

# Understanding the Dynamics of LGBT Domestic Violence

Adapted From: National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs

<http://www.ncavp.org/issues/DomesticViolence.aspx>

**Cultural/Identity Abuse:** threat of outing (disclosing) partner's sexual orientation, gender identity, S/M or polyamory practices, HIV status, or any other personal information; using partner's race, class, age, immigration status, religion, size, physical ability, language, and/or ethnicity, against them.

From The Network/LaRed (<http://www.thenetworklared.org/partnerabuse.htm>)

While many aspects of LGBT domestic violence are similar to those experienced by heterosexual victims, it is not in all ways identical. Perpetrators often attempt highly specific forms of abuse based on identity and community dynamics, including:

- "Outing" or threatening to out a partner's sexual orientation or gender identity to family, employer, police, religious institution, community, in child custody disputes, or in other situations where this may pose a threat.
- Reinforcing fears that no one will help the victim because s/he is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, or that for this reason, the partner "deserves" the abuse
- Alternatively, justifying abuse with the notion that a partner is not "really" lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (i.e. the victim may once have had, or may still have relationships, or express a gender identity, inconsistent with the abuser's definitions of these terms). This can be used both as a tool in verbal and emotional abuse as well as to further the isolation of a victim from community.
- Telling the survivor that abusive behavior is a normal part of LGBT relationships, or that it cannot be domestic violence because it is occurring between LGBT individuals.
- Monopolizing support resources through an abuser's manipulation of friends and family supports and generating sympathy and trust in order to cut off these resources to the survivor. This is a particular issue to LGBT people and others living in small insular communities, where there are few community specific resources, neighborhoods or social outlets.
- Portraying the violence as mutual and even consensual, especially if the partner attempts to defend against it, or as an expression of masculinity or some other "desirable" trait.
- Depicting the abuse as part of sado-masochistic (S/M) activity. Domestic violence can exist in S/M relationships but it is not implicit, nor unique to this type of relationship. Domestic Violence is not S/M, nor should any non-consensual violent or abusive acts that take place outside of a pre-arranged scene or in violation of pre-determined safe words or boundaries

**Similarities & Differences**  
**Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Abusive Relationships**

<b>Similarities</b>	<b>Differences</b>
<p>Forms of abuse are the same. Purpose is power and control. Use of isolation as a tactic. Cyclical nature of abuse. Psychological impact. Violence worsens over time. Leaving is dangerous. Victim is often blamed. Batterers are hard to recognize. Occurs at approximately same rate. Identity is no protection. Batterers have similar mentality. Impact on children.</p>	<p>Fewer services available for help. Isolation can be compounded by LGBT invisibility. Threat of being outed. LGBT vested interest in idea that LGBT community is non-violent. Idolization of LGBT relationships; denial of same-sex violence. Fear of further oppression. Denial of men as victims and women as batterers. Distrust of service providers. Leaving may be more difficult. Risk of losing children is greater.</p>