

SAFVIC ON THE SCENE

NO MORE DENYING: FACING WOMAN-TO-WOMAN SEXUAL VIOLENCE

By Lori B. Girshick, Ph.D.

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National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC)

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Woman-to-woman sexual violence is an invisible form of sexual violation because of our denial that some women are sexual perpetrators. But once we face that it exists—as sexual abuse and rape in battering relationships, as date and acquaintance rapes, as sexual abuse by professionals we trust, and as sexual harassment by co-workers—we must admit that our denial has sacrificed the well-being of survivors for the perpetuation of a myth of women’s nonviolence.

It is impossible to document the actual prevalence of sexual violence among lesbians and bisexual women because we cannot do a scientific study of a stigmatized group. Our studies are usually convenience samples, such as women at women’s events or research based on participants who answered a study ad. But the studies do document the existence of a continuum of sexual violence that women are subjected to by

other women. Research on battered lesbians, which has outpaced research specifically on sexual violence, has documented sexual abuse as one form of power and control (Lobel, 1986; Renzetti, 1992; Taylor & Chandler, 1995).

Studies over the past two decades on lesbian sexual violence show a range from a low of 5% to a high of 57% of respondents claiming they had experienced attempted or completed sexual assault or rape by another woman, with most studies finding rates of over 30% (Duncan, 1990; Sloan & Edmond, 1996;



Waterman, Dawson & Bologna, 1989).

A study on 70 survivors of sexual violence by Girshick (2002) showed how serious the denial is. Lesbians were caught off-guard by sexual assault at the hands of another woman. Denial in the broader society that women might be sexual perpetrators or batterers is not the only problem. Denial in lesbian communities has also hindered acknowledgment of the issue. For some, admitting this abuse shatters the dream of lesbian utopia that our relationships are mutual, egalitarian, and nonviolent. For others, the motivation is self-protective. They fear how this information might be used against us as an already stigmatized population. An additional factor is the insular nature of our community and subcommunities. Who will hold the abuser accountable? She might be an advocate in an anti-violence agency or a leader in the community.

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2009 SAFVIC Student Survey

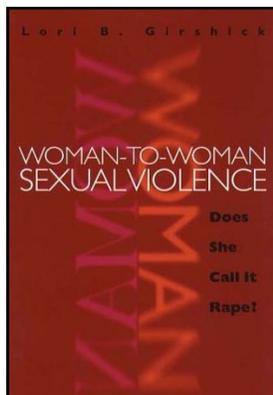
The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Investigator Course (SAFVIC) is designed to provide law enforcement officers with quality training aimed towards investigating and preventing family violence and sexual assault across the state of Texas. In an effort to judge the trainings impact, the “SAFVIC Student Survey” was created in 2007 to collect feedback from students who attended and completed the 24-hr

SAFVIC. Specifically, these responses assist the SAFVIC team in understanding how the training affects sexual assault, family violence, and stalking investigations and identify ways to improve the needs of future students attending SAFVIC training programs.

The survey instrument was mailed to 1,497 individuals who completed training within the past two years. One hundred and thirty

nine surveys were returned for a response rate of 9.3%. Within those surveys returned, 20% responded they had taken the class less than six months ago; while the majority (41%) indicated they had completed the course 7-12 months prior. The greatest number of respondents (39%) were patrol officers, while only 16% were investigators, and 19% were supervisors.

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This controversial work examines for the first time the often taboo subject of bisexual and lesbian women who are sexually assaulted by other women.

Available in the SAFVIC Library



The SAFVIC for Cybercrimes course is back!

This 8-hour training course (TCLEOSE course #3266) was designed to educate peace officers on:

- High-tech tools used by perpetrators
- How tools are being used to perpetrate crimes
- The impact of these actions on victims
- How to properly seize and preserve electronic evidence
- Texas & Federal Laws

The digital age is bringing many resources for safety and support to victims of family violence, sexual assault, and stalking. At the same time, advancements in technology are posing unique challenges to victim safety. Perpetrators regularly use a variety of technologies such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS), spyware, mapping, and cell phones to stalk current and former intimate partners. As peace officers it is important to have knowledge of how this technology works, and how it is being used against victims.

This class is for law enforcement officers only. Online registration is at www.safvic.org.

FEATURED BOOK

WOMEN-TO-WOMEN SEXUAL VIOLENCE

By: Lori B. Girshick, Ph. D.

A woman raping another woman is unthinkable. Our legal system is not equipped to handle women-to-women sexual assault, our women's services do not have the resources or even the words to reach out to its victims, and our communities face hurdles in acknowledging its existence. Already dealing with complex issues related to their sexual identities, and frequently overwhelmed by shame, lesbian and bisexual survivors of such violence are among the most isolated crime victims.

In a work that is sure to stir controversy, Lori B. Girshick exposes the shocking, hidden reality of woman-to-woman sexual violence and gives voices to the abused. Based on a nationwide survey and in-depth interviews, the work explores the experiences and reflections of seventy women, documenting what happened to them, how they responded, and whether they received any help to cope with the emotional impact of their assault. Ranging from acquaintance rape, to sexual abuse by partners, to sexual harassment in the workplace, these harrowing stories provide a fuller understanding of woman-to-woman sexual violence than exists anywhere else.

This provocative book offers much-needed insights on a subject rarely discussed in the literature on domestic violence, and it does so with compassion. Above all, it recommends how agencies can best provide services, outreach, and treatment to survivors of woman-to-woman rape and battering, using suggestions by the survivors themselves.

SAVE THE DATE

NATIONAL DISTRICT ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION presents the

19th Annual National Multi-Disciplinary Conference on Domestic Violence

Embracing Hope: Healing Generations...One Survivor at a Time

This multi-disciplinary conference welcomes prosecutors, judges, law enforcement, victim advocates, therapists, crisis advocates, members of the faith community and organized religion, educators, school administrators, probation and parole officers, medical and mental health care professionals, court administrators, legislators, paralegals, survivors, policy makers, grant administrators, physicians, shelter workers, social workers, dispatch operators, city council members, men involved in the movement, children and adult protective services personnel, and other professionals who work on behalf of survivors of Domestic Violence and their families.

Conference Schedule:

Saturday, October 31, 2009 at 9:00am - 5:00pm
 Sunday, November 1 - Tuesday, November 2, 2009 from 8:30am - 5:00pm
 Conference ends at 1pm on Wednesday, November 4, 2009.

Conference Tuition:

The course fee is \$595. The first attendee from an office pays full tuition. Each additional attendee from the same office will receive a \$50 discount for this course.

Late Registration Fee:

If you do not register at least 10 business days prior to the start of the course, you will be charged a late registration fee of \$60 in addition to regular tuition. This fee also applies to walk-in registrants.

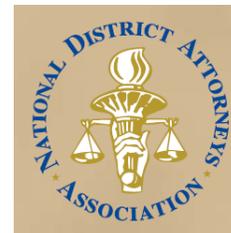
Accommodations:

There will be two (2) host hotels for this conference:

The San Antonio Marriott® Rivercenter Hotel (*All conference activities will be held here.*)
 101 Bowie Street
 San Antonio, Texas 78205
 Toll Free: 1-800-648-4462

The Marriott Riverwalk Hotel
 889 East Market Street
 San Antonio, Texas 78205
 Toll Free: 1-800-648-4462

The group rate is \$149 single/\$169 double occupancy. To secure this group rate, you must make reservations by October 8, 2009 by calling the hotel directly or CEM Travel Services at 800-247-8785; a first night's deposit is required.



For more information and to register for this conference, visit <http://www.ndaa.org> & click on "All Upcoming NDAA Courses."

SAFVIC INSTRUCTOR OF THE YEAR

Our recipient of the 2009 SAFVIC Instructor of the Year Award is Chief Juan Gonzalez. Juan has been a SAFVIC Instructor for over 6 years and has taught SAFVIC to over 450 officers. He is currently the Chief of Police at San Juan Police Department and previously was the Training Commander of the Pharr Police Department. He has over 20 years of law enforcement experience and over 20 instructor certifications, including SAFVIC. Juan has worked with the Hidalgo County Family Violence Task Force, coordinating local multi-agency partnerships with non-profit organizations, and conducting community seminars. He received the Volunteer Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award twice, as well as the Pharr Police Department Policeman of the Year Award. He holds a Texas Southmost College Associate's degree in Criminal Justice, and is a FBI National Academy Graduate.



In recognition of your loyal service, dedication, and commitment to the SAFVIC Program, we would like to congratulate Juan Gonzalez on receiving the 2009 SAFVIC Instructor of the Year Award.

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Unique Problems

While there are many similarities among all survivors of sexual violence, for women whose perpetrators are other women, there are some unique differences. First, the context of homophobia presents many problems. We may not be out and therefore might not feel comfortable telling anyone else what has happened to us. We might not be able to turn to family members who have disowned us because of being lesbian or bisexual. Daily, we live with the negative messages that to be lesbian is perverted, twisted, and sick. We cannot marry, adopt our partner's children, or serve openly in the military. Furthermore, the homophobia of agency providers and funders means there are few targeted programs for us, especially in rape crisis and domestic violence programs. Where are we to turn?

Heterosexism, the belief that heterosexuality is normal, natural and right, and any other sexuality is wrong and unnatural, is found throughout our society. It is particularly a problem for lesbians in the legal arena. The law presumes heterosexuality, and assumes a female victim and a male perpetrator. Ambigu-

ous language in many restraining order statutes seems to invite same-sex application but until cases go through the appellate courts, there is no guarantee of access to legal protection. Furthermore, forced sexual acts during lesbian sex might be misdemeanor offenses rather than felonies because they are not penis penetration. Same-sex sexual violations are not taken as seriously as heterosexual rape.

Program Needs

Most rape crisis and domestic violence agencies do not have specific programs for lesbians and bisexual women, such as targeted support groups, hotlines, literature or out lesbian staff and counselors. Yet this is what lesbians say they want and feel safest with. For lesbians in a mixed group the need to change "she" to "he" due to homophobia is a revictimization. Lesbian survivors of sexual violence by other women, whether in or out of battering relationships, have few places to go. They have great difficulty identifying their sexual assaults because there is so little validation in literature, agency training and agency programming that these assaults occur. If we want to serve these women, this will have to change.

Conclusion

Lesbians are beginning to speak out about their sexual violence at the hands of other women. There is no more denying that this occurs. Second wave feminists struggled to provide services for women in need and to produce an analysis about this violence. Woman-to-woman sexual violence presents a challenge to those efforts, but one that must be met. Stopping sexual violence has always meant confronting issues of hierarchy, privilege, power and control in society and that is just as true today.

References

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OCTOBER is



For more information about the campaign, visit dvam.vawnet.org

7th Annual SAFVIC Instructor Summit

We would like to thank all the instructors who attended this year's Instructor Summit in San Antonio! We hope everyone had the opportunity to meet each other, exchange stories and techniques, and take an active role in the growth of SAFVIC.

The SAFVIC Team sincerely appreciates your dedication & hard work!



"Piecing together the tools needed to effectively investigate and prevent sexual assault and family violence."

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We're on the Web @
www.safvic.org

Featured Agency

MONTROSE COUNSELING CENTER ANTI-VIOLENCE PROGRAM

When we think about sexual assault, most often we think of the traditional model that the victim is a woman and the perpetrator is a man, but that isn't always the case. Men may be sexually assaulted by women. And in the case of the clients who receive services at Montrose Counseling Center (MCC) in Houston, men may be sexually assaulted by other men, and women may be sexually assaulted by other women. It may happen in the context of date rape (which includes internet hookups), domestic violence, or may be the method of attack in a bias/hate crime.

Sexual assault is about power, control and humiliation, and it can happen to anyone. Statistics show that only about 20 percent of sexual assaults are reported to the police. Imagine if you're dealing with internalized homophobia (self hatred over your sexual orientation), shame for hooking up with someone online or at a gay bar, afraid that law enforcement will not believe you were unable to defend yourself against someone of your same sex, and fear that you may be "outed" by filing a report that becomes part of the public record. The perpetrators of these crimes count on the gay, lesbian, bisexual and

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The vast majority of students felt the course was useful (96%), well taught (97%), and improved their investigation skills (91%). In the 3 months prior to completing the survey, 68% indicated they had used the skills learned during the training and 76% of respondents replied the course changed their outlook on family violence crimes. In addition, 74% agreed the SAFVIC training changed their outlook on sexual assault crimes, as well as the act of stalking.

A major goal of the SAFVIC training is to encourage officers to work with their local communities and programs that serve victims of sexual assault and family violence. SAFVIC was interested to see whether students had addressed the "community coalitions" component following the course. To determine the



For more information,
please call
713.529.0037 or visit

www.montrosecounselingcenter.org

transgender (GLBT) community to be silent. Where would you go for help?

If the victim/survivor identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, or if someone is the victim of a same-sex sexual assault, MCC may dispatch an advocate 24 hours a day through Gay & Lesbian Switchboard Houston (**713.529.3211**) to accompany someone to the hospital for a SANE exam and medical treatment. The advocate may be with the person if and when the victim/survivor chooses to file a police report, and continue to support that person through any and all court proceedings. It is scary enough for someone who has been sexually assaulted to go through these processes. Someone who identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender may be more likely to report a crime and get help if they have someone with them who will make sure they are being taken seriously and treated with dignity and respect.

impact of this component, the survey asked respondents if they had "contacted a local stakeholder such as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) or Victim Advocate since attending training." More than a third (38%) of students indicated that they had contacted a local stakeholder.

The majority of respondents (96%) demonstrated they would recommend the Sexual Assault and Family Violence Investigators Course to others. Respondents listed the following as the most useful skills and tools learned from this training:

- Interview Techniques
- Evidence Collection
- Proper Documentation & Photography
- Identification of Defensive Injuries
- Contact Information for Victim Assistance
- Understanding Barriers to Leaving Violent Relationships
- Increased Victim Sensitivity

The victim/survivor may receive case management services through Montrose Counseling Center, including assistance in filing for crime victims' compensation, along with individual and group counseling. While these services may exist in other settings, MCC believes that you should not have to educate your therapist about sexual orientation, gender identity and/or HIV status before addressing your needs. A GLBT victim/survivor of sexual assault needs to be able to talk openly and honestly about the crime, if it was a date or acquaintance, if it was a hate crime, or if it was by an intimate partner. He or she needs to talk about the impact it's having on current relationships, and that may not happen even if just one person in a support group is uncomfortable or disapproving of the GLBT victim/survivor.

Another way Montrose Counseling Center addresses the needs of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender population is through education. MCC's anti-violence specialist is able to educate law enforcement officials and other social service providers about the dynamics of sexual assault, domestic violence and hate crimes when it impacts the GLBT communities.

*Article provided by Sally A. Huffer,
Community Projects Specialist of MCC.*

- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE)
- Stalking Dynamics and Statutes
- Law Updates

This survey demonstrates the SAFVIC program has successfully increased community awareness and knowledge amongst officers across the state of Texas. However, more training and education is still needed. The SAFVIC program is dedicated to responding to the needs of the students and with the results of this survey SAFVIC will be able to improve the contents of this course by including new topics and addressing student concerns.

**To read the full
Student Survey Report,
visit www.safvic.org.**