

Societal Oppression and Domestic Violence

Oppression at the societal level can affect the dynamics of abuse. In the case of domestic violence, GLBT victims may experience increased shame, fear, and isolation as a result of homophobia and other forms of prejudice. Below are just a few examples of how oppressive myths may affect individuals who experience domestic violence. This is not an exhaustive list, but it may provide a starting point for discussion.

Homophobia/Heterosexism

Oppressive Myth

- Homosexuality is a perversion.
- Domestic violence = men abusing women
- Homosexuality is shameful
- GLBT relationships won't last
- Monogamy is heterosexual
- Invisibility of homosexuality
- Homosexuality is immoral
- God hates homosexuals
- Homosexuality violates religious teachings
- "They're child molesters."
- Homosexuals haven't had good hetero sex
- Homosexuality is a phase

Feelings of Oppressed Group

- Desire to be perceived as "normal."
- Denial within community and without
- Need to be closeted at work
- Fear that lasting relationships are rare
- Pressure to reject monogamy
- Few models of healthy relationships
- Internalized feelings of immorality
- Rejection of religion
- Disconnection from spirituality
- Afraid of losing children
- Desire to show sexuality as positive
- Anger that relationships aren't taken seriously

Impact on Survivor

- Afraid to make community look bad
- Feeling isolated and alone
- Disclosing abuse means coming out
- Desire to prove that relationship can last
- Denial of anger at infidelity
- Hard to recognize abuse
- Shame, "I deserve this"
- No guidance from religious leaders
- Hopelessness, no sense of purpose
- Children used as a tool of abuse
- Fear of disclosing abuse
- Feelings of mourning the relationship are minimized

Sexism

Oppressive Myth

- Men are strong
- Weak men are sissies
- Men don't cry
- Men don't need help
- Men are naturally more violent
- Men can take care of themselves
- Men dominate women
- Women are weak
- Women are caring
- Women are submissive
- Women are nurturing

Feelings of Oppressed Group

- Fear of being perceived as weak
- Shame at "feminine qualities"
- Afraid to be vulnerable
- Desire to be strong
- Violence is normalized
- Shame when unwilling/unable to fight back
- Shame at victimization
- Difficult to trust men
- Denial that women can abuse
- Easier to trust women

Impact on Survivor

- Afraid to disclose abuse
- Told to "take it like a man."
- Afraid to reach out for help
- Ashamed of abuse
- Afraid to say, "This is wrong."
- Fear of not being believed
- Afraid of being called a "woman"
- Afraid to be alone
- Shock at abuse by woman
- Afraid of not being believed
- Shock at violence in women