with victims suggested; third party support is vitally important to victims both as a standalone intervention and when liaising with police. For all victims interviewed, they felt that more publicity and campaign work needed to be done to encourage reporting; specifically through mediums and in areas accessed by the LGBT community. With the exception of Pride, victims struggled to recall any campaigns within their local areas.

7.7 Discussion

Overall, based on the findings from the FOI requests, approximately half of the forces in the UK who responded do not provide high levels of specialist provision for SSPA victims. The range of provision varied extensively between forces, with some providing LLOs, attending training, providing drop-ins at LGBT venues, taking part in projects and being Stonewall Champions, whereas 33% stated that they were not aware of any specialist provision they would provide for LGBT victims. Of all specialist support, employing LLOs was the most common provision outlined by the FOI requests and within interviews. Many professionals expressed the importance of having LLOs working with the LGBT community, particularly in terms of them being active within the community and possessing specialist knowledge about SSPA. Having specialist knowledge was also deemed important by officers, who stated that they could ask an LLO for support if they were struggling with a case. These efforts to provide specialist support may go some way to overcoming barriers faced by SSPA victims who may fear negative responses from the police if they seek support, as has been mentioned by existing research (Calton et al., 2015; Donovan & Hester, 2011).

Though participants discussed the positive aspects associated with LLOs, there were also concerns. Some police participants mentioned that LLOs were not visible to the public, as strict policy rules meant they were not able to identify themselves by means of, for example, a rainbow coloured tabard. In addition, there was discussion that even within events such as Pride, policy again prevented LLOs (and other officers) from fully engaging with the community due to strict rules on dress and conduct. This was problematic for officers who felt that the LGBT community therefore still viewed them as 'police' rather than allies. Existing research has suggested that LGBT people may be reluctant to seek support from LLOs due to previous negative experiences or concerns about how they would be dealt with by general police officers (Dwyer et al., 2017), suggesting that efforts to break down these barriers and to ensure LLOs stand out as 'different' may be needed. Furthermore, one officer illustrated the constraints of policy by mentioning that the officer who made the 'spontaneous' wedding proposal at London Pride in 2016 had to seek permission from the force before doing so. These examples all link to the police's process-based policies and procedures, and highlight how this can make breaking barriers and building bridges with the LGBT community difficult.

In addition to visibility, some participants mentioned that only a small amount of resource was invested into preserving the LLO roles. Some participants stated that LLOs may be carrying out the role in addition to their primary role in order to gain promotion; meaning they may not be fully invested. This view was supported when speaking to an LLO who said they 'didn't really want to do it'. For officers in this position, they may not possess enough specialist knowledge or be willing to learn, meaning that SSPA victims may not be given a positive service. Dwyer et al. (2017) also found this, with LLOs in their research recognising that they needed to show the LGBT community that they would understand their issues better than 'your run-of-the-mill copper' (p.19). In addition, some participants within the current research mentioned that there was a high turnover of LLOs and they received little training. If specialist officers are not providing adequate support to victims, victims may view the police as an institution who cannot help them, and may not seek support again in the future. There is very scarce existing literature which considers the role of LLOs. The little research that does exist in Australia focusing on homophobic and transphobic victimisation suggests that although 70% of LGBT communities were aware of LLOs, only 4% of victims accessed them (Robinson & Berman, 2010). In addition, the researchers found that LGBT victims did not seek support from a LLO for many of the same issues found in this thesis; a high turnover of LLOs, LLOs not being interested in taking the role forward and lack of training appropriate to their needs. This limited research suggests that the role of LLOs and how they support victims needs to be explored further.

Attending Pride was mentioned by many participants as a key way that the police interact with the LGBT community in a positive manner. Police and professionals discussed the positive aspects of this, such as the LGBT community being able to see the police engaging with them. However, some participants discussed how the police only interact with the LGBT community when something negative happens, and, as such, members of the community may see the police as there to 'police' them rather than interact; thus viewing them with distrust. Research by Dwyer et al. (In Press) found that the negative historic relationship between the police and LGBT community does influence present behaviours, with LLOs in their research stating that they thought that LGBT people did not think that police understood their situation. Instead, they believed they were there to assault them rather than assist. Taking into account the negative historic relationship between police and LGBT people, and the gap of trust that exists (Donovan & Hester, 2011), police interaction only when things are going wrong for the LGBT community is likely to further deter them from seeking support, as they will not view police as allies. The interviews overall suggested that actively being involved with and supporting the LGBT community rather than simply policing them is important. Doing so may enable the community to engage with the police in a positive manner rather than to feel they are being negatively 'policed'.

When considering police liaison with other support services, views were mixed. Some support services felt that the police were engaged and interested, and they worked well in partnership. This was particularly apparent when support services and their clients were able to build up a relationship with a particular officer(s); which in relation to earlier findings relating to high turnover of LLOs could be difficult. Bonds between support services and the police seemed to be stronger when the police took an interest in the support service such as an awareness in what services are provided and where the service is located; and were strengthened further when police physically visited the service's premises, so staff and clients could build a relationship with them. On the other hand, some professionals expressed frustration that they wanted to build links with the police but were struggling to do so, feeling that the police were not invested enough in tackling SSPA. It was clear from the interviews that all participants saw the benefits of partnership working with support organisations, but the extent to which this was occurring was variable. Most police interviewed were also not fully aware of local specialist support organisations that they could refer victims to. Many said they would refer to their local non-specialist support organisation who would then refer on. Others said there were probably specialist support organisations in their area but they could not recall them. Considering SSPA victims' reluctance to involve police at all, it may be that by being

passed onto more agencies than necessary, victims lose confidence in the police and disengage. If police possessed knowledge of specialist agencies should the victim require one, they would be able to quickly refer them or provide the victim with their details which would minimise the amount of people the victim had to come into contact with, and may reduce disengagement.

Existing research highlights how the response to partner abuse cannot be carried out by one organisation alone. Monckton-Smith et al. (2014) discuss how the police take the majority of the blame for the official response to partner abuse; however, it is highlighted that the response to victims needs to involve more than the CJS. This is exemplified by the title of the HMIC report 'Everyone's Business' (HMIC, 2014) which stresses that more than just the police response needs to be scrutinised. More effective partnership working between support organisations and the police would therefore help to strengthen the overall response provided to victims. This could also help overcome the frustrations expressed by some professionals within interviews, in that police were not aware of them and their services, despite in some cases being in existence for a number of years. The findings from the FOI requests mimicked those from interviews; with some forces stating that they liaise with support organisations, and others not mentioning this, again highlighting the variability between forces.

Most participants felt that specialist support organisations are not necessary, and that non-specialist organisations should be able to respond adequately to everyone experiencing partner abuse. It should be noted that participants were not calling for non-specialist practitioners to respond to everyone; rather for those with specialism in supporting SSPA victims being based within non-specialist organisations. This view was echoed by a Local Commissioner who was interviewed about what he felt was important when commissioning services. In areas where this setup existed, it worked well for both victims and police officers. For victims, it meant that they could have a specialist worker if they desired, and for police it meant that they were aware that by referring to the 'non-specialist' organisation, SSPA victims could still receive a specialist service. The Local Commissioner mentioned that having one service meant that LGBT people could choose if they wanted a specialist worker, asserting that some people may not want to speak to an LGBT person due to the community being small and the possibility of their business being known by others. Existing research has discussed the insular nature of the LGBT community and how this may cause problems for victims. In addition to possibly knowing the professional allocated to them, victims may feel that by admitting that they are experiencing partner abuse they are bringing shame on their community (Alhusen et al., 2010; Peterman & Dixon, 2003). Research such as this, in addition to the

findings from this thesis, suggest that victims need to be provided with a choice as to who they seek support from, whilst still having their unique needs met.

Throughout interviews, it was important to participants that a specialist worker/service needed to be well integrated into a non-specialist service rather than simply being 'added-on'. Participants stressed that an inclusive service was vital to ensure that LGBT people would continue to access the service and feel valued. Existing research has suggested that where staff are not skilled enough, LGBT people are critical of services (Hester et al., 2012). In addition, within Hester's research, participants were also concerned about homophobia when contacting services, and trans people particularly voiced how they are often left out of LGBT services (Hester et al., 2012). One of the authors' concluding thoughts was that consideration should be given to how to provide support for LGBT victims within existing services. Interviews from the current thesis suggest that this is being carried out to some degree, but the extent of provision varies between areas and therefore victims are receiving different services depending on where they live.

Building on existing research by Donovan et al. (2006) which found that the police are the least common source of support for SSPA victims, the findings within this thesis suggest that partnership working is vitally important in order that victims feel they can seek support. If stronger links were forged between the police and support organisations, victims may feel more confident to report to the police either directly or via a support organisation. Within the current research, all four victims had support from other organisations during their liaison with the police, which proved invaluable to them. This is particularly important as victims may not have an understanding of how the CJS works and what their options are, but if their support organisation worked closely with the police, they would be able to explore this before making any decisions.

Participants also discussed the importance of community engagement and campaigning in encouraging more SSPA victims to come forward to report to the police. The majority of participants were well aware that SSPA is under-reported to the police, and it was seen that in addition to forging links with other organisations, campaigning and outreach was vital in providing a more positive service for victims. Awareness-raising within places frequented by LGBT people was viewed as particularly important by victims. Lucas stated that he felt that police could raise awareness via places like Grindr and dating sites, mentioning that they tend to have a lot of drug users, which leads to vulnerability. Having police presence on sites that people are 'likely to use when they're in weird situations' (Lucas) was stated as important, and to illustrate the message that abuse is not

acceptable regardless of a person's situation. This police presence may be particularly important when considering that people could be entering into risky or first time relationships on these sites, due to hiding their sexual orientation from the 'real world'.

Factors discussed earlier such as not recognising a relationship as abusive, lack of support networks, or coercion from the perpetrator may mean that someone in a same-sex relationship could remain with their abusive partner for longer. However, other research has suggested that those in same-sex relationships may remain with a partner for longer because they see the relationship as 'special' – particularly true for those experiencing their first same-sex relationship. Donovan et al. (2006) argue that first same-sex relationships embody a specific set of circumstances, which include the relationship as validation of a person's identity and their sense of self. Participants in their research described how their first same-sex relationships made them feel 'exhilarated' (p.13) with one participant describing it as 'I was in love with being in love' (p.14). These experiences illustrate that the importance of a first same-sex relationship in terms of the validation of sexual orientation, feelings of love, and exploring what a same-sex relationship means can override any abuse experienced. Therefore, a police presence on sites such as Grindr to advertise services and raise awareness about abusive relationships may be of great benefit.

All participants mentioned the importance of campaigns to reach out to the LGBT population. A particular emphasis was placed on social media, as this was seen as the primary way that people communicate. Social media was mentioned in a variety of ways, from advertising helplines, YouTube videos and having a police presence on dating websites. In addition, advertising on television and radio was mentioned to acknowledge that police are aware that SSPA is happening, although Amil followed this suggestion with 'but I think I'm in dreamland I will never see that'. In terms of advertising services, ensuring they were in places accessible for LGBT was important, to avoid as one participant stated, a single poster in an expensive café.

In order to increase rapport between the police and LGBT community, participants discussed how the police presented as 'masculine'. To help break down barriers between victims and police, police discussed how they need to rid themselves of their 'masculine' image which may deter victims from reporting. Interestingly, it was police rather than professionals or victims who were most aware that they may be perceived as such by victims. Existing research by Guadalupe-Diaz and Jasinski (2016) suggested that gay male victims view police as 'hypermasculine and hostile' (p.167) and may be reluctant to report SSPA to them. Other research has described police as acting masculine and joking

around with the perpetrator (Stephens & Sinden, 2000), adhering to 'cop culture' (Hoyle, 1998), and one woman described the police as 'the most sexist, homophobic, racist section of society that I have ever encountered' (Brown, 1998, as cited in Westmarland, 2015, p.113). In addition to working in partnership with organisations to attempt to combat this image, participants discussed the importance of the police attending areas where LGBT people gather, and having a presence on social media, linking to earlier thoughts around ensuring that police are present within LGBT communities in general, and not only there to 'police' them. The presence of specialist LLOs was also deemed as positive, although recent research would suggest that LLOs may still be viewed as 'police' by LGBT people (Dwyer et al., 2017).

Though the majority of participants felt that the police could do more to encourage reporting, some police felt that they did not need to encourage victims to report and that the responsibility lay with the victim to decide. The findings of this thesis would disagree, instead indicating that the police do have a responsibility to present themselves as inclusive and approachable to enable people to feel confident to report. Stating that responsibility lies with the victim indicates a lack of understanding of the dynamics of abusive relationships and the barriers to reporting that victims face. Building on police perspectives, however, existing research has suggested that the LGBT community are reluctant to accept that partner abuse occurs, for fear of bringing stigma to an already stigmatised community (Bornstein et al., 2006; Murray et al., 2006/7). Victims may therefore be silenced as they either do not recognise that abuse is happening to them, or do not want to speak out (Alhusen et al., 2010; Donovan & Hester, 2010). Partnership work to enable the LGBT community to more readily recognise and speak out about abuse may be useful in enabling victims to feel confident that abuse does happen within LGBT communities and that they can report it. Due to existing stigma and historic connotations with the police, this is likely to take time, and more research with the LGBT community is warranted to explore ways in which this can be successfully implemented.

7.8 Summary

This final findings chapter explored the extent to, and the ways in which, police forces provide specialist provision for victims of SSPA, and the ways forces liaise with external support agencies. Overall, interviews with police, professionals and victims in addition to the qualitative findings of the FOI requests suggested that provision was mixed, with some forces providing a high amount of provision, and some not providing anything. As such, the findings suggested that victims will receive a different service depending on which force area they live within. Considering provision within forces, LGBT liaison officers were viewed as a key source of specialist support by many participants,

though there were concerns expressed about whether they would still be viewed as 'police'. The masculine image depicted by the police was viewed as something which may present as a barrier to LGBT people coming forward. It was suggested that police frequent areas where there are known LGBT populations and target campaigns in an accessible way to help build rapport. Police liaison with external support agencies was mixed, with some police and professionals reporting excellent working relationships, and others frustrated that the police do not recognise their services and work with them.

Most participants spoken to felt that specialist services are not needed for SSPA and that non-specialist services should provide an inclusive service for all, whilst still recognising specific same-sex relationship dynamics and the different ways that abuse can be perpetrated. The findings gave rise to a number of implications for future research, such as further examination of the role of LGBT liaison officers in responding to SSPA and gaps within service provision, and exploring partnership working between police and support services. In terms of practice, forces may need to examine their policies and processes in terms of ensuring that officers appear 'safe' for LGBT people to talk to, such as increasing the visibility of LLOs. Chapter Eight will conclude the thesis, discussing findings from all four stages of the research and will consider the implications overall for policy, practice and further academic research.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Partner abuse is not a one-off event (Dichter & Gelles, 2012) and, as such, it is important that research is carried out in order to better understand the phenomena and surrounding implications so that victims can be supported. Research focusing on SSPA only began to appear in the 1980s and 1990s (Hester & Donovan, 2009; Renzetti, 1992), focusing predominantly on violence within lesbian relationships due to the prominence of the Women's Movement. Still, at the time of writing in 2018, many issues surrounding SSPA are underexplored or absent from academic literature, with issues of hate crime and HIV being at the forefront of academic research exploring same-sex issues (Langenderfer-Magruder et al., 2014; Stiles-Shields & Carroll, 2014). The notion of those in same-sex relationships as an 'invisible' population in addition to difficulty in obtaining official statistics regarding SSPA means that a full picture of the nature and extent of SSPA is difficult to build, and much knowledge exists as a result of a compilation of small and larger scale academic studies. In addition to the small pool of academic research, national data collection within the UK is also unhelpful in helping to determine prevalence, with the Crime Survey for England and Wales offering no option for people to state they are in a same-sex relationship, meaning that findings relating to crime are assumed to be applicable to heterosexual populations.

This thesis contributed to the existing field of SSPA research by focusing exclusively on the police responses to SSPA in England and Wales. Though SSPA research is gaining momentum, the police response is rarely considered in its own right, and is more commonly explored as part of research focusing on issues affecting the same-sex community, if at all. In addition to using police data to gather a picture of the nature and extent of recorded SSPA crimes in England and Wales, this thesis also explored the help-seeking decisions victims' face, the perceptions of and responses to SSPA provided by police forces, the ways that forces provide specialist provision for SSPA victims, and police knowledge of specialist support agencies. By using a mixed-methods approach of FOI requests and interviews with victims, police, and professionals, the research addressed some of the gaps which exist within police responses to SSPA, which will be of interest to those working in the fields of domestic abuse, LGBT studies and policing.

This final chapter summarises the key findings pertaining from the research aims and objectives, and relates them to literature as discussed throughout the thesis. Though each research aim will be presented separately, findings from all stages of data collection will be assimilated where needed rather than being viewed as distinct, to highlight the integration between them and how qualitative

and quantitative methods can work together to provide a fuller picture of a phenomenon. Key contributions to knowledge are then outlined, before recommendations for future research and policing are suggested. The chapter then closes with reflections on the research process.

To recap, the four aims addressed in this thesis are:

1. To consider the nature and extent of police recorded SSPA crime in England and Wales.
2. To explore the help-seeking decisions victims face when deciding whether to call the police about SSPA.
3. To examine how police perceive SSPA and what responses they provide to victims.
4. To consider the extent to which police are aware of, and provide, specialist provision for victims experiencing SSPA.

8.1 Summary of key findings

8.1.1 Research aim 1: To consider the nature and extent of police recorded SSPA crime in England and Wales

- Most police forces could not provide data asked for within the FOI request due to not recording it in an easily accessible way on their systems
- The twelve police forces who provided individual level crimed data as part of the FOI request collectively recorded 916 crimes between 1st August 2014 and 31st July 2015
- Of the eighteen forces providing data, most police forces recorded fewer than 100 crimes per year, with one force recording seven crimes (the lowest) and another 509 (the highest)
- A similar proportion of same-sex and heterosexual incidents were crimed over a year long period
- Generally, the larger the population of a force area, the more SSPA crimes were recorded, though this was not true in all cases
- Crime types recorded as being committed by men and women were remarkably similar
- Men and women were most likely to be recorded as committing 'assault with injury', suggesting incidents involving physical injury were most likely to come to police attention
- Over half of all crimes had a recorded outcome of 'evidential difficulties'
- Approximately two thirds of men and women whose incident was classed as 'evidential difficulties' did not support the police to take action on their case

- The high number of cases closed as ‘evidential difficulties: victim does not support police action’ suggests police are not utilising victimless prosecutions in many cases
- Risk levels assigned to men and women were different, despite crime types committed being similar
- Most incidents were classed by police as ‘medium risk’, however, significantly more incidents involving men were classed as ‘high risk’ compared to women overall
- For assault with injury crimes, men were more likely to be recorded as high risk compared to women, whereas for harassment crimes, women were more likely to be recorded as high risk compared to men
- It was unclear whether risk ratings were formed relating to risk posed by the perpetrator, the risk posed to a victim or a combination of both

Freedom of Information requests were sent to all 43 forces in England and Wales asking for information about SSPA incidents between 1st August 2014 and 31st July 2015. Most forces could not provide this data due to systems not being programmed to filter SSPA only, as often family abuse was ‘mixed in’ with partner abuse. When looking at individual level crimed data from the twelve forces who were able to provide it, it can be seen that 916 crimes were recorded collectively over the year. Historically, statistical information around the nature and extent of SSPA has been difficult to determine, and can only be estimated from research studies (Baker et al., 2012). Due to only twelve forces providing the data, the findings cannot be said to be representative of the whole of England and Wales; however, the forces were spread throughout the countries and so findings can be used to help increase our understanding of an already difficult to estimate area. Using data gathered by forces also means there is consistency within the definition of domestic abuse used, in opposition to a common criticism of attempting to gather prevalence data from academic research which uses different definitions (Stiles-Shields & Carroll, 2014). Hence, though the data gathered by FOI requests is not without flaw, it provides a stable starting point for beginning to understand the prevalence of crimes reported to police forces in England and Wales.

The FOI data suggested that most forces reported fewer than 100 crimes a year, suggesting that SSPA is largely unreported to police, and/or that police recording systems are inaccurate. A significant finding was that men and women were recorded as committing the same crime types in roughly equal numbers, with assault with injury crimes the highest. This is contrary to societal belief and academic research that women engage in less crime and are less violent than men (Hassounah & Glass, 2008; NRCODV, 2007). However, as discussed in Chapter Four, this data must be viewed in

light of caveats such as that the police data only reflects that which is reported and recorded correctly. It may also reflect willingness of women to call rather than higher offence rates, and we lack contextual information from the data such as why offences occurred.

Evidential difficulties as the most commonly recorded outcome for cases involving same-sex victims was a key finding. The sub-category 'victim does not support police action' was also prevalent. From the data only it is not possible to ascertain why victims did not support police action, however, Chapters Five and Six explore some of the reasons given by police, professionals and victims why victims may not seek police support, such as fear of negative repercussions and police viewing SSPA as mutual. Using the interviews alongside the FOI data within this thesis has helped to provide a fuller picture of the reasons why victims may disengage with the CJS; illustrating one way that mixed methods can complement each other.

The final key finding addressing research aim 1 was around risk; men were more likely to be rated high risk for assault with injury crimes than women, and women were more likely to be rated high risk for harassment crimes than men. Existing research and interview data from this thesis suggests that this is likely to be due to gendered perceptions around men and women; with men viewed as more likely to cause serious injury (Ahmed et al., 2013) and women viewed as causing harm by stalking and harassing due to being attributed with stereotypes such as being 'obsessed' and 'crazy' (Beck, 2016). It was also suggested, however, that men may be rated by police as lower risk for harassment due to their unwillingness to demonstrate fear because of expectations surrounding the masculine notion of being 'tough', or of self-protection. These findings illustrate the influence that gender stereotypes have on police practice, and how this affects the way in which crimes are recorded and responded to. However, risk ratings must be viewed with caution. It was unclear how police formulated risk ratings, and interviews which aimed to uncover this provided mixed responses.

8.1.2 Research aim 2: To explore the help-seeking decisions victims face when deciding whether to call the police about SSPA

- Well-founded fear was the primary concern that police and professionals felt victims experienced when deciding whether to call the police, with these fears based on victims' justified perceptions of what would happen should they choose to call

- Professionals felt that fear was experienced on a number of levels, such as not receiving an empathic response or being believed; most police did not mention these fears
- Decisions around help-seeking were formed due to a variety of intersections, such as gender and sexual orientation alongside a victims' cultural background, status as a mother and being a non-UK national. Police rarely mentioned intersections which may influence help-seeking
- Victims were concerned about a number of losses they may experience if the police were involved, such as the relationship with their partner, their community, family or children, and other losses such as their home and financial security. Therefore, calling the police was a last resort. Police did have an understanding of these losses, however, little understanding of their intersections with other aspects of a victims' identity e.g. being a lesbian mother
- Most participants alluded to physical injury as being justification for calling police
- Police and professionals outlined that victims often feared reporting to police due to being outed by processes following their report, rather than concerns over outing themselves to police
- Victims feared perpetrators' pre-emptive coercive tactics and help-providers' coerced responses, rather than homophobia or negative attitudes from police
- Trans victims face unique factors when help-seeking such as fear of being mis-gendered
- Previous poor police response (personally or vicariously) along with assumptions about police responses reduces the chance a victim will call the police again
- Key support professionals played a major part in helping victims to seek police support and remain involved with the CJS

Overall, well-founded fear was discussed as the primary reason why victims may not call the police for support with SSPA. Victims experienced these fears on a number of levels, particularly relating to loss of important relationships if the police were involved. These fears intersected with aspects of victims' identities (such as their cultural background) to effect whether or not victims decided to call the police. Victims were very aware of these potential losses and, as such, would often call police as a last resort when they felt that they did not have another option. Police and professionals were aware of potential losses and how they shaped help-seeking, however, rarely mentioned how these potential losses intersected with other aspects of a person's identity, such as being a non-UK national, or being a mother. Calling the police as a last resort may begin to account for the low number of crimes provided by the FOI requests, in addition to why most involved assault with injury.

If victims are calling as a last resort, they will have been likely to have experienced abuse over a period of time before coming to the attention of police, and it may only be when physical injury occurs that they feel justified in calling. Therefore, the statistics for assault with injury crimes recorded by police would be high, as suggested by the FOI request data. Interviews with police, professionals and victims all suggested that physical injury was viewed as serious and therefore victims would feel more justified in involving police. The centrality of physical injury as the most serious links to the idea that to have experienced partner abuse (or at least serious partner abuse), physical injury must have occurred, demonstrating the influence of the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011).

Victims in same-sex relationships were generally not concerned about outing themselves to the police, though police and professionals discussed that this was a concern for some victims. Trans victims were perceived to be an exception; there were unique factors which police, professionals and victims felt would make a trans victim less likely to seek help from police, such as fear of being mis-gendered and not feeling that they fit into any services. More strongly than fear of outing themselves to police, interviews with victims alongside victims' experiences discussed by professionals generally indicated that victims feared outing in other ways, such as the perpetrator outing the victim to their family if they reported, or being outed via the CJS process such as through knocking on neighbours' doors to gather evidence. Though the theme of outing is consistent with existing literature (Calton et al., 2015; Irwin, 2008; Kirkland, 2004), the findings from this thesis suggest a move away from victim fear of outing themselves to police, and more a fear of *consequences* of outing which were often separate to, but influenced by, police involvement and processes.

Rather than a concern over homophobic responses, there was worry amongst victims over the ways that perpetrators' had pre-empted their help-seeking and employed coercive tactics, and how police would respond to these tactics. For example, whether the perpetrator could manipulate police into believing them or whether police would remove children due to perpetrators' lies were of concern to victims. Consequently, fear of a coerced response from police due to perpetrators' pre-emptive coercive tactics played a large part in determining victims' help-seeking behaviours. When victims did choose to seek help, perpetrators could attempt to re-establish relationship rules (Donovan & Hester, 2014) by enacting further coercive tactics in an attempt to disrupt any future help-seeking, illustrating how coercive perpetrator tactics were engrained throughout help-seeking processes. What victims perceived the police would do following a report highly influenced victims' help-

seeking decisions, and when they did call the police, these worries did not disappear. These concerns were influenced by victims' existing experiences with the police, their expectations of police response and their concerns over receiving a coerced response. Additionally, lack of awareness of police processes and assumptions about the actions police would take prevented victims from seeking help. Prior negative experiences with the police – either experienced by the victim themselves or someone else within the LGBT community - shaped victim help-seeking to some extent (Donovan & Hester, 2011).

Finally, a key theme which arose from victim and professional interviews was the role that support professionals play in victims' police help-seeking behaviours. All victims interviewed had the support of a key professional from a support service working around domestic abuse and/or with LGBT people and expressed how they had received momentous support from them. Despite the importance of this support voiced by victims, the support of professionals outside the police was rarely mentioned by police as a factor influencing victim help-seeking, suggesting that work around SSPA may still exist in silo within some police forces.

8.1.3 Research aim 3: To examine how police perceive SSPA and what responses they provide to victims

- Police perceived male to female partner abuse as more serious than male to male or female to female partner abuse
- Gender of victim and perpetrator rather than their sexual orientation informed police's views of incident seriousness; police drew upon gender stereotypes and perceived female to female partner abuse as the least serious and male to male abuse as more serious as men were viewed as more likely to cause serious physical injury
- Police generally use the extent to which people are physically injured to determine who is a victim and who is a perpetrator; however, there was awareness from some police that serious injuries do not always mean someone is a victim.
- Physical injury was often prioritised at the expense of other abusive behaviours such as coercion and control
- Harassment was viewed as a 'female crime' by police; consistent with the findings of the FOI requests
- Lack of gendered markers in same-sex relationships meant that police sometimes struggled to identify victim and perpetrator and therefore assigned the abuse as 'mutual'

- Police said they find responding to all types of partner abuse the same level of difficulty due to utilising a 'process-driven' approach; professionals disagree and think police find responding to SSPA more difficult
- Most police did not feel that there were any dynamics specific to same-sex relationships that they needed to be aware of when responding; professionals disagreed

Male to female partner abuse was perceived by police as the most serious, and female to female partner abuse as the least serious; consistent with existing research (Brown & Groscup, 2009; Hassouneh & Glass, 2008). This generally occurred due to beliefs that physical injury was the most serious aspect of partner abuse, and that men were more capable than women of causing serious physical injury. Gender stereotypes and notions of masculinity and femininity were used by police when determining who victims and perpetrators were, and they often drew upon notions of strength and vulnerability relating to gender, as linked to the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011). Thus, it was the gender of the couple (particularly the perpetrator) rather than their sexual orientation which primarily influenced police's views of seriousness. When there was a male perpetrator involved, police viewed an incident as more serious due to the potential for serious physical harm, regardless of the victim also being male.

Linking to this, police viewed female perpetrators as less likely than male perpetrators to cause physical harm. This view had a direct consequence for Anna in particular who felt that she was not taken seriously due to Carol also being female (along with the intersection of her also being a mother). Police views around gender and perceived risk supported the FOI findings that assigned risk levels were lower for female same-sex couples than for male couples when physical injury was involved. These police views also corroborate victim fears as outlined earlier around not being taken as seriously if physical violence has not occurred, and many police did not discuss the existence and impact of coercive and controlling behaviours. This was not, however, the view of all police, and a minority were very aware of the ways that non-physical forms of abuse occurred, emphasising the importance of not taking what appears to have happened at face-value. Amil's experience in particular highlights the positive ways which the police understood and responded to coercive and controlling behaviours. However, overall, there was a distinct lack of understanding from police of the seriousness of non-physical forms of abuse.

The FOI findings illustrated that women were more likely to be rated high risk than men for harassment crimes, suggesting that women are seen as more likely to perpetrate severe harassment.

The findings from interviews reflected this, with harassment being viewed as a crime primarily carried out by women. Though violence perpetrated by women has been found within this and existing research to not be taken seriously (Hardesty et al., 2011; Hassouneh & Glass, 2008) compared to violence perpetrated by men, *harassment* perpetrated by women was found to score highly on police risk scales. This illustrated the prominence of gender stereotypes and assumptions around women being 'crazy' and therefore a risk to their victims. An alternative view was that men may 'play down' the impact of harassment whilst police are carrying out risk assessments as expressing fear does not align with their views of masculinity, meaning that risk levels assigned to men would be lower than for women.

The role of gender was also prominent when police were assigning victim and perpetrator status. In the absence of gender as a marker to aid decision making, police described how sometimes both partners would be arrested, or treated equally as perpetrators. Police sometimes expressed difficulties relating to gender, in that they felt that male perpetrators could cause serious harm, but male victims should be able to defend themselves, and that female perpetrators could not cause too much physical harm, but that female victims are vulnerable. Due to this, police sometimes attributed partner abuse as mutual, with both partners being viewed as equally responsible. These views around propensity to cause and suffer harm were likely to be influenced by the majority of partner abuse cases being perpetrated by men towards women, and the associated notions of masculinity and femininity and how they intersect with assumptions around how a person should act. This could mean that police are using the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) pertaining that in heterosexual relationships men are primarily perpetrators and women are victims and applying it directly to same-sex relationships, which then causes problems in assigning victim and perpetrator status.

Overall, police felt that they found responding to all types of partner abuse of equal difficulty. Professionals, however, felt that police found responding to SSPA more difficult. Generally, police justified their response by asserting that they follow force guidance and policy and therefore all incidents should pose a similar level of difficulty when responding, as the same decisions need to be made. Professionals felt that police found responding to SSPA more difficult as they were not aware of specific dynamics such as outing and mis-gendering which would affect their response. Most police, when asked, felt that they did not need to be aware of specific dynamics to same-sex relationships, or that specific dynamics did not exist. Police felt that as a process-driven response was followed in all cases of partner abuse, people were treated equally. However, it was concluded

that by following this set procedure, specific dynamics which were important would be missed, meaning those in same-sex relationships may receive a poorer response than people in heterosexual relationships. As one victim highlighted, she was reluctant to report due to fear of being misgendered, and existing research has highlighted specific dynamics and tactics that police need to be aware of when responding (Calton et al., 2015; Donovan & Barnes, 2017; Pattavina et al., 2007). As mentioned as part of research aim 2, victims have many fears when engaging with the police, some of which are same-sex specific, and if police do not understand these, victims may disengage from the process.

The FOI findings highlighted 67% of victim cases closed as 'Evidential difficulties' had a subcategory of 'Victim does not support police action'. Though some victim disengagement is common for those within heterosexual and same-sex relationships, this high percentage suggests that many SSPA victims are not happy with the police response. As discussed throughout the thesis, this could be for a number of reasons such as fear of being outed or of repercussions, and, as such, the police following a process-driven approach and not possessing an understanding of specific dynamics may contribute to this high level of disengagement. In addition, as it was found that police rated SSPA as less serious overall than male to female partner abuse, the high number of 'victim does not support police action' cases found by the FOI requests could suggest that victims may be aware of police feelings around this, and subsequently disengage.

8.1.4 Research aim 4: To consider the extent to which police are aware of, and provide, specialist provision for victims experiencing SSPA

- Almost half of forces who responded to FOI requests provided low levels or no specialist provision (such as LLOs or campaigns) for victims experiencing SSPA
- From forces providing specialist provision, the most common form was LLOs and engagement with the LGBT community
- Liaison with external support services was mixed, with some forces having excellent relationships, and others having none
- Most police were not aware of local specialist LGBT services, and some professionals expressed frustration at this lack of awareness
- Most participants did not feel that specialist services were necessary, believing that non-specialist services should be able to provide support to all. However, they felt that non-

specialist services needed to fully integrate LGBT workers and understanding of dynamics to provide a complete service rather than simply an 'add on'

- LGBT victims can be encouraged to report to the police by: more engagement with the LGBT community in LGBT spaces (including campaigning and online spaces), breaking down the polices' masculine image, forces recruiting specialist LLOs, and stronger partnership working with support services. A small minority of police felt it was not their role to encourage reporting.

Overall, provision within police forces for SSPA victims was mixed, with some police and professionals speaking about the positive work carried out by police forces, and others expressing frustration with current ways of working. The FOI responses suggested that almost half of the thirty nine forces provided little or no specialist provision for SSPA, with only eleven providing high levels of provision. LLOs were the most commonly mentioned way of providing support via both FOI requests and interviews with police; this was viewed as positive by professionals and victims who felt that possession of specialist LGBT partner abuse knowledge by police was important. However, some participants mentioned how there was little investment into LLO roles, and they are usually occupied by an officer adopting the role as an 'add on'. In many cases it was discussed that officers may be taking on the role to secure promotion, meaning a high turnover of officers occupying the role, and that LLOs may therefore not be fully invested in supporting SSPA victims. This was a particular frustration for professionals who struggled to build relationships with LLOs due to the high turnover. For LLOs who were trying to engage with the LGBT community, strict policy and procedure guidelines within the police prevent them from doing so fully (such as not being allowed to wear a rainbow flag during external events), which one LLO felt made her appear unapproachable and upheld the masculine image of the police. This again illustrates the constraints of working within a process-driven approach when engaging with minority populations.

'Pride' events were mentioned by many participants as a key way that the police engage with the LGBT community. Though deemed positive by many in terms of police engagement with the community, others expressed that the LGBT community may view the police with suspicion due to their involvement usually being to 'police them' rather than support them. This was linked to negative historic connotations, and may be exacerbated by issues discussed above such as not being able to wear items of clothing or accessories that express support. These factors indicate that police community engagement on a continuous basis is important to build up trust with the community, rather than only when 'something goes wrong'.

In terms of liaison with support agencies, opinions from participants were mixed. Some services and police forces had built up excellent working relationships, enhanced by liaison with the same officers who were able to build rapport with the LGBT community by, for example, visiting support agencies and having a presence around areas frequented by the LGBT community. For other forces who were not aware of any specialist support services, professionals expressed frustration that police did not know they existed (some had been established for many years) and felt that police engagement with victims would be more successful if organisations worked in partnership with the police. This has been highlighted by Government report 'Everyone's Business' (HMICa, 2014) and mentioned by researchers (Monckton-Smith et al., 2014). In addition, victims' views within this thesis highlighted the significant role of support professionals in helping them to engage with police; giving more weight to the need for partnership working. For police who were not aware of specialist services, they referred onto non-specialist services, with the view that if a victim required specialist support, they could be referred on further. However, due to the number of barriers victims face before deciding to call the police, a complicated referral system and having to 'out' themselves to more services than necessary may prevent them from engaging.

Generally, participants felt that non-specialist support services should be able to provide services to everyone who has experienced partner abuse. However, they also mentioned the importance of workers possessing specialist knowledge of SSPA and ensuring that any specialist support within a non-specialist organisation was fully integrated rather than an 'add-on'. The local commissioner interviewed also held these views, believing that SSPA victims should have a choice whether they wish to see a specialist worker, but that one service would best meet the needs of all. A small minority of police forces in the UK currently use this as a model of working, but many continue to work in silo, separately from local organisations, meaning it is 'pot luck' based on where a victim lives geographically as to what services they will receive.

Participants felt that there were a variety of ways that the police could encourage reporting. As touched upon, attending events such as Pride and other community functions was seen as important to build up relationships. In addition, a key area discussed by participants was around breaking down ideas of the police as 'masculine'. Having a presence in areas frequented by LGBT people and on social media were viewed as ways the police could do this. To encourage reporting in general, participants discussed targeted campaigns, awareness raising of SSPA and 'policing' of sites where LGBT people may be vulnerable to abuse, such as the dating site Grindr. Additionally, though police

did not generally feel that negative historic relationships between the police and LGBT community still had an impact on LGBT people's perceptions of them, professionals disagreed, and it is therefore suggested that police need to work to encourage victims to report to them. Though most participants described ways the police could do this, a small minority of police felt that it was not their job, and that victims needed to take responsibility. These views suggested a lack of understanding of the dynamics of SSPA (and partner abuse in general), and lack of awareness of the police's role in supporting victims to report.

8.2 Original contributions to knowledge

This research has made a number of contributions to criminological and feminist literature, exploring policing of SSPA from the point of view of police, support professionals and victims. These will now be discussed.

8.2.1 Methodological and theoretical contributions

In terms of methodological approach, this thesis is the first to my knowledge to utilise FOI requests to explore police recorded data relating to same-sex partner abuse crimes. Some of this data was then used to form interview questions for police and professionals to uncover further depth behind the figures. Using FOI requests to gather police recorded data has recently been utilised as a tool within social science research (Bows, 2017; Westmarland et al., 2017), however, is still a relatively new method in the field. Using this method to gather data about an invisible population on a sensitive topic is deemed a suitable way to consider prevalence, particularly when noting the scarcity of nationally available data on SSPA.

This thesis also makes a significant contribution to academic knowledge by using a feminist approach via semi-structured interviews with police officers to explore their views on policing SSPA. A small body of research exists that gathers information from police officers about SSPA (Cormier & Woodworth, 2008; Felson & Lantz, 2016; Pattavina et al., 2007; Younglove et al., 2002); however, this research often uses different methodology such as nationally recorded data (USA), surveys, or hypothetical situations. Much of the qualitative, quantitative and mixed method research that has been carried out exploring police responses to SSPA has been from the point of view of victims (Alhusen et al., 2010; Donovan et al., 2006; Guadalupe-Diaz & Jasinski, 2016; Johnson, 2007; Wolf et al., 2003) including using interviews (Donovan & Hester, 2011; Hardesty et al., 2011; Walters, 2011).

Though this research is vital in increasing our knowledge of policing SSPA, there is a dearth of research using semi-structured interviews to explore policing SSPA from police officers' points of view. As police decide who receives assistance and have the power to impose penalties and provide protection (Younglove et al., 2002) it is important to have an understanding of their views. Accessing a police service as a researcher can be time-consuming and met with suspicion, in addition to difficulties in negotiation with gatekeepers. These issues may have contributed to a scarcity of police views within existing research, and therefore being able to access police forces during the current thesis has allowed a relatively unique insight into policing SSPA. It is hoped that this research will provide a welcome addition to the knowledge of policing SSPA that has built up from existing research with victims.

This thesis also makes an important contribution to feminist theoretical literature by drawing on a feminist framework with consideration to intersections such as sexual orientation to examine partner abuse in same-sex relationships. Though using feminist theory to examine SSPA challenges some feminist thinkers, the view taken for this thesis is that considering intersecting factors alongside gender can assist in widening the feminist paradigm (Murray et al., 2006/7). Amil's narrative, for example, highlighted how Bradley exploited the fact that Amil is gay, by making threats to 'out' him to his family if he did not comply with relationship rules (Donovan & Hester, 2014). This is an example of how coercive control can operate in same-sex relationships, linked to sexual orientation, and is vital that experiences such as Amil's are considered in the context of living in a heteronormative society (Irwin, 2008).

Anna's experiences also highlighted how coercive control operates in same-sex relationships, linked to the surrounding gendered norms. Carol pre-empted Anna's help-seeking by telling her that if she reported to the police they would see she was a bad mother and could not cope. When Anna did report, Anna and Carol were both viewed by police 'as mothers', and thus caring, kind, and unlikely to perpetrate abuse. This subsequently affected the police response to Anna. Theoretically, it can be seen that coercive control did indeed operate within the lives of the victims interviewed, and the perpetrators were able to instil extreme fear in the victims, control their behaviours, and manipulate police and other help-providers. This refutes the idea that only men can cause this level of fear and only women experience it (Stark, 2007). However, mechanisms of coercive control used were still highly gendered, for example, threats to 'out' only held power due to living in a heteronormative society, and making a victim believe she would be viewed as a bad mother if she reported plays on the idea that women should act a certain way (caring, tender). The findings therefore provide some

challenge to feminist theory, illustrating that wider contributing factors (such as sexual orientation) need to be examined alongside gender to ascertain how coercive control operates in same-sex relationships. Findings also suggested that coercive control in same-sex relationships is indeed a cultural and societal issue as in heterosexual relationships, and should be viewed this way rather than a problem of individuals. Focusing using this wider lens not only benefits those in same-sex relationships, but all people with experiences of abuse, as other factors aside from gender that may contribute to abuse can then be examined and assimilated into existing knowledge.

8.2.2 Emergence of new knowledge

By working in-depth with the police, this research has uncovered new knowledge, as well as supporting the findings of existing research. The key contributions are summarised below, followed by the implications for policy and practice.

8.2.2.1 A significant number of victims do not support police action due to 'pre-emptive coercive tactics' and fear of a 'coerced response'

Though it was known that SSPA is underreported to police, it was uncovered via FOI findings that for those who do report, a large majority of victims do not support the police to take action. Interviews examined this further and found that one of the key reasons why this may be occurring is due to worries that they will receive a 'coerced response' from police, based on perpetrators' pre-emptive coercive tactics. In this way, perpetrators would pre-empt that victims would be likely to seek help, and as such would make attempts to prevent this such as 'getting in there first' with help-providers by claiming to be a victim, and setting consequences for the victim if they were to break relationship rules (Donovan & Hester, 2014). By informing the victim they have taken these steps, victims were worried that any response they consequently receive from help-providers would be a 'coerced response' – a negative response based on perpetrators' manipulative tactics. As such, victims may not report to police, or if they do, may withdraw their support due to fear over a perceived negative response, or negative consequences from the perpetrator.

8.2.2.2 Police do not have a universal view on how risk ratings are applied

When exploring the differing risk ratings assigned to incidents as suggested by the FOI requests, it was found that police do not all use the same mechanisms for assigning risk, even when the same

risk assessment tools are used. This was particularly the case in terms of who the risk rating applies to; the victim or perpetrator. Though the DASH risk assessment is the tool used by the majority of police forces, other forces use their own tool. As such, there is the potential for inconsistency in how risk is being assessed. Additionally, even when the DASH is in use, officers used the tool in different ways, meaning subsequent risk ratings were subjective. This finding mimics a similar finding by the HMIC (2014), who found differences within and between forces on how risk ratings were reached due to use of variable use of risk assessment tools.

8.2.2.3 Process-driven approach

The ways in which the current process-driven approach adopted by the police can act as a barrier to responding to SSPA has emerged as a new area of knowledge. The police's process-driven approach includes treating everyone 'the same', following strict protocol around conduct and uniform at organised events, and using tools in the same way with each person, such as the DASH risk assessment. Though this was generally viewed within the police as positive as it meant that all victims were treated the same, it had some negative implications for LGBT people. For example, it meant that police did not feel that they needed to be aware of dynamics specific to the LGBT community, such as fear of outing. It also created further barriers between the police and the LGBT community, by making police appear unapproachable and having a lack of understanding into LGBT issues. It should be mentioned that not all police appreciated the process-driven response, and some were unhappy that they were required to work in the same way with all victims, feeling that this meant that a positive service was not given to all.

8.2.2.4 Harassment was viewed by police as a 'female crime'

The FOI findings suggested that police rated female to female harassment crimes as higher risk than male to male harassment crimes, and subsequent interviews explored the reasons why. The findings suggested that harassment was viewed as more severe when carried out by women, as is often depicted by the media. This gendering of risk indicators came about due to police perception that women were more dangerous 'stalkers', and are persistent and would not 'let things go'. This finding illustrates the prominence of gender stereotypes in police perceptions of risk, and the ways that these stereotypes subsequently shape police action. In 'gendering' these indicators of risk, men and women committing the same crimes were susceptible to being allocated different risk ratings, based on their and their partner's gender.

8.2.2.5 Almost half of forces do not provide high levels of specialist provision

Nearly half of forces who responded to the FOI requests provided low or no specialist provision for SSPA victims, such as LLOs, targeted campaigns or outreach. There were, however, eleven forces who offered high levels of provision. It appeared therefore as a lottery for victims as to what services they will receive, depending on what is offered within their local police force.

8.2.2.6 Partnership working with support agencies was mixed

Some police and professionals reported excellent examples of partnership working. This was clearly important for victims, who spoke of how support from a professional external to the police greatly aided them with making and sustaining contact with the CJS. There were, however, some forces that did not carry out partnership working and were unaware of local specialist services that could support victims. Again, this means that victims will receive different services depending on their geographical location.

8.2.2.7 Specialist services should not be needed

Most participants felt that non-specialist services should be able to offer a service to all, providing that they had a full understanding of LGBT issues and integrated any specialist workers as part of the overall service, rather than simply as an add-on. This finding appeared to be due to participants' beliefs that LGBT people should be able to access any service and receive a tailored response, rather than having to choose between LGBT and 'mainstream' organisations. There was the caveat however that if this was to be the case, services needed to possess a thorough understanding of issues affecting the LGBT community, and provide a personalised response.

8.3 Links with existing knowledge

This research supported many findings from existing SSPA research, such as: physical injury is viewed as the most serious form of abuse by victims and police (Monckton-Smith et al, 2014; Wolf et al., 2003); victims call as a last resort (Alhusen et al., 2010; Tesch & Bekerian, 2015); previous poor police response decreases the chance that a victim will call again (Monckton-Smith et al., 2014); female to female abuse is viewed by police as the least serious (Hassouneh & Glass, 2008; Taylor & Sorenson, 2005), and male to female as the most serious (Cormier & Woodworth, 2008; Gracia et al.,

2014). These similarities strengthen the robustness of both the findings from this thesis, and those of existing research.

8.4 Implications for policy and practice

This research highlighted a number of implications for those responsible for developing policy, as well as for help-providers working in the field of SSPA.

When initially making the FOI requests, one of the primary reasons that the statistical information could not be provided by some police forces was due to family and partner abuse being part of the same cross-government definition of domestic abuse. As all domestic abuse data was recorded collectively, partner abuse data could not be easily separated from family abuse data. By collecting the data this way, most forces were unable to quickly access information about SSPA only. This means many forces will be unsure of how many incidents they record involving SSPA, and will have difficulty determining any trends or specific dynamics. The problems with placing partner and family violence under one definition have previously been discussed by feminist researchers (Kelly & Westmarland, 2014). Due to these problems and those identified during police data collection within this thesis, I would suggest that partner and family violence and abuse are separated within policy and definitions, to reflect the specific dynamics unique to each group. Should this change not occur, police forces could be encouraged to follow Manchester Police's example (discussed in Chapter Four) to record a code for SSPA incidents so they can be easily retrievable from police systems. Doing so will ensure that police are aware of trends of SSPA and appropriate interventions can be put into place for victims and perpetrators.

A further implication for police forces relates to how risk is measured and allocated within partner abuse cases. Though some officers said they used the DASH to inform risk ratings, others stated a number of ways in which they assessed risk, meaning that risk ratings assigned to victims' cases are likely to be subjective. Specifically, officers were unsure about whether risk ratings related to the risk a victim was facing, or the risk a perpetrator posed, with some officers asking me to clarify. These findings suggest that for forces not already doing so, clarity should be given over how to assess risk, and refresher training for officers should be considered on a regular basis. Gaps in knowledge which should be covered by training are: what the risk rating means and who/what it applies to; using DASH risk assessments (particularly highlighting that victims (especially men) may downplay risk due to not wanting to appear weak and 'as a victim'), and how to assess non-physical risk – most police

interviewed for this thesis mentioned physical injury as a key way to assess risk, ignoring the patterns of behaviour and instead focusing on incident specific instances of abuse. Training around risk and how it is assessed is particularly important as risk ratings influence the professional support a victim receives. Additionally, thought should be given as to whether the DASH is suitable to assess risk to those in same-sex relationships. Currently, questions on the DASH do not include specific questions for those in same-sex relationships, for example, 'do you fear being outed by your partner?', and, as such, risk to those in same-sex relationships may not currently be assigned accurately; potentially leaving victims in danger. The low numbers of LGBT victims referred to MARACs as found in previous research (Donovan, 2010; Safe Lives, 2018) also suggests that victims may not be flagged as high risk on current risk assessments, which may be due to reasons such as their report being the first time they have contacted police, and police not viewing them as high risk (for example, if two women are in a relationship not involving physical violence). As such, consideration should be given as to the ways in which the DASH may prevent LGBT people from meeting criteria needed to access support, and police forces should consider incorporating questions specific to LGBT relationships, as well as ensuring officers are trained to use the tool to respond sensitively to those experiencing abuse. The implication of not doing so could mean that LGBT victims do not have their level of risk assessed correctly, potentially leaving them in serious danger from the perpetrator.

Findings around victim help-seeking behaviours also have implications for policy and practice. The police were found to adopt a process-driven way of working, and whilst this may be deemed positive in the sense of consistency of service, in some cases it may mean that specific dynamics relating to same-sex abusive relationships are missed, and could put victims in danger (for example, as discussed in Chapter Six, knocking on neighbours doors asking for witnesses could inadvertently 'out' somebody). Awareness of these dynamics was highlighted as particularly important for victims, who, rather than fearing a homophobic response from police, were more concerned at the response they would receive from police due to the perpetrators' coercive tactics. Training for police around specific dynamics and tactics used by SSPA perpetrators would allow police to possess a deeper understanding and therefore be aware and able to respond appropriately to victims. Specific training in these areas would aim to increase the likelihood of victims reporting and remaining engaged with the CJS due to enhanced police awareness when responding. This may mean being aware that processes may need to be carried out differently (such as the 'knocking on neighbours' doors' scenario described above) in order to protect victims.

A key finding within the thesis was in relation to perpetrators' pre-emptive coercive tactics, and help-providers' coerced response. This finding offers a greater insight into the way that perpetrators enact coercive and controlling behaviours in order to disrupt victim help-seeking behaviours, and how this subsequently impacts on the extent to which victims are willing and able to seek help. By way of perpetrators 'getting in there' first by manipulating help-providers into believing that they are the victim, or by setting relationship rules (Donovan & Hester, 2014) and revealing the consequences of breaking them, perpetrators are able to maintain control. The discovery of this tactic within the thesis also supports the notion that perpetrators are fully aware of the implications of their coercive behaviours, as otherwise they would not feel the need to pre-empt victims' help-seeking behaviours. This is an important finding for practice, ensuring that help-providers do not make excuses for perpetrators' coercive behaviours by passing them off as unintended or trivial.

The second part of this finding relates to help-providers also being manipulated by perpetrators, and this affecting the service they provide to victims – a 'coerced response'. Successful perpetrator manipulation of help-providers may result in them feeling that both parties are 'as bad as each other', or in worst case scenario, that the victim is actually the perpetrator. Help-providers should ensure that they receive adequate training in order to understand how coercive and controlling behaviours are enacted, and how they may influence the behaviours of both victims and support services. Failure to respond adequately to perpetrator coercive tactics may mean that a support organisation provides a 'coerced response' to the victim, which does not understand their needs or their position as a victim within the relationship.

These two original findings have implications not only for victims in same-sex relationships, but all victims who are experiencing coercive and controlling behaviours. They are therefore useful to the wider field of domestic abuse. The findings also highlight the importance of help-providers being aware that they may unknowingly be providing a 'coerced response' to victims due to perpetrators' manipulative coercive tactics, and suggest that help-providers remain aware of these two related elements of coercive control.

In terms of recognising non-physical forms of abuse, it was found that many victims may not recognise non-physical abuse as constituting partner abuse, compared to physical violence which was often recognised. Or, if they did recognise it as abuse, it was not viewed as serious by many participants. Reflecting on Amil's situation, he looked up his 'non-physical abuse' situation on

google, in addition to asking support professionals whether what he was experiencing was abuse, or normal. Additionally, police rarely spoke about non-physical forms of abuse within interviews, instead focusing on physical abuse as the signifier of risk. These findings suggest that awareness-raising needs to be carried out with both victims and the police to increase understanding around non-physical forms of abuse, and how these may operate differently in same-sex relationships. For police particularly, an understanding of the ways that coercive and controlling behaviours underlie partner abuse and how risk materialises is essential. Expanding on this further, it was found that it was coercive and controlling behaviours that had the most impact on victims, and subsequently affected their help-seeking behaviours, even when they did not recognise these behaviours as abusive. As such, if police focus on physical violence/injury as the default signifier of harm, the underlying coercive tactics will be likely to be missed. If this happens, victims may be unlikely to seek support again, particularly as this and existing research has found that victims often call police as a last resort to begin with. The implication of this is that victims will be left in abusive relationships and subject to further coercive control, which will make future help-seeking more difficult.

In addition to the previous point, viewing physical injury as the most serious form of abuse was often tied to then 'gendering' the associated risk. Interviews suggested that this focus on gendered risk sometimes resulted in victims not being believed due to their physical appearance or roles (e.g. as a mother), or both parties being arrested. Men were seen to possess greater propensity to cause harm than women due to their gender, and thus, male victims in relationships with men were rated as higher risk than women in relationships with women. Similarly with harassment crimes, police tended to associate harassment as something that 'women do', and female victims' risk ratings were therefore higher than men's. Linking indicators of risk with gender is an issue of concern within this research for a number of reasons. Firstly, doing so reinforces the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) of domestic abuse – that it is one of strong men enacting physical violence towards weaker women. In this way, victims in a same-sex relationship may struggle to have the abuse recognised, due to not being in a heterosexual relationship, and/or if physical violence is not present. Secondly, if the 'public story' is reproduced through police action, victims will be unlikely to seek help in the future, due to feeling that their experience is not valid. Finally, if victims' abusive relationships are not acknowledged and recognised by help-providers, victims may also begin to normalise what is happening to them, and not see behaviours as abusive. They may associate, for example, women with not being able to cause harm, and use this template to understand their experiences as something other than domestic abuse. Alongside the perpetrator reinforcing this through coercive tactics, the victim will remain isolated from support. It is recommended that training is required for

police around responding to SSPA to increase awareness of assumptions around risk and vulnerability related to gender. This training would be helpful to be carried out in partnership with a local LGBT organisation and should explore how gender and expressions of masculinity and femininity do not always correlate to perpetrator and victim. Challenging police perceptions around how they 'gender' risk this way would help to change thought processes, for example, that men pose more physical risk than women, and subsequently ensure that victims receive a more appropriate response.

When considering working with the LGBT community to enhance understanding of what an abusive relationship looks like, this is not purely a job for the police, and partnership work is needed. Though some excellent partnership work was occurring, as apparent from interviews, in some areas there was silo working, and a lack of awareness from some police about local support services. Victims had strong links with and high levels of trust for support professionals from other organisations, and hence it would be beneficial for police and professionals to work together to support victims. This would mean that victims could access the police service with the support of a professional who holds an understanding of police processes, and who could assist them in making informed decisions, and similarly, police could increase their presence within support organisations to attempt to build up trust with victims and educate about the role they can play in assisting them. Suggestions as to how more successful partnership working could occur are: ensuring police have an awareness of local support agencies; attend events together, for example, 'Fresher's week' at a local University; International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHO) events; have police presence within organisations on a regular basis, and creating joint campaigns. This relationship building is important, and needs to be carried out continuously, rather than when 'things go wrong'. The fragile history between police and the LGBT community will take time to reconstitute, and working together in partnership with other support organisations is suggested as a positive way to rebuild this.

Linking to police attendance at events, it was a concern for some police that they were unable to visually demonstrate to the LGBT community that they were 'on their side' by wearing a rainbow flag in some form. As it has been found that SSPA victims may view police with suspicion and be reluctant to seek help, feeling that the police are against them will discourage reporting. Allowing the police to let victims know that they are a 'safe' person to talk to may encourage victims to come forward and break down negative historic barriers. This was particularly important for one LLO who stated that she had no way of letting victims know what her role was and that she had specialist

knowledge; instead feeling that people would view her as a 'just another copper'. In addition, police being given more freedom to express themselves at key events such as Pride may help build bridges with the LGBT community. Currently, officers are required to march and not permitted to walk or dance, which one participant said meant they get booed as they do not engage with the 'fun' aspect of Pride. Again, allowing police more flexibility when attending events such as Pride may help to break down the police's masculine image and demonstrate to victims that they are an approachable organisation to come to for support. Doing so would again require consideration of an amendment to the 'process-driven' approach utilised by police forces. Interviews suggested that should police forces allow officers and staff more flexibility in situations such as Pride, this would be interpreted positively LGBT people, police officers and staff. I felt that police in particular who commented on the issue within interviews felt frustrated that they could not engage suitably with LGBT people, and were trying to build relationships the best they could within constraints of police policy. It may be that forces feel that they need to uphold their 'professional image' of law enforcement, but my findings indicate that if police want to improve relationships with LGBT people, they need to give further consideration as to the ways that they can engage with them to build trust.

A final key finding was that the majority of participants felt that specialist support services were not needed, and LGBT victims should be able to attend any domestic abuse support service and receive a service that was sensitive and tailored to their needs. One victim, Anna, felt that specialist support services were needed due to them possessing implicit understandings around sexual orientation. As a consequence, she felt that LGBT people would be more likely to seek help from a specialist organisation. There is a question of whether specialist services do need to exist due to the reasons mentioned by Anna, especially when considering the finding in this thesis relating to gendered risk assessments that may prevent victims receiving the support they need. For example, if a female victim is perceived as low risk via a risk assessment due to not experiencing physical harm, and being in a relationship with another woman, a mainstream organisation may also assess and view risk in a similar way. This could result in the victim not receiving appropriate support for their needs. If a victim accesses a specialist organisation, the help-provider would be more likely to possess a thorough understanding of unique dynamics within abusive same-sex relationships, and respond appropriately. The problem, however, with specialist organisations is that they may encourage segregation, as mentioned by a frustrated IDVA who stated that two men she worked with were advised to access a specialist organisation due to their sexual orientation. Placing responsibility on a small number of specialist organisations to provide support to LGBT victims will not only increase pressure on these organisations, but may also mean that mainstream organisations will not see it as

their responsibility to train staff and possess an understanding of LGBT issues. One solution is for specialist organisations to continue to exist, but also for mainstream services to train staff to increase their understanding of LGBT issues, so that victims have a choice about which services to access. Mainstream services must however ensure that LGBT issues are fully incorporated as an integral understanding within their service, so that victims who choose to access them are receiving an appropriate response.

8.5 Recommendations for further academic research

At the time of writing, FOI requests were a largely under-utilised method of data collection within the social sciences. However, to date, there were no other mechanisms through which to collect national data relating to the nature and extent of SSPA. For this reason, whilst being mindful of issues of using FOI requests as outlined in Chapter Three, they are a useful way to collect this data. More academic research utilising FOI requests could be carried out to continue to build up a picture of SSPA. This research only considered crimed cases, so information relating to non-crimes could be collected and compared. Though the number of forces who provided data for this thesis was small, future research could use this thesis to build an awareness of the types of information police can provide in relation to SSPA. Another research project utilising FOI requests to explore police recorded data regarding sexual violence in older women reaped a response rate of 93% (Bows, 2017) and so this method does have the potential to produce a large amount of data, depending on how forces record it.

The FOI requests suggested that a large majority of victims in same-sex relationships do not support the police to take action on their case. This research considered reasons why victims seek help and the barriers to this, but did not explore in-depth the reasons for dropping out from the CJS process once the police are aware. Specific research considering the reasons why victims do not support police to take action would be useful to assist police in developing targeted campaigns to address these problems. In addition, considering whether these reasons are the same or different for men and women would be beneficial. Research could also compare the prevalence of and victims' reasons for not supporting police action within same-sex and heterosexual relationships, to examine similarities and differences and assess the extent that this is related to sexual orientation and associated intricacies.

The FOI requests and interviews also highlighted problems with how risk ratings were assigned to SSPA cases. Further research could attempt to uncover this in more detail, exploring with police officers the processes of assigning risk and the factors that affect these decisions – specifically considering any factors unique to same-sex relationships. Though this thesis has suggested that the DASH may not be suitable to use with SSPA victims, further research in this area could explore its relevancy more fully, and make further recommendations on how to improve this if needed.

This research suggested that victims are not adverse to police knowing their sexual orientation but are worried about other implications of reporting further along the CJS process, such as being outed to others, and police's 'coerced response' based on pre-emptive coercive tactics. Further research would be beneficial to examine the specific concerns that victims have about these implications, and the influence that these concerns have on their help-seeking behaviours as well as remaining involved with the CJS.

Gender, masculinity and femininity linked to the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) played a large part in officers' perceptions of seriousness of incidents, allocation of risk ratings, and victim and perpetrator status. Further research should explore this by examining with police officers the role that victim and perpetrator gender and masculine/feminine expressions play to affect these perceptions and assumptions. In addition, research could explore police allocation of 'mutual abuse'. This thesis did not explore this in detail, and there are still gaps in knowledge such as the extent to which fulfilling 'masculine' and 'feminine' stereotypes affects police perceptions and responses around assigning mutuality.

As mentioned earlier, specific research exploring police officers' experiences of responding to trans partner abuse victims also needs to be carried out. This thesis and existing research have suggested that trans people experience unique barriers to help-seeking and may experience police response in different ways, and, as such, research focusing specifically on trans people and their experiences of police responses to partner abuse is a vital area to be researched.

Finally, the importance of LLO's was mentioned by many participants. This research explored in part the role they play in assisting SSPA victims, but the findings of the interviews uncovered interesting factors which would benefit from further exploration such as the role being carried out by people who are not invested, and high turnover of staff. The implications of these factors should be explored further to assess the impact this has on working with the LGBT community and support

organisations. Specifically, the amount of resource allocated to SSPA within the role could also be explored to uncover any gaps in provision and how these can be filled.

8.6 Limitations and considerations

This research has made important contributions to the fields of criminology, policing and LGBT studies, however, it does have limitations which must be acknowledged. Pertaining to the FOI requests, information from twelve forces was used. Therefore, the findings of the FOI requests cannot be said to be applicable to all police forces in England and Wales. However, the twelve forces were spread widely across England and Wales, varied considerably in size, and were based in rural and city locations. As a result of this, the sample was diverse and can be said to represent a number of different police forces. In addition, a sample of 916 individual cases is large enough to be able to determine patterns and trends. Nonetheless, information from more forces would be useful in validating the findings and this could be a consideration for future research. The FOI data also only considered crimed incidents. A comparison of non-crimed incidents could also be carried out to identify similarities and differences in police practice.

In order to recruit police officers for interviews, gatekeepers were used. This was a lengthy process, and hence four forces were approached. Again, suggesting that police officer views and experiences are generalisable to all forces in England and Wales must be done with caution, however, police officers with a wide range of experience of working with LGBT people were spoken to, and many common themes arose, suggesting that the findings are applicable to a number of officers in different areas. Using a different methodology such as surveys may result in a larger number of participants from a wider range of areas, however, it would not reflect the depth that this research was able to obtain.

Recruitment of victims was difficult, resulting in four people being spoken to in total. Ideally, a larger number of victims would have been recruited, however, difficulties with sampling a minority population were encountered, and despite extensive efforts through a variety of mediums and contacts, a sample of four emerged. The sample did, however, provide rich, in-depth data which was used alongside other qualitative and quantitative data to give voice to all participants. The advantage of mixed-methods was particularly prominent here, with qualitative and quantitative data complementing and enhancing each other.

Finally, a note must be made to generalising the research findings to trans people. One victim identifying as trans took part in the research, and practitioners and police rarely spoke about trans peoples' experiences directly. For the trans victim who took part, her experiences intersected largely with her identity as a traveller, and generalisations to non-travelling trans people cannot be made. Therefore, the extent to which trans peoples' experiences are reflected within this thesis are limited, and work must be carried out with trans people specifically in order to be able to make assertions more relevant to their experiences, whilst considering the intersections of other oppressions they may face. In addition, work with police officers about their experiences of responding to trans people who have experienced partner abuse could be carried out to gain more in-depth knowledge about their experiences of providing support to this community.

8.7 Reflections on the research process

Conducting this research has been an insightful and emotional journey, and I am privileged to have been able to undertake it. My interest in the police responses to partner abuse only developed fairly recently, due to my work as a Knowledge Transfer Partnership associate within a local police force. Whilst working there, I began to understand the key role that police play for some people experiencing partner abuse (both positive and negative) and was keen to explore this further. Recognising from current literature that policing SSPA was an underexplored area, I decided to follow this avenue to undertake this research.

Mixed methods were used for this research. When beginning the research journey, it became apparent immediately that national data pertaining to SSPA was not available to access. When discussing this with a colleague, she mentioned that she experienced the same problem when attempting to access data pertaining to rape and serious sexual assault of older women (Bows, 2017). It was from speaking to this colleague that I decided that using Freedom of Information requests would be the best way to collect the data needed. As a relatively new method utilised by social scientists, there was little guidance as to how to conduct these requests, and, as such, I met with an information compliance officer before submitting the requests, in addition to reading guidance to ensure I could submit requests that were likely to be responded to. However, despite this planning, many police forces were unable to provide the data asked for, stating most often the 'Time and Cost' exemption. For forces that provided more detail, they said that they could provide 'same-sex' domestic incident data, but that this would include family violence data and there was no

way to determine which incidents involved partners without reading every individual incident. This was a source of frustration, and I was both surprised and angry that some forces could not provide what I felt were simple statistics on SSPA. This frustration was heightened when realising that as some forces could access this information through implementation of a simple filter button, it was possible, and it felt that a number of forces were not taking SSPA seriously.

As a result of many forces being unable to provide the data asked for, a number of hours were spent in e-mail conversation with forces, with each amended request resetting the number of days the forces had to reply back to twenty working days. The process of data gathering was consequently long and arduous, and I was disappointed that only twelve forces could provide the information needed. However, I did recognise that this was still information which has previously not been used and gathered in relation to this topic and thus was still valuable.

Between the twelve forces, 916 individual crimes were recorded. This number meant I had a large enough sample to be able to determine trends in victim and perpetrator demographics, types of incidents, outcomes and risk levels. I was initially surprised when considering this information, particularly that a roughly even number of men and women were recorded as committing crimes within the sample. However, Chapter Four explored further thoughts on this and why the figures may not provide a true reflection of the extent of partner abuse relating to gender. To attempt to explore this assertion further, and the fact that the figures suggested men and women were more likely to perpetrate the same crime types, interviews with police and professionals built upon these findings. Using qualitative alongside quantitative methods meant that I could firstly build a wider and fuller picture, but secondly explore some of the FOI findings more deeply – which would have been a limitation if using FOI data alone. Police and professionals provided their insights into some of the data which meant that I could ‘give voice’ to the data and explore some of the possible reasons as to why it paints the picture it does. Interviews with victims provided a third encapsulating layer, and using IPA I was able to listen in-depth to their stories and journey with the criminal justice system, in addition to reflecting upon the participants’ journeys myself. Victims’ experiences therefore provided another level of richness to the data which would not be achieved from FOI data and police and professional interviews alone.

Conducting interviews with participants was a rich and fruitful process, and reflections pertaining to insider/outsider position, being a young female researcher, working within the police using a feminist framework, and responding to uncomfortable comments have all been explored in Chapter

Three. In addition to this emotional labour required during interviews, setting up interviews themselves was sometimes a challenging process, particularly with police. Due to the nature of their work, interviews were sometimes cancelled and rearranged, or police officers turned up late. This is something to be aware of when conducting interviews with police, as researchers may travel some distance to find that an interview is cancelled at short notice. In addition, when interviews did happen, police were often 'on call' and were required to keep their radios switched on, which although initially distracting, I learned to accept as part of the police role.

Interviews with victims had a different dynamic, and I found myself shocked and saddened at their negative experiences, and sharing in the joy they also expressed. Through identifying as LGBT myself, there were specific times when victims' experiences cemented my decision to study this area and to do justice to their experiences via this thesis and beyond. Charlie made the comment 'seriously I'm really grateful to you doing this because our voices need to be heard' which stuck with me in particular, and made me more determined to continue to support victims via academic research. I had originally hoped to speak with more victims, however, the difficulties discussed in Chapter Three around recruiting minority groups meant this was not achieved. This was primarily due to difficulties in finding people in abusive same-sex relationships who had also reported to the police; a number of support organisations made contact saying they worked with victims who had not reported to the police, but not those who had. Nonetheless, the methodology adopted for the thesis meant that the small sample did not take away from the richness of experiences of those who I did speak to, and combined with interviews with police, professionals and the FOI data, built up a fuller picture of police responses to SSPA.

The findings illustrated the importance of using a feminist approach with a focus on the intersection of sexual orientation (amongst others) to frame this research. Throughout the research journey, it was clear that the impact of gender (such as gendered norms and expectations) was prominent in relation to how victims experienced SSPA and the ways in which police responded. However, using a feminist framework with a sole focus on gender without considering sexual orientation would have meant that many unique aspects relating to experiences of SSPA would have been overlooked, such as unique factors related to sexual orientation which influence help-seeking. Additionally, the research has provided some challenges to feminist theory, such as providing evidence that coercive control can indeed operate within same-sex relationships in a gendered manner, and SSPA victims can experience debilitating fear as a result of coercive control in the same way as heterosexual women. Thus, the thesis has expanded the feminist lens and highlighted the importance of

considering the influence of intersections alongside gender to build a bigger and fuller picture of partner abuse; a picture which is of relevance to both same-sex and heterosexual partner abuse.

8.8 Final words

Despite the fact that SSPA is now recognised by academics, professionals and within policy, there is still a dearth of research exploring its intricacies. Due to difficulties with sampling and accessing the LGBT population, the nature and extent of SSPA is unknown, and can only be estimated via an accumulation of findings from academic research. In relation to the policing of SSPA, a limited amount of academic research has discussed aspects of police response such as why victims do not seek help, and considered police's views of SSPA. However, much of the research around policing of SSPA either emerged as a subsection of research with a different focus, or has been carried out using quantitative methodology, and lacks in-depth insight. In particular, police's voices are rarely heard within SSPA research, which, due to their central role in providing support, need to be considered. This research is the first within the UK to explore policing of SSPA using innovative mixed-methods, from the perspectives of police, professionals and victims, and using FOI findings. The findings build on the existing small pool of literature exploring SSPA.

This research has highlighted the ways in which police recorded data can be used for academic research, and described some of the limitations of using this data to make generalisations about a population. In relation to the current picture, one force has recently introduced a 'code' on police systems for SSPA incidents so that they can be easily recognised and searched for. Similar practice across other forces may improve the recording of and accessibility to data pertaining to SSPA incidents.

Existing research suggests that SSPA is underreported to the police, and the current research has found that even when it is reported and a crime has occurred, victims are still reluctant to support the police, which interviews suggested is primarily due to victim worry as to how police will respond to them due to coercive perpetrator tactics. The research has also offered new insight into the ways in which police assess risk of incidents, and the role that gender and the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2011) play in this alongside intersections of masculinity and femininity. In particular, the role of physical injury (and this being viewed as more severe when perpetrated by men) as being the most serious form of partner abuse was the prevalent view of participants, and this view shaped how the police responded to incidents. Connotations around gender played a central role

throughout the thesis, affecting how the police viewed SSPA incidents, and how victims interacted with the police. The findings also demonstrated how the police adoption of a process-driven approach sometimes means that dynamics specific to same-sex relationships are missed, and victims' may receive a service that fails to meet their needs.

A key area explored by the research was the provision of specialist support for SSPA within forces, with an exploration of partnership working with other support organisations. Findings suggested that this was varied, and whilst some forces demonstrated examples of excellent specialist support and partnership working, others did not provide any specialist provision for victims. These findings suggested a lottery service depending on the area a victim lives. It also emerged from the research that most participants felt that non-specialist services should not be required, but still needed to possess specialist knowledge to be able to respond appropriately to LGBT people experiencing partner abuse. There was call to ensure that any specialist LGBT workers were fully integrated within a non-specialist service, rather than them simply being an add-on.

Overall, conducting this research, particularly through the lens of a feminist approach with a focus primarily on the intersections of gender and sexual orientation has contributed to the visibility of the policing of SSPA. A typically hidden area, I hope that by highlighting areas of concern, police forces view the findings as they were intended, as an agent for change, and can use them to ensure that they are doing their part in providing the best possible service to victims in abusive same-sex relationships.

Appendices

Appendix I Freedom of Information data asked for from police forces (quantitative)

1. Number of domestic abuse cases between 01 Aug 2014 and 31 July 2015 (inclusive) where both victim and perpetrator identify as **female** AND are partners or ex-partners (not family members)

2. Please provide further information about these cases by using the drop down boxes in the table below or inserting free text; should you need to record more incidents, please extend the table as needed

| Incident number | Victim age | Perpetrator age | Main type of abuse | Did incident result in a crime? | Crime type? (Higher Order classification & sub classification) | Outcome | Risk (standard, medium, high) |
|-----------------|------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|---|---------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | |

Note: this table was repeated for male to male incidents

Appendix II: Freedom of Information data asked for from police forces (qualitative)

9. What provision does your force currently have for LGBT victims of domestic abuse? Please select from the drop down box and expand in the 'comments' box

| Provision | Comments |
|-----------|----------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

9a) If you answered 'other' to the above, please expand here

1. Do you record victim and perpetrators' sexual orientations on your system?

Nb – information within the drop down 'provision' box consisted of:

- LGBT liaison officer/s
- LGBT DA specific training for staff
- LGBT DA campaigns
- Rainbow flag on publications
- Focus groups with LGBT victims
- Other (please expand below)
- None of the above

Appendix III: Professionals' recruitment flyer

Police response to same-sex domestic abuse



Are you a professional who works with victims/survivors of same-sex domestic abuse?

Would you like to take part in research aiming to explore police responses to same-sex partner abuse victims?

I am interested in speaking to all professionals who have experience of working with victim/survivors who have reported abusive relationship behaviours to the police. This may be in a support role, counselling, advisory or other capacity.

If you fit the above, I would be grateful if you would be willing to take part in a face-to-face, skype or telephone interview about your experiences as part of my PhD project. The interview will explore your views and opinions to help to build a bigger picture of police response to same-sex domestic abuse. The interview will take place at a time and location to suit you and everything you share will be in confidence. If you are interested in taking part in the research or would like to know more information before deciding please contact me by e-mail or letter.

Thank you,
Kate Butterworth

PhD Researcher
School of Applied Social Sciences
Durham University
32 Old Elvet
Durham
DH1 3HN

E-mail: kate.butterworth@durham.ac.uk

Appendix IV: E-mail inviting professionals to participate

Dear [insert name]

I am writing to invite you to participate in my doctoral research which is exploring how the police respond to victims who have experienced abuse from a same-sex partner. I am interested in finding out what factors enable or restrict victims to report same-sex partner abuse to the police, and for those who do decide to report, what level of service they receive.

In order to increase understanding around these areas, I am conducting interviews with professionals who work with same-sex victims in capacities such as counselling, victim support and other supporting roles to explore your experiences of working with them. I am particularly interested in any differences you may have noticed between male and female victims' thoughts around reporting to the police (if your service works with both).

If you are interested in taking part, please read the attached information sheet which will explain what the research entails in more detail. If you would like participate or require any further information about the research please feel free to get in touch with me, or alternatively, contact my research supervisor Professor Nicole Westmarland Nicole.Westmarland@durham.ac.uk.

I look forward to hearing from you

Yours faithfully,

Kate Butterworth

Appendix V: Participant information sheet and consent form (victims)

Note: professionals and police were asked to complete a similar form

Police response to same-sex partner abuse

About this research

This research project is being carried out by Kate Butterworth, a PhD researcher at Durham University. The aim of the research is to find out how people who have experienced abusive behaviours in a previous same-sex relationship were responded to by the police. I am also interested in finding out whether experiences are different for males and females in same-sex relationships.

Before you decide whether you wish to take part, please read this information sheet and ask the researcher if anything is not clear.

What your participation in the research will involve

I would like to interview you about your experiences of calling the police about an abusive relationship with a previous same-sex partner. The interview will last approximately 1 hour, and you are welcome to have a break during the interview, or to end it altogether at any point.

What kinds of questions will I be asked?

I am interested in finding out about your experiences around calling the police for help with an abusive relationship. I would like to discuss with you what the police did when they arrived and whether you found their response helpful to you, and also more generally your thoughts about police response to same-sex domestic abuse.

Do I have to answer every question?

No. You do not have to answer all of the questions. If you are uncomfortable or do not want to answer any of the questions just let me know and the question can be skipped. You will not have to give a reason for not wanting to answer any of the questions.

Are you tape-recording the interview?

With your permission it would be helpful for me to tape-record the interview. The tape will be used to produce a transcript (written document) of the interview, and will then be destroyed. Only I will have access to the tape and it will be stored securely when not in use. Your name will not be written anywhere on the tape. When the interview is transcribed I will change any information which may

identify you (such as people's names or towns you mentions), and you are free to request a copy of the transcript to be sent to you to check. During the interview, the tape can be stopped at any time if you wish to do so.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

All of the information collected from interviews will form part of my PhD research. Within the research and any future publications all attempts will be made to make you anonymous, including, as mentioned, changing or removing any information which may identify you. If I use any of the direct words you have spoken your name will not be attached to these. If, after the interview, you would like to withdraw your data from the research, please contact Kate Butterworth. This can be done at any point until analysis in February 2017.

What are the possible problems or risks of taking part?

We may be speaking about some difficult and upsetting topics, and although you do not have to talk about anything you may not wish to, please do not feel that you have to hide these feelings if they occur. You are free to take a break or end the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue. Whatever you say in this interview is confidential unless you tell me that you or someone else is in immediate danger of serious harm. If that happens, I will raise this with you during or after the interview and explore how you would prefer to deal with the situation. In some circumstances it may be necessary to inform my supervisor in order to ensure you and others are safe, but I will always attempt to discuss this with you first.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this research?

By speaking to you about your experiences, you are helping to contribute to research about domestic abuse in same-sex relationships, an area has been largely neglected in research and so your contributions are very valuable. You are also helping to share knowledge about how the police respond to people experiencing domestic abuse in same-sex relationships. Any findings which come from the research may be used to help the police to improve their responses to domestic abuse, which will hopefully improve the police response received by people in same-sex relationships.

If I want to take part what do I do next?

If you wish to take part, please complete the form below to confirm that you have had enough information about the research to decide whether or not to take part, you are aware of your rights as a participant and you agree to be interviewed for the research

| | YES | NO |
|--|-----|----|
| I have read the information sheet and had a chance to ask questions and receive answers that I am happy with | | |
| I agree to take part in an interview with Kate Butterworth from Durham University | | |
| I understand that I have the right to refuse to talk about anything which I am uncomfortable with | | |
| I agree that quotations from this interview can be used in the thesis and future publications. I understand that these and other information I give will be used anonymously. | | |
| I understand that what I talk about in the interview will be kept confidential, however, if the researcher feels that I or someone who I mention is at risk of harm, they may need to disclose this to relevant agencies. | | |
| I understand that it is my choice whether to take part. I also know that even if I agree to take part now, I can withdraw my information at any point during or after the meeting up until the data is analysed in February 2017 | | |
| I understand that I can keep a copy of this informed consent form for my records | | |

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____

Kate Butterworth

**PhD Researcher, School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University, 32 Old Elvet,
Durham, DH1 3HN.**

Email: kate.butterworth@durham.ac.uk

Thank you for taking part in my research project

Appendix VI: Demographics information collected

Age

16-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65+

Prefer not to answer

Gender

Female

Male

Trans

Transwoman

Transman

Genderqueer

Other _____

Prefer not to answer

Ethnicity

White

a. *British*

b. *Irish*

c. *Other white background*

Mixed

a. *White and Black Caribbean*

b. *White and Black African*

c. *White and Asian*

d. *Other mixed background*

Asian or Asian British

a. *Indian*

b. *Pakistani*

c. *Bangladeshi*

d. *Other Asian background*

Black or Black British

a. *Caribbean*

b. *African*

c. *Other Black background*

Chinese or other ethnic group

a. *Chinese*

b. *Any other ethnic group*

Prefer not to answer

Sexual Orientation

Lesbian

Gay

Bisexual

Heterosexual

Queer

Pansexual

Polysexual

Other _____

Prefer not to answer

Children

No children

1 child

2 children

3+ children

Prefer not to answer

Education

(Please state the highest level you have achieved)

Some high school

Completed high school

Some college

Completed college

Undergraduate degree

Master's degree

PhD

No formal education

Other _____

Prefer not to answer

Employment Status

Employed full-time

Employed part-time

Self-employed

A homemaker

A student

Military

Retired

Unable to work

Prefer not to answer

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Physical

Intellectual

Mental

Visual

Hearing and Speech

Other _____

No disability

Prefer not to answer

Appendix VII: Police interview schedule

Note – questions within this interview schedule were not always asked in the order they appear below, or at all, as participants sometimes covered the topics within their free narratives

- Go through participant information sheet, check understanding and give participants the opportunity to ask questions. Reiterate right to withdraw.
- Ask participant to read and sign the informed consent form (offer to read it with them if preferred).
- Summarise the purpose of research and what I am interested in exploring.

Section1: Background questions

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and what made you want to talk to me today?
(Tell participant a bit about myself if appropriate)
2. Can you tell me what your role is and how long you have held it for?

For the rest of the questions if you could think about responding to domestic abuse between two people of the same-sex who are either partners or ex-partners, not family members.

Section 2: Help-seeking: this section will explore help-seeking decisions that victims face.

1. When a victim is considering calling the police about an abusive partner/ex-partner, what kinds of things do you think help them decide whether to call or not?
 - 1a . Do you think there are any differences for male and female victims in SS relationships when deciding whether to call?
 2. Do you think same-sex victims will have any worries about calling, and if so, what kind of things might they worry about? *[If no, why not? If yes, can you tell me about these worries?/do you think any of these worries are related to experiencing abuse in a SS relationship?]*
 - 2a. Do you think there are any differences in these worries for male and female victims in SS relationships?
3. What kinds of things do victims hope the police will do when they arrive?

Section 2: responding to same-sex partner abuse

4. How often, on average, would you say the police respond to an incident involving a same-sex victim?
5. Would you say the police respond to more male-male incidents, female-female incidents, or a roughly equal number?
6. *(If a difference is established)* why do you think more males/females are reporting same-sex domestic abuse to the police?
7. When arriving at an incident between two women of the same-sex, what helps the police decide who is the victim and who is the perpetrator?
8. When arriving at an incident between two men of the same-sex, what helps the police decide who is the victim and who is the perpetrator?
9. What happens if police cannot identify a victim and perpetrator?
10. Do you feel there are any dynamics specific to same-sex relationships that police need to be aware of when responding?
11. What do you think are the difficulties the police encounter when responding to a same-sex incident?
12. Is there anything the police might do differently when responding to people in a same-sex relationship compared to a heterosexual relationship?
13. When responding to same-sex domestic abuse, do you refer onto support agencies, and are any of these specifically for same-sex domestic abuse?
14. Overall, do you think police find responding to same-sex domestic abuse easier, harder or about the same as responding to heterosexual partner abuse? (please explain)
15. Are there any other difficulties you want to mention when responding to SS partner abuse?

Section 3: Perceptions of same-sex partner abuse

16. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not confident at all and 5 being extremely confident, how confident do you think police feel when responding to the following people:
 - a. Male perpetrator, female victim
 - b. Female perpetrator, female victim
 - c. Female perpetrator, male victim
 - d. Male perpetrator, male victim
 - e. Please can you explain your reasoning for your above responses
17. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not serious at all and 5 being extremely serious how serious do you feel police believe the following situations are:
 - a. Male perpetrator, female victim

- b. Female perpetrator, female victim
- c. Female perpetrator, male victim
- d. Male perpetrator, male victim
- e. Please can you explain your reasoning for your above responses

Section 4: General

- 18. What do you think the police can do to encourage people in same-sex relationships to report to them?
- 19. Do you think police need to reach out in the same or different ways to people in same-sex relationships and heterosexual relationships?
- 20. How about reaching out to men in SS relationships compared to women in SS relationships?
- 21. Within your force, are you aware of any campaigns or similar to encourage people in same-sex relationships to report to the police?
- 22. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Appendix VIII: Professional interview schedule

- Go through participant information sheet, check understanding and give participants the opportunity to ask questions. Reiterate right to withdraw.
- Ask participant to read and sign the informed consent form (offer to read it with them if preferred).
- Summarise the purpose of research and what I am interested in exploring.

Section1: Background questions

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and what made you want to talk to me today?
2. Can you tell me what your role is and how long you have held it for?
3. What ways does your organisation provide support to victims experiencing SSPA?
4. Are there any specific cases that you would like to talk about today when thinking about how the police respond to SSPA?

For the rest of the questions if you could think about responding to domestic abuse between two people of the same-sex who are either partners or ex-partners, not family members.

Section 2: Help-seeking: this section will explore help-seeking decisions that victims face.

5. When a victim is considering calling the police about an abusive partner/ex-partner, what kinds of things do you think help them decide whether to call or not?

(Prompts: Do you think there are any differences for male and female victims in SS relationships when deciding whether to call?/ Do you think same-sex victims will have any worries about calling, and if so, what kind of things might they worry about?/ Do you think there are any differences in these worries for male and female victims in SS relationships?)

6. What kinds of things do victims hope the police will do when they arrive?

Section 2: Calling the police about same-sex partner abuse

7. How often, on average, would you say you support a victim experiencing SSPA?

(Prompts: Would you say you support more male victims, female victims, or a roughly equal number?(If a difference is established) What factors do you think account for this difference in the number of men and women you support? Do victims talk to you about contacting the police about same-sex partner abuse? Is there anything victims feel enables them to be able to call the police more easily?)

Section 3: Police on the scene

8. When arriving at incidents between two people of the same-sex, what factors do you think help police determine who is the victim and who is the perpetrator?
(Prompts: do you think there are differences between how they establish victim and perpetrator between two men and two women/What do you think happens if police cannot identify a victim and perpetrator?/ Do you feel there are any dynamics specific to same-sex relationships that police need to be aware of when responding?/What do you think are the difficulties the police encounter when responding to a same-sex incident?/Do you think there anything the police do differently when responding to people in a same-sex relationship compared to a heterosexual relationship?)
9. What do you think would make a victim more likely to call the police again for support with an abusive same-sex relationship?
10. Overall, do you think police find responding to same-sex domestic abuse easier, harder or about the same as responding to heterosexual partner abuse? (please explain)
11. Are there any other areas you want to mention when considering police response to SSPA?

Section 4: Perceptions of same-sex partner abuse

12. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not confident at all and 5 being extremely confident, how confident do you think police feel when responding to the following people:
 - a. Male perpetrator, female victim
 - b. Female perpetrator, female victim
 - c. Female perpetrator, male victim
 - d. Male perpetrator, male victim

12e. Please can you explain your reasoning for your above responses

12f. Do you think confidence levels affect the services given to different groups?
13. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not serious at all and 5 being extremely serious how serious do you feel police believe the following situations are:
 - a. Male perpetrator, female victim
 - b. Female perpetrator, female victim
 - c. Female perpetrator, male victim
 - d. Male perpetrator, male victim

13e. Please can you explain your reasoning for your above responses

13f. Do you think seriousness levels affect the service given to different groups?

Section 5: General

14. Do you think the police would feel confident knowing where to refer a victim of SSPA if they asked for a specialist service?
(Prompts: Do you get referrals from the police?)
15. What do you think the police can do to encourage people in same-sex relationships to report to them?
(Prompts: Do you think police need to reach out in the same or different ways to people in same-sex relationships and heterosexual relationships?/ How about reaching out to men in SS relationships compared to women in SS relationships?)
16. Within your local police force, are you aware of any campaigns/specialist officers etc. or similar to encourage people in same-sex relationships to report to the police?
17. I carried out FOI requests with UK forces *(explain how they work if not known)*, and found for AWI crimes males much more likely to be rated high risk than females, why do you think this may be?
18. For harassment, females were much more likely to be rated high risk than males, why do you think this may be?
19. Evidential difficulties most common outcome, making up approx. 60% of all outcomes, and within this, 'victim does not support police action' most common. Why do you think this may be?
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Appendix IX: Victim interview schedule

- Go through participant information sheet, check understanding and give participants the opportunity to ask questions. Reiterate right to withdraw.
- Ask participant to read and sign the informed consent form (offer to read it with them if preferred).
- Summarise the purpose of research and what I am interested in exploring.

Section 1: Background questions

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and what made you want to talk to me today? (Then I tell participant a bit about me)

For the rest of the questions if you could think about a relationship you have been in where you have called the police about a partner's abusive behaviours

Section 2: Help-seeking

2. Can you tell me what prompted you to call the police for the first time? *[how long had behaviours been going on before/had you considered calling before/did you or someone else report]*
3. Before you called for the first time, did you have any worries about calling? *[If no, why do you think this was? If yes, can you tell me about these worries?/were any of these worries related to experiencing abuse in a SS relationship?]*
4. What did you hope the police would do when they arrived with you?
5. What did happen when the police arrived?
6. Do you think being in a SS relationship with a man/woman affected the response you got from the police?
7. Do you think the police would respond the same or differently to a woman in a heterosexual relationship/man in heterosexual relationship/two men/two women
8. Did the police do what you wanted them to do? *[please explain]*
9. Did the police refer you to a support agency or leave you with details of where you could access support that was relevant to your needs?
10. What happened after the police left? *[with you/your partner, did you have any further police contact?]*
11. Overall did the police respond better than you expected, worse than you expected or about the same?
12. Have you called the police for support since this first time? *[If yes, can you tell me a bit about police response other times you have called? If no, what made you decide not to call again?]*
13. Would you ever consider calling the police in the future if you were in a similar situation? *[Why/why not?]*

Section 3: General

14. What do you think the police can do to encourage people in same-sex relationships to report to them?
15. Do you think police need to reach out in the same or different ways to people in same-sex relationships and heterosexual relationships?
16. How about reaching out to men in SS relationships compared to women in SS relationships?
17. Thinking of your local police force, have you noticed any campaigns or similar to encourage people in same-sex relationships to report to the police?
18. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences?

Appendix X: Criteria used to establish levels of provision provided by forces

| | |
|---------------|--|
| High | The force provides a number of LGBT-specific areas of provision. As a minimum any force rated as 'high' will employ LGBT liaison officers <i>and</i> alongside this they must also provide three or more other area of support such as running LGBT domestic abuse campaigns, holding focus groups with LGBT victims, or raising awareness of LGBT domestic abuse. |
| Medium | To be rated as medium the force provides some LGBT specific provision but does not meet the criteria for 'high' due to either 1) not employing LGBT liaison officers or 2) employing LGBT liaison officers but not offering three or more other specific LGBT domestic abuse provisions. |
| Low | The force provides very minimal or no LGBT-specific areas of provision. |

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