

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND THE LGBT COMMUNITY

RESOURCES – INFORMATION

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INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS ADVOCATES

WORKING WITH LGBT PEOPLE

This list was compiled by a lesbian-identified SART nurse for a 2003 rape crisis center volunteer training.

- Victims may fear to disclose they are LGBT when reporting to the police for fear of being re-victimized due to their sexual orientation or gender identity
- When assaulted due to a bias, they question their own worth, regardless of whether it's due to being LGB, transgender, a person of color, etc.
- Lesbians, gay men, and transgender people are targeted for sexual assault by anti-LGBT attackers or raped "opportunistically" (when the perpetrator of another crime inadvertently discovers that his victim is LGBT).
- If the victim has not "come out" yet, they may not report it or report it as something other than a bias motivated crime.
- Self hate and blame can lead to feelings of depression and helplessness, even in individuals who are comfortable with their sexual orientation.
- Those who are "out" have already faced a major threat to their self-esteem.
- Those in the early stages of "coming out" will probably not have the social support and developed LGBT identity that can increase their psychological resilience and coping skills.
- If there is no positive interpretation of the assault, they may accept the feelings of helplessness, depression, and low self-esteem.
- You must confront your own interpretations and beliefs regarding the LGBT community before working with these persons.
- It is not fair to the victim to re-victimize them due to your beliefs and prejudices.
- Without cultural sensitivity in the LGBT area, it is virtually impossible to provide meaningful, supportive services.
- There is a time when some, if not most, will prefer to receive their services from the LGBT community, with LGBT providers, so know your references and resources for this community.
- Many are not out to their family and friends. Do not discuss any LGBT issues with the victim in front of them if you have not already gained permission from the victim.
- No current statistics due to fear or lack of reporting their sexuality during the exam.

SEXUAL ASSAULT ISSUES FOR LGBT COMMUNITIES

There are many levels to internalized and externalized homophobia, and in order to understand same-sex sexual assault, it is important to first make a commitment to acknowledge and challenge homophobia. Furthermore, it's important to recognize that, although violence exists within lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, homosexuality, bisexuality or being transgender does not CAUSE this violence. It is also important to recognize that individuals within the LGBT community are targeted for sexual assault due to perceived gender expression. Sexual violence is used as a form of social control to maintain heterosexism.

Same-sex sexual assault has not received much attention from researchers, support services, or the criminal justice system. This lack of attention to same-sex rape has left many survivors without culturally competent support and, therefore, with few resources for healing.

- Same-sex sexual assault may include forced vaginal or anal penetration, forced oral sex, forced touching, or any other type of forced sexual activity.
- Same-sex sexual assault can happen on a date, between friends, partners, or strangers.
- Same-sex survivors are even less likely than opposite-sex survivors to report the assault to the police or seek counseling after it occurs.
- Most survivors of same-sex assault report additional barriers to seeking support from the police or rape crisis centers, and because of this there is very little statistical data compiled about same-sex violence.

Common Barriers that Same-sex Survivors of Sexual Assault Experience:

- Not being taken seriously or having their experience minimized
- Not having their experience labeled as sexual assault or rape
- Having to explain how it happened in more detail than one would ask a survivor of opposite-sex assault.
- Having to educate those they reach out to
- Having their experiences sensationalized
- Increasing people's homophobia or being seen as a traitor to their community if they tell their story to straight people
- Having fewer people to talk to (because the LGBT community can be a small one that is tightly knit)
- Mistakenly seen as the perpetrator
- Being blamed for the assault
- Not being understood or being blamed if it happened in an S&M environment
- Being treated in a homophobic manner by the police, the hospital, rape crisis center, and others
- Being "outed" (having one's sexual orientation discussed or revealed without one's consent)

This information has been adapted from "Support for Survivors-Training for Sexual Assault Counselors;" California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 1999

<http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu/Services/Sexualassault/salgbt.htm>

RAPE WITHIN THE LGBT COMMUNITY

The aim of this pamphlet is to explore the issue of rape* within the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community so that those who have been raped can find the support they need and the compassion they deserve.

What is rape?

Whenever a person uses force or threatens to use force or future retaliation in any sexual activity, where non-consent has been indicated, a rape has been committed. Whenever a person initiates sex knowing that the other person is unable to function or resist because of alcohol or other drug overuse, a rape has been committed.

Rape is considered an expression of power, control and domination even when the person who rapes has sex as his or her goal. Most people who are raped know the person who raped them.

*A note on terminology. The word rape rather, than sexual assault, is used throughout this pamphlet because of its political/historical significance. Sexual assault is a term used by the criminal justice system. While rape is indeed a crime, we wish to place it in a broader context and intend for the word to be inclusive of all forms of sexual assault and survivors of all genders and sexual orientations.

How prevalent is rape in the LGBT community?

Studies vary and insufficient research has been done. A 1990 study in Psychological Reports found 31% of lesbians and 12% of gay men had been raped. However the study did not discern the type of relationship in which the assault took place. Although most men who are raped are raped by homophobic straight men and most women are raped by men, rape within LGBT relationships is a serious reality. One study found that 52% of LGBT people had been raped by someone of the same gender.

What issues around rape are unique to the LGBT community?

While it is important to acknowledge the diversity within the LGBT community, there are issues of common concern for LGBT rape survivors, arising largely from homophobia and heterosexism.

Specifically:

- Survivors who are not "out" may find sharing and/or reporting the rape especially difficult or even impossible.
- The uncertainty of knowing the level of sensitivity of resources may make reaching out for support very difficult.
- Lack of awareness of same-sex rape both within and without the LGBT community may make silence seem the only option.
- If the LGBT community is small, the fear of other's disbelief and/or people "taking sides" may cause the survivor to keep silent.
- Guilt and self-blame may take the form of questioning ones sexual identity and sexuality. These, rather than the rape may become the central issues.
- Internalized homophobia may compound the complexities of strong emotions after rape.
- Gay/bi male survivors may face the fear of not being believed and/or being ridiculed because of the stereotype of men never rejecting a sexual opportunity.
- Lesbian/bi women survivors may face the fear of not being believed if they are raped by a female because of the myth that "women don't do that sort of thing."

What issues are common to all rape survivors?

- Fear, humiliation, self-blame, depression, denial, powerlessness, anger and suicidal feelings are common after rape.
- The need to be believed and reassured that what happened was in no way their fault.
- The need to be given the dignity of making their own decisions about any course of action.

How can I be helpful as a friend or partner?

- By believing your friend or partner who has been raped.
- By respecting the need for confidentiality.
- By avoiding judgmental comments.
- By controlling your own feelings of anger and/or frustration.
- By asking how you can be helpful rather than giving unsolicited advice.
- By respecting her or his decisions even when yours might be different.
- By being a good listener.

- By being honest with yourself if you have trouble handling the aftermath of the rape.
- By finding other sources of support if this is the case.
- By offering unconditional love and support.
- By avoiding pressure to resume any form of sexual activity until initiated by your partner.

Source: UCSC Rape Prevention Education and members of the LGBTI community.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN WORKING WITH LGBT SURVIVORS

LGBT individuals may be sexually assaulted by someone of the same or opposite sex, within a relationship or outside of it, by an acquaintance or a stranger in a bias attack. Here are some other things to consider when working with LGBT survivors.

Bias assaults

Where someone is at in their coming out process when an assault occurs can be important

Bias assaults target someone directly because of their sexual orientation in a punishing and humiliating manner. For a victim of a bias assault feeling secure in their sexual orientation, being 'out' for a longer period of time and comfortable with who they are, and/or having a solid base of community and other support to draw upon can help combat the extreme negative messages that the assailant may have directed towards them.

Feeling a sense of stability in the area of life that the assailant aimed to weaken and destroy can provide a base with which to begin healing and be a source of strength during this difficult time.

Shame is often a major barrier to people feeling safe about coming out, if an assault occurs before they may have had the opportunity to develop a support system and to feel confident and secure with their sexual orientation, it may significantly add to the level of shame and confusion the survivor experiences.

Age

- If a LGBT is sexually assaulted when they are a teenager it can be particularly challenging because of:
 - The concern of their parents finding out that they are L/G/B/T
 - Not yet having a system of friends/community to get support from
 - Their just beginning to explore their sexual self
 - Confusion over who to go to, or what their resources are.

While a sexual assault as an adult will still be difficult for a L/G/B/T, they might have a larger framework of experiences to assist in coping with the assault. They are also more likely to have a more secure support system and be aware of what their community resources are and how to access them.

If the assault was the first same-sex 'sexual' experience it can create certain challenges for the survivor concerning their sexuality, self-esteem and their identity as a L/G/B/T. If someone's 'first time' is a traumatic experience, it may bring about doubts about who they are and how they feel.

Sexual exploitation by older LGBT people also happens. The assailant may be a:

- Trusted 'chosen family member' or a friend
- Coach, mentor
- Teacher or professor
-
- Or someone who may have been 'out' for a longer period of time.

For an older teen or a young adult who is just beginning to explore their sexuality, this person may be their first same-sex partner.

Experiencing a sexual assault in the context of: Coming out, without someone you trust, and in a society which is homophobic and heterosexist can be extremely difficult and confusing.

Even having the words and language to explain the experience may be challenging. Naming the experience as an assault for the victim in itself can be difficult sometimes because:

- There was no overt physical violence involved
- They wanted or initiated some sexual activity
- There was no penetration

Transgender – For a Transgender person some specific issues that may exist are:

- Being sexually assaulted because they are known to be Transgender.

- Being a victim of another crime and when discovered to be Transgender are then sexually assaulted.

For a Transgender victim, the assailant's gender, where the survivor is at in their own transition from female to male or male to female, and what kind of support they have, can greatly affect how they respond to and cope with a sexual assault.

Gender – Not unique to the LGBT community, but maybe more pronounced, is the situation of gender confusion from others.

- What feelings may come up for a butch Lesbian if she is called 'he' when she enters a health center, following a sexual assault, to get some help?
- How might a male to female Transgender woman react if the police refuse to interact with her as a woman?
- What might a female to male Transgender feel if after being sexually assaulted service providers continue to call him 'her'?

WHEN THE SURVIVOR IS A LESBIAN...

Lesbians, and bisexual women, are in some ways no different from other survivors, but they have their own issues and special needs. Like many survivors, a lesbian may have to deal with Rape Trauma Syndrome. Their extra needs and issues can be broken down into institutional and personal challenges.

Institutional Issues

Not all, but many survivors end up dealing with police and hospital personnel. This interaction can pose a problem that is familiar to many lesbians and some bisexual women. The question of when or if to come out (reveal that one is not heterosexual) can be difficult at this time of crisis. Many lesbians, even those who have not been raped, might recognize this conversation with a doctor:

Doctor, "Are you sexually active? Is there any chance that you're pregnant?"

Patient, "Yes and No."

Doctor, "Have you been sexually active recently?"

Patient, "Yes."

Doctor, (condescending look) "Then how do you know you're not pregnant?"

So, a lesbian dealing with medical personnel in the emergency room after a rape may likely have the added problem of deciding if and when to come out. The decision to come out or not to come out can be an every day reality of being gay. That issue does add stress to an already difficult situation, when rape is also an issue. There is a legitimate fear for many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people that coming out will adversely affect one's treatment.

This fear is probably increased when dealing with law enforcement. Lesbian survivors might be afraid that the police won't be as vigorous in their investigation if they come out, or that the information will become public knowledge if it comes out in court. Depending on the extent of one's secrecy, this can be a real concern.

Another institutional concern with lesbians and bisexual women, as well as for gay or bisexual men and transgender people, is the dearth of specialized and competent services available.

Personal Issues

In addition to the hassles of dealing with various institutions, some of the more personal effects of the rape may be different for lesbian and bisexual survivors. Firstly, it is not uncommon for a lesbian survivor's partner to exhibit symptoms of the attack and the Rape Trauma Syndrome herself. The chance of this is increased if the partner is also a survivor, but it does happen when this is not the case. This can be very distressing, as the partner feels that she should be focusing on the survivor, and yet has her own issues to deal with.

If another woman rapes a lesbian or bisexual woman, this can create a great deal of distrust in other women. A sense of betrayal only complicates what is often a socially isolated experience for lesbians and bisexual women. If lesbian or bisexual woman experiences activity she has never known before, such as certain types of penetration or an encounter with a male, this can be additionally traumatic.

For many survivors, finding supportive and non-judgmental support can be challenging. However, those challenges can be compounded by a general lack of supportive and nurturing people in the lives of lesbian and bisexual women.

Source: Rape Victim Advocates, 228 S. Wabash, Suite 240, Chicago, IL 60604
phone (312)663-6303 TTY (312)935-3401 fax (312)663-6302
<http://www.rapevictimadvocates.org/lesbian.html> info@rapevictimadvocates.org

FACTS ABOUT LESBIAN RAPE

RAPE, SEXUAL ASSAULT ON LESBIAN WOMAN

We all take for granted that feelings of anger, fear, and confusion are natural reactions for those who are recent survivors of a violent crime. Rape survivors, for example, often feel guilty and responsible for the crime which was committed against them. But what kind of emotional after-effects are common to victims of anti-lesbian violence? No one knows for sure, largely because anti-lesbian violence itself has remained a wholly neglected phenomenon until recently.

This article, based on interviews with women who counsel lesbian victims and on the scant amount of literature available, is an initial inquiry into the common reactions of the lesbian violence victim, as distinguished from the straight female victim or the gay man. It is intended as an initial discussion of issues which may be present in and specific to the lives of lesbians in general, and the lesbian violence victim in particular.

PRACTICAL ISSUES:

Lesbian victims share all of the usual practical issues with other victims of violence: where to get medical help, where to report crimes, where to get counseling, how to be reimbursed for financial losses incurred through crime, etc. In addition, however, lesbians have specific practical problems that other adult crime victims might not have. Since rape or sexual assault are perhaps the most common form of attack against lesbians (as it is against all women), it follows that many purely practical issues would arise for lesbians who victims of rape or sexual assault. Some of these are:

Pregnancy is a factor which many lesbian women have deliberately excluded from their lives. Many lesbians are unsure when they had their last period, or when they are at greatest risk to become pregnant. If they are pregnant, the issue of whether or not to have an abortion may cause substantial additional trauma.

Since lesbians are the lowest risk group in the adult sexually active population for all forms of VD and STDs, many lesbians are unfamiliar with these diseases. Thus, it is particularly important that follow-up care for lesbian rape victims include counseling about VD and information on when to get testing.

PAINFUL PENETRATION:

For those lesbians who have never had sexual relations with a man, the act of vaginal or anal penetration itself may be particularly traumatic, medically as well as emotionally.

INSENSITIVE TREATMENT BY POLICE OR MEDICAL PERSONNEL:

Often the treatment for rape and sexual assault can be as traumatizing as the experience of the assault itself, particularly for lesbians. Inexperienced, insensitive, or downright homophobic hospital workers, doctors, or policemen can make a rape an even more brutal experience.

The former head of a rape crisis center at a major Greenwich Village hospital related an incident to me that she had witnessed which illustrates this point. A doctor in the emergency room, preparing to perform a pelvic exam on a woman who had just been raped, asked the woman what kind of birth control she used. "I don't use any," she replied, "I'm a lesbian." "Oh," the doctor said, "but you're so beautiful!"

Unfortunately, examples like this one, which occurred merely four years ago, still happen almost every day and will continue until proper training is provided to those who deal with victims of anti-lesbian assault. A particularly bad experience like this can leave a lasting impression on an already vulnerable victim.

SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION:

Sexual dysfunction is common to victims of sexual assault, and lesbians are no exception. Many lesbians, however, are puzzled by this, since they do not understand why their violent experience with a man carries over into their sexual/sensual/loving relationship with another woman.

EMOTIONAL ISSUES:

The emotional issues which follow rape and assault are often much more complex and harder to pin down than the practical ones. Of course, lesbian violence victims share most of the usual responses of crime victims - anger, helplessness, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, crying spells, depression, nightmares. There are, however, also some emotional issues that are specific to lesbians. Some of these are:

SENSE OF ISOLATION:

Rape or assault is always an isolating experience. Many women find that a lesbian who has been raped serves as too direct a reminder of their own vulnerability as lesbian women and, consciously or unconsciously, they avoid the recent victim. Even a victim's lover may find it hard to cope with the experience. Since many lesbians already perceive themselves as isolated from the mainstream culture, and since many are in fact separated from their families, isolation from the lesbian community as well can be especially painful.

SENSE OF VULNERABILITY:

For many lesbians, an experience of assault serves to enforce the myth that a woman without a man is fair game in our society. Even if a woman was with her lover or other women at the time of the attack, she may feel that it was her status as a single woman (i.e., a woman without a man) that got her into trouble. Thus, a woman may come out of an assault unconsciously blaming her own lesbianism for the attack.

SENSE OF PUNISHMENT:

Carrying the sense of vulnerability one step further, some lesbians, particularly those who are highly religious, or those who have been rejected by their families because of their "evil" lifestyle, will react to an assault by a suspicion that they are being justly punished.

SENSE OF PARANOIA:

Beyond the usual feelings of uncertainty most women experience in the streets, many lesbians have an added concern: their visibility. They ask themselves: "Do I look gay? Is that why he picked me? Did he see us come out of the bar?"

National Gay Task Force Violence Survey statistics indicate that women are more likely than men to modify their behavior to avoid violence; concern about visibility is a legitimate concern for women, who are much more likely to be targets for violence if they are perceived to be lesbians. And an assault can heighten concern over visibility tenfold, as well as creating anxiety in even the most seemingly harmless public situation.

FEELINGS OF SHAME DUE TO THE GENDER OF THE ATTACKER:

Many lesbians feel a particular shame at having been violated by a man. Because the rape of a lesbian involves enforced sexual acts with someone of a gender other than her sexual preference, it takes on an extra dimension beyond the experience of either straight female or gay male rape victims.

For lesbians, rape by a man is not only a bodily violation; it is a violation of a lifestyle. This sense of violation is particularly strong when one woman is raped in front of her lover, in a calculated attempt by the rapist to destroy the bond that the two women share.

DIMINISHED SENSE OF SELF:

The sense of shame at having been assaulted by a man may also damage a lesbian's sense of self. Many lesbians pride themselves on their independence and cannot reconcile their self-sufficiency with the vulnerability they feel after an attack.

SEXUAL CONFUSION:

Lesbians, like straight women, frequently wonder if an incident of rape was their fault. But there is an additional twist: sometimes a rape brings up deep-seated sexual confusion in a gay woman ("Did I really want this to happen?" "Do I look straight?"). Although fleeting, such thoughts add to a woman's confusion after an attack.

HOW ANTI-LESBIAN VIOLENCE CAN AFFECT LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS:

It is obvious that a sexual assault affects not only the victim, but those closest to her. However, unlike straight couples, in which the man may be sympathetic but basically a stranger to the issue, assault may be a personal experience for both partners in a lesbian relationship. "More often than not," comments a woman who has counseled victims of anti-lesbian violence, "when you're dealing with a lesbian couple, you're dealing with someone who's been raped ten years earlier, and someone who's been raped recently." In other words, so many women are victims of assault at one point in their life that one woman's assault can trigger upsetting or traumatic memories in her lover.

This may either allow the partner of a rape victim to be especially supportive; or it may lead to tension and distance if she is unable to cope with her own memories. And like all partners of rape victims, the partner may feel inadequate for not having protected her lover properly, or even angry at her lover for letting the assault happen. All of these reactions are common ones, and a combination of both individual and couple counseling is generally recommended when a lesbian couple is affected by an anti-lesbian assault.

In conclusion, it is crucial to the well-being of lesbian violence victims that rape crisis counselors, violence project volunteers, hospital staff members, and others who routinely deal with them, begin to obtain accurate information about lesbianism in general and about anti-lesbian violence in particular.

Article by Abby Tallmer. Taken from National Gay Task Force Newsletter
<http://members.aol.com/spiral2478/lesbian.html>

MEN: RAPE'S UNNOTICED VICTIM

by Susan Wachob, MSW, LCSW

Warning: Due to the content of the article, graphic language is used in some spots

Susan Wachob is a psychotherapist in San Francisco. She specializes in the treatment of adults who were sexually abused either in childhood or as adults. Her particular area of focus is working with sexually abused men in both individual and group therapy.

Rape Trauma Syndrome, as described in the lead article of the May issue of *"Men's Issues Forum"*, describes a devastating group of symptoms, both short and long term, often experienced by those who have been raped. That article went on to describe the experience and needs of adult men who were raped in jail.

This article will focus on a lesser known yet widespread group of rape survivors- adult men who were raped as adults while NOT IN JAIL. I also include in this article men who were raped as older adolescents (16+) in non-incest situations and who were likely to deal with the aftermath outside of the family context.

Societal messages about who a rape survivor is -female, powerless, emotional, a victim - are in sharp contrast to acceptable male roles defined as powerful, expressive only of anger and in control. Our society is just barely beginning to accept that little boys and girls can be targets of sexual violence. Acknowledgement that an adult man can be the victim of sexual abuse is rare.

For adult rape survivors, statistics are hard to come by. It is estimated that only about one in ten women who are raped come forward for legal, medical or psychological assistance, even when these services are widely available. I have every reason to believe that the rate of male rape victims who self-identify and come forward for services is vastly lower.

The man asking for help as a rape survivor is taking a big risk. Numerous male rape victims have described calling a Rape Crisis Center for assistance, only to be told that they do not work with rapists and have the counselor then hang up. Few Rape Crisis Centers have specialized training or outreach programs geared toward the specific needs of men who have survived sexual abuse as adults.

The therapy group that I lead specifically for adult men who were raped as adults (or older adolescents) is one of the few, and perhaps the only group in this country with this sole focus. While I've consulted with representatives of Rape Crisis Centers in Australia and Norway as well as representatives from England's Scotland Yard on providing appropriate services to male rape victims in their countries, requests from the hundreds of centers in this country have been conspicuously infrequent.

For the adult male rape survivor, saying he was powerless and that he has feelings other than anger about what happened to him is, by societal definition, a "female" role. The absurdity of this position damages both women and men. It disempowers women and it cuts men off from expressing their full range of human emotions. Instead it encourages the male victim to hide what feels shameful and inappropriate. This is the reality faced by most male rape victims.

Before the decision of whether or not to ask for help with the legal, medical or emotional aftermath of the sexual assault, however, the survivor must make a much subtler and more difficult decision: "How do I identify what happened to me?". He may not even be aware of making this decision. Having been raised male, he has learned to see himself according to the myths he has been taught about men. Without the awareness that the rape of men outside of prison even exists, it will not occur to the male victim to see his assault this way.

Instead it gets distorted to fit some other definition:

****He had an erection and maybe even ejaculated ("I must have enjoyed it and therefore it wasn't an assault."), or**

**** He was drunk or high ("It was my fault so I don't have any right to feel bad or get help."), or**

**** He consented to some sexual acts and then was forced to do others or ("I don't have any right to call it rape since I agreed to have sex."), or**

**** He was in an area where men go to pick up others for anonymous sex and was forced to have sex ("I asked for it since I was there, so it's not really rape."), or**

**** He has consensual sex with men at other times ("I do this anyway so I have no right to cry rape."), or**

**** He was too scared to resist ("so it wasn't really rape.").**

How then do we know how many men are raped? Who are they and what are their recovery needs? We have no realistic way to estimate the frequency of the sexual assault of adult men. From a variety of anecdotal sources, however, I believe that this is a much bigger problem than is currently recognized. When I speak on this subject, I am often approached afterward by someone saying that this had happened to him but that he hadn't identified what happened to himself as rape until now, hadn't known where to go for help when it happened, or had been too ashamed to tell anyone. For every call from a man who wants to join the men's rape victim therapy group, I might receive five from men who just want to talk to someone about being raped (usually for the first time) or from therapists looking for assistance in helping a current client who is working through his rape. It's not unusual for a man who I'm seeing in individual therapy for other issues to disclose some kind of forced, post-adolescent, sexual activity.

While rape happens to a wide variety of men, a significant proportion of victims are gay men, not because of anything inherent in being gay but because of the realities of rape. We know that almost all rapes of adult men are by other men. We also know that approximately 70% of rapes of women are by acquaintances (partner, date, friend, co-worker, etc). If we assume that this statistic is somewhat similar for men, then approximately 70% of the rapes of non-incarcerated men are by their acquaintances. Since presumably, gay men's partners, dates and a substantial portion of the people with whom they socialize are also men, gay men are at a substantially higher risk for sexual victimization than are their heterosexual counterparts whose primary intimate relationships are likely to be with women.

There are also two non-acquaintance situations in which gay men might find themselves and in which the possibility of sexual abuse might be heightened. The first is in an anonymous sexual encounter when the motives of the other person can only be presumed and in which each participant is more vulnerable. The other is during a gay bashing which often has a sexual component and in which the target is a gay (or presumed gay) man.

The gay survivor, who may have grown up keeping his sexual orientation a secret, is already skilled at hiding important facets of himself. When a sexual assault takes place, he is already primed for how to treat yet another experience of himself that he has been taught is private, shameful and unacceptable.

Rape is, first and foremost, an act of anger, aggression and control; the penis is the weapon of choice. Societal messages defining who and how a "man" is supposed to be does an incalculable disservice to the man who has just been raped. Helping the male victim identify the assault as a physically and emotionally violent attack enables him to mobilize his appropriate anger. But feelings of shame, humiliation, sadness, rage, terror and helplessness must all be faced eventually for his healing to be complete.

Support for the expression of the full range of his needs is vital to his recovery- support from family, friends and peers- support from the medical, legal and mental health +/-or rape treatment communities- support that acknowledges the full extent of the trauma- and perhaps most importantly of all, support that says "You're a man. You were raped. All of your needs and feelings are acceptable. You're still acceptable."

To subscribe to "The Men's Issues Forum", or to talk to someone at **M.A.L.E. Males assisting, leading & educating** - the phone # is 1-800-949-MALE, and the E-mail address is fred.tolson@dlsinfonet.com

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<http://pooh.asarian.org/~kayjay/malerape.htm>

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Source: Unknown.

GENDER NON-CONFORMING YOUTH AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

By *Shannon Wyss*

Taylor graduated from a public, coeducational, Midwestern high school in the late 1990s. Although she had some similarities with most other teens, she was also different because she was an out-of-the-closet and very butch dyke. She wore baggy pants, leather jackets, and a chain connecting her wallet to a belt loop. She hung out with guys, skaters, Goths, punks, and freaks. And like many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, Taylor survived sexual assault. At fourteen years old, she was raped by an older boy, a rape that became a public event when another teenager saw what was going on and called others to watch.

Unfortunately, like most instances of anti-LGBTQ sexual assault, Taylor's rape happened amidst ongoing violence from her peers. Other students constantly stared at her, she was called names, and boys tried to force themselves on her sexually. And as is also common in homophobic physical attacks, Taylor was assaulted by multiple perpetrators: on her fifteenth birthday, three boys beat her with a belt on her buttocks and between her legs. She has named this experience not only a physical attack but also a sexual one. Like a great many other gender non-conforming youth who are punished for their difference, Taylor lived in continual fear. She responded by putting on a front of being hard and willing to fight at the slightest provocation. To numb her physical and emotional pain and in an attempt to make herself be the kind of girl that others expected, she resorted to substance abuse and to unsatisfactory sex with boys. Ultimately, she became so depressed that she tried to commit suicide. While Taylor survived, others are not so fortunate. It is estimated that one-third of all completed adolescent suicides are done by LGBTQ youth, and gender non-conforming teens are among the most likely to attempt to kill themselves.

Taylor's story points to the desperate need for groups in the field of rape prevention to incorporate into their work the lives of butch, effeminate, transgendered, and genderqueer teenagers. Organizations of feminist men can look to Taylor's teen years to learn how assaults may spring from a combination of sexism, homophobia, and genderphobia: Taylor might have been spared, for instance, if her peers had been more accepting of her refusal to be closeted about her sexual orientation, to dress and act in ways that we deem "appropriate" for female-bodied teens, or to sleep with the boys who wouldn't take "no" for an answer. As it stands, innumerable youth like Taylor - young people who will not compromise their integrity or their identity - suffer emotionally, socially, physically, and sexually because of the bigotry of the students they meet everyday.

Organizations like Men Can Stop Rape have the opportunity to play a unique role in educating high school students about gender non-conformity. Volunteers can also have a deep impact by showing gender non-conforming youth that there are adults who care about them not *in spite of* who they are but *because of* the uniqueness and remarkableness of their gender identities.

Source: Survivor Project, <http://survivorproject.org/wyss.html> Reprinted with permission from the newsletter of Men Can Stop Rape, <http://www.mencanstoprape.org/>