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APPENDIX A
Interview Guide

Describing the experience and effects of internalized homophobia

1. When and how did the possibility first occur to you that you might be sexually attracted to women, and want to become involved with another woman? Think about a particular time and describe the feelings you had about the situation.
2. Describe a specific time you felt the need to inhibit your feelings or behavior concerning your lesbianism. What were your feelings during and after that specific instance?
3. Describe your biggest fears about coming out to your family, peers, co-workers, and society at large? Tell me about the experiences that were most meaningful to you? Describe them in detail and include positive as well as negative emotions that you experienced during and after your disclosure.
4. Tell me about the activities you participate in that involve the gay and lesbian community (e.g., Gay Pride Parade, AIDS Marathon/Walk). Think about a specific activity and describe the feelings you experienced. If you never or rarely participate in LGB social activities, tell why.
5. Describe how you currently view yourself as a lesbian woman living in a predominantly straight world.

Describing the experience and effects of CSA

6. Tell me about your sexual abuse history (age of onset, relationship to perpetrator, length of time, reactions, feelings, termination).
7. Describe, in detail, the first time you told someone about your sexual abuse. What emotions do you remember experiencing?
8. Describe some interaction and communication patterns in your family of origin; in your present relationships (involvement in abusive relationships, isolation, experiencing rage, self-blame, mistrust of people).
9. If you can, describe what the perpetrator told you about the abuse, and about telling others. What did you tell yourself (self-blame, denial, fantasy)?
10. Describe the things you and your friends did when you “hung out” with each other (alcohol and/or drugs, delinquency). What kinds of activities or thoughts did you engage in when you were alone (contemplating or attempting suicide, self-injury, problematic issues with food)? What was your favorite activity in school (underachiever/overachiever)?
11. What strategies are you aware of that you presently use to reduce stress and/or help you to be resourceful? Examples: journal writing, attending to physical/spiritual care (sports, exercise, meditation, religion), humor, helping others in need, being a non-abusive parent.

CSA effects and internalized homophobia

12. Describe the relationships between you and family members as you were growing up. Talk about any moments that were especially meaningful to you.
13. Describe changes in your feelings or attitudes that you perceive have occurred, regarding your homosexuality and childhood sexual abuse. What accounts for the changes?
14. Looking back, how do you think your abuse experience affected your interest and ability in maintaining significant relationships with (female and male) heterosexuals and homosexuals?
15. Describe the most important obstacles you had to face in order to accept your homosexuality. How do you perceive those obstacles were affected by your abuse experience?
16. Describe your general thoughts about the relatedness of being lesbian and being sexually abused as a child.

*APPENDIX B:**Information for Participants Regarding Permission and Consent*

I am a Ph.D. candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Virginia Tech) and I am doing research about lesbian women who were sexually abused as children. I worked as a counselor with gay and lesbian clients at the Whitman-Walker Clinic in Washington, D.C. where I conducted both individual and group therapy. For this study, however, I will be functioning as a researcher, and not as a counselor. My counseling experience with clients who were sexually abused as children, led me to wonder how childhood sexual abuse might influence the coming out process that lesbian women experience.

This research is a qualitative study, which means that I will not be dealing with statistics, nor are there any hypotheses. This study is about understanding experiences of being sexually abused in childhood, being lesbian, and coming out. Because what I am looking for is how each woman who is selected to participate in the study perceives her lived experience, generalizations and predictions are not a concern in this study. Your interview can be likened to raw data that statisticians collect, but instead of numbers, I will be using the interviews themselves as my “database”. My ultimate goal is to capture the complexities of the specific experiences of childhood sexual abuse and your coming out, as you perceive them.

The way I will collect my “data” is through a semi-structured interview, about 90 minutes in length. The interview will take place in a private, comfortable space that is agreeable to us both. I will use a voice recorder to tape the interviews, after which I will transcribe them. Because the research material is considered confidential, identifying names will be kept separately from taped conversations, written material, etc. Anonymous names will be used as identifiers in the transcriptions for two reasons: (a) transcripts will be available to members of my dissertation committee, and (b) the resulting dissertation will become a public document that can be obtained at libraries. If you have any questions, apprehensions, or comments about confidentiality issues, I will address them at any time, before, during or after the interview.

Recalling these experiences might stir up some unpleasant feelings, but there are potential benefits to your participation. It is my hope that your contribution to this endeavor will result in raising awareness about lesbian women and their life experiences, to counselors and other mental health professionals. Presently, there is very little research on how lesbian women experience the effects of childhood sexual abuse. It is my hope that this research will be like discovering a land we never knew existed, and that in the future, others researchers will be able to explore and map it. Thank you for participating in the discovery.

Nancy Schapiro
nanscha@comcast.net

*APPENDIX C:
Consent Form*

This consent form is to check that you are satisfied with the information you received about the study, that you are aware of your rights as a participant, and to confirm that you wish to take part in the study.

I have read the explanatory information about this study, and I have received enough information about the study to make the decision to participate.

I understand that my participation is confidential, and that only the researcher has access to information about my identity.

My participation in this study is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time.

I am aware that the interview will be recorded, and the tapes and transcripts of this study will be kept confidential, and that arrangements have been made to safeguard confidentiality.

I agree to take part in this study.

Signature _____ Date _____
Name in block letters _____

I confirm that quotations from the interviews can be used in the final research report and other publications.

Signature _____ Date _____
Name in block letters _____
