

Institution: University of Sunderland		
Unit of Assessment: 20		
Title of case study: Better support for victims and survivors of domestic violence and abuse in LGBT relationships		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005-2011		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Catherine Donovan	Professor	1996-2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013-December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Y		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Research by Donovan has demonstrated that domestic violence and abuse (DVA) in lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or trans (LGBT) relationships is poorly understood and recognized within agencies involved with DVA, and that victims and survivors do not receive the same support as their heterosexual counterparts. Her research has enhanced the knowledge of key DVA and LGBT rights stakeholders, leading to changes in national and local DVA strategies and services across the UK. It underpins the training practitioners complete to deliver these services and to date 4,766 practitioners are known to have completed such training. The research is used to justify funding for capacity-building and is beginning to shape public discussion and awareness through creative partnerships.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) The original, multi-method research was an ESRC-funded collaboration between the Universities of Sunderland and Bristol entitled 'Comparing love and violence in same sex and heterosexual relationships' (PI: Donovan). From a comparative social science perspective, it was the first project of its kind in that it focusses on women and men across gender and sexuality. Methods included a national community survey of 'what happens when things go wrong' in same sex relationships; focus groups with heterosexual women, men, lesbians and gay men; and interviews with 67 heterosexual women, men, and self-defined non-heterosexual women and men. The survey was designed to allow comparison with the British Crime Survey (BCS) as a proxy for the heterosexual experience of domestic violence. Interviews focussed on respondents' 'worst' and 'best' relationship experiences so that accounts of love and violence could be explored.</p> <p>Specific insights include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> DVA (when one partner exerts power and control over the other partner using physical, financial, sexual, emotional, isolating, threatening behaviours) is a substantial problem in same sex relationships in the UK; DVA in same sex relationships is often not recognised as such because of the impact of the public story which identifies DVA as a heterosexual problem of men for women; as a problem of predominantly physical violence; and as a problem of gender in that the 'bigger, stronger' embodied male exerts power and control over the 'smaller, weaker' embodied female; The public story also impacts negatively on the help-seeking of victim/survivors in same sex relationships as they fear responses of disbelief, minimisation, denial and/or homo/bi-phobia; and because of the subsequent gap of trust between these victim/survivors and mainstream and specialist DVA services. For example, findings showed that out of ten potential help/support sources, victims and survivors approached the police the least, whilst the British Crime Survey shows that the police are the second or third choice for heterosexual women (depending on whether friends and family are grouped together or separately); mutual abuse, rather than being common amongst same sex relationships (because of the assumption made that two women or two men must be 'equal'), is rare and in most cases one partner exerts power and control over the other. 		

- e. those in first same sex relationships were often at risk of experiencing domestic violence because they did not 'know' what to expect in a same sex relationship and/or believed it to be normal;
- f. there is a need for LGBT DV training and awareness raising amongst mainstream and DV specialist agencies; and
- g. there is a need for awareness-raising among LGBT communities.

Subsequent research by Donovan (March-June 2010) explored the treatment of LGBT DVA victim/survivors by the national DV strategy as enacted through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs). This strategy focuses resources on those victim/survivors at the highest risk. Nationally LGBT referrals to the MARAC are disproportionately low. A study exploring barriers to referring LGBT victim/survivors to MARACs identified the following insights:

- a. there is a need for training and awareness- raising about LGBT DV in agencies potentially referring victim/survivors to the MARACs but especially the police - particularly in relation to the use of the risk assessment tool and the specific vulnerabilities of LGBT victim/survivors of DVA;
- b. most referrals to MARACs are from the police yet very few LGBT victim/survivors report to the police so they are unlikely to be referred to the MARAC;
- c. domestic violence in same sex relationships is not recognised either within LGBT communities or within mainstream or specialist agencies;
- d. the public story about DV — whilst accurate for the majority of cases of domestic violence — should not be the only model portrayed in the literature of agencies or in domestic violence campaigns.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. **Donovan, C.**; Hester, M.; Holmes, J.; McCarry, M. (2006) Comparing Domestic Abuse in Same Sex and Heterosexual Relationships. Interim Report November. **113 citations.**
2. **Donovan, C.** & Hester M. (2008) 'because she was my first girlfriend, I didn't know any different': Making the case for mainstreaming same-sex sex/relationship education. *Journal of Sex Education*, Vol 8(3): 277-287. **66 citations.**
3. **Donovan, C.** & Hester, M. (2010) "'I hate the word 'victim'": an exploration of recognition of domestic violence in same sex relationships' *Social Policy and Society* 9(2): 279-289. 90 citations.
4. **Donovan, C.** (2010) Barriers to Making Referrals of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) victim/survivors to the MARAC and Recommendations for Improvement: A Study of IDVAs, MARAC Coordinators and PPU Detective Inspectors Within the Northumbria Police Force Area. **7 citations.**
5. **Donovan, C.** & Hester, M. (2011) 'Seeking help from the enemy: help-seeking strategies of those in same sex relationships who have experienced domestic abuse' in *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, 23(1): 26-40. **30 citations.**
6. **Donovan, C.** & Hester, M. (2011) 'Exploring Emotion work in domestically abusive relationships' in J. Ristock (Ed) *Intimate Partner Violence in LGBTQ Lives*, Routledge. **16 citations.**

Research quality

This is a continued case study, and the underpinning research (unchanged here) met the threshold for its predecessor at REF2014.

Funding

ESRC. 'Comparing love and violence in same sex and heterosexual relationships'. RES-000-23-0650. PI: Catherine Donovan. 2004-06. £188,401

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Donovan's research has transformed understanding of DVA in LGBT relationships among the LGBT community, relevant agencies and the general public. This change has, in turn, informed the way policy makers, front-line professionals and campaigners meet the needs of LGBT victims and survivors.

Conceptual impact

Donovan's findings run against mainstream discourses of DVA as physical violence perpetrated by large, strong men against small, weak women. This narrative implies that if DVA takes place between two women, the abuse is not significant; likewise, in the case of two men, it will be seen as something normal, as violence between men is 'natural'. By identifying the reality of DVA in LGBT relationships, the pathways survivors use to access support, and the inequality of DVA provision for victims and survivors in LGBT relationships compared to heterosexual, Donovan's research has created a more accurate understanding of the issue.

Key stakeholders single out Donovan's research as the source of their own understanding of DVA in LGBT relationships. The CEO of **SAY-iT**, a charity supporting young LGBT people, says that before engaging with Donovan's research, he "*made assumptions about it being the norm and the price we paid for being in same sex relationships.*" Donovan's research "*led to a degree of consciousness and awareness raising both for me, my colleagues and my peers, [and it] enabled me to refocus and recognise violent and controlling and coercive behaviours which had previously not been apparent*" [S1]. Likewise, the national domestic abuse charity **SafeLives** say that "*Her research has provided evidence and a framework for how we can gain a more nuanced understanding of what's happening in a relationship,*" and that without this work, "*our understanding of DVA in LGBT relationships would be blunted*" [S2]. **Galop**, the national LGBT+ anti-violence charity, attest that "*Donovan's research is one of the first to shed light on the experiences of survivors and perpetrators of DVA in LGBT relationships in the UK. Until then, understanding of these experiences was based on data from other countries predominantly USA. Local data was needed to inform policy decisions and shape professional and practitioner knowledge; Donovan's research addresses this gap.*" [S3]

Impact on policy-making

Donovan's research has influenced policy making in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland [S4,S5] both through stakeholders such **Galop**, **SafeLives** and **Broken Rainbow** (who have incorporated their new understanding from the research into their lobbying) and through policy makers using the findings themselves. Since August 2013, Donovan's work has shaped strategies, processes, recommendations and needs assessments in **25 local and national government organisations and executive government agencies** including the **Northern Ireland Department of Justice** and **NICE** [S4]. The sheer volume of references to Donovan's research in government and organisational policies confirms her position as an authority among policy-makers, civil servants and other officials.

These strategies, needs assessments and other official publications translate the findings into service design. For example, after acknowledging differences in the nature of abuse in LGBT partnerships, and help-seeking processes that survivors follow, **City of Edinburgh Council** committed to ensuring that service redesign provides service pathways specifically for LGBT victims, and for working with LGBT perpetrators, in their 2017 strategy and improvement plan [S6]. **Tower Hamlets Council's** 2016-19 violence against women and girls strategy draws on Donovan's research to understand the prevalence of DVA in LGBT relationships, citing her finding that there are similar levels of DVA as in heterosexual relationships. The council uses this evidence to justify targeted activities such as awareness-raising campaigns at key LGBT events and the appointment of DVA champions to represent LGBT residents [S7]. In 2018 Donovan was invited to join the National Scrutiny Panel convened by the **Home Office** to examine current practice in MARACs relating to LGBT victims and survivors of DVA. The resulting guidance and recommendations were written by **SafeLives** with Donovan's assistance, and were shared with the **Home Office** and the **270 MARACs across England** [S2]. SafeLives has confirmed the importance of Donovan's influence, saying that if policy-makers did not draw on her work, "*the experiences and needs of LGBT individuals would not be represented in government policy. Ultimately, this would mean that the needs of LGBT people experiencing DVA would not be met.*" [S2]

Impact on professional training and practice

Government and non-governmental bodies use Donovan's research to create training for practitioners from across the whole spectrum of professionals involved in DVA, including

Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, police officers, GPs, nurses, social workers, probation officers, teachers, solicitors, and staff from domestic abuse agencies, DVA charities, mental health services, the CPS and CAFCASS. In the assessment period 4,766 practitioners and professionals in England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland have completed training based on Donovan's research; this number includes 1,200 Cleveland Police officers and staff (75% of their workforce), 398 Durham police officers and staff, and 168 members of Cork Gardai [S2,S3,S8,S9]. One Police Inspector who completed this course says that it *"will make [me] deal with this area of police business in a different way now. [...] I will ensure all my officers under my command deal with this area to the necessary standard and with the necessary sympathy and empathy"* [S9]. 98% of the Durham cohort said it had improved their understanding of coercive control [S9]. Organisations that have delivered this training confirm that Donovan's research is a core piece of the evidence used [S8], and that *"as her research has provided a common language for talking about DVA in LGBT relationships, her work is embedded in everything we say."* [S2].

As well as informing training content, the research has been used as evidence of unmet need, enabling organisations to access funding for training. **SafeLives** used Donovan's research to support successful business cases to fund practitioner training nationally [S2] and in 2019 it underpinned the Yorkshire charity **SAYiT's** successful bid to set up a programme of training and awareness-raising across South Yorkshire, a programme which has created two new posts delivering training across the region [S1].

Impact on public representation and discussion

Donovan is advisor to the theatre company **Open Clasp**, a partnership that has resulted in new public representations and discussions of DVA. Donovan contributed to two award-winning productions, *Rattle Snake* and *Key Change*. *Rattle Snake* toured the UK in 2017-18 attracting an audience of 7,442 people. A streamed version has been watched by 16,000 people. *Key Change*, which sold out its first tour, won the 2015 Edinburgh Fringe Festival's Best in Edinburgh Prize before having a 3-week run off Broadway. It has been seen live by over 9,000 people in the UK and USA. It was released as a film in Autumn 2017 and screenings were followed by a panel discussion featuring Donovan, who spoke about her research. Approximately 28,000 people on six continents have seen the film and discussion [S9]. While her research contributed directly to these productions, her knowledge permeates the company's other work, and Open Clasp's Artistic Director (who writes all of the company's plays) says *"I hear myself saying the things that Catherine [Donovan] says."* [S10]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S1 Written testimonial from CEO of SAY-iT

S2 Written testimonial from Senior Practice Advisor, SafeLives

S3 Written testimonial from Research and Policy Officer, Galop

S4 List of policies, strategies and other official documents referring to Donovan's work published during the assessment period.

S5 Written evidence submitted by Donovan to Home Affairs Committee Domestic Abuse Inquiry, October 2018

S6 Domestic Abuse Strategy and Improvement Plan 2017, City of Edinburgh Council

S7 Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2019, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

S8 Details of all professional training underpinned by Donovan's research

S9 Open Clasp Trustees' Reports and Annual Reviews 2015-2020

S10 Artistic Director, Open Clasp Theatre Company.