

## Comparative Data of Childhood and Adolescence Molestation in Heterosexual and Homosexual Persons

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*In research with 942 nonclinical adult participants, gay men and lesbian women reported a significantly higher rate of childhood molestation than did heterosexual men and women. Forty-six percent of the homosexual men in contrast to 7% of the heterosexual men reported homosexual molestation. Twenty-two percent of lesbian women in contrast to 1% of heterosexual women reported homosexual molestation. This research is apparently the first survey that has reported substantial homosexual molestation of girls. Suggestions for future research were offered.*

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**KEY WORDS:** childhood molestation; adult sexual orientation; female pedophiles.

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### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to determine and compare the incidence of childhood molestation of homosexual and heterosexual adults. The previous literature suggests that a history of childhood molestation may be more common in homosexual men and women than in their heterosexual counterparts.

Bradford *et al.* (1994) reported that 25% of 1,925 lesbians surveyed had been sexually abused or raped as children. They said that 31% of the perpetrators were male relatives, 45% other known men, 45% male strangers, and 1% women (it is not known why this totaled 122%).

In interviewing with 35 lesbian women in alcoholic recovery, 16 (46%) revealed sexual abuse, even though they were not asked about sexual abuse (Hall, 1996). The onset of the molestation ranged from <4 years to 12 years, with 10 of

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the women being younger than 7 years at the time of molestation. Fourteen of the 16 women were molested only by men. One was molested by multiple intrafamilial males and one extrafamilial female. Another was molested by her father and by one extrafamilial female.

Simari and Baskin (1982) determined the extent of incestuous experiences in 54 gay men and 29 gay women. Twenty-five (46%) of the gay men reported experiencing incest, all of the homosexual sort, between 9 and 16 years of age with a mean age of 13 years. Twenty-four (96%) of the 25 men who experienced incest viewed themselves as homosexual before the incest. Eleven (38%) of the 29 gay women reported experiencing incest, heterosexual in seven (64%) of the cases, with two (29%) of these women regarding themselves as homosexual before the incest. Four (36%) of the 11 women experienced homosexual incest, with 3 (25%) of them regarding themselves as homosexual before the incest.

In research by Doll *et al.* (1992), 1,001 homosexual and bisexual men in sexually transmitted disease clinics were interviewed. Thirty-seven percent of these men reported having been forced or encouraged to have sex by an older and more powerful person, before the age of 19. The median age of these events was 10 years. The median age difference between the younger and older participants in the sex acts was 11 years. In 94% of the cases, the older person was male, in 5% female, and 1% involved both male and female perpetrators.

Cameron and Cameron (1995) surveyed 5,182 adults and found a history of incest in 22.3% of homosexual men, 1.2% of heterosexual men, 3.4% of homosexual women, and 0.3% of heterosexual women. The authors did not provide any information about the age of molestation. Cameron and Cameron pointed out that their findings are consistent with the findings of Bell *et al.* (1981) who reported a history of sibling incest in 15.6% of homosexual men, 9.0% of heterosexual men, 10.4% of homosexual women, and 5.6% of heterosexual women. Bell *et al.* did not specify the gender of the other partner in the incestuous acts.

Gundlach (1977) surveyed 225 lesbian and 233 heterosexual women, and found that 30% of the heterosexual women and 21% of the lesbians had been raped. Of the 30 women who had been raped before the age of 14, 26 had an adult homosexual orientation while 9 had an adult heterosexual orientation.

On the basis of the previous literature, it would appear that gay men and lesbian women have a greater history of molestation than do heterosexual persons. The perspective from the previous studies, however, is unclear. Not all of the cited studies employed a heterosexual control group, specified the criteria of molestation, specified the gender of the perpetrator, specified the present sexual preference, and that before the molestation, and employed both gay men and lesbian participants. Furthermore, some of the studies focused only upon rape or incest.

This study intended to extend the perspective by the inclusion of gay men and lesbian women and heterosexual control men and women, by using specific