

# Research & Advocacy Digest

## Linking Advocates & Researchers

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The research included in this report focuses on those assaults that occur against or between individuals who identify somewhere along the continuum of sexual orientation that is typically referred to as gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer.

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## Same-Sex Sexual Violence

This edition of WCSAP's Research and Advocacy Digest focuses on same-sex sexual assault. It is important to be clear about the limitations of that phrase to describe this phenomenon. The research included in this publication focuses on those assaults that occur against, or between, individuals who identify somewhere along the continuum of sexual orientation that is typically referred to as gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer.

It is also important to talk about those who are largely left out of the formal research. The vast majority of these studies discuss sexual orientation as a binary construct: heterosexual or homosexual. Only occasionally, and then in fleeting terms, are those who identify as bisexual included in the research conversation.

Similarly, the issue of gender identity is usually left without clarification. None of the studies that were abstracted in this issue spent any significant amount of time discussing the transsexual, transgender or gender-queer community. The same can be said for survivors who are intersex. Understanding these clarifications, exclusions, and generalizations is essential to underscoring the point that research on sexual assault in the LGBTQ community tends to be incomplete. There is still an enormous need for more formal research which explores the experiences and incidences of sexual violence in this community.

As service providers, the information contained within these abstracts – as well as the gaps – can inform our work and reinvigorate our commitment to ensuring that every survivor of sexual violence receives services that affirm their autonomy and dignity.

As editors, we also made some decisions about research that would not be included in this edition of the Research and Advocacy Digest. Excluded from consideration in this edition were

articles that focused on same-sex prison rape because those survivors may not necessarily identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer. Prison, and the sexual violence that is rampant within its walls, represents an institutional framework that deserves its own consideration at a future date.

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**“As service providers the information contained in this publication can inform our work and reinvigorate our commitment to ensuring that every survivor of sexual assault receives services that affirms their autonomy and dignity.”**

- Suzanne Brown-McBride

Thank You to Connie Burk of the Northwest

Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse and Lacey Sloan, Research Associate from the Institute for Child and Family Policy, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service for their time and assistance with the development of this issue.

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# Same-Sex Sexual Violence

## An Interview with Lacey Sloan

**WCSAP: Lacey, ok let's talk about your article on sexual violence within the homosexual community, as opposed to talking about sexual assault within the prison population which is where most of the research on same sex violence has been assembled. What drew you to do research on the topic of sexual violence in this community?**

L: I was working at the Austin Rape Crisis Center and wanted to do more outreach to all communities. In examining who we were serving, we realized we were pretty much just reaching out to white, heterosexual women, to some extent Latino women and to a lesser extent African American.

When I became the Director of Public Education I began the practice of striving for diversity. Although I wasn't out as a lesbian at the time, I was very concerned for that community. So, since we were striving to serve everybody, and because of who I was, this community felt like one that I had a natural bridge to.

**WCSAP: How would you characterize the research you found at the time or even the research now regarding the gay and lesbian community?**

L: To prepare for my study I did literature reviews but it was, and continues to be, very scarce. All I found was Claire Renzetti's study of domestic violence in same sex lesbian couples, and Waterman, Dawson, and Balona's research pertaining to both gay men and lesbians which showed that women reported higher rates of violence in their relationships than men did. However, they speculated it was because men were less likely to identify it or be willing to admit it, whereas women were

more familiar with naming it. I would love to know what you have found in your review of the literature.

**WCSAP: We found a fair amount of**

**research but much of it was research related to same-sex prison rape. Unfortunately that research has often been used to equate it to the gay and lesbian community as a whole, which I honestly find disturbing. There are people who believe that since these are the patterns we see within the prison population regarding same-sex violence, they believe they can draw the same conclusions to the general queer community. In putting together this Research Digest we chose not to include research pertaining to prison rape, although we might consider doing some research on prison rape at a later time.**

L: Right, we certainly can't generalize prison studies to the general gay and lesbian population which has often been the case.

"The literature reviews and research on same-sex sexual violence was, and continues to be scarce. This prompted me to do my own research, along with my desire of striving to reach out to All communities."

- Lacey Sloan

**WCSAP: Most of the research compiled is done specifically on those who identify as gay or lesbian, with very little done on those who identify as bisexual. What are your thoughts about the existence or non-existence of research pertaining to either the bisexual or transgender community, which seems to be largely silent?**

L: In my study I did ask about bisexuality but since there were so few I inappropriately lumped bisexual women in with lesbians and bisexual men in with gay men because we were trying to look at the experiences of women and men. As for the transgender community, I think there is nothing. The only stuff I've ever seen regarding the transgender community has been about violence toward transgender prostitutes.

**WCSAP: So researchers are going to be challenged by the need to construct their surveys to include transgender and queer folks. It will also be a challenge because there isn't much that speaks to those communities' experiences specifically.**

L: Yeah, I think, the more marginalized a group is the less money there is available for research and the less likely researchers in academia are willing to do the research. Because of this I think that our own organizations are in a better position to collect data on these groups. Direct service providers have a clearer picture of whom they are serving as opposed to other community groups. For example, some rape crisis centers report that up to 75% of the people being seen are victims of acquaintance rape, whereas the police were seeing just the opposite. In addition, we know that about 10% of the victims we saw were men who had also experienced acquaintance rape.

**WCSAP: That's a nice segue into talking about some of the findings of your research. What did the data from your study ultimately find?**

L: The findings revealed the following:

- Almost none of the gay men knew that the rape crisis center was available to serve them if they were victimized.
- Although lesbians did know the services were available to them, they didn't necessarily feel like they would get the support they needed. I was really surprised about that since we were running support groups for lesbians at that point. But the lesbians in the survey didn't know that.
- We also found that the women in my study ended up having about the same rates of sexual assault or sexual abuse victimization (42%) that we anticipated based on other studies we looked at, like those found in Diana Russell's study. However, what was most surprising was the rate of male victimization. I think about 20-22% of the men reported being sexually assaulted as adults and that's much higher than we expected in men.
- In terms of service provision, both gay men and lesbians wanted support groups for themselves and their significant others. In addition, they wanted these services to become more publicized. To ensure this, whenever we did presentations, regardless of where, we began by saying, "we serve anyone whose been a victim of sexual violence, children and adults, people who are old, people who are gay, people who are straight, people who are bisexual, people who are transgender, people of all colors, whether you're a citizen or not, people who have disabilities or not, etc."

"The more marginalized a group is the less money there is available for research and the less likely researchers in academia are willing to do the research."

- Lacey Sloan

“The most significant recommendation is not to assume that just because you are providing services, that all people will use them. Those in the study voiced that if they want the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community to come, the organization must let them know.”

- Lacey Sloan

**WCSAP: So one recommendation you would give to rape crisis centers and service providers is to ensure they are advertising their services to all people. Based on the research, what other recommendations can you give service providers?**

L: The most significant recommendation is not to assume that just because you are providing services, that all people will use them. Those in the study voiced that if they want the LGBT

(lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community to come, the organization must let them know. They articulated how difficult it is for them to know how gay friendly, welcoming or accessible an organization is if the organization doesn't specifically invite them in.

Also, if you are going to serve heterosexual and gay men then it is important for organizations to begin talking about male victimization along with discussing female victimization.

It's also important to examine your literature to determine if it gives the message that you are open to serving all victims. I am sensitive to the fact that some organizations fear losing funding if they advertise that they serve the LGBT community. But if an organization is truly committed to reaching this population there are things an organization can do to advertise more subtly, like putting triangles or rainbows on literature in discrete places.

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**“In terms of service provision both gay men and lesbians wanted support groups for themselves and their significant others. They also wanted these services to be more publicized.”**

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You can also train your volunteers and staff not to assume gender until the victim does. Don't assume because the victim is a female, that the perpetrator is a male.

In addition, organizations need to educate themselves about the special issues pertaining to LGBT victims. For example, most lesbians in relationships are not on birth control pills. Therefore, if a male rapes a lesbian, not being on birth control becomes an additional worry, which may not be the case for heterosexual women using birth control.

The other recommendation I would make is to ask the community you wish to serve how to provide services to them. They'll let you know.

That being said, although this didn't come from the research, I do believe in my heart that sometimes communities like the LGBT community would sometimes be better served through programs that already serve them, like an LGBT Community Center, if that center were able to build their capacity to provide sexual assault services. Sometimes it just boils down to recognizing that we can't always serve the whole world, especially if another organization is better equipped to serving that community.

**WCSAP: Well, it actually is informed by the research. One of the key places you went to get your information was through organizations that serve that community. What do you think gay serving organizations should be doing in terms of building partnerships with rape crisis centers?**

L: I think organizations have to be cross-trained. The LGBT Community Centers need to be trained in sexual violence, and rape crisis centers need to be trained on how to deal with sexual violence within the LGBT community. Whether this will happen will depend on the community and the program.

I think organizations that serve the LGBT community must educate themselves about violence in this community. Although we know that most sexual violence occurs amongst acquaintances, we also have to be cognizant that some sexual violence incidences occurs against the LGBT community as a form of hate crimes. If we really want to be able to serve the queer community fully, then we are going to have to look at how well the rest of the system is prepared to serve LGBT victims.

We must ask the following questions:  
Are our health providers going to be appropriate?  
How sensitive will the hospital personnel be if a victim that is LGBT comes in?

The same goes for law enforcement.

I've heard from those in the LGBT community that handing these victims over to a criminal justice system that is homophobic or heterosexist may not be the best course of action. I've also heard that from the Native American and other communities of color.

I'm not saying that I believe one way or the other but the point is that we have to think about the community that we are working with to know how to best serve them.

**WCSAP: That's true, especially when we see research that says that perceptions of orientation can render some people to believe that some victims are more culpable for what happened to them than others because of their sexual orientation. The research demonstrates a larger social reality that should inform us about how we construct our services and how we construct our outreach.**

L: Exactly. When the movement began we started working with systems that would serve basically straight white women. Although we've begun the work, we need to do the same for the LGBT and other marginalized communities.

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**"The most significant recommendations for service providers is not to assume that just because you are providing services that all people will use them."**

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**WCSAP: That leads me to my last question. How do you think research might be constructed in the future so that it can pick up the gaps that currently exist?**

L: I would do a random community survey with my friend Susan Terrell. We would use a series of questions that we know illicit information about victimization. This is based on the belief that the more you ask, the more a person will reveal.

I would ask about the gender of their last three partners because although some people have same sex experiences, they may or may not label themselves as LGBT.

"What was most surprising was the rate of male victimization. About 20-22% of the men reported being sexually assaulted as adults, and that's much higher than we expect in men.

If you are going to serve heterosexual and gay men, then it is important for organizations to begin talking about male victimization."

- Lacey Sloan

“We shouldn’t see marginalized populations as groups that we begrudgingly have to serve. So, we have to do it out of sincerity and with a sense of heart to ensure that all victims, males, females, gay men, transgender, those with disabilities, people of color and other marginalized groups can feel safe coming to our organizations”

- Lacey Sloan

To get at the question of sexual assault, I would ask about their offenders so we would know who committed these assaults against whom. I would also want to do a detailed history of the offenses, when, by whom, by relationship and so on. I would want to know if they reported or not, did they seek help, if they sought help, how they would rate the help, etc.

I would also include questions about depression and anxiety and perhaps their sense of hostility from the community and from their environment to determine if these variables impact mental health. Most gay men, lesbians and transgender people know that a large part of the world hates them so I want to see if and how that impacts their mental health. But succinctly, what really needs to be done is the random household survey where you ask about sexual orientation and victimization. It wouldn’t be hard to do it just takes some money. But one of these days I will do it if someone doesn’t do it before me. I’m convinced that I can do this and that eventually somebody will give me money someday.

**WCSAP. Is there anything else you’d like to add?**

L: The most important thing is that we make our programs available to serve all victims of sexual violence and we shouldn’t see marginalized populations as groups that we begrudgingly have to serve. So, we have to do it out of sincerity and with a sense of heart to ensure that all victims, males, females, gay men, transgender, those with disabilities, people of color and other marginalized groups can feel safe coming to our organizations.

**WCSAP: Well, Lacey it’s been really good to talk to you. You’ve given us good information to share with our organization and I thank you for your time.**

## Research Abstracts on Same-Sex Sexual Violence

### Shifting the Focus: Recognizing the Needs of Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Sexual Violence

Lacey Sloan, Tonya Edmond  
Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services  
Vol. 5(4), 1996

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**“Respondents ranked prevention and education programs for gay and lesbians as the highest priorities for services followed by support groups for lesbian and gay survivors.”**

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This article’s opening analysis focuses on the lack of overall research about the incidence and prevalence of sexual violence in the gay and lesbian community. The authors also note that the slim body of research that has been conducted focus mostly on lesbian women and the few studies that have been conducted regarding sexual violence and gay men have been largely conducted in the prison environment.

In this study overall, forty-one percent (41%) of the respondents self-identified as a victim of childhood sexual abuse,

sexual assault, sexual abuse as an adult, sexual harassment or attempted sexual assault. Thirty-eight percent (38%) self-identified as victims of sexual harassment, and twenty-one percent (21%) self-identified as victims of attempted sexual assault. Twenty-one percent (21%) identified as victims of sexual assault. Female respondents identified as being victims of childhood sexual abuse (57%) at twice the rate of male respondents.

In 1992, the authors (who were employed at rape crisis centers) worked with local lesbian and gay service providers to construct an instrument that focused on the following five criteria:

- Awareness of local crisis services
- Perception of the problem of sexual violence in the gay community
- What services were deemed most important for the gay community
- Extent of sexual victimization of respondents
- The demographic characteristics of respondents

The study analyzed one hundred fifty-two questionnaires which were filled out by 57% female respondents. Eighty percent of this group self-identified as white. Those who filled out the survey were predominately between the ages of 25-34.

In this survey, the vast majority of respondents knew about the existence of the 24-hour crisis line, however, only 29% of those who filled out the survey were aware that rape crisis services were also available for gay men. Half of those surveyed were broadly aware of

services. Generally, women were more familiar with the services offered by crisis centers; the majority of men sampled were not familiar at all with center offerings. The study notes a statistically significant relationship between gender and knowledge of services.

In terms of perception of sexual assault in the gay community, the majority of respondents to the survey identified it as a problem in their community. While many identified in-community sexual assault concerns (such as gay men assaulting other gay men), the largest number of survey respondents (77%) identified the rape of lesbian women by heterosexual strangers as occurring either frequently or sometimes. Women who filled out the survey were twice as likely as men to believe that lesbians were frequently or sometimes the victims of childhood sexual assault with over 93% identifying the frequency of childhood sexual assault as sometimes or often.

Respondents ranked prevention and education programs for gay and lesbians as the highest priorities for services followed by support groups for lesbian and gay survivors. Support groups for significant others were ranked last. Additionally, a few respondents added service ideas such as: services for victims of gay bashing, education for staff about hate crimes, outreach to all racial and ethnic groups, provision of legal advice, and education through media outlets such as TV and radio.

“In terms of perception of sexual assault in the gay community, the majority of respondents to the survey identified it as a problem in their community. While many identified in-community sexual assault concerns (such as gay men assaulting other gay men), the largest number of survey respondents (77%) identified the rape of lesbian women by heterosexual strangers as occurring either frequently or sometimes.”

Ultimately, the researchers did not find any differences in the rates of sexual coercion between lesbian and gay men. Contrary to the researchers expectations, there were no gender differences indicated on the 12 point scale that was used to measure coercion and coercive behavior.

The authors recommend that rape crisis services:

- Educate themselves about the concerns of lesbian and gay men, and conversely services that serve the gay community educate themselves about sexual violence
- Agencies should promote collaborative relationships to better understand services and needs
- Educational materials should be non-homophobic and non-heterosexist
- Staff at crisis centers should be trained to respond with sensitivity to gay and lesbian victims
- Crisis services should advocate within the system to promote sensitivity and support for gay and lesbian victims
- Considering the large number of individuals who were unaware of services, agencies should target outreach to this community

-SB

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**Sexual Coercion in Gay / Lesbian Relationships: Descriptives and Gender Differences**

Lisa K. Waldner-Haugrud, Linda Vanden Gratch  
 Violence and Victims  
 Vol 12 (1), 1997

The study attempts to explore the relationship between sexual coercion and gender of assailant in homosexual relationships. Commenting on the dearth of formal research on this topic the authors note that, generally, while the rates of sexual victimization of

lesbian and gay men do not overall differ in terms of individual incidence over a lifetime, the incidence of assault within the context of a homosexual relationship remains unclear. As constructed, the study does not attempt to compare the rates of sexual violence between homosexual and heterosexual relationships, it compares the rates of sexual coercion between lesbian and gay men.

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**Individuals who were included in the survey identified as either exclusively gay or lesbian and the vast majority were of a middle-class or higher background...**

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The authors utilized data from over 300 surveys distributed through a variety of gay and lesbian service organizations and events, largely in Iowa and other Midwest states. The sample self-identified as entirely white. Individuals who were included in the survey identified as either exclusively gay or lesbian and the vast majority were of a middle-class or higher background and highly formally educated (most were in, or completed college). The authors note these factors as a potential weakness in survey design and results.

Ultimately, the researchers did not find any differences in the rates of sexual coercion between lesbian and gay men. Contrary to the researchers expectations, there were no gender differences indicated on the 12 point scale that was used to measure coercion and coercive behavior.

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### **Effects of Victim Sex and Sexual Orientation on Perceptions of Rape**

Bradley H. White, Sharon E. Robinson Kurpius  
Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, March 2002

Over three hundred male and female college students were asked to respond to sexual assault scenarios that depicted the rape of a heterosexual woman, heterosexual man, a gay man or a lesbian woman. The facts of the scenarios were identical with the exception of obviously gendered names.

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**Contrary to other research findings, male survey respondents did not blame homosexual male victims at a higher rate than male victims overall.**

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The study found that overall:

- Male respondents assigned more blame to victims than female respondents. More specifically, men attribute more blame to male victims than female. However, contrary to other research findings, male survey respondents did not blame homosexual male victims at a higher rate than male victims overall.
- When survey respondents indicated that they held more traditional beliefs around gender roles, and gender socialization they were more likely to blame victims, especially homosexual victims.

-SB

### **Effects of Sexual Orientation in the Courtroom: A Double Standard**

Jennifer M. Hill, MA  
Journal of Homosexuality Vol. 39  
2000

Using the framework of the term "Homonegativity" the author notes that the generally negative attitudes about homosexuality that pervade society through institutions, attitudes and actions, will affect a victim of violent crime's experience in the courtroom.

Seventy-two students participated in the evaluation of trial transcripts based on a stranger rape scenario. The scenario was selected to ensure that there was some level of ambiguity about the guilt to the accused. Students were split into groups that evaluated transcripts, the only difference between the transcripts presented to each group was that the name of the victim was Patrick or Patricia, and the sexual orientation of the accused was varied. The students were asked to characterize their assessment of guilt as if they were on the jury of the case and then rank the importance of 12 pre-identified factors in their determination of guilt.

In terms of assessment of guilt, based on the same facts, homosexual males accused of sexually assaulting heterosexual males were found more guilty than heterosexual males who assault heterosexual females, as well as more guilty than homosexual males who were accused of assaulting homosexual men.

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Homonegativity is defined as insecurity about one's own sexuality, a lack of education about homosexuality, fear that the value of masculine characteristics and the devaluing of feminine characteristics is shifting, strong fundamental religious beliefs, sexual conservatism and sexual rigidity, and a consciousness or overt awareness of social status (Wells and Franken 1987).

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### **Attributions of Rape Blame as a Function of Victim Gender and Sexuality, and Perceived Similarity to the Victim**

Darren L. Burt, Lesley R. DeMello  
Journal of Homosexuality, Vol. 43(2)  
2002

The research attempts to test two theories:

- Survey respondents with negative attitudes about homosexuality will attribute more blame to a male victim of rape than a female one, due to the cultural tendency to assume male victims of rape are gay.
- Survey respondents with negative attitudes about homosexuality will attribute more blame to a homosexual male victim, than a male victim identified as heterosexual.

Using a survey of 168 undergraduate students, composed largely of females, researchers provided three short vignettes that depicted acquaintance rape within the victim's residence. The victims in the three scenarios were a female, a homosexual male, a heterosexual male.

Students were asked to measure the degree of respondent identification between the student and the victim as well as the student and the offender. Students were also asked to identify perceived degrees of victim responsibility, and offender blame. Students evaluated the vignette they were given and a tool designed to assess homophobia (Hudson and Ricketts scale).

In terms of the first hypothesis, homophobic respondents did tend to blame male victims more than female victims.

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### **Homophobic respondents ascribed more "blame or responsibility" for homosexual male victims of sexual violence.**

Markedly, the second hypothesis shows significant differences in blame attribution between homosexual male victims and heterosexual male victims. Homophobic respondents ascribed more "blame" or "responsibility" for homosexual male victims of sexual violence. Consistent with this analysis, homophobic students also ascribed less accountability with the offender.

-SB

In terms of the first hypotheses, homophobic respondents did tend to blame male victims more than female victims.

## Reactions to Heterosexual and Homosexual Victims of Male Rape

Damon Mitchell, Richard Hirschman and Gordon C. Nagayama Hall  
Sexual Assault Report  
January / February 2001

The article opens with some general information about the victimization of men (both homosexual and heterosexual). The authors discuss the common misconception that male sexual assault only occurs against "marginalized out-group." What little research exists describes the victimization of men by a variety of assailants in a variety of situations. The researchers also note the tendency to blame male victims at a higher rate than female victims.

The article also describes some of the reasons that male victims do not report or access supportive services. In particular, the "homosexual stigma" is highlighted as a rationale for not reporting. The researchers describe this stigma as two fold, heterosexual men fear being labeled as homosexual and homosexual men being fearful of homophobic treatment.

The researchers distributed a survey (number unknown) to college psychology students that described the sexual assault of a 28 year old man, who in one survey was described as heterosexual and homosexual in the other.

The researchers found the following:

- Male participants reacted more negatively towards the victim than female participants.
- Overall, the survey respondents reacted more negatively to homosexual victims than heterosexual.
- Participants in the survey assigned moderate levels of responsibility to both victims however, they also assigned high attributions of trauma and low levels of pleasure. As a result, the researchers argue that the potential insensitivities are more subtle than the instrument allowed for.

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**Overall, the survey respondents reacted more negatively to homosexual victims than heterosexual.**

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"In particular, the "homosexual stigma" is highlighted as a rationale for not reporting. The researchers describe this stigma as two fold, heterosexual men fear being labeled as homosexual and homosexual men being fearful of homophobic treatment."

### **Gay Men as Victims of Nonconsensual Sex**

Hickson, Davies, Hunt, Weatherburn, McManus, Coxon  
Archives of Sexual Behavior v. 23  
June 1994

The researchers open the article with a common problem in discussing sexual violence and same sex or homosexual rape. The authors write:

*Early commentators on sexual assault assumed that because the act was sexualized, it was primarily sexual, and because it involved two men, it was, necessarily (and by definition) homosexual. Here we have a problem in terminology, whereby the term "homosexual rape" while accurate in terms of the sex of the people involved, confuses their sex with their sexual orientation.*

Keeping this frame in mind, the study focuses on coercive sexual experiences among a group of "homosexually active men" and identifies some characteristics of assaults. Constructed as a five-wave, six year longitudinal study, researchers interviewed 930 gay-identified men.

Overall, the group indicated that 27.6% had been the victim of non-consensual sex at some point in their lives, 3.9% of these assailants were women. For 29.2% of the victims some kind of sexual contact had occurred between the assailant and the victim prior to the assault. In 11.3% of cases, the victim had been assaulted by multiple perpetrators. 3.1% of victims had been assaulted multiple times by the same perpetrator.

### **Battered Gay Men: an Exploration of Abuse, Help Seeking and Why They Stay**

Gregory Merrill, MSW and Valerie A. Wolfe  
Journal of Homosexuality Vol. 39(2)  
2000

This survey attempts to synthesize some of the similar, and dissimilar, elements of why battered gay men stay in relationships that are physically and sexually abusive.

In the review of literature, the authors state that many battered women have many reasons for staying in abusive relationships including hope that the batterer will change, fear of retaliation, lack of financial resources and employment skills, and finally love of their partner. In the limited research that has been conducted about battering gay relationships, some researchers have suggested that these are many of the reasons that battered gay men stay in abusive relationships. Additionally, some research suggests that the complicating factor of HIV status may serve as an additional reason for a partner to stay in an battering situation.

111 surveys were distributed, with 52 completed

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-SB

and returned for analysis. The sample group was exclusively gay or bisexual men who self-identified as being a victim of domestic violence (of which sexual coercion was a subset). The ages ranged from 25-50 and respondents identified as African, European or Latino in descent. Approximately 10% were still involved with their abusive partner at the time of survey.

In addition to other acts of violence, 73% of respondents indicated that they had experienced sexual abuse or assault. In this study sexual abuse included when a perpetrator:

- Became angry if the respondent did go along with an activity the partner wanted (60%)
- Making respondent feel like their sexual needs were unimportant (58%)
- Wanting “make-up” sex after a violent incident (56%)
- Constantly bothering respondent for sex or wanting sex on command (48%)
- Subjecting respondent to public displays of sexual affection that he knew made the respondent uncomfortable (40%)
- Pressuring respondent to do sexual things he knew the respondent didn’t like (39%)
- Continuing a sexual act even though he knew he was hurting the respondent (39%)
- Continuing a sexual act even though the respondent asked him to stop (39%)
- Expecting respondent to play a certain sexual role without negotiation, communication, or reciprocity (39%)
- Physically forcing respondent to have sex against their will (39%)

-SB

### **“No More Denying: Facing Woman to Woman Sexual Violence”**

Lori B. Girshick, Ph.D  
Greenwich Village Gazette  
2001

In this article, Girshick examines societal denial and misconceptions of woman-to-woman sexual violence. The author identifies society’s role in perpetuating myths of what constitutes woman to woman sexual violence and the silencing of an already stigmatized group.

Girshick points to the lack of research in this area, specifically noting that there has been greater research done on battered lesbians than that on woman to woman sexual violence. Studies over the two past decades on lesbian sexual violence note a low of five percent to a high of fifty-seven percent of women stating they had experienced an attempted or completed sexual assault of rape by another woman. Most of the studies found rates over thirty percent (30%).

In the analysis of woman to woman sexual violence the author notes the need for one to consider using a framework that looks not only at male privilege, but also at the inter-related issues of class, race, age, ability and sex in relation to power and control dynamics.

Dr. Girshick states that there is a broader societal denial of women as perpetrators or batterers and this, along with the lesbian community’s denial of domestic and sexual violence within their community causes the issue to be hidden and nearly invisible.

Dr. Girshick states that there is a broader societal denial of women as perpetrators or batterers and this, along with the lesbian community’s denial of domestic and sexual violence within their community causes the issue to be hidden and nearly invisible.

In a sample of 43 heterosexual couples, 43 lesbian couples and 39 gay couples, the author found that 28% of heterosexual couple's reported physical violence, 48% of lesbian couples reported physical violence, and 38% of gay men experienced physical violence.

Gardner-1989

There are unique issues identified for survivors of woman to woman violence. The author notes the pressures of internal and external homophobia, heterosexism, and legal definitions of sexual assault.

Dr. Girshick calls on rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters to develop training for staff members on the lesbian and bisexual community. She notes the need for outreach for early intervention, and the creation of targeted programming, such as a separate gay and lesbian domestic violence hotline, and support groups. Lesbian survivors suggested that service providers use the words lesbian and bisexual in their mission statement, literature, community education and outreach. The survivors also asked that agencies' media ads depict same sex couples and ads should be placed within the gay and lesbian community.

-SJ

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**Violence In Lesbian and Gay Relationships: Theory, Prevalence, and Correlational Factors**

Leslie K Burke and Diane R. Follingstad  
 Clinical Psychology Review, Vol 19, No 5,  
 pp 487-512

This article reviews some of the existing literature on violence in lesbian and gay relationships. The article discusses many of the barriers which lead to an underreporting of violence between same sex partners. Many of the barriers which lead to underreporting are based on society's preconceived notions about women and its homophobic attitudes towards gay men and lesbians.

The article reviews a number of different studies on the topic including comparisons of the prevalence of lesbian vs. heterosexual female partners, comparisons of the prevalence of lesbian vs. gay couple partner abuse, and estimates of the prevalence of gay couple partner abuse. In addition the article compares research that offers comparisons between the prevalence of heterosexual and lesbian and gay couple partner abuse. In a sample of 43 heterosexual couples, 43 lesbian couples and 39 gay couples, the author found that 28% of heterosexual couple's reported physical violence, 48% of lesbian couples reported physical violence, and 38% of gay men experienced physical violence. (Gardner-1989)

The article also discusses the correlation between lesbian partner abuse and substance use. Specifically, the article presented two descriptive studies that suggested that alcohol consumption was associated with lesbian partner abuse. In addition the article also reviewed a number of different studies (Bradford-1994, Schilit-1990) which reported that lesbians sought help in battered relationships 60% of the time, and that the number increased to 80% when studies included more informal means of help.

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The collection of studies presented in this article concludes that gay men and lesbians are as likely to abuse their partners as heterosexual men. The article concludes by calling for more research in the area of same sex partner violence, and for service and medical providers to gain increased education on the issue.

-RW

# Additional Resources

## Websites

**Northwest Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse**  
POB 20398 • Seattle, WA 98102  
206-568-777  
[Info@nwnetwork.org](mailto:Info@nwnetwork.org)

**Gender Variant Healthcare Project**  
360.264.7846

**Seattle Counseling Center For Sexual Minorities**  
206.323.1768  
[www.seattlecounseling.org](http://www.seattlecounseling.org)

**Seattle LGBT Community Center**  
PMB 1010 • 1122 E. Pike St. • Seattle, WA 98122  
[info@SeattleLGBT.org](mailto:info@SeattleLGBT.org)

**Survivor Project**  
LGBT Elder Abuse and Neglect Project  
POB 40664 • Portland, OR 97240  
503-288-3191  
[info@survivorproject.org](mailto:info@survivorproject.org)

**Rainbow Hope**  
Online support group for lesbian survivors of abuse and their partners  
[www.rainbowohope.org](http://www.rainbowohope.org)

**Milwaukee Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center**  
Sexual Assault Treatment Center  
Crisis counseling, medical exams, and treatment following a sexual assault  
414-219-5555

**Audre Lorde Project, Inc.**  
Center for LGBT, Two-Spirit, People of Color  
85 S. Oxford St. • Brooklyn, NY 11217-1607  
718-596-0342  
[alpinfo@alp.org](mailto:alpinfo@alp.org)

## Books/Journals

**Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering**  
by Kerry Lobel • Seal Press, 1986

Personal stories of pain and empowerment, grief and healing.

**Coming Out of Shame**  
by Gershin/Lev Kaufman, Ph.D./Raphael, Ph.D. • Double Day, 1996

Includes strategies for: restoring self-esteem, healing scenes of shame, creating a positive gay identity, developing partnerships in intimacy.

**The Violence We Face as Lesbians and Gay Men: The Landscape Both Outside and Inside Our Communities**  
by Bea Hanson • The Haworth Press, 1996

This article discusses symptomology and dynamics of violence, obstacles to service, and necessary tools for intervention with survivors.

**Loving in Fear: An Anthology of Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Childhood** • Queer Press, 1991

Portrays the impact of childhood sexual abuse on lesbians and gays as survivors, friends, lovers, and community members. The stories are about anger and celebration, fear and defiance, healing and survival.

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