

Abuse in Lesbian Relationships & Lesbian Friendly Service:

A Saskatchewan Survey (2001-2002)
Analysis of Data from Individuals

This survey was intended to measure the level of awareness in Saskatchewan's 'lesbian community' about abuse in female same-sex relationships, and the availability of and need for 'lesbian friendly' services for women abused in same-sex relationships. The Questionnaire for Individuals (self-administered) was for **any woman living in Saskatchewan who considers herself to be a woman who has or has had intimate sexual relationships with women**, whether she calls herself lesbian, dyke, gay, queer, a woman who sleeps with women, bi-sexual, two-spirited, or by some other label or none at all.

Two 'Sets' each (comprised of the Covering letter to Individuals and the Questionnaire for Individuals (see both attached), with an addressed, stamped return envelope) were sent to some 135 direct service providers across Saskatchewan at the beginning of November, 2001 (see Data for Service Providers Document for complete list), along with a poster announcing the survey (see also attached). As well, 100 Sets went to [Gay & Lesbian Health Service](#) (GLHS), 20 to the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Centre, 10 to the USSU Women's Centre, and 6 to U of S Student Counseling (all in Saskatoon), 130 to contacts in Regina (for distribution to some 25 groups), and a number of Sets to miscellaneous friends and acquaintances, for a total distribution of some 550 Sets and 160 posters. The stated deadline was December 7, 2001, but we accepted responses until approximately January 31, 2002. Based on an estimate of 370,000 women in Saskatchewan 18 years of age and older, and an estimate of 3 to 4% lesbianism within the female population, there may be some 14,800 lesbians in Saskatchewan. We would have needed 350 to 400 responses to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. Although we did not expect that many, we fully expected to receive requests for more Sets from a significant number of the agencies we initially sent to, and to receive anywhere from 100 to 200 responses.

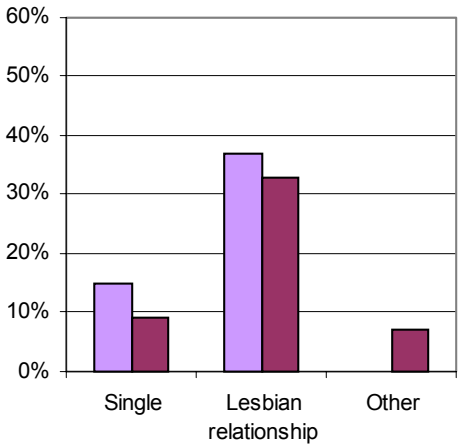
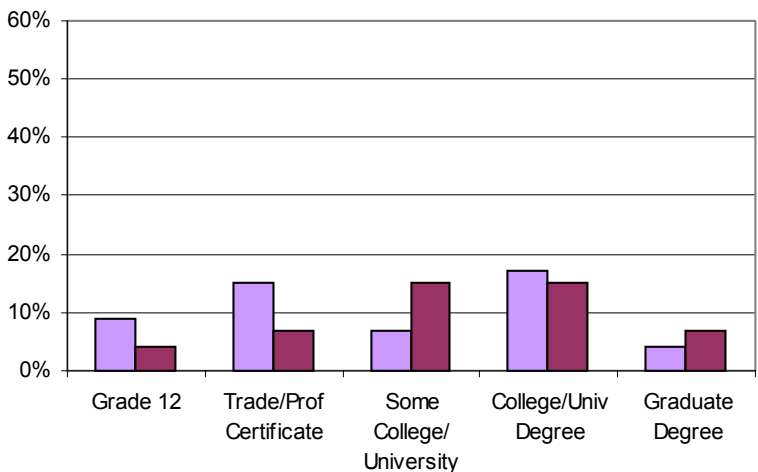
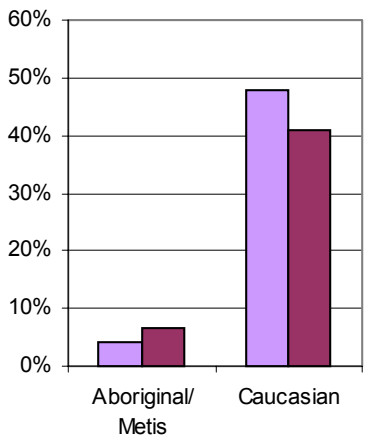
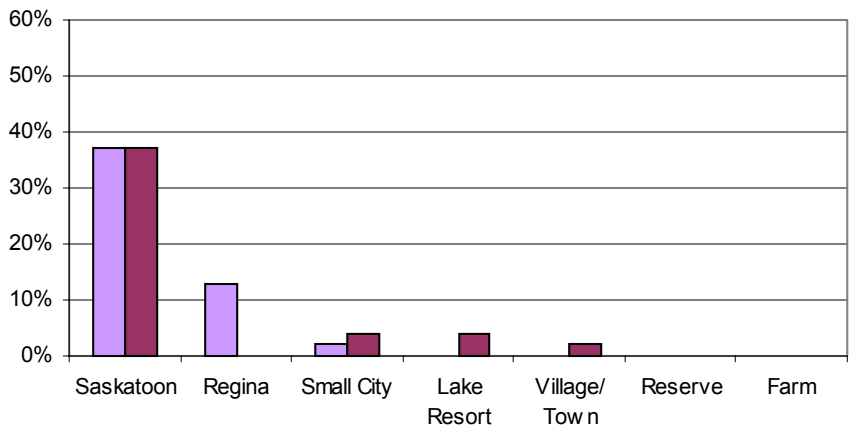
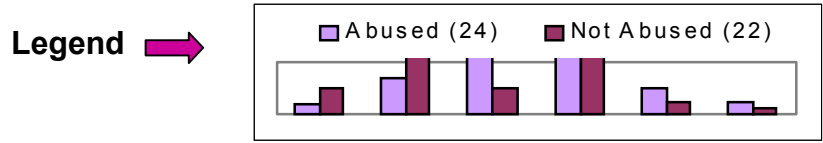
We received only 46 completed Questionnaires back from self-selected respondents (as opposed to randomly selected. To have drawn a random sample of Saskatchewan lesbians would require starting with a complete list of all lesbians in Saskatchewan. Such a list obviously does not exist.). **Obviously, 46 responses are too few to use for any solid representative statistical analysis. We have, however, performed some analyses in this report, with the caveat that the margin of error may be as much as 15%.** All 46 respondents answered every question from 1 to 10 and from 25 to 30, except as noted in the Data Document (see questions 7, 8 & 29 thereof). Answers from all 46 questionnaires were entered into an Access database, and the compiled data are contained in the attached Data for Individuals Document.

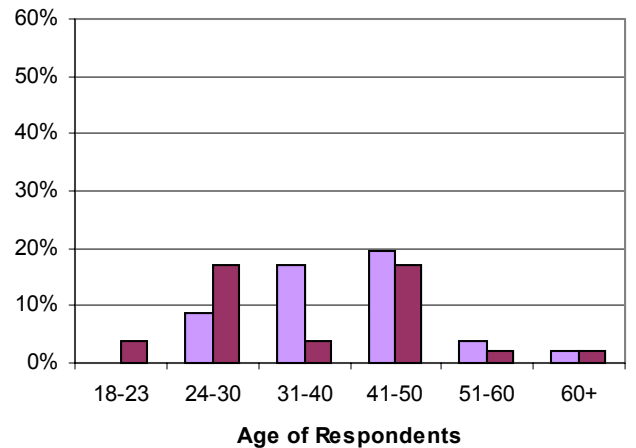
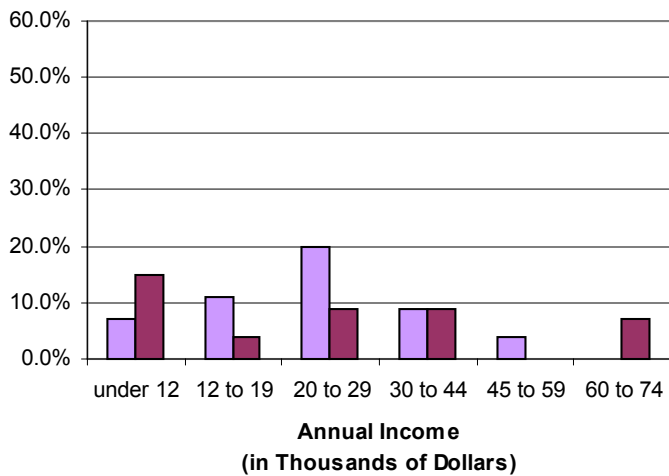
The disappointingly low response is in large part a function of the nature of 'lesbian community' in Saskatchewan (and everywhere), i.e. there is really no 'lesbian community' in Saskatchewan. Instead, there are various disparate, unrelated 'lesbian communities' throughout the province (although concentrated in Saskatoon and Regina), and there is essentially little communication between the diverse 'lesbian communities' within Saskatoon and within Regina, let alone communication between what would theoretically comprise the Saskatoon 'lesbian community' and what would theoretically comprise the Regina 'lesbian community'. Particularly disappointing is the number of responses from Regina (only 6, while there were 34 from Saskatoon), likely a function of the lack in Regina of an equivalent to **Gay & Lesbian Health Services in Saskatoon** (GLHS). (In

hindsight, we realize we should have numbered the Questionnaires in order to be able to determine which agencies were most successful in garnering responses, although from the answers we have to the residence question (# 27), it is obvious that agencies outside of Saskatoon were not a significant source of responses.) Had we advertised in 'Perceptions', a Saskatchewan LGBT information publication, or in Sensible Shoes News, a Saskatchewan lesbian information publication, or made Sets available at social events such as dances, we may have had a greater response, but we were concerned about compromising the safety of some women had we used those avenues, and we assumed we would get a higher response using the avenues we did. Were a survey of this nature to be repeated, we would recommend that Questionnaires be made available, and responses be accepted, for at least 1 year in order to generate a larger database.

Demographics

The demographics of the 46 respondents, as determined by Questions 9 and 25 to 30 of the Questionnaire, are represented here. Percentage is out of 46 respondents, except for "Income", where it is out of 43.





74% of respondents reside in Saskatoon and 89% of respondents are Caucasian. No respondents identified as Latina, Black, Middle Eastern, Asian, South Asian, Jewish or other. The Saskatoon and Caucasian cohorts may be useful as representative to some degree*, but they are the only ones that possibly could be, given the extremely low numbers for other sub-populations such as Aboriginals (4), Metis (1), Visible minorities (0), Regina residents (6), Small City residents (3), and Village/Town residents (1). The entire group of respondents as a whole may be representative of the Saskatchewan ‘lesbian community’ in some respects, but we repeat the **caveat that the margin of error may be as much as 15%**. (Although 20% of the population of Saskatchewan resides in Saskatoon, whereas 74% of our respondents do, we are safe in assuming that the geographical demographics of lesbians in Saskatchewan are different from that of the general population, i.e. that lesbians are even more concentrated in the two major urban centres.)

*Here is a comparison of the racial identity percentages of Saskatchewan’s population in general (from Canadian Census, 2001) and of our respondents:

	Respondents	Saskatchewan
Caucasian	89%	85.9%
Aboriginal	11%	11.4%
Other visible minorities	0%	2.7%

We have no information to indicate that the racial make-up of Saskatchewan’s lesbians differs from that of Saskatchewan’s population in general.

There is a good balance between those respondents who have been/are in abusive same-sex relationships (24) and those who have never been in an abusive same-sex relationship (22), but given the small number of respondents and the fact that respondents were self-selected as opposed to randomly selected, **we cannot assume that the ratio of 24/22 for abused/never abused is representative of the ratio in the Saskatchewan ‘lesbian community’**. (Recent research indicates that 22-48% of lesbian relationships involve partner abuse similar to violence by men in heterosexual relationships.) Again, the status ratios of 11/32/3 for single/in a female same-sex relationship/other may or may not be representative of the status ratios of the Saskatchewan ‘lesbian community’. Notwithstanding the low number of the overall cohort, there is a good mix of levels of education, ages, and incomes, which is not drastically out of line with the demographics for Saskatchewan’s female population in general**, and so may hold useful information for the

cohort as a whole. However, given the extremely low numbers for most strata of education, age and income, we conducted no analysis based thereon.

**Here, for instance, is a comparison of the age range percentages between ages 20 and 59 of Saskatchewan's female population in general (from Saskatchewan Health Insurance Registration File, June 30, 1998) and of our respondents:

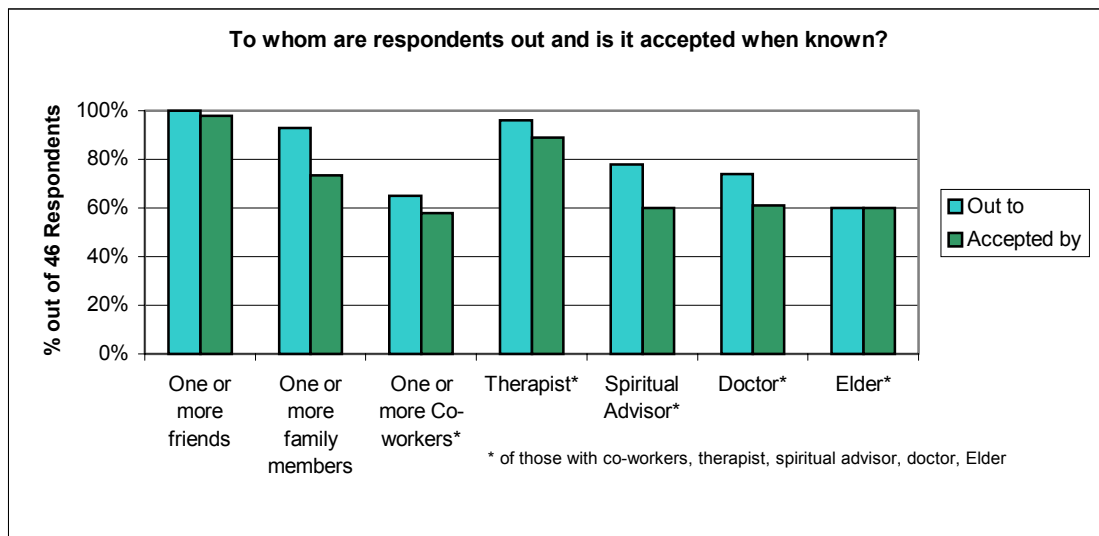
Age range	Respondents	Saskatchewan
20 to 29	32%	27%
30 to 39	23%	30%
40 to 49	39%	27%
50 to 59	16%	7%

Respondents over 59 (at 4% of the entire cohort) are under-represented. We have no information to indicate that the age range of Saskatchewan's lesbians differs from that of Saskatchewan's female population in general.

To whom are respondents out and do these groups accept it?

In order to put into context the percentage of abused lesbian who sought help from Abuse Help Agencies, we asked respondents:

- a) who knows about their sexual orientation (i.e. to whom they are out) (Ques.1) and, of those they are out to,
- b) who generally accepts their sexual orientation? (Ques. 2).

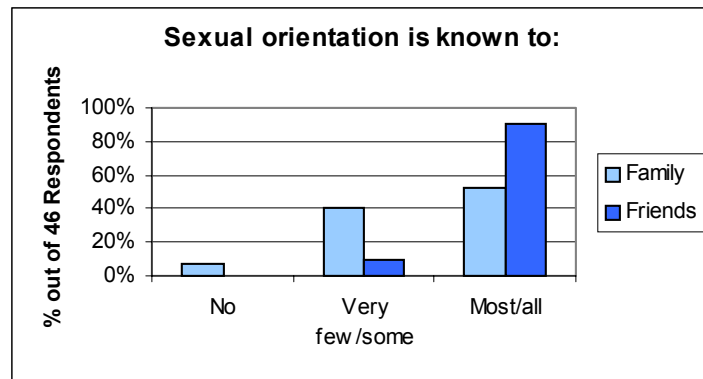


only 11 respondents had spiritual advisors and only 5 consulted with Elders

Obviously, many of the respondents feel they must keep their sexual orientation hidden from significant people in their lives, including co-workers, therapists, spiritual advisors, doctors, Elders, and even family members. This is understandable, of course, in view of the general non-acceptance by some of those whom respondents are out to. (Even though every respondent was out to at least one friend, there were still a few respondents who had friends who were not generally accepting.)

Given the near universal nature of family and friends, and the apparent significant difference between them in especially *acceptance level*, we thought it would be interesting to examine more

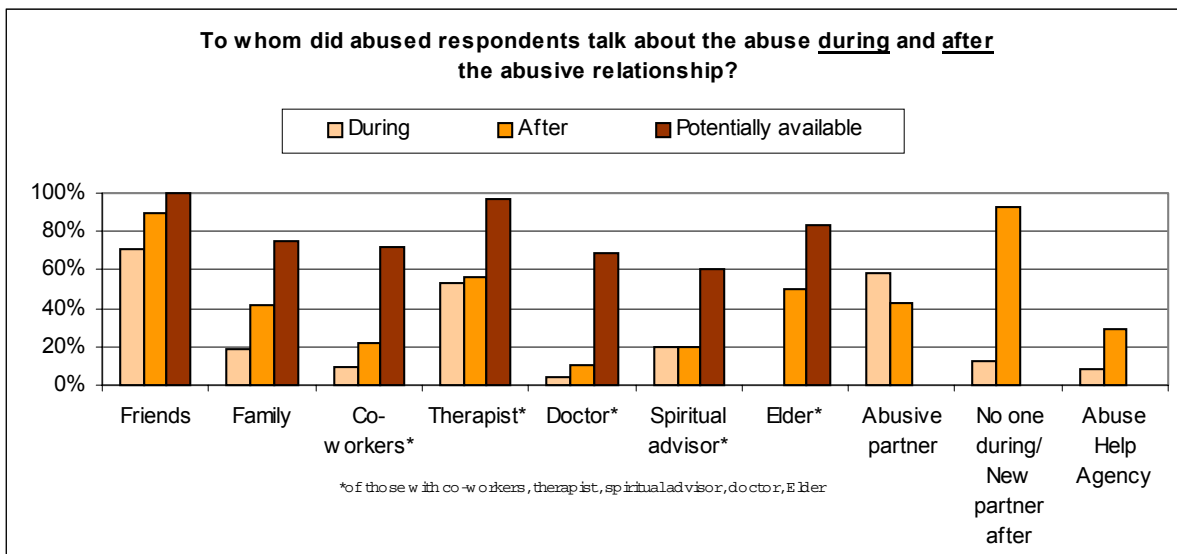
closely the difference in degrees of 'outness' re friends vs. family, since Question 1 provided for degrees of outness to both friends and family.



The results reveal a substantially different profile in the outness of respondents to family in comparison to friends. It is unlikely that this is just a function of the fact that one can choose friends, but not family, since some of those accepting friends are likely high-school or even childhood friends chosen before the respondent was even out to herself. More on the significant role of friends below.

To whom did abused respondents talk about the abuse?

We feel safe in assuming that those to whom a lesbian has not even talked about her sexual orientation, and those to whom she has talked but who do not accept it, are not available for her to disclose same-sex abuse to. Conversely, we believe that those who accept sexual orientation once it has been revealed can be counted in as *potentially available* to talk to about the abuse. Given that assumption, we derived the following graph: (For the sake of simplicity, *potentially available* is actually an average of what it was *during* and *after*.)

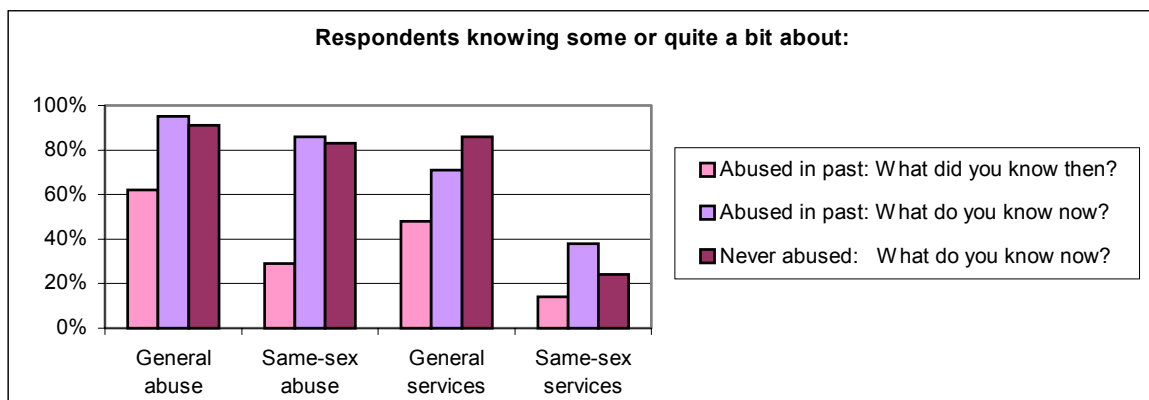


only 5 abused respondents had spiritual advisors and only 3 consulted with Elders

Again, friends played a considerably more important role as confidants for abused respondents than did any other group. In comparison, family, co-workers and especially doctors are significant potential confidants who were under-utilized—the difference between those who told their therapists and those who told their doctors is remarkable. It would be interesting to compare these data with that of abused straight women. We would hazard a guess that the profile illustrated by the above graph is not significantly different from what it might be for a cohort of abused straight women, other than, perhaps, the place of the abusive partner and of the new partner. (No attempt was made to make a determination of the *potential availability* of abusive partners nor of new partners.) Also of note is that some of the abused respondents talked to absolutely no one during the abusive relationship, but every one of them talked about it to at least one person after leaving. As for the role of Abuse Help Agencies, again, no attempt was made to make a determination of the *potential availability* of same. Because we have no data with respect to time-frames (except for the one respondent who reported that the abuse happened 20 years ago), we do not know if the abuse that respondents reported occurred only months ago, or decades ago when abuse of straight women wasn't even talked about and when there were few if any agencies.

Respondents' reported knowledge of abuse and of Abuse Help Agencies

Again, since we did not build questions about time-frames into the questionnaire (such as “During what time period were you in the abusive relationship?”), we can make no attempt to determine *potential availability* of Abuse Help Agencies to any particular segment of the abused cohort. However, because we did ask everyone what they know **now**, we were able to produce the following graph, and can infer a significant increase in reported knowledge between some unknown past time and the present.

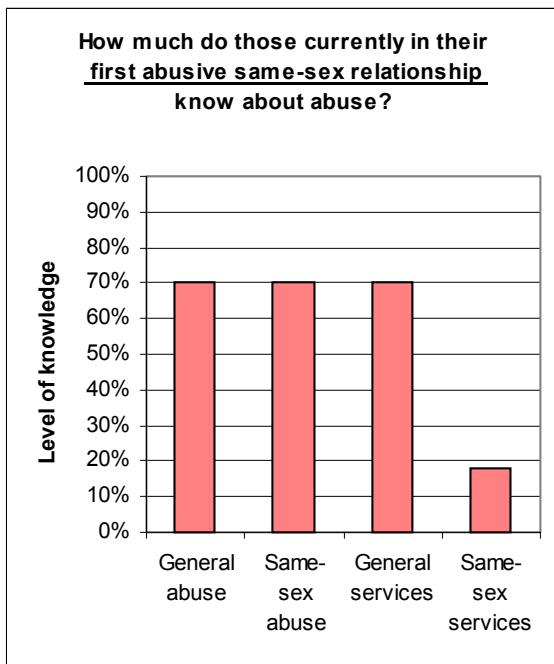


The first bar of each group represents **past** knowledge about abuse on the part of abused respondents—respectively, their knowledge of abuse generally, of same-sex abuse, of services offered to abused women generally and of services offered to women abused in same-sex relationships. The second bar represents **present** knowledge about abuse on the part of those same abused respondents, and the third bar represents **present** knowledge about abuse on the part of respondents who have never been abused.

Although we cannot make a statistical determination of how much the increase in knowledge of abused respondents from past to present is a function of:

- a) their own efforts to learn about abuse because they were abused; or
- b) the general greater availability of abuse information now as compared to in the past,

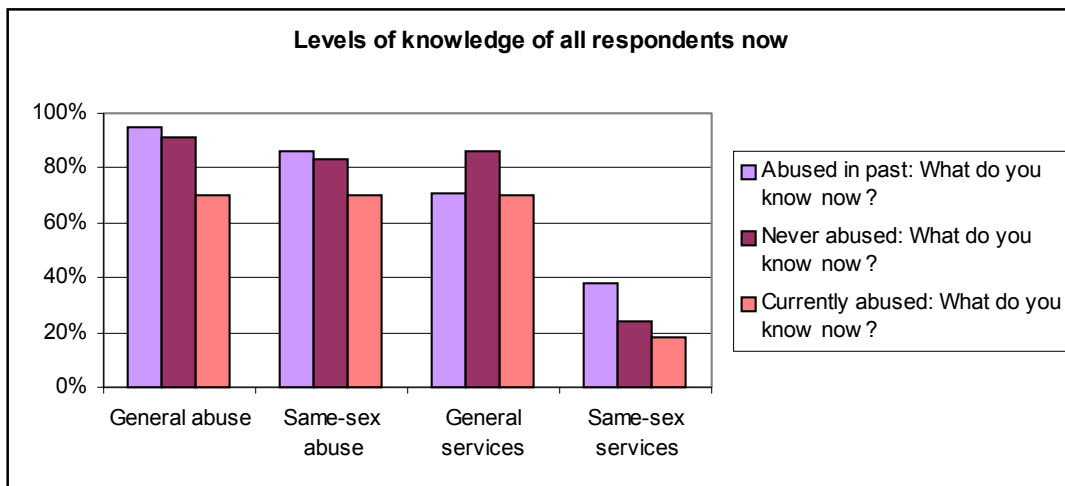
we can infer that it is likely a function of the latter more than the former, given that respondents who have never been abused have levels of knowledge much closer to the present levels of knowledge of abused respondents than to their past levels. And if we look at the present levels of knowledge reported by respondents currently in their first abusive same-sex relationship (albeit there were only 3), we see a profile in the levels of knowledge that is remarkably similar to the profiles of present reported knowledge in the above graph:



In order to illustrate the levels graphically, we arbitrarily assigned 85% to 'quite a lot', 40% to 'some', and 7.5% to 'very little'. The present levels of knowledge reported by the three respondents currently in their first abusive same-sex relationship are, therefore:

ID#	Ques 3 General Abuse	Ques 4 Same-sex Abuse	Ques 6 General Services	Ques 7 Same-sex Services
6	Quite a bit: 85%	Quite a bit: 85%	Quite a bit: 85%	Some: 40%
33	Quite a bit: 85%	Quite a bit: 85%	Quite a bit: 85%	Very little: 7.5%
39	Some: 40%	Some: 40%	Some: 40%	Very little: 7.5%
Average	70%	70%	70%	18.3%

Combining the above graph with the present knowledge from the previous one, we get:



So (if our respondents are at all representative of the Saskatchewan 'lesbian community') there are significant (and comparable) levels of reported knowledge of abuse generally, of same-sex abuse, of services offered to abused women generally, and significantly lower (and comparable) levels of knowledge of services offered to women abused in same-sex relationships. More on this later.

Abusive behaviours

Question 5 of the questionnaire for individuals was intended more as an educational tool than an information gathering tool. That is, our intention was to say "these are abusive behaviours, in case you didn't know". As it turned out, 2 of the 3 respondents who are currently in their first abusive same-sex relationship may very well have benefited directly and personally from the 'educational' aspect of Question 5. Neither of the 2 had yet sought help from an Abuse Help Agency—one (ID #33) because she is in denial about the abuse, and the other (ID # 39) because she hasn't self-identified as an abuse victim (as reported in Question 19). (Both indicated that every behaviour listed in Question 5 is abusive.)

ID# 33 reported that she has only talked to friends about the abuse, and that her partner has:

- punched her
- threatened to leave her
- verbally threatened to hurt her friends
- put her, her kids, friends and family down
- sworn and yelled at her
- humiliated her in front of other people
- blamed her and her kids for almost everything
- made her feel like nothing she ever does is good enough
- controlled where she goes, what she does, what she wears
- controlled who she sees, who she talks to, what she says
- refused to let her be out.

ID# 39 reported that she has talked to friends and her abusive partner about the abuse, and that her partner has:

- threatened to leave her
- put her down and called her names
- sworn and yelled at her
- outed her against her wishes.

Perhaps now that they have each read the list of suggested abusive behaviours in Question 5, and have each had the chance to report in Question 16 on the behaviours they have experienced, ID# 33 and ID# 39 will respectively, self-identify and come out of denial.

With respect to all respondents generally, Question 5 was further intended to offer information they could use in reflecting on their own behaviours and in helping friends who might come to them for reality checks. The compiled results from Question 5, which (after the exercise of some editorial discretion on our part*) are set out in the following table, raise some thought-provoking points:

Behaviour	Abusive	Not abusive
Slapping; hitting; punching; choking; kicking; scratching; biting; shoving; cornering; violence to doors, walls, furniture, possessions; abuse of your kids; threatening with weapons; threatening looks, gestures; verbal threats to hurt you, your kids, your friends; verbal threats to hurt your family, pets; forcing you to have sex; forcing you to have rough sex; putting you down; controlling all the money; controlling money you earn; not allowing you to work; controlling where you go, what you do, what you wear, who you see; who you talk to, what you say	46	0
Hair pulling; grabbing; calling you names; swearing at you; blaming your kids for almost everything; making you feel like nothing you do is ever good enough; treating you like a servant or slave; refusing to let you leave the relationship; outing you against your wishes; threatening to out you	45	1
Abuse of your pets; threatening suicide; putting your kids down; humiliating you in front of other people; making you responsible for the money and blaming you when there is not enough; blaming you for almost everything; making you the 'bad guy'	44	2
Putting your friends down, putting your family down; refusing to let you be out	43	3
Threatening to leave you	42	4
Yelling; insisting that you work	41	5

*The exercise of our editorial discretion involved discounting the exclusion of a behaviour when that exclusion appeared to have been unintentional i.e. when it appeared quite likely that it was only a matter of missing the spot for the check-mark (not unimaginable under the crowded conditions of Question 5). We have bolded the behaviours that seemed without a doubt to have been intentionally excluded by a particular respondent from the list of abusive behaviours—for those that are not bolded, it was not clear whether they had been unintentionally or intentionally excluded. We also did not use Question 5 data in the case of ID# 5, an abused respondent who excluded a total of 24 of the 54 suggested behaviours in Question 5, and whose inclusions bore a remarkable correlation to the behaviours she reported in Question 16, i.e. she did not see as abusive many of the behaviours she herself has not personally experienced, e.g. behaviours such as: threatening you with weapons; verbal threats to your family and pets; forcing you to have sex/rough sex; controlling all the money, even money you earn; not allowing you to work; blaming your kids for almost everything; treating you like a servant or slave; and controlling where you go, what you do, who you talk to, and what you say.

It was encouraging to see that respondents did not all just rubber-stamp our list of suggested abusive behaviours, and also interesting that more abused respondents (37.5%) than never-abused respondents (27%) excluded at least one behaviour. (We suggest that the experience of being abused makes it more likely that one can think critically about what is abusive and what is not.) However, some respondents intentionally excluded behaviours that we would be hard-pressed to think of as not abusive, such as scratching, hair pulling, grabbing, abuse of your pets, humiliating you in front of other people, blaming you/your kids for almost everything, making you feel like nothing you do is good enough, making you responsible for all the money and blaming you when there is not enough, treating you like a servant of slave, and outing you/threatening to out you against your wishes. One of the limitations of self-administered surveys is that respondents are required to interpret the questions for themselves. Perhaps we should have made it clear that:

- a) we did not mean behaviours acted out in a consensual S & M game (although many respondents noted such a distinction on their own); and
- b) to be abusive, the behaviour should be intended to control the victim's behaviour or to systematically reduce her sense of self-worth.

In 'Any other comments?' at the end of the survey, ID# 22 said: "Question 5 was very difficult to answer in some respects unless one assumes the extreme, or assumes each item includes threatening behaviour", and some of the suggestions under 'Other' in Question 5 can be seen as trying to articulate the idea of systematic reduction of self-worth:

Abused?	Question 5: Other
Yes	belittling your feelings
No	anything that makes you feel bad about yourself, scared or threatened
Yes	creating abusive self doubt
Yes	any other behaviour that takes away from me as a person

'Forced sex/rough sex' within a consensual S & M game is not abusive, and is not what we meant by 'forced sex/rough sex'. Telling your partner truthfully and honestly that you no longer want to be in the relationship is not abusive, and is not what we meant by 'threatening to leave you'; telling your partner that you will leave in order to force her to do something she doesn't want to do is an example of 'threatening to leave you' and is abusive. Confiding in your partner that you are feeling suicidal is not necessarily abusive, and is not what we meant by 'threatening suicide'; telling your partner that you will kill yourself in order to keep her from leaving you is an example of 'threatening suicide' and is abusive. Calling you names or swearing at you once, then apologizing and never doing it again is not abusive; calling you names or swearing at you weekly, knowing it affects you deeply, is probably abusive, even if you always apologize. 'Putting your friends or family down' means regular and repetitive denigration that you obviously react to negatively and take personally (whether or not you agree with what is said), but does not mean an honestly held negative opinion voiced once by your partner within a discussion about that friend or family member. And so on.

Between all of these examples of when a behaviour is abusive and when it is not, however, are gray areas that are not so easy to label. Yelling is a good and interesting example, and it received the most exclusions (other than 'insisting that you work'). ID# 8 excluded yelling but wrote: not sure, as it's natural for people to raise their voice when angry. Depends how it's done; and ID# 10 wrote: some yelling is abuse, some is not. As well, both ID# 7 and ID# 8 excluded yelling in question 5, but included it in Question 16. (ID# 7 also excluded swearing in question 5, but included it in Question 16.)

'Insisting that you work' is also obviously complicated. We included it in the sense that you were promised that you would not have to work, but that promise was not honored, or you were forced to work two or more jobs that exhausted you, or you both had agreed to work and then your partner wouldn't, but insisted that you did.

And finally, there is 'refusing to let you be out'. The issue of 'outing/being out' is not easy if one partner wants to be out and the other doesn't. The one who wants to be out constantly 'threatens'

to out the other, just by being out, and the one who doesn't want to be out can appear thereby to be 'refusing to let the other be out'.

The dilemmas with each of the above behaviours become even more engaging when we look at the behaviours abused respondents reported having experienced in abusive same-sex relationships i.e. in Question 16.

Behaviour Experienced	Max 24	%
Putting you down	19	79%
Yelling	17	71%
Swearing at you; humiliating you in front of other people	15	63%
Making you feel like nothing you do is ever good enough; making you the 'bad guy'	14	58%
Cornering you; blaming you for almost everything	13	54%
Violence to doors, walls, furniture, possessions; threatening to leave you	12	50%
Shoving; threatening with looks; putting down friends; calling you names; controlling who you see	11	46%
Controlling where you go; what you do	10	42%
Threatening suicide; putting your kids down; putting your family down	9	38%
Hitting; verbal threats to hurt you; forcing you to have sex; making you responsible for all the money and blaming you when there is not enough; refusing to let you leave the relationship; controlling who you talk to	8	33%
Slapping; punching; grabbing; controlling what you say	7	29%
Threatening you with gestures; controlling all the money; outing you against your wishes; refusing to let you be out	6	25%
Biting; forcing you to have rough sex; controlling money you earn; blaming your kids for almost everything;	5	21%
Choking; hair pulling; abusing your kids; verbal threats to hurt your friends; controlling what you wear	4	17%
Kicking; verbal threats to hurt your pets; insisting that you work; treating you like a servant or slave	3	13%
Abusing your pets; verbal threats to hurt your kids; verbal threats to hurt your family; threatening to out you	2	8%
Scratching; threatening you with weapons	1	4%
Not allowing you to work	0	0%

Every behaviour that was **excluded** in Question 5 by at least one respondent has been reported as **experienced** by at least one abused respondent. (The only behaviour that none of the respondents reported was 'not allowing you to work'.) 'Yelling' had 5 exclusions in Question 5, yet almost ¾ of the abused respondents reported having experienced yelling in an abusive relationship. And, as was pointed out in the discussion of Question 5 above, both ID# 7 and ID# 8 excluded yelling in question 5, but included it in Question 16. 'Insisting that you work' also had 5 exclusions in Question 5, but 3 abused respondents reported it in Question 16. 'Threatening to leave you', 'threatening suicide' and 'refusing to let you be out' each provoked discussion when suggested as abusive behaviours, as we saw in Question 5, but in answering Question 16, 50%, 38%, and 25% of abused respondents, respectively, reported experiencing those behaviours.

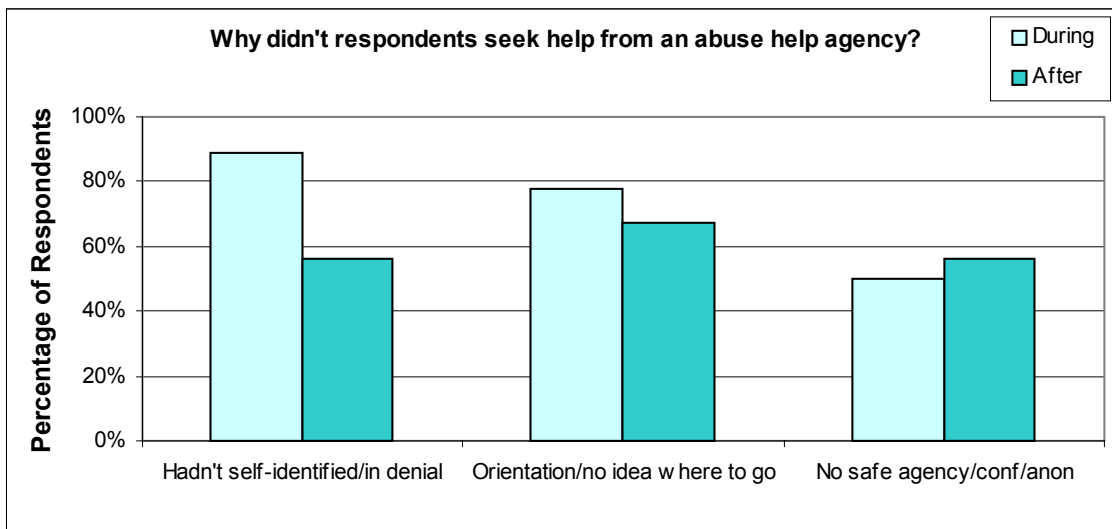
We have highlighted behaviours involving physical violence or threats of physical violence (other than forcing sex) in the above table in order to draw specific attention to the incidence of same. 12 **(50%)** of abused respondents have experienced at least one of: hitting, slapping, punching, choking, kicking, or biting. From the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey (which surveyed women with male partners) we see that 1 out of 2 women with previous marriages **(50%)** reported experiencing violence at the hands of a previous spouse.

'Humiliating you in front of other people' has been highlighted because 3 of the 15 respondents who reported experiencing this behaviour (ID# 5, ID# 8 and ID# 34) emphasized it, respectively, by: 3 check-marks, "constantly!!!", and "especially". No other behaviour was emphasized in this way.

Why didn't respondents seek help from an Abuse Help Agency?

22 out of 24 (92%) of abused respondents did not seek help from an Abuse Help Agency while in an abusive same-sex relationship; 18 of those (82%) cited one or more of the 9 barriers suggested in Question 19. 15 of 21 (71%) have not sought help since leaving; 9 of them (60%) cited one or more of the 9 barriers suggested in Question 23. In the following graph, we have combined the totals for particular barriers listed in Questions 19 and 23 in order to identify larger categories of barriers that keep abused lesbians in Saskatchewan from seeking help at Abuse Help Agencies, as follows:

- '*hadn't self-identified as an abuse victim*' was combined with '*in denial about abuse*': the issue here is "What is abuse?"
- '*felt that sexual orientation was a barrier*' was combined with '*no idea where to go for help*': the issue here is "Is there a place that understands lesbian abuse?"
- '*didn't feel safe going to an agency*' was combined with '*worried about confidentiality/anonymity*': the issue here is "Is there a safe place to go?"



So, if the goal is to encourage lesbians in abusive same-sex relationships to seek help from Abuse Help Agencies, they need:

1. to know that they are being abused (accomplished perhaps by listing abusive behaviours);

2. assurance that there are abuse help agencies that are well aware that abuse occurs in lesbian relationships, and that are lesbian friendly
3. a list of specific safe agencies.

These needs are born out by:

- i) a few of the remarks under 'Other' in both 19 and 23;
- ii) most of the answers to the auxiliary question in both 19 and 23: "What might have encouraged you to seek the services of an abuse help agency?" and
- iii) a couple of the points in 'Any other comments?' at the end of the Questionnaire.

(We are also reminded of the significantly lower levels of respondents' knowledge of services offered to women abused in same-sex relationships in comparison with the levels of their knowledge of services offered to abused women generally that we have already seen.)

ID #	19. Other
4	Knowing where to go - where to look - knowing I would be helped even though sexual orientation was hidden from everyone then!!
10	Had no idea what I would say; felt that it would be hard enough explaining that I was abused, never mind that it was by a woman.
38	Needed a clear indication that they were gay-positive & understood same sex violence
41	Initially in denial, then felt orientation was a barrier as well—partner well known in community

ID #	23. Other
8	There are no lesbian only groups for "battered" womyn as far as I know and I don't feel safe or like I'd fit in a regular battered (straight) womyn's group.
31*	Once I self-identified and was able to talk to friends, new partner, I didn't feel the need to seek counselling.
41	Partner well known in community - talked to a private therapist/counsellor rather than an abuse help agency.

ID #	19. What might have encouraged you to seek the services of an abuse help agency while in the abusive relationship?
2	In rural Saskatchewan, there are few options/still not many out people or organizations
3	More publicity about issues
8	Being less proud. Knowing there is a place for lesbians
10	Maybe if the word "Lesbian" was in the name of an agency like "Info and Support Centre for Abused women, including Lesbians." Maybe if a friend had gotten a counsellor to come to me, instead of me having to go to someone.
30	Having an agency specific to gays.
35	Someone else validating what I went through as real abuse.
36	Awareness of agencies, gay positive identification.
37	Knowledge & acceptance of same sex relationships; offer help to both victim & abuser.
39	Better awareness of agencies available. [This respondent is currently in her first abusive same-sex relationship]

ID #	23. What might have encouraged you to seek the services of an abuse help agency After leaving the abusive relationship?
4	Knowing that it was abuse. Being sure I could get the help. Knowing where to go!!!
8	Knowing there were lesbian only groups.
30	Gay positive agency.
35	Someone else validating what I went through as real abuse.
37	If agency had more experience & knowledge of same sex relationships.
38	Info about gay-positive services & understanding of violence within same sex relationships; lesbian-specific services (i.e. groups, awareness campaigns, counsellors)

	Any other comments?
Yes	I'm an university student and I rely on the health & counselling services at the University and find it frustrating dealing with a constant turn-over of doctors and counsellors, especially none that specialize/are knowledgeable in lesbian/gay health & counselling.
No	I think there is a feeling among my lesbian/queer friends (& gay male ones too) that there isn't any place to go for help, except specifically gay agencies. The fear of homophobia whether or not it's justified has kept several queer people I know (both male & female) from getting help. It's really scary.

Why did respondents seek help from an Abuse Help Agency?

2 out of 24 (8%) of abused respondents did seek help while in an abusive same-sex relationship and 6 of 21 (29%) sought help after leaving. Information from them as to:

- i) where they went for help;
- ii) why they went there;
- iii) whether they were aware at the time of anything else that was available;
- iv) how it went;
- v) what was helpful/not helpful;
- vi) whether there were gaps in service; and
- vii) whether they have suggestions for improvement

(from questions 20 and 24) can perhaps also shed light on what might encourage lesbians in abusive same-sex relationships to seek help from Abuse Help Agencies. Here are their answers to questions 20 and 24, (as well as their answers to Question 8: If someone who was experiencing abuse in a female same-sex relationship asked you where to get information or assistance, what would you suggest?)

ID #	20. During abusive relationship sought help at:	8. Suggested:
29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Service Saskatoon, Mental Health, GLHS Knew of gay positive people there I had minimized some situations and they helped me to realize how bad it really was for me. With that help, I got out. I could have used more education and reminders on abuse. I do wish that GLHS had some decent/good counselors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual Assault Centre GLHS Family Service Saskatoon Mental Health
34 (Regina)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health agency in BC where I was living Knew the counselor I was seeing was a lesbian. I did not know of other services available. [It was] awesome. I was lucky. I found a great support that helped me leave the relationship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to talk to a few lesbian counsellors that I know

ID #	24. <u>Since leaving</u> abusive relationship sought help at:	8. Suggested:
2 (Regina)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saskatchewan Mental Health, 13th & Hamilton Street Health Care Coverage: Needed to learn about feelings & quit bottling them up It is still going. It is helpful though slow and I have many trust issues and layers. My therapist seems ok with my sexuality (though I do sense some vibes). Maybe old paranoia of homophobia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PFLAG Pink Triangle
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saskatoon Family Services I can't remember why I went there. I heard about it through work (I worked for a provincial abuse umbrella association). I got into a Domestic Abuse Program (DAP), with 9 straight women. It went quite well. I felt comfortable about being out to them. Even though all the info was for women abused by men, I was able to apply it to my case almost all the time. However, it would have been better if there had been some info about lesbian abuse and if the 2 facilitators had known something about lesbian abuse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hot Peach Pages GLHS
29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual Assault Centre; Family Service Saskatoon I was aware of my options (this respondent was the only one who went to an agency during and after) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual Assault Centre GLHS Family Service Saskatoon Mental Health
32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Crisis Centre [Family Support Centre?] It was the only place I knew of to go for help. It was helpful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't know.
36 (Aboriginal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Health; Family Healing Circle Lodge More discussions around same-sex issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to call GLHS for info sexual abuse line Crisis line there are a few counselors I would recommend
42 (Regina)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counselors at Mental Health I needed to talk. I was not aware of anything else at the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regina Women's Centre Mobile

The two who went to an agency for help during the abusive relationship went specifically to agencies where they knew there were either gay-positive counsellors or lesbian counsellors. All 6 who've gone to an agency for help since leaving the abusive relationship went to a non-same-sex specific-agency, but only one would now suggest the non-same-sex specific agencies she went to if a lesbian friend needed help—all but two of the others would suggest a same-sex-specific agency (of the other two, one lives in Regina*, and one did not know what to suggest, even though she said the non-same-sex-specific agency she went to “was helpful”). Of the 8 who ever went to an agency, 6 would now suggest either Gay & Lesbian Health Services in Saskatoon (GLHS), a lesbian counsellor she knows, or PFLAG/Pink Triangle (in Regina) i.e. all same-sex-specific help, and, as above, of the other two, one lives in Regina* and the other doesn't know what to suggest.

* Regina has no obvious, visible 'dedicated' same-sex agency like Saskatoon's GLHS

What suggestions did the entire cohort make in answer to Question 8?

Suggestions	Saskatoon (Out of 32 replies to this question)		Regina (6 replies)	Other (6 replies)	Comments
GLHS (Gay & Lesbian Health Service)	22	69%	1	*	* 2 suggested "local gay/lesbian centre"
Sexual Assault Centre	8	24%	2		
Interval House or local shelter	5*	16%		2	*one said "as last resort"
Counseling/counselor	5*	16%	2#		*one said "I would recommend a few specific counselors" # one said "lesbian counselors I know"
Hot Peach Pages	3	10%			
Crisis line	3	10%		1	
Tamara's House	2	6%			
Family Service Saskatoon/Regina	2	6%	1		
Doctor (physician)	2	6%			
Church/minister	2	6%			
Mobile Crisis			1		
Mental Health	1	3%			
Crisis Nursery	1	3%			
Victim Services				1	

Although only 50% of the entire cohort suggested GLHS, 69% of those residing in Saskatoon did. And while it is true that GLHS has a province-wide toll-free number, that fact is not widely known province-wide, and GLHS has no offices or staff outside of Saskatoon. Because of the much higher percentage who suggested GLHS in Saskatoon, we feel confident in assuming that whether or not a respondent suggested GLHS is largely a function of knowing about its existence (and at least a little about its programs). (Residents of Saskatoon are simply more likely to know about GLHS.) We can then also assume that if more lesbians residing outside of Saskatoon knew about GLHS (and its toll-free number), they, too, would suggest it. The following graphic illustration makes these assumptions difficult to dispute, given the location of GLHS's office.

