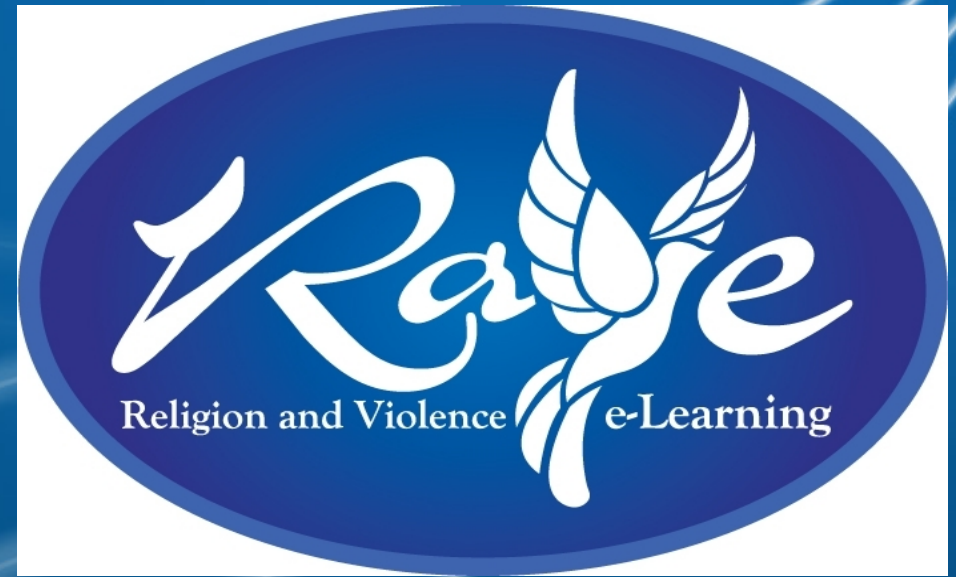


# Same Sex Intimate Partner Violence



# Learning objectives

Most people know coworkers, neighbours, friends or family members who belong to same sex relationships. Just like hetero-sexual partnerships, same-sex relationships can be abusive. This lesson will cover:

- limitations on domestic violence research on same sex relationships;
- issues related to power and control; and
- challenges that are unique to victims of abuse in same sex partnerships.

# Rates of violence



While we know that there is violence in same sex relationships, research studies on these unions have been limited.

Why does gay and lesbian intimate partner violence create challenges for researchers?

Things to consider:

- because of known stereotypes, gays and lesbians may be reluctant to participate in studies;
- this creates challenges in gathering a large sample size for research;
- often participants have volunteered or been invited to participate in the research and therefore they may not be representative of the gay and lesbian population as a whole.

Source: [www.vifamily.ca/library/cft/samesex\\_05.html#RELIABLE](http://www.vifamily.ca/library/cft/samesex_05.html#RELIABLE)

# Rates of violence

Some studies suggest that the rate of intimate partner violence is about the same in both hetero- and homo-sexual relationships.

Other studies suggest that the rates of violence may be even higher in same-sex relationships.

Source: [www.aardvarc.org/dv/gay.shtml](http://www.aardvarc.org/dv/gay.shtml)





# Power and control



The Power and Control Wheel was developed from the experience of battered women in Duluth, Minnesota who had been abused by their male partners. It has been translated into over 40 languages and has resonated with the experience of battered women world-wide.

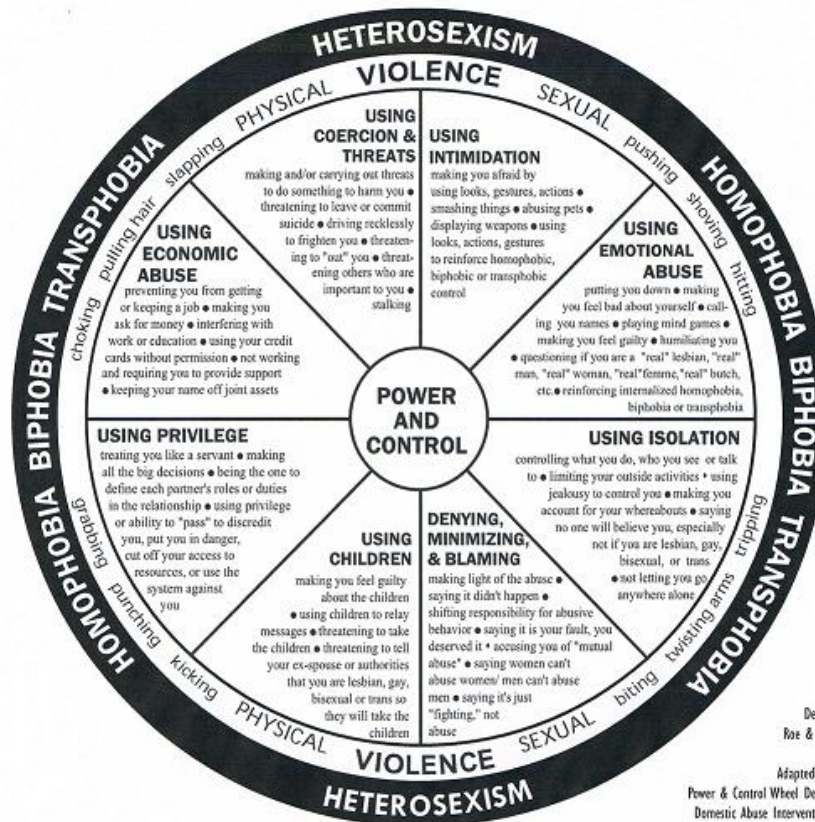
# Power and control

The Power and Control Wheel has been adapted for same-sex intimate partnerships.

A batterer systematically uses threats, intimidation and coercion to instill fear in her/his partner.

To download a copy of this wheel, [click here.](#)

## Power and Control Wheel for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Relationships



Developed by  
Rae & Jagodinsky

Adapted from the  
Power & Control Wheel Developed by  
Domestic Abuse Intervention Project  
206 West Fourth Street  
Duluth, MN 55806

Adopted by:

**Texas Council On  
FAMILY VIOLENCE**

P.O. Box 161810 • Austin, TX 78716  
512/794-1133 • Fax: 512/794-1199

# Abuse in same-sex relationships

There are numerous ways that abuse takes place in same-sex partnerships:

- physical abuse
- psychological or emotional abuse
- isolation
- stalking/harassing
- threats and intimidation
- economic abuse
- sexual abuse
- property destruction





# Fear

Gay and lesbian victims of intimate partner violence have concerns that differ from victims of heterosexual domestic violence.

They worry about the impact of homophobia. How will service providers react to the abuse? Will they receive the services that they need?

What if the victim has not yet "come out of the closet?"

"For those who are 'in the closet,' the abuser can threaten to reveal the victim's sexual and/or gender identity as a means of control, thereby endangering relationships with family members, friends, coworkers of employers" (Gillis, p. 135).





# Fear

Persons living with HIV/AIDS may have additional concerns.

What if the victim of abuse is HIV positive?

Will the abuser threaten to disclose her/his HIV status?



Source: Alaggia, R. and Vine, C. (1999). *Children in the unusual: Violence in Canadian families*. Waterloo, ON, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

# Fear



In same-sex couples experiencing abuse there may be additional fears:

- of losing the relationship that confirmed ones sexual orientation;
- of not being believed about the violence and abuse;
- of losing support within the gay and lesbian communities.

# Challenges

## Intervention

Because of stereotypes of same-sex relationships, it can be difficult for same-sex victims of IPV to reach out for help.

For example, gay men may worry that the police will assume that the assault is not intimate partner violence but simply a fight between two men.





# Challenges

## Emergency shelter

A lesbian woman may seek refuge in a shelter for battered women but she may worry that her abuser may claim to be a victim and also end up in the shelter with her. Unlike in heterosexual relationships where a woman is abused by her male partner, shelters are able to refuse access to adult men. But what if the female abuser claims to be a victim?

Gay men, as well as heterosexual men, who are abused rarely have access to shelters for victims of violence.



# Challenges



## Crisis line

Gay men and lesbian women are reluctant to call crisis lines.

They wonder if the counsellor will be sympathetic to the particular challenges of same-sex IPV.

Many gay men think that they will be given the lowest priority when they call a crisis intervention line.

# Things to consider . . .

Research on the rates of violence amongst same-sex couples is limited and it is difficult to determine how rates of IPV among same-sex couples compares to heterosexual couples.

Given societal stereotypes and homophobia, same-sex couples who experience intimate partner violence experience unique challenges when they seek help.

How would you respond if someone from your church who was experiencing abuse in a same-sex relationship came to you for help?