

Understanding Intimate Partner Abuse between Queer Women

A Different Lens

Myths About Abuse in Queer Women's Relationships

- The “butch” is usually the abuser. There is always a butch and a femme.
- It's not really abuse because the partners are of equal physical size and strength.
- Women aren't really violent.

The Context of Abuse in Queer Women's Relationships

- Queer women don't want to talk about abuse.
- Queer women have difficulty recognizing abuse.
- Fear of isolation from their community
- Fear of further stigmatizing the community.
- Fear of OUTING.
- More likely to happen in first relationship.
- Less likely NOT to report for fear of confronting homophobia and heterosexism.
- Power dynamic shifting.
- Less likely to be lethal.

Examining Abuse in Queer Women's Relationships

- Needs assessment survey conducted. 225 responses from pride festivals in Ontario, online and Michigan Women's Music Festival.
- 65% identified as lesbian, 25% bi-sexual. Others distributed between heterosexual, queer, non-identified.
- 31% identified as having children.
- 42% identified as having been in an abusive same-sex relationship, 11% were unsure, 47% said now.



Abuse Experienced

- Physical Abuse: 26%
- Emotional/Psychological Abuse: 42%
- Sexual Abuse: 15%
- Financial Abuse: 12%



Admission of Abuse of Others

- Physical: 14%
- Emotional: 13%
- Sexual: 3%
- Financial: 1%



Seeking support for abuse.

- 33% asked for help, 67% did not.
- 59% turned to friends
- 31% to medical professionals
- 53% counsellors
- 24% family
- 14% Police
- 17% support groups
- 8% help lines

Dismantling the Heteronormative Approach to IPA

- Feminist theory that uses gender-based oppression to explain violence against women is not the lens we need to use for queer women.
- What does the current education system teach our professionals about abuse in queer women's relationships?
- Current systems and institutions can further marginalize queer women.
- Law enforcement training related to IPA and queer women is inadequate.

What do we need to do differently?

- How does internalized homophobia create two victims?
- Shifting the woman as victim/survivor NOT perpetrator mentality.
- Victim only mandates.
- Power shifting versus self-defence.
- Leaving relationship is necessarily the end goal.
- Who should do the work?
- Queering your existing services.



Thinking Outside the Box

- Outside the Box Program
- Just ask the queer agencies.
- Challenges of letting go of what we know, for what we don't know.
- Good resources.