

THE DEGREE OF OPENNESS ABOUT A GAY/LESBIAN
ORIENTATION AS RELATED TO FEAR OF NEGATIVE
EVALUATION, SELF-ACCEPTANCE, AND
INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA

By

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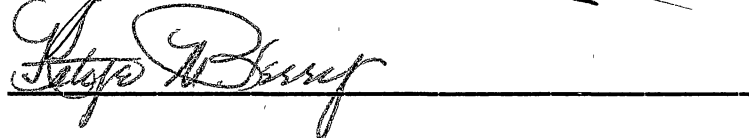
I dedicate this dissertation to all the fine gay men and lesbians who struggle continuously with coming out issues, in a world quick to oppress and slow to understand or care. My most sincere respect and my undying support to all of you, my brothers and sisters.

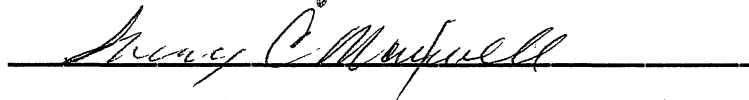
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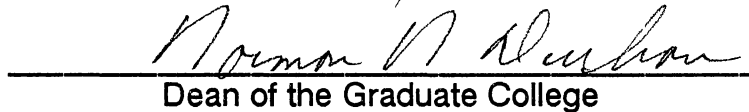
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In order to adequately understand lesbians and gay men (hereafter referred to collectively as "gays") it must be realized that gays represent an invisible, oppressed minority, residing within a predominantly heterosexual culture. In America, this dominant culture is hostile towards gays; and, society at large systematically discriminates against them by way of homophobia and heterosexism (Aiken, 1976; Beane, 1981; Potter, 1985; Potter & Darty, 1981).

"Coming out" is the term used to describe the process of personally acknowledging a lesbian or gay sexual/affectional orientation and revealing that orientation to others. The task of coming to terms with a sexual/affectional orientation that is at odds with the mainstream of American society can be quite difficult (Coleman, 1982; Corbett & Morgan, 1983). It entails taking on what Goffman (1963) refers to as a "spoiled identity" (p. 2). This means that, being gay is considered by many to be deviant, pathological, immature, unnatural, and/or immoral. Despite urgings of the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association to remove the stigma associated with a gay lifestyle, by and large, the stigma still remains (Faderman, 1984; Gershman, 1983; Hess).

After gays inwardly accept their orientation, the next step is to reveal this orientation to others. This prospect poses a number of problems. For example, when lesbians or gay men are open about their sexual/affectional orientation,

they may encounter culturally sanctioned maltreatment. A major obstacle to coming out hinges on the lack of civil rights for lesbians and gay men. Because gays are denied civil rights and because gay partnerships are not viewed as valid, legal contracts, there can be negative ramifications associated with coming out. These ramifications may include denial of housing, employment termination, expulsion from universities, denial of certification or licensure, dishonorable discharge from the armed services, custody suits, and even imprisonment (Adelman, 1977).

Unfortunately, the revelation of a gay sexual/affectional orientation cannot be accomplished once and for all; rather it is a perpetual, ongoing process (Enck, Preston, & Thornton, 1984). With each new situation and each new person encountered, a gay person must decide whether or not to reveal her or his alternate lifestyle. Even casual situations, taken for granted by heterosexuals (straights) require decision-making. For example, to avoid inadvertent disclosure of lifestyle to others, closeted gays (those who conceal their sexual orientation) must monitor activities such as how intimately they gaze at their partners in the grocery store, or whether or not to hold hands, during a romantic dinner (Groves & Ventura, 1984; Kingdon, 1974).

Each gay person must ascertain under what circumstances and to whom she or he wants to come out. The work place is one arena in which coming out becomes a critical issue. Closeted gays often camouflage their orientation by changing the gender of their loved one, or by attending office parties with an opposite-gendered date who serves as a decoy. As is the case with single employees, closeted gays are thought to be ideal candidates to send on business trips, since ostensibly they do not have a family or marriage to disrupt (Hedgepeth, 1979). Another uncomfortable situation for a closeted gay person concerns the awkwardness associated with sharing a hotel room with a same-

sexed colleague, during business conferences. If the gay person is "out", the colleague may fear a sexual advancement. If she or he is not out, the closeted gay may be anxious about how the rooming situation will be viewed in retrospect; in the event that her or his sexual/affectinal orientation was exposed later on (Hedgepeth, 1979).

Families pose a dilemma because coming out to family members is often accompanied by rejection from loved ones. Yet, if one does not tell family members, she or he may feel emotionally estranged from them. This sets gays apart from other minority groups who can usually count on the support of their families (typically the minority status is shared by all family members). Special problems occur when gays in committed relationships remain closeted with their families. Often closeted partners remain separated during the holidays, since each is expected to remain with her or his own family. Also, when family members come to visit, closeted gay couples are apt to scrutinize their home for evidence which might tip off family members about their relationship; such evidence is often purged, denying to family the very existence of their love. This, in effect, disclaims the legitimacy of their relationship (Krieger, 1982).

Gay parents encounter special problems related to coming out. If sexual/affectinal orientation is discovered, lesbian or gay parents risk losing custody of their children. Moreover, non-custodial parents may be denied visitation privileges. Consequently, many gay parents remain closeted. Another area of concern for gay parents is whether or not to come out to children. If a gay parent has not confided in her or his children, the children will likely feel betrayed and confused upon discovering their parent's sexual/affectinal orientation. Yet, if the children are told, they may reject their parent. Or, they may feel overburdened and may fear stigmatization by association (Morrison, 1984; Ponse, 1976).

As with family members, it can be difficult for gays to come out to friends because they fear negative evaluation from others. For closeted gays, this dread of critical evaluation can create a constant undergirding of social anxiety which colors all interactions with others. This may be keenly felt in relationships with friends; If gays are not out, they cannot be truly authentic with friends. The inherent deception precludes intimacy because as gays pretend to be straight, their friends do not really know them. Closeted gays feel compelled to hide a major area of their lives from friends. Furthermore, when gays insist on being closeted with friends, they must tacitly accept jokes or harsh remarks that devalue gays, and therefore self (de Monteflores & Shultz, 1978; Sophie, 1982, 1985).

Certainly, there is a severe personal cost for not being genuine in important relationships, and for presenting a facade to the world (Jourard, 1971). Likewise, there are severe penalties that accompany openness. Most of the literature suggests that coming out is a self-affirming act that improves the self-esteem of gays. Likewise, gay activists advocate that coming out is psychologically healthier, because it demonstrates pride in being gay (Coleman, 1982; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Graham, Rawlings, Halpern & Hermes, 1984; Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1978; Rand, Graham, and Rawlings, 1982; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Shacher & Gilbert, 1983; Sophie, 1982; Steinhorn, 1983; Weinberg, 1984). Furthermore, the activists contend that coming out provides the only effective mechanism for creating the social changes needed to improve the quality of life for gays. Perhaps Lewis (1984) expressed the dilemma best when she espoused that gays can either "be in conflict with self and in harmony with the world or in harmony with the world and in conflict with self" (p. 465).

Gay rights advocates profess that it is self-affirming to be open about sexual/affectional orientation (de Monteflores & Shultz, 1978; Gartrell, 1981; Hess, 1983; Lewis, 1984). In their landmark study of 2,497 gay men from the U.S., Netherlands, and Denmark, Hammersmith and Weinberg (1973), concluded that commitment to a gay identity and sharing that identity with others was associated with increased self-esteem.

Gay advocates claim that pretending to be straight creates the need to lead a double life (Fitzpatrick, 1982; Gartrell, 1981). As noted above, deception precludes personal authenticity (de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Hess, 1983; Lee, 1977; Lewis, 1984). Many authors have contended that without the personal authenticity afforded by coming out, an individual will have lower self-esteem and self-acceptance (Coleman, 1982; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1973; Jourard, 1971; Lee, 1977; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Ponse, 1976; Rand et al., 1982; Sophie, 1986; Troiden, 1984; Wells & Kline, 1987).

Countering these claims, there have been two research studies suggesting that openness about lifestyle orientation may be associated with low self-esteem (Jacobs & Tedford, 1980; Myrick, 1974). When, Myrick (1974) compared 150 gay men with 126 heterosexual men on measures of self-concept, he found that overt gays were characterized by lower self-acceptance than covert gays. Likewise, Jacobs and Tedford (1980), in their study of 34 gay men, found a significant inverse relationship between openness about sexual/affectional orientation and self-esteem.

Several authors have complained of the paucity of research specifically designed for lesbians (Kingdon, 1979; Morin, 1977; Watters, 1986). In fact, in a systematic review of the research articles on gays, conducted between 1967 and 1974, Morin (1977) found that, compared to the number of studies using

lesbian subjects, there were four times as many studies utilizing gay male subjects. Despite Morin's recommendations that more studies be conducted on lesbians, when Watters (1986) replicated Morin's study (reviewing the years from 1979-1980) he found no change in this trend.

In terms of the differences between gay men and lesbians, two studies compared the self-esteem of lesbians with that of gay men. Both Carlson and Baxter (1984), and Larson (1982) found significantly higher levels of self-esteem in lesbians than in gay men. Carlson and Baxter (1984) found that self-esteem (as measured by the BEM) seems to be a function of degree of masculinity in both lesbians and gay men; with higher degrees of masculinity associated with corresponding elevations in levels of self-esteem.

Statement of the Problem

Given the apparent contradiction between the numerous authors who endorse the desirability of openness about one's lifestyle preference, and the two abovementioned studies that found openness to be undesirable, more research needs to be conducted. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to extend this empirical investigation to include not just gay males, but also lesbians, and to examine in greater depth the possible emotional consequences of coming out. Specifically, this study examined the relationship between degree of openness about one's sexual/affectional orientation, and self-acceptance, fear of negative evaluation, and internalized homophobia, in both gay male and lesbian populations.

Definition of Terms

Gay: Besides having an erotic/affectional preference for members of the same sex, "gay", has positive connotations: it entails an attitude of self-acceptance, and implies a rejection of the negative societal stereotypes associated with being "homosexual", (a term which carries negative connotations, associated

with a clinical diagnosis of mental disorder and a negative self image). "Gay" can be used as a generic term to include both genders, though it is often used to describe only men (Beane, 1981; Berg-Cross, 1982).

Lesbian: Like the term "gay", "lesbian" is associated with a denouncement of negative societal attitudes towards same-sex love relationships. The term "lesbian" is not limited to sexual preference for women, it includes an emotional preference for another women which may or may not include sexual involvement (Corbett & Morgan, 1983; Potter & Darty, 1981).

Sexual/Affectional Orientation: This is a term that underscores the fact that being gay or lesbian is not limited to sexual behavior; rather, it can better be understood as a lifestyle preference or orientation which includes a preference for emotional as well as sexual intimacy with same-sex partners (Fitzpatrick, 1982).

Homophobia: This is a type of societal prejudice aimed at gays. Homophobia refers to enculturated negative attitudes toward gays, including fear, loathing, anger, discomfort, and aversion towards gays. It may be manifested by heterosexuals via overt or covert maltreatment of gays, or it may be internalized by lesbians and gay men and experienced as self-hatred and feelings of unworthiness (Coleman, 1982; Martin, 1982; Morris, 1982; McDonald, 1982; McWhirter & Mattison, 1982; Troiden, 1984).

Coming Out: This term is an abbreviation of the expression, "coming out of the closet." Coming out is a lifelong process and is characterized by two important steps: acknowledging sexual/affectional orientation to self and disclosing that orientation to others. It is both an intrapsychic and an interpersonal process calling for the integration of gayness into one's personal and social life, and, hence, the process never ends (Berg-Cross, 1982; Di Angi, 1982; Martin, 1982; McDonald, 1982; Ponse, 1976; Sophie, 1982; Troiden, 1984).

Openness/Overtness: This refers to allowing others to know about one's sexual orientation. Openness implies a refusal to comply with the dictates of society to remain secretive about sexual/affectional orientation, by hiding in the "shame closet" (Aiken, 1976; Lee, 1977; Ponce, 1976).

Statement of the Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance.

Difference Between Lesbians and Gay Men: Research has indicated that differences exist between the populations of lesbians and gay men (Groves & Ventura, 1983; Lewis, 1984; Loney, 1972; Peplau, 1982; Potter & Darty, 1982). This study investigated differences between lesbians and gay men relative to the variables of interest for this study (relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and fear of negative evaluation, self-acceptance, and internalized homophobia).

General Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant relationship between the degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and the following predictors: Fear of negative evaluation, self-acceptance, and internalized homophobia for gay men.

General Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant relationship between the degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and the following predictors: fear of negative evaluation, self-acceptance, and internalized homophobia for lesbians.

The following hypotheses are derived from general hypotheses one and two:

Self-Acceptance: Research has indicated that there is a positive relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and self-acceptance (Coleman, 1982; Graham et al., 1984; Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1978; Rand et al., 1982; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Shacher & Gilbert, 1983; Sophie, 1982; Steinhorn, 1983). This investigation examined the possible existence of

a relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and self-acceptance.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant positive relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and self-acceptance for gay men.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a significant positive relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and self-acceptance for lesbians.

Fear of Negative Evaluation: Research has indicated that there is a negative relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and fear of negative evaluation; as degree of openness increases, there is a corresponding decrease in fear of negative evaluation. Likewise, as degree of openness decreases, there is a corresponding increase in fear of negative evaluation (Berg-Cross, 1982; Ross, 1978; Schmitt & Kurdek, 1984). This investigation examined the possible existence of a relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and fear of negative evaluation.

Hypothesis 5: There will be a significant inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and fear of negative evaluation for gay men.

Hypothesis 6: There will be a significant inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and fear of negative evaluation for lesbians.

Internalized Homophobia: Research has indicated that there is a negative relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and internalized homophobia; as openness increases, there is a corresponding decrease in internalized homophobia. Likewise, as degree of openness

decreases, there is a corresponding increase in internalized homophobia (Coleman, 1982; Groves & Ventura, 1983; Kingdon, 1977; McDonald, 1982; McWhirter & Mattison, 1982; Troiden, 1984). This study examined the possible existence of an inverse relationship between sexual/affectional orientation and internalized homophobia.

Hypothesis 7: There will be a significant inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and internalized homophobia for gay men.

Hypothesis 8: There will be a significant inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and internalized homophobia for lesbians.

Significance of the Study

Aside from the importance to individual gay people as they confront problems associated with coming out in a homophobic society, this study indirectly addressed a larger social issue. Because gays are primarily an invisible minority, it is very difficult to achieve social change. The impetus created by a large, vocal group is wanting. Hence, there is a dilemma because unless more gays are overt, they have little muscle to provoke social change, yet coming out may have damaging personal repercussions (Aiken, 1976; Kingdom, 1979; Lee, 1977; Martin, 1982).

To date, most studies have been conducted solely on gay men. Yet, the findings of these studies have been applied to both gay men and lesbians, even though such applications may not be valid. The literature has indicated that while gay men and lesbians share some common characteristics, they constitute two distinct populations. Therefore, this study investigated whether or not differences in lesbians and gay men are manifested via the coming out process (de Monteflores & Shultz, 1978; Gartrell, 1981)

Information about impact of coming out on factors related to self-concept could prove useful to therapists. Realizing that coming out is associated with psychological well-being, therapists could work toward helping their clients come to terms with their lifestyle orientation, while learning strategies for disclosing their orientation to others, as each situation warrants.

Assumptions of the Study

Several assumptions were made in this research study. First, it was assumed that all the subjects, while varying in their degree of openness, are "out" about their sexual/affectional orientation. An assumption was also made that subjects would honestly report their degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation. Likewise, it was assumed that the instruments used would accurately measure the variables of interest. It was further assumed that there would be no major violations of the assumptions underlying multiple regression analysis. These underlying assumptions included linearity of relationship, homoscedasticity, uncorrelated error, normality of error, and independence among subjects (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Stevens, 1986). It was assumed that all of the subjects for this study could be classified predominantly gay as indexed by the Kinsey Scale (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948).

Limitations of the Study

There were certain limitations to this study which should be noted. Since the subjects were derived largely from a word of mouth method, they may not have been representative of the gay population as a whole and, thus, caution should be exercised in generalizing the results of this study. Another limitation was that all participation in the study was voluntary. A further limitation was that because it is virtually impossible to identify completely closeted gays, the range on degree of openness was restricted. A final limitation was that the dependent variables could be affected by other unknown life experiences rather than the

by the independent variables. Of particular concern were such possible confounding variables as: 1) whether or not subjects were in committed relationships, 2) their type of employment, 3) their academic major, 4) their degree of homosexuality as indexed on the Kinsey continuum, 5) the length of time they considered themselves to be gay, 6) the presence or absence of a positive support system, 7) the attitude of family towards gays, 8) religious beliefs, and 9) ethnic origin (Kinsey et al., 1948).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter consists of a review of pertinent literature, including theories and empirical findings about select personality variables as they relate to the gay coming out process. Subject matter is organized into a number of sections. The first section reviews the development of self-concept in relation to the perceived attitudes of others towards self. Moreover, this section discusses various important aspects about self conception (i.e. self-acceptance). The next section reviews aspects of societal oppression of gays and examines the impact of oppression on the lives of gays. The last major section reviews self-disclosure in general, and self-disclosure of sexual/affectional orientation in particular. The coming out process is examined against a background of homophobic oppression. Specific subsections of this chapter are devoted to each of the variables of interest to this study (openness about lifestyle orientation, self-acceptance, fear of negative evaluations, and internalized homophobia).

Self Concept

Definition

Self-conception is derived from a person's perception of her or his personal qualities and characteristics including: physical attributes, personality traits, self

in relation to others, and self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967). Self-concept can be understood as a person's attitudes and beliefs about self (Videbeck, 1969).

Atchly (1982) identified two components of self-concept, a cognitive component and an affective component. The cognitive component has several parts: self-concept (what one thinks she or he is like), ideal self (what one thinks she or he should be like), and self-evaluation (appraisal of how well one achieves ideal self). The affective component has only one part, self-esteem (whether or not one likes or dislikes self and to what degree). Self-evaluation and self-esteem are moral and emotional reactions to the estimated fit between what one thinks she or he is like (self-concept), and what one thinks she or he should be like (ideal self). The nearer the fit between self-concept and ideal-self, the more positive the evaluation of self and hence, the higher the self-esteem.

Conversely, the greater the disparity between self-concept and ideal-self, the more negative the evaluation of self and the lower the self-esteem. This issue becomes problematic for gays when there is disparity between view of self as is (gay) and view of self as should be (heterosexual). Such a disparity results in negative evaluation of self, and hence low self-esteem (Atchley, 1982; Troiden, 1984).

Self in Relation to Others

According to Symbolic Interactionists, three aspects of self become important; the "real self-image" which is self as defined by the ego; the "looking glass self" which is self as the ego thinks others view her or him; and the "ideal self", which is self as ego would like it to be. The "looking glass self" (through which a person learns about self indirectly as a reflection of others' opinions about her or him) is of particular interest. The "looking glass self" is made up of two main component parts: the "me" which is the internalization of the imagined perceptions of others, and the "I" which is the person's reaction to the imagined

perceptions of others (Cooley, 1902; James, 1890; Manis, 1955; Mannheim, 1966; McDonald, 1982; Mead, 1934; Myamoto & Dornbusch, 1956; Troiden, 1984; Videbeck, 1960).

The perception of self in relation to others develops as the evaluations of significant others (particularly parents) become internalized (Cooley, 1925; Horney, 1950; Sullivan, 1953). At a later point in time a group often referred to as "generalized others" also serves as referent for gaining information about self (Cooley, 1902; Mannheim, 1966; Videbeck, 1960).

Reference Groups

There are specific groups a person looks to for information about self. These may be either groups a person actually belongs to, or they may be reference groups. Both reference and membership groups provide norms against which a person evaluates self (Cooley, 1902 & 1925; Jacobs & Tedford, 1980; Mannheim, 1966; Mead, 1934). Whenever an individual adopts the group's point of view, that group's perspective will influence her or his self-concept. Individuals can belong to and refer to several different groups simultaneously, even though the groups have different norms (Jacobs & Tedford, 1980).

Deviant Self Labeling

People learn to evaluate themselves in comparison to others. The process of social evaluation by comparison leads to positive, neutral, or negative self-ratings (Rosenberg, 1977). As aforementioned, according to the principles of reflected appraisals, the attitudes of others are influential in shaping attitudes towards self. Since the reactions of others toward labeled deviants are usually negative, these reactions typically result in lowered self-esteem (Chassin & Stager, 1984; Dank, 1971; Elliott, 1984; Stager, Chassin, & Young, 1983). Self-labeling as "gay" necessarily entails adopting a deviant social label. Should gay self-labeling occur under conditions where it is denegated by others, the

deviant social label associated with gayness will carry with it a negative connotation. Consequently, low self-esteem is predicted. However, it appears that internalizing a deviant social labeling does not necessarily result in lowered self-esteem. Lowered self-esteem is associated with: Awareness of negative evaluations from others, agreement with the prevailing negative viewpoint about the deviant characteristic, personal relevance of the deviant characteristic, and importance granted to the negative opinion of others (Chassin & Stager, 1984).

Contextual Consonance or Dissonance

Rosenberg (1977) identified contextual consonance or dissonance as a critical factor impeding upon self-concept as it relates to reference groups. Contextual consonance or dissonance refers to the concordance of, or discrepancy between, an individual's social characteristics and those of the surrounding culture. There are two subcategories of contextual dissonance, namely, dissonant communication environments and dissonant cultural environments. A communications environment is a setting in which certain things, whether actually said or not, are known by implication. Tacit assumptions underlie explicit messages. Certain shared values and characteristic points of view prevail. In a communications environment a person learns not only how much she or he is disliked, but also how much her or his social group is disliked. A minority person in a dissonant context routinely hears deprecations of her or his social group, but rarely hears positive remarks about it. Rosenberg (1977) concluded that dissonant communications contribute to reduced self-esteem, and increased awareness of the negative attitudes of others towards one's social group. This makes pride in group membership difficult to achieve.

A dissonant cultural environment is extant when a minority group exists as a subculture within a larger dominant group. The minority member may have once been a respected conformist well integrated into her or his own group. Now, as a minority member, she or he is deviant, laughed at, rejected, and/or despised because of her or his deviant status. As might reasonably be assumed, this maltreatment has a negative effect upon self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1977).

Effect of Approval or Disapproval from Others

Approval or disapproval from others is associated with corresponding increases or decreases in self-esteem. Hence, the decision to inform certain people over others (of one's deviant status) may be indicative of feelings towards self. If negative responders are chosen it may bespeak of negative self-evaluation, whereas if favorable responders are chosen it may reflect positive self-evaluations (Sophie, 1982). If, despite the deviancy, a person is accepted by some people, it is easier to withstand rejection by society (Coleman, 1982; Maehr, Mensing, and Nafzger, 1962; Videbeck, 1960). However, the relative importance of the person offering support or disapproval must be considered. For example, the approval of a significant person would be much more influential than the approval of a casual acquaintance. Support from significant others encourages commitment to the deviant identity; this will ultimately enhance self-esteem. On the other hand, persons already committed to a deviant identity may selectively seek out supporters, while devaluing the negative opinion of non-supporters (Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1973).

Achieving Positive Self-Concept

Despite maltreatment from others, there are several ways a labeled deviant may avoid lowered self-esteem. First, deviants may disclaim the personal relevancy (of prevailing negative attitudes about the deviancy) by denying that it

applies to self. Or, a deviant may acknowledge personal relevancy, while discounting the correctness of those views. A final strategy for averting lowered self-esteem is to recognize self as deviant, but to minimize the importance of this deviant quality. In this case, the deviant quality is viewed as a minor, inconsequential part of overall self-concept (Chassin & Stager, 1984; Stager et al., 1983).

Most researchers and theoreticians contend that openness about sexual orientation positively influences self-concept, conversely hiding sexual orientation from others is associated with damage to self-esteem (Corbett & Morgan, 1983; Graham et al., 1984; Ivey, 1972; Kingdon, 1977; McDonald, 1982; Sophie, 1982; Shacher & Gilbert, 1983; Steinhorn, 1983; Rand et al., 1982). Sophie (1982) sums up this notion by concluding that "Hiding in major areas of one's life implies devaluation of lesbians, and, therefore, of oneself" (p.343). Martin (1982) claims that "Lying about who you are, results in self-contempt and can cause substantial damage to self-esteem"(p.346). On the other hand, according to McDonald (1982), "Achieving a positive gay identity appears to be contingent upon disclosing one's sexual orientation to significant others" (p.48).

Identity

Definition

Identity can be understood as a subset of self-concept, in that self-concept is made-up of a collection of identities. In the same way that self-concept develops in relation to interactions with other people, identity is believed to develop in consequence to the reactions of others. Yet, unlike self-concept, identity is situationally specific (Troiden, 1984). Identity refers to the organized set of characteristics an individual believes represent her or his self in relation to a real or imagined social audience (Troiden, 1984). Troiden (1984) noted

three key aspects of identity: self-identity, which is identity in social situations; presented identity, which is the behavioral expression of self-identity, and perceived identity, which is how a person believes others view her or him.

Role Identities

In considering self-concept as a conglomerate of identities, each specific identity is contingent upon the role a person assumes within a social context (Atchly, 1982; Burke & Tully, 1977; Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1973; Shachar & Gilbert, 1983; Troiden, 1984). Role identities are the meanings a person attributes to self as an actor, performing a social role. The responses of others provide clues as to how a particular role should be performed. Then, others respond to the person as though her or his presentation of self, constitutes that person's true identity. Over time, and with enough repetitions, the person internalizes the reflected appraisals of others and develops a self-identity (in any given situation). At first these role identities are situation specific. Eventually they are organized into a hierarchy of identities. The top tier of the hierarchy contains the most central, encompassing role identities; these serve to organize and govern the lower role identities (Burke & Tully, 1977).

Gay Identity Development

Sexual Identity

One problem in understanding the concept of "gay identity" revolves around confusion of terminology. There has been a lack of differentiation between key terms. For example, sexual identity is comprised of gender identity (male/female), sex role identity (role behaviors associated with a certain gender), and sexual orientation (preferred gender of sexual partners). Despite the significant difference in their meanings, these terms are often used interchangeably (Larson, 1982; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Riddle, 1978).

Developing a Non-Traditional Identity

Adopting a non-traditional identity (i.e. gay identity) necessitates the reconstitution of self. This restructuring of self-concept may call for revising future goals and/or reinterpreting past events to make them compatible with the emerging deviant identity (Chassin, Eason, & Young, 1981; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Fein & Neuhring, 1980; Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1973; Martin, A., 1982; McDonald, 1982; Sophie, 1986). The redefinition of self caused by incorporating a stigmatized identity into an existing self-conception can be extremely disconcerting (De Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Di Angi, 1982; Minton & McDonald, 1984). In fact, it may lead to an identity crisis. An identity crisis occurs when circumstances or choices necessitate the acquisition of a new identity component that is in conflict with long-standing components. An identity crisis is characterized by strong, personal commitments to two distinct identity components that have become incompatible. These incompatible commitments demand contradictory behaviors. From a subjective point of view, the person in an identity conflict feels that she or he is in an impossible situation because the felt commitments are irreconcilable. Such a person feels that it is impossible to act without betraying self and others. Gay people in the process of formulating a gay identity often experience an identity crisis (Baumeister, Shapiro, & Tice, 1985).

Gay Versus Homosexual Identity ✱

Morin and Schultz (1978) differentiate between the development of a homosexual identity versus a gay identity. A homosexual identity implies acceptance of society's devaluation of same-sex sexual/affectional orientations. The end result is a negative identity. Conversely, a gay identity results in a positive identity and it is based on rejection of society's negative evaluation of same sex-sexual/affectional orientations.

The Acquisition of a Gay Identity

Fein & Nuehring (1980) explain that "Gay people learn the negative stereotypes associated with homosexuality. Upon recognizing themselves as homosexual, there is a time of disbelief that parallels the incredulity of patients faced with a serious, socially marring, and irreversible diagnosis, such as epilepsy. The patients may have suspected the condition, but only upon definite confirmation is their reality shocked" (p. 7).

To develop a gay identity, a person must necessarily take on a deviant status. As the gay person begins to question her or his sexual orientation, an identity confusion similar to adolescence may ensue; the person may struggle to sort out the difference between engaging in homosexual behavior and identifying self as gay (Corbett & Morgan, 1983; Krieger, 1982; Weinberg, 1978; Wilson, 1984). This problem is exacerbated by the unfortunate reality that most gay people are socialized by heterosexuals to become heterosexual adults. Hence, having no model of proper gay etiquette, gays do not automatically know how to function as gays. For example, they do not know how to court or even interact with other gays. Nor do they know how to present themselves (as gay) to heterosexuals (Fein & Neuhring, 1980; Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1973; Lewis, 1984; Freeman, 1975; Schneider & Tremble, 1986).

Stages of Gay Identity Development

When a person acknowledges her or his sexual/affectional orientation, it causes the loss of one identity (heterosexual) and necessitates the adoption of an new identity (gay). This identity reconstruction is an on-going process that takes place over the entire life span (Coleman, 1982; Fisher, 1984; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Troiden & Goode, 1980; Weinberg, 1984). Often the identity formation process is believed to occur in stages (Brady, 1985; Cass, 1983/1984; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Di Angi, 1982; Minton & McDonald, 1984;

Plummer, Troiden, 1979; Troiden & Goode, 1980). Though various researchers have postulated their unique version of the stages of gay identity development, Sophie (1986) extracted the underlying commonalities of these theories. Commonalities include: (1) awareness of same-sex emotional and/or physical attraction, (2) acting on homosexual feelings, (3) self-labeling as gay, and (4) integrating a gay identity (see Appendix A, for a comparison of stage theories).

Weinberg (1984) criticized the stage theories of gay identity formation claiming that since these theories were derived from biological models, they cannot be applied to social phenomenon in a meaningful way. Moreover, the stage theories have been challenged because they are linear in nature, creating artificial categories that do not adequately account for the "basic flexibility of human beings, whose life spans are often characterized by shifts and reorientations" (Sophie, 1986, p.50; Weinberg, 1984). The ultimate goal, as proffered by stage theorists, is to achieve a final, integrated and stable identity. Sophie (1986) cautions that stability of identity should not be taken to mean that individuals who have adopted a gay lifestyle cannot subsequently change.

Weinberg (1984) contended that the major problems with linear stages were as follows: Stage theories fail to consider that there may be alternative pathways toward achieving the same identity. They assume that development occurs at a uniform rate. They treat deviations from the expected as immature or regressive. Further, they ignore: the possibility of change in the course of a life span, the inherent flexibility in human beings, and the possibility of multiple identities (Weinberg, 1984). Cass (1983/1984) underscored the multiple nature of identities by admonishing that "There is no such thing as a single homosexual identity....Homosexual identity may vary on any number of dimensions. There are a myriad of meanings that individuals can include in

their perceptions of themselves as 'homosexuals'. A sound theory of gay identity must be able to incorporate within its proposals the multi-faceted nature of identity" (p. 118).

Developing a Positive Gay Identity

Because gays in the U.S. are often stigmatized and condemned, it is difficult for most gays to achieve a positive gay identity (Kingdon, 1977; Wooden, Kawasaki, & Mayeda, 1983; Sophie, 1987). The expectation that gays should be able to feel good about themselves independent of societal reactions is delusive. Riddle & Sang (1978) contend that "It is unrealistic to expect lesbian clients to be impervious to what others think of them or to remain unaffected by the widely publicized images of heterosexual relationships as normal" (p.93) (Beane, 1981; Fein & Nuehring, 1980; Krysiak, 1987; Larson, 1982; Steinhorn, 1983; Troiden, 1984). The experience of being stigmatized, or tolerated but never truly accepted takes its toll on self-acceptance (Coleman, 1978; Coleman, 1982; Di Angi, 1982; Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1978; Larson, 1982; Minton & McDonald, 1984).

The difficulty inherent in achieving a positive, gay identity against a backdrop of homophobia and heterosexism should not be taken to mean that such a task is impossible. In fact, there are several factors that seem to be associated with forming a positive gay identity. Being committed (as indicated by an unwillingness to change sexual orientation even if given the opportunity to do so) to a gay identity is self-affirming and this in turn, is associated with increased self-esteem (Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1973; Troiden, 1979). Commitment to a gay identity encourages the person to seek out significant others who are supportive and this process reinforces self-esteem (Coleman, 1982; Elliott, 1984; Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1973; Jacobs & Tedford, 1980; Sophie, 1982, 1986). Another factor that seems to be important to the development of a

positive, gay identity is association with other gays. In Troiden's (1979) study of 150 gay men, he discovered that before self-identifying as gay, 94% of these men thought that homosexuality was a form of mental illness. It was not until these men met other gays with interests and attitudes similar to their own that they reevaluated their former beliefs. Meeting other gays enabled the men studied to counteract and defuse some of the power of negative, societal stereotypes; this, in turn, allowed them to see gays and consequently themselves in a more positive light.

As gays are able to accept their gayness and accept themselves as gay, they will be able to achieve a positive, gay, identity synthesis which includes an integration of gay identity with other aspects of self. The gay identity will not be viewed as the only identity, but rather one important aspect of self. When this happens, the person's personal and public sexual/affectional identity will have been integrated into a single self-image (Coleman, 1982; Di Angi, 1982; Minton & McDonald, 1984).

Cognitive Congruence

Cognitive Consistency

The notion that people strive to maintain a state of cognitive consistency was first proffered by Fritz Heider (Heider, 1946). Heider developed a "balance theory" which espouses that people are motivated to maintain a cognitive balance between their attitudes about an issue, other people's attitudes about something, and their relations with other people (Heider, 1946, 1958). When there is an imbalance, cognitive discomfort occurs and there is an effort to restore a more satisfactory state of balance. For example, if a gay person believes that gay lifestyles are legitimate and desirable, yet her or his society views gayness as objectionable, then the person will be in a state of imbalance. That is, if she or he deems societal acceptance important. To

restore cognitive balance, the person could either agree with society that being gay is objectionable, or she or he could believe that society is wrong.

Cognitive Dissonance

Leo Festinger (1957) addressed the issue of cognitive congruence by developing his theory of cognitive dissonance. According to this theory, people feel compelled to have consistency between their attitudes or beliefs and their behaviors (Scott, 1959). Cognitive elements can be either consonant, dissonant or irrelevant. If dissonant, inconsistency exists between attitudes/beliefs and behavior, stress and discomfort will ensue and an attempt will be made to reconcile the dissonance. For instance, if a person engages in numerous homosexual affairs and society insists that being gay is unacceptable, this person will be in a dilemma. If, she or he accepts the societal viewpoint, then she or he must consequently view self as unacceptable. To reduce the dissonance inherent in this situation, a person may implement one of several strategies; she or he may engage in homosexual affairs while denying that this behavior is indicative of gayness. The person may discredit the source, believing that society is in error, being gay is acceptable. The person may cease engaging in homosexual affairs. The person may attempt to change society's negative viewpoint. The person may agree with society's negative view and internalize a homophobic view of self. Or, the person may diminish the importance of the contradictory attitudes or belief by reasoning that while there may be prejudice, it does not really affect her or him because few people know that she or he is gay (Festinger, 1957; Manis, 1955; Minton & McDonald, 1984).

Cognitive Congruence As Applied to Gays

When gays first acknowledge their sexual/affectional inclinations, there is usually a period of internal conflict, wherein they feel disoriented, stressed, and

unsure of themselves. There is a conflict between an individual's own same-sex feelings and her or his heterosexist rearing (Fein & Nuehring, 1980; Groves & Ventura, 1983; Hanlou, Hafstaetter, & Connor, 1954; Lewis, 1984). When gays are confronted with their own stigma, their construction of social reality is challenged (Fein & Nuehring, 1980; Groves & Ventura, 1983). As gays find that they do not fit all the negative stereotypes incorporated into their personalities via socialization, they may become confused and have a sense of unreality (Fein & Nuehring, 1980). Inconsistencies among self-identity, behavior, and perception of others' view of self produce pressure to restore congruence (Hess, 1983). A person becomes torn between developing a gay lifestyle and avoiding pain (Berg-Cross, 1982). Perhaps this dilemma can best be exemplified by Lewis (1984) when she quotes her client as saying 'you can be in conflict with yourself and in harmony with the world or in harmony with yourself and in conflict with the world'. As gays accept and internalize a positive gay identity they are able to achieve congruence between self-perception, behavior and the viewpoint of others. A gay identity is experienced as valid when balance exists between who individuals feel they are, who they present themselves as being, and how they think others view them (Hess, 1983; Troiden, 1984). According to Roth (1985) if a woman in a relationship identifies herself as lesbian and discloses this identity in a larger social context, she will achieve an identity which is continuous across all contexts of her life, and will experience relief from the burden of "passing", and the incessant decisions about where, how, and to whom it is safe to reveal herself.

Self-Acceptance

According to Berger (1952, 1955) self-acceptance refers to a person's ability to: Rely on own standards and values, accept responsibility for own behavior, accept criticism or praise objectively, accept feelings without denying or

distorting them, not expect rejection from others, regard self as person of worth, not view self as fundamentally different from others in a negative way, and not be self-conscious or shy.

Because of the societal sanctions against a gay lifestyle, self-acceptance is difficult to accomplish (Greenberg, 1973). In fact, acknowledgement of same-sex attraction is often accompanied by feelings of denial, shame, ambivalence, and anxiety (Coleman, 1978; Lewis, 1984; Schaefer, 1976). An individual's sense of worth rests on both validation from self and validation from others (Rosenberg, 1977). If the reactions of others are positive, it can begin to counteract some of the old, negative feelings about gays and can encourage self-acceptance. If the reactions of others are negative it can confirm the negative feelings a person has about being gay and hence decrease self-acceptance (Coleman, 1982; Cramer, 1986; Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1973). Unfortunately, society typically invalidates gays or validates them despite their gayness. Therefore, gays must rely mainly on self for a sense of validation (Coleman, 1978; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978).

Self-acceptance begins with gay self-identification. In Troiden's (1979) study of 150 gay men, he discovered that roughly one year after self-identifying as gay, 87% experienced a positive change in attitude about self. Though self-identification is the first step towards achieving self-acceptance, it is inadequate to fully explain the complex process of accomplishing self-acceptance (Lewis, 1984). Another factor impending upon self-acceptance relates to the degree of openness about sexual orientation. Gays who remain isolated and hidden do not fully accept themselves as gay, because they retain some of the negative attitudes toward gays that discourage self-acceptance (Groves & Ventura, 1983; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Sophie, 1982). Hiding necessitates presenting self as straight; this is accomplished via conforming to society's heterosexual

expectations. Ross (1978) found that gays passing as straight, had low scores on self-acceptance. Coming out, on the other hand, implies the personal rejection of negative stereotypes about gays; this leads to a positive redefinition of gayness (Lee, 1977). As a gay person starts to question the negative values of society, while relying on personal values, she or he may be able to overcome some of the harmful effects of internalized homophobia. The self-accepting gay learns to blame the oppressive culture, rather than self (Kingdon, 1977; Lewis, 1984). Coming out, publicly demonstrates pride in self as gay and a willingness to abandon existing social standards despite the personal costs, in order to develop one's own standards of behavior (Humm, 1980; Lee, 1977).

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Definition

Social anxiety is the discomfort resulting from either the potential for, or the actual evaluation of self in social situations (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1984).

According to Kurdek & Schmitt (1984) there are three component parts to social anxiety: social timidity which is the fear of creating an adverse reaction; fear of exhibitionism which is the fear of being noticed by others; and fear of revealing inferiority which is the fear of being critically evaluated by others. It is the fear of revealing inferiority that is of greatest import to gays.

In order to experience social anxiety, one must have an awareness of self as a social object. This public self-consciousness can lead to anxiety over the perceived scrutiny of others and feared rejection from them (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1984). Watson and Friend (1969) are concerned with social-evaluative anxiety which they define as distress, discomfort, fear, and anxiety in social situations. More specifically, they define fear of negative evaluation as a type of social-evaluative anxiety which includes "apprehension about other's evaluation, distress over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and

the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Watson & Friend, 1969, p. 449).

Most gays live with the ever present threat that if other people were cognizant of their gayness, they would be evaluated negatively, rejected, stigmatized, and discriminated against (Berg-Cross, 1982; Chafetz, Sampson, Beck, & West, 1974; Gershman, 1983; Martin, A., 1982; Pagelow, 1980; Potter, 1985; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Wells & Kline, 1987). Consequently, the majority of gays choose to remain closeted.

Because closeted gays fear exposure, they resort to lying, and constant deception to protect their facade. However, remaining closeted takes a toll; fear of exposure can lead to feelings of paranoia and chronic stress. Hiding can breed self-hatred (Kingdon, 1977; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Well & Kline, 1987). Moreover, perpetually contending with both the implicit and explicit negative societal reaction to gays can become exhausting (Groves & Ventura, 1983; Mette, Taylor, & Stuart, 1971; Ross, 1978).

In a study of 61 gay men, Ross (1978) found that those who expected negative societal reactions were conforming, psychologically maladjusted, and had low self-acceptance. Other researchers have also reported an inverse relationship between social anxiety and self-acceptance (Schmitt & Kurdek, 1984; Turner, Scheier, Carver, & Ickes, 1978). Schmitt & Kurdek (1984) explained that social anxiety was related to lowered self-acceptance when people were motivated to make a favorable impression on others, but doubted that they could succeed. Hence, they imagined negative reactions from important others. These imagined rejections as well as actual rejections had a powerful effect (Coleman, 1982).

Snoek (1962) discussed invidious versus non-invidious rejection from groups. Invidious rejection occurred when rejection from a group could be

interpreted to mean that the person was not worthy of membership. Non-invidious rejection occurred when rejection was based upon reasons that did not reflect on the rejectee's self-worth. It was discovered that invidious rejection had a much more powerful effect (than did Non-invidious rejection) on desired membership in a group. In fact, when rejected because of something to do with self, the rejectee still wanted approval from the group (Snoek, 1962).

Furthermore, the lower a person's self-esteem, the greater her or his need for group acceptance. Moreover, the more a person needed approval, the more power the group had to influence her or his behavior (Dittes, 1959). The findings of the abovementioned studies have implications for gays; it may be inferred that gays soliciting group acceptance will have lower self-esteem than gays not desirous of acceptance. Moreover, the stronger the desire for approval, the more readily gays would be expected conform to the expectations of others.

Differences Between Lesbians and Gay Men

Traditionally, gay men and lesbians have been treated as though they formed a single, undifferentiated group. For this reason, research findings based on gay male samples have been indiscriminately applied to lesbians (Elliott, 1984; Morin, 1977; Watters, 1986). Recently, there has been more impetus to recognize and honor the differences between the two groups: lesbians and gay men. Apparent differences between groups may be reflective of the differential socialization for men and women in the American culture (Groves & Ventura, 1983; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Vance, 1977).

For example, lesbians, like other women, are socialized to look externally for approval and so lesbians may be even more sensitive (than gay men) to acceptance and rejection from others (Riddle & Sang, 1978). Another difference that appears to be tied to the socialization process is that lesbians

tend to have higher levels of self-esteem than gay men. Researchers speculate that this finding is indicative of the differential valuation of masculine as opposed to feminine traits in the American society (masculine traits are valued more than feminine traits). Though as a collective, both gay men and lesbians have higher levels of androgyny than straights; this holds different meanings for each gender group. For lesbians this indicates higher than usual levels of masculine traits, whereas for gay men, this indicates higher than usual levels of feminine traits. (Carlson & Baxter, 1984; Larson, 1982).

Identifying Self As Gay

Gay men often have homosexual experiences first, then later they identify as gay. Lesbians, on the other hand, most often develop close emotional bonds within a friendship context. Then, these established relationships become so intense that intimate feelings are sexually expressed. Only after becoming involved in a committed love relationship does the woman identify herself as lesbian (Groves & Ventura, 1983).

Sexuality

Lesbian's sexuality usually takes place within the context of a relationship, whereas gay males are more apt to engage in casual sex (Lewis, 1984). Consequently, as a group, lesbians tend to have fewer sexual partners than do gay men (Chafetz et al., 1974; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Loney, 1972; Potter & Darty, 1981). Another difference related to sexuality is the higher rate of bisexuality in lesbians as opposed to gay men (Chafetz et al., 1974; Groves & Ventura, 1983; Hedblom & Hartman, 1980; Loney, 1972; Potter & Darty, 1981).

Relationships

In terms of relationships, lesbians are more inclined (than gay men) to establish stable, long-term relationships (Chafetz et al., 1974; Groves & Ventura, 1983; Loney, 1972; Peplau, 1982). Moreover, lesbians are more likely

than gay men, to cohabitate with their primary partners (Loney, 1972; Peplau, 1982; Potter & Darty, 1981). When in committed relationships, lesbians are more likely than gay men to be raising children (de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978). Also, in comparison with gay male partnerships, lesbians are more likely to be monogamous (Peplau, 1982; Potter & Darty, 1981). In comparing gay men and lesbians who married opposite sex partners, most of the gay men believed they were gay prior to marriage, whereas most of the lesbians were unaware of any homosexual tendencies prior to marriage (Wyers, 1987). Moreover, lesbians become romantically involved with members of their own sex roughly five years later than do gay men (de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Riddle & Sang, 1978).

Support Systems

Another difference between lesbians and gay men has to do with the feminist movement. Lesbian feminists reject institutionalized heterosexuality. From a feminist perspective, lesbianism may be viewed as a political protest against a social system that devalues women and treats them as sex objects. From this perspective, lesbian love may actually be viewed as superior to heterosexual love. There is nothing comparable in the gay male community (Berg-Cross, 1982; Faderman, 1984; Gartrell, 1981 & 1984).

Another feature of the lesbian community that has no counterpart for gay men, is the phenomenon of lesbian separatist communities. Lesbian separatist communities are set up to be independent from men. Lesbian members look to other women to meet all of their needs. In fact, lesbianism is exalted as a superior lifestyle (Berg-Cross, 1982; Chafetz et al., 1974; Faderman, 1984; Krieger, 1982; Sophie, 1982; Wilson, 1984).

Homophobia

The pervasiveness of anti-gay attitudes touches every person, but it profoundly affects gays (McWhirter & Mattison, 1982). Individual gay people suffer because they live in a culture where they are considered maladaptive and maladjusted (Potter & Darty, 1981; Siegal & Hoefer, 1981).

Hostile Social Milieu

Homophobia has been defined as the irrational fear and loathing of gay people (Beane, 1981; Graham et al., 1984). It is impossible to adequately address the problems encountered by gays without examining the homophobic society in which gays develop and reside (Barquist, 1985; Cohan, 1982; Gentry, 1986; Grabert, 1985; Krysiak, 1987; Morris, 1982; Shernoff, 1984). Plummer (1975) states that "The single most important factor about homosexuality as it exists in this culture is the perceived hostility of the societal reactions that surround it.....Homosexuality as a social experience simply cannot be understood without an analysis of societal reactions toward it" (p.102). Most North Americans are socialized to believe that gays are immoral, sinful, disgusting, mentally ill, perverted, unacceptable, and criminal because of their choice of sexual/affectional partners (Aiken, 1976; Beane, 1981; Kremer, Zimpfer, & Wiggins, 1975; Humm, 1980; Kingdon, 1977; Morin & Schultz, 1978; Myrick, 1974; Wilson, 1984).

Subtle Homophobia

Anti-gay attitudes are deeply entrenched; such attitudes are woven into the socialization process (Humm, 1980; McWhirter & Mattison, 1982). Even in elementary school children begin to internalize negative feelings towards gays. According to Aiken (1976), "Elementary children learn to label gays, to avoid being called 'queer' at any cost, and they learn that it is perfectly acceptable to abuse 'queers'" (Aiken, 1976). Humm (1980) described the invidious nature of

anti-gay attitudes, "An estimated 800,000 gays were killed in Nazi concentration camps, a fact that is often omitted from holocaust chronicles. Gay people were ✱ the only group of survivors of the death camps that were denied reparations from the German government" (Humm, 1980). Moreover, stereotypes and myths about gays are proliferated through the legal, medical, and psychological systems (Carlson & Baxter, 1984; Davison & Friedman, 1981; Desdin, 1977; Garfinkle & Morin, 1978; Gartrell, 1981; Martin, A., 1982; Meredith & Riester, 1980; Norton, 1982; Potter & Darty, 1981; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Rochlin, 1982; Weitz, 1982). Unlike other minority groups, gays have been viewed as mentally disordered because of their minority status. Rochlin (1982) notes that "Even racist therapists are unlikely to view dark pigmentation as either an arrest in normal development or a sociopathic, narcissistic, paranoid, or masochistic mental disorder." (p.24) Weitz (1982) inspected recent sociology and psychology textbooks to determine the extent of stereotyping through mental health literature. She discovered that though there has been some improvement, stereotypes still prevail (Weitz, 1982). The Judeo-Christian ethic has negatively influenced society's animosity towards gays. Major religions condemn gays and reinforce the belief that homosexual love is sinful and that establishing a stable gay relationship is tantamount to living in a constant state of sin (Humm, 1980; Kremer et al., 1975; Morin & Schultz, 1978).

In their discussion of the special problems encountered when a gay partner dies, Siegal & Hoefer (1981) address the subtlety of institutionalized homophobia. For instance, Seigal & Hoefer note that when a gay partner of many years dies, the newspapers make no mention of the fact that the person is survived by a loving partner. It is as though the survivor is a non-person who does not really exist. This sort of subtle homophobia is so insidious that for the

most part it goes unnoticed (Fein & Neuring, 1980; Lee, 1977; Potter, 1985; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Seigal & Hofer, 1981).

Furthermore, the insidious nature of homophobic oppression is exemplified by the omission of teaching children that gay lifestyles are possible lifestyle options. Likewise, children receive no information about famous gays who have made important contributions to society. By presenting no evidence to counter negative stereotypes, discrimination via omission, subtly reinforces existing stereotypes (Kimmel, 1978; Martin, A., 1982; Winkelplick & Westfeld, 1982).

Overt Homophobia

Other types of homophobia are not at all subtle. Sometimes overt homophobia takes the form of physical violence issued against gays. Furthermore, overt homophobia is exemplified through an ever present unwillingness to grant gays the civil rights awarded to other groups and through the criminalization of consenting, adult homosexual behavior. Gays may be verbally harassed or verbally condemned because of their lifestyle choice. Gays have been accused of being child molesters. They have even been accused of being a threat to the continuance of the human race. Also, gays have been indicted as undermining the family and heterosexual marriage (Aiken, 1976; Gershman, 1983; Martin, D.A., 1982; Morris, 1982; Potter, 1985; Schneider, 1986; Steinhorn, 1983; Richards & Phil, 1979/1980). Richards & Phil (1979/1980) have observed that no similar fear accompanies religious vows of celibacy; they wryly comment that "The suggestion must be that homosexual preference is so strong and heterosexual preference so weak (and conventional family life so unattractive) that people would tend to abandon heterosexual marriage if homosexuality were legitimized."

Homophobia and Self-Acceptance

The entirety of covert and overt homophobia make self-acceptance and the attainment of a positive gay identity difficult to achieve (Aiken, 1976; Coleman, 1982; Hess, 1983; Karr, 1978; Krieger, 1982). According to Riddle & Sang (1978) being a lesbian is not a problem per se; living in a homophobic society is the culprit that works against the attainment of a positive self-concept.

Heterosexism ✕

Heterosexism refers to the culturally conditioned bias that heterosexuality is intrinsically superior to and more natural than homosexuality (Aiken, 1976; Brown, 1975; Graham et al., 1984; Morin, 1977; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Rochlin, 1982; Watters, 1986; Weitz, 1982). Heterosexism is at the root of myths about gays such as: lesbians turn to other women because they cannot attract men, all lesbians are masculine and want to imitate men, all gays are promiscuous, or gay relationships are less serious, committed, and stable than heterosexual unions (Glenn & Russell, 1986; Martin, A., 1982; Potter & Darty, 1981). Heterosexism is used to justify discrimination against gays and the accompanying denial of gay civil rights (Morin, 1977; Watters, 1986).

Compulsory heterosexuality is a corollary of heterosexism. According to the principle of compulsory heterosexuality, all people should be attracted to and should form romantic relationships with members of the opposite sex. The presumption being that heterosexuality is the only acceptable outlet for sexual expression (Elliott, 1984; Rich, 1980). The heterosexual assumption may be internalized by gays as well as straights. Corbett & Morgan (1983) found that prior to taking on a lesbian identity, most lesbians had an image of themselves as heterosexual and felt that heterosexuality was the only unobjectionable form of sexual expression. According to the heterosexual assumption, all people are presumed to be heterosexual unless proven otherwise. This creates a dilemma



for gays because in order to rectify the erroneous heterosexual assumption, gays must somehow communicate their gayness to others. It is this heterosexual assumption that creates the need for coming out (Aiken, 1976; Krysiak, 1987; Roth, 1985).

Gays As An Oppressed Minority ✓

A minority group is a group whose nature is defined by its relationship to a surrounding majority (Rosenberg, 1977). Gays should be understood as a minority group, housed within a hostile, dominant culture (Graham et al., 1984). There are several noteworthy distinctions between gays and racial or ethnic minorities.

Families Do Not Share Minority Status

One key difference between gays and other minority groups is that unlike ethnic and racial minorities, gays do not share minority status with their families. Not only do gays feel alone and different from society at large, but they also feel alienated from their families of origin (Beane, 1981; Fein & Neuhring, 1980; Krysiak, 1987). In fact, they may be ostracized and shunned by their families; this constitutes the unique pain of gays unparalleled in the family experiences of other minority groups (Potter & Darty, 1981; Rochlin, 1982). Because gays do not share their minority status with their families, they are the only minority group that cannot look to parents as a role models. Gays have no one to teach them how to go about being gay (Beane, 1981; Krysiak, 1987).

Develop Minority Status As Mature

Another difference between gays and other oppressed minorities is that gays acquire their minority status after or during adolescence, not at birth. Hence, they acquire a minority membership that goes against their rearing. Not sharing their minority status with family members and not acquiring their minority status at birth, gays do not grow up interacting with children and adults who have a

like minority status. In fact, they are not taught skills that might help them cope with an oppressive, hostile world (Beane, 1981; Kimmel, 1978; Lewis, 1984; Martin, 1982).

Hidden Minority

Yet another major difference between gays and other oppressed minorities is that because of the cost of openness and because most gays are indistinguishable from heterosexuals, gays are a silent, hidden minority (Aiken, 1976; Beane, 1981; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Krieger, 1982; Lee, 1977; Potter & Darty, 1981; Riddle & Sang, 1978). This conspiracy of silence keeps gays isolated and it keeps society from understanding the gay lifestyle, for the stereotypes and myths go unchallenged (Di Angi, 1982; Martin, A., 1982; Rochlin, 1982).

Gays Viewed As Immoral or Psychologically Disturbed

Another important distinction between gays and other minority groups is this; no other minority group has been accused of having a diagnosable mental disorder strictly because of their minority membership. Though some progress has been made in this area a good deal of prejudice remains, even despite the myriad of evidence to the contrary. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the psychological adjustment of gays is indistinguishable from that of straights (Braaten & Darling, 1965; Freeman, 1975; Meredith & Riester, 1980; Oberstone & Sukoneck, 1976; Potter & Darling, 1965). Moreover, both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have removed homosexuality from their list of mental disorders. In fact, mental health professionals have been admonished to take the lead in removing the mental illness stigma associated with being gay (Morin, 1977).

In addition to accusations of mental illness, gays have been labeled immoral. In conjunction with religious dogma, gays and straights are socialized

to believe that same-sex love is indecent and intolerable. Gays are judged as being derelict and depraved (Rochlin, 1982).

Oppression Based On Choice of Love Object

Something else that sets gays apart from other minorities is that whereas most minorities are oppressed because of some ostensible difference from the dominant culture (i.e. skin color or gender), gays are discriminated against because of their choice of love objects. For most minorities, it is not only socially permissible to fall in love with a member of the same minority, it is encouraged. In short, other minorities are hated for whom they outwardly appear to be, gays are hated for whom they love (Vida, 1978).

Double Minority Status For Lesbians

A final point worthy of mention is that all lesbians are necessarily members of a double minority, since they are both women and gay. Consequently, they are doubly discriminated against; they suffer the same loss of earning power and status encountered by all women. Plus, they suffer the homophobic hostility experienced by all gays (Krieger, 1982; Potter & Darty, 1981; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Roth, 1985).

Discrimination

Discrimination against gays is different from racial or gender discrimination because these qualities are apparent. Sexual/affectional preference on the other hand is not apparent; unless it is assumed or known, gays are not directly discriminated against (Adelman, 1977). However, while perhaps not directly experienced, discrimination is indirectly felt, because the discriminating and oppressive tone of society is ever present (Fein & Nuehring, 1980; Winkelpleck & Westfeld, 1982). Discrimination may be evident through negative attitudes and stereotypes about gays. Moreover, it may be directed towards employment

and housing discrimination, or denial of custody of children etc. (Adelman, 1977; Martin, D.A., 1982).

Civil Rights/Legal Issues

One of the most difficult problems for gays is the lack of civil rights protection. As it stands now, because of their sexual/affectional orientation, gays can be: fired from their jobs, denied licenses or certification, denied housing, and denied custody or visitation of their children (Adelman, 1977; Beane, 1981, Cohan, 1982; Fein & Nuehring, 1980; Guthrie, 1979; Hitchen, 1979/1980; Lewin, 1981; Martin, A., 1982; Martin, D.A., 1982; Padelow, 1980; Potter & Darty, 1981; Steinhorn, 1983). Moreover, the constitutional right to privacy is not enforced for those in a gay lifestyle. Hence, even engaging in private, consensual, homosexual acts places gays at risk (Hedgepeth, 1980; Richards & Phil, 1979/1980; Sullivan, 1984). The federal courts have extended considerable protection to other minority groups disallowing employment discrimination. According to federal law, minorities should be given equal opportunity to be hired for a position. Employers cannot discriminate on the basis of age, color, race, religion, sex, physical handicap, or national origin. However, employers can discriminate on the basis of sexual/affectional orientation. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enforces policies of nondiscrimination for the other minorities mentioned above, but not for gays. So, it can be seen that the right to equal employment opportunity, fundamental as that right may be, has not yet been extended in a meaningful way to gays (Hedgepeth, 1980; Vetri, 1980).

In most places, being gay is illegal. This criminalization taints all gays as delinquent and prevents an unbiased evaluation of other legal issues (Aiken, 1976; Vetri, 1980). Moreover, same-sex unions are not granted the legal or cultural legitimacy afforded heterosexual couples. Hence, gay couples may

have problems with ownership of property and property management, access to hospitalized partners, or burial of deceased partners. Likewise, they may be prohibited from, or at the very least have difficulty with, collecting social security benefits, insurance, or inheritance (Curry & Clifford, 1986; Haynes, 1977; Morris, 1982; Winkelpleck & Westfeld, 1982).

The lack of civil rights, criminalization of gays, and the lack of legal legitimacy for gay couples makes discrimination not only permissible, but socially sanctioned. In a society that tolerates and even legally condones discrimination and oppression of gays it is no wonder that so many gays remain hidden (Kingdon, 1977). Unfortunately, however, the invisibility of gays has made it difficult for the Gay Rights Movement to have the impetus needed to create social change (Cohan, 1982; Humm, 1980). The Gay Rights Movement is striving to put an end to the legalization (in statutes, regulations, and judicial decisions) of discrimination against gays. Attaining gay civil rights is the critical first step towards ending institutionalized discrimination against gays (Vetri, 1980). Humm (1980) explains that "Without these (civil rights), we are not fully free to move on to the larger social agenda.....This society's lack of acceptance has led to the creation of a whole group of victims who have been made to suffer as needlessly as Black people have for their color and women for their sex."

Stigma

Gay people are stigmatized in the American society because of their sexual/affectional orientation (Martin, A., 1982; Morrison, 1984; Siegal & Hoefer, 1981; Troiden, 1984). Hence, self-labeling as gay entails taking on a culturally devalued stigma (Hencken, 1984; Padelow, 1980).

To acquire a stigma, a person must be placed with others in a single social category assumed to be homogeneous. A widely held set of negative

valuations must be associated with that social category and the stigmatized characteristic must be seen as the most important characteristic of the individual (Fein & Nuehring, 1980). Goffman (1963) differentiates between stigma based on being discredited versus being discreditable. Those who are discredited, have visible marks of their stigma. Those who are discreditable do not appear different, but would be stigmatized if their failing were discovered. Hence, the main task is to manage information about their hidden defect. Discreditable people must continually decide whether or not to deceive. Likewise, they must decide whom, if anyone, to tell of their failing. The stigma of concern to gay people is their discreditable quality (gayness) (de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Fein & Neuhring, 1980; Larson, 1982). Stigmatized people know or quickly learn how they are evaluated by others and how their behavior is interpreted. The experience of being stigmatized, or of being tolerated, but not really accepted takes a toll on the self-concept of the stigmatized gay person (Fein & Neuhring, 1980; Larson, 1982).

Internalized Homophobia ✕

Heterosexist beliefs are instilled into gays via the socialization process. Most gays are raised to believe that being gay is immoral and generally bad (Aiken, 1976; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Humm, 1980; Schafer, 1976). Continued exposure to this sort of prejudice results in the stigmatization through which gay identities become spoiled (Goffman, 1963; Martin, D.A., 1982). Rosenberg (1977) explains that if a minority member accepts and internalizes the values of the dominant culture she or he may come to despise self; to view self as strange, inadequate, inferior, and inept at the skills valued by the dominant culture. This is particularly devastating, for it is an attack from within. Gays are encouraged by society to hate themselves and this is hard to overcome (Beane, 1981; Groves & Ventura, 1983; Humm, 1980; Kingdon, 1977;



McCandlish, 1982; Ross, 1978; Shernoff, 1984). Aiken (1976) contends that "Self-hatred is carefully and thoroughly instilled into gay people, by the anti-gay training received during the socialization process...training received by the family, the church, the legal system, print media, television, and lyrics in popular songs" (Aiken, 1976, p.26).

When gays first realize their probable same-sex preference, they may feel anxious, ashamed, and inferior (Gershman, 1983; Di Angi, 1982). They may even go through a grieving process as they mourn their old, established identity and begin revision of their identity to include same-sex feelings (Lewis, 1984). Getting acquainted with other self-identified gays can lead to a more positive conception of what it means to be gay, as one's own internalized stereotypes about gays are challenged. This promotes enhanced levels of self-esteem for a gay person; even so, she or he may be reluctant to adopt a gay lifestyle (Troiden, 1984). Martin, A. (1982) argues that deciding between homosexuality and heterosexuality does not merely involve weighing two equal alternatives. One of them, homosexuality, is heavily loaded with fear and stigma. There is no corresponding stigma attached to heterosexuality. The aforementioned alternatives (homosexuality/ heterosexuality) do not become equal until the homophobia has been analyzed and dissolved.

Society's stigmatization makes it difficult for gays to achieve a positive gay identity. Needless to say, the internalized homophobia resulting from oppression and stigma has a deleterious effect on the self-concept of gays (Martin, D.A., 1982; McDonald, 1982; McWhirter & Mattison, 1982; Nichols, 1983). This internalized homophobia is inversely related to coming out. Hence the greater the internalized homophobia, the lower the level of openness about gay orientation (McDonald, 1982; McWhirter & Mattison, 1982).

Passing

According to Ponse (1976), the gay community forms a secret society which exists within the context of the larger social milieu. There are two types of secret societies: societies whose very existence is not known, and societies whose existence is known, but its members are not known (Ponse, 1976). Both types of secret societies develop under conditions of restricted personal freedom. In response to the strong societal proscriptions against certain behaviors or characteristics, those possessing such traits either hide or suffer negative consequences. The secretiveness of the gay lifestyle is rooted in the stigma associated with it (Humm, 1980; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Ponse, 1974).

Because of homophobia and heterosexism, most gays opt to remain in the proverbial closet. The degree to which gays hide, however, is variable. At one extreme, there are gays who do very little to hide their sexual/affectional orientation and in fact are willing to openly acknowledge it most of the time (Ponse, 1976). At the other extreme, there are gays who are "all the way in the closet"; in such cases, sexual/affectional orientation is known only by the gay person herself or himself, or only by the two people involved in a gay relationship (Aiken, 1976; Groves & Ventura, 1983; Lewis, 1984; Ponse, 1976).

Most gays are so familiar with the "straight" (heterosexual) world that they can easily pass as straight. Passing refers to presenting the facade to others that one is heterosexual (Aiken, 1976; Corbett & Morgan, 1983; Berger & Kelly, 1986; Gershman, 1983). Passing is easily accomplished by most gays because of the heterosexual assumption that all persons are heterosexual unless proven otherwise (Ponse, 1976).

Strategies For Passing

There are several strategies for passing that might be employed including impression management, restriction of audience, separation of audiences, and

counterfeit secrecy (Ponse, 1976). In order to pass effectively using impression management, covert gays must not only obscure their sexual/affectional orientation, they must also present a convincing straight facade to others (Ponse, 1976). This requires constant vigilance and careful attentiveness to behaviors or statements that might reveal sexual/affectional orientation. For example, covert gays must curb impulses to express affection in public, not just physical affection, but even intimate gazes (Riddle & Sang, 1978). Moreover, covert gays cannot afford to associate with more obvious gays, because their sexual/affectional orientation may be inferred by association (Morrison, 1984; Ponse, 1976). In the course of masquerading as heterosexual, gays must tacitly endure anti-gay remarks, change the pronouns of their partners, introduce their partners as merely roommates, bring opposite-sexed dates to office and family functions, and spend holidays apart from their partners, etc. (Gartrell, 1981; Lee, 1977; Martin, A., 1982; Martin, D.A., 1982; Ponse, 1976; Potter, 1985; Schafer, 1976; Sophie, 1982).

Other strategies for passing include restriction and separation. Restriction refers to only socializing with other gays and removing the "heterosexual mask" only in this context. Separation involves leading double lives, in that gays move between two worlds (gay and straight), but keeping the audiences (gay and straight) separate from, and unaware of each other. In this instance, a gay person must not only manage self, but also situations and other gays who might either inadvertently or intentionally give the secret away (Di Angi, 1982; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Ponse, 1976).

A final strategy for passing is counterfeit secrecy. Counterfeit secrecy is accomplished when a gay person and someone else both know that the person is gay, but neither one acknowledges it to the other. A mutual pretense is maintained; both parties know the secret, but they pretend not to know. There is

a tacit agreement not to make the implicit, explicit by direct reference to the secret. As long as a gay person's lifestyle is not directly addressed, the charade can continue. However, because the supposed understanding is never discussed, the gay person cannot know for sure that she or he would be accepted if the secret was out (Ponse, 1976).

Costs of Passing

As mentioned above, when gays pass they must go along with demeaning jokes about gays or verbal attacks of gays; thus they indirectly condone deprecations of themselves (Aiken, 1976). Closeted gays are more likely to be anxious because they live with the constant fear of being found out, and because there is tension between wanting to maintain the secret and wanting to disclose (Berger & Kelly, 1986; Lee, 1977; Martin, D.A., 1982). Also, freedom of expression is sacrificed, or at least severely inhibited, by having to be ever watchful of one's speech and behavior, lest a slip should be made which would expose one's lifestyle. (Ponse, 1976; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Sophie, 1982). This continual deception underscores one's inferiority and difference (Martin, A., 1982 & Martin, D.A., 1980). Passing seems to be associated with an internalization of the negative attitudes of others towards gays; this results in impaired self-acceptance (Gartrell, 1984; Minton & McDonald, 1984).

Intimacy. Most gays tire of keeping up the facade. As gays listen to personal disclosures from straights, they are afraid to reveal substantive information about themselves. This leads to feelings of alienation from others. Secret keeping dictates against intimacy and keeps communications on a superficial level (Kingdon, 1977; Lee, 1977; Martin, D.A., 1982; Ponse, 1976). Indeed, if a person hides a major part of self and is accepted as being like others, when in fact she or he is not, the person is apt to feel valued for the image presented, not for who she or he really is. The underlying fear is that if

one's true identity were known she or he would be rejected. The implication being that the true self is unacceptable (Martin, D.A., 1982; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Ponse, 1976). Eventually, this leads not only to alienation from others, but also to alienation from self (Groves & Ventura, 1983; Ponse, 1976; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Sophie, 1982; Strassberg, Roback, D'Antonio, & Harris, 1977). Jourard (1971) explains that "In an effort to avoid becoming known, a person provides for himself a cancerous kind of stress which is subtle and unrecognized, but none the less effective in producing an unhealthy personality" (p.33). Gays must choose between the self-alienating experience of living a lie, and personal authenticity which (for gays) invites societal punishment and condemnation (Berg-Cross, 1982; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Gershman, 1983; Groves & Ventura, 1983). The most frequently cited costs of passing are, hypocrisy, pretense, and the inability to be authentic (Lee, 1977). For some, the cost of remaining closeted is too great; they decide to go against societal edicts, directing their anger at oppression and discrimination and not at self. When a gay person comes out, she or he is able to be more authentic in personal relationships; this allows for greater depth of intimacy (Gartrell, 1981; Kingdon, 1977; Lee, 1977).

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure is an act in which a person establishes contact with real self and makes public self congruent with real self; this process demands the exposure of personal aspects of self to other people. (de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Jourard, 1971; Ponse, 1976). Self-disclosure requires the courage to be known by others as one is known by self (Di Angi, 1982). There are personal risks involved in self-disclosure and so the discloser may encounter fears, including the fear of negative evaluation, fear of losing or damaging a

relationship, fear of hurt feelings, or the fear of losing control over the situation (Wells & Kline, 1987).

Self-disclosure takes place in relation to another person and so it requires some type of response from her or him. The response to disclosure of sexual/affectional orientation may range anywhere from respect (for the discloser's courage) to judgmental condemnation. Regardless of the other person's response, the gay person is altered by the process (de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978). It is through the process of revealing self to others that a person comes to know herself or himself (de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Jourard, 1971; Lee, 1977; Rand et al., 1982; Strassberg et al., 1977; Wells & Kline, 1987).

Coming Out

Coming Out As A Process

The question of whether or not to come out is relevant to all gay people. Coming out is not the sort of activity that can be suffered through one time with the knowledge that upon completion of this ordeal, one will never have to go through it again. Rather, the decision of whether or not to come out must be re-evaluated in relation to every new acquaintance and in every new situation (Bean, 1981; Coleman, 1982; Corbett & Morgan, 1983; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Enck et al., 1984; Gartrell, 1981; Hedblom & Hartman, 1980; Martin, A., 1982; McDonald, 1982, Minton & McDonald, 1984; Riddle & Sang, 1977; Schaefer, 1976; Schneider, 1986; Well & Kline, 1987). The coming out process takes place over a period of time; this long-term process calls for the reorganization of self-concept to include a gay identity. The knowledge of gayness must be integrated into a gay person's personal and social life. Many authors believe this progression occurs in definable stages. Though various authors have devised stage theories portraying their particular version of the

coming out process, all of these theories contain two fundamental elements: 1) coming out to self, (which includes acknowledgement and acceptance of gay feelings) and 2) coming out to others (which entails disclosing gay feelings to others) (see appendix B table for comparison of various stage theories as described by Minton & McDonald (1982) (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Grove & Ventura, 1983; Lee, 1977; Martin, D.A., 1982; Minton & McDonald, 1982; McDonald, 1982; Sophie, 1986).

Coming Out In a Homophobic Society

Coming out implies a rejection of negative societal stereotypes and a sense of pride in self as gay (Berg-Cross, 1982; Lee, 1977; Martin, A., 1982; McDonald, 1982; Ponce, 1976; Sophie, 1982; Troiden, 1984). McDonald (1982) emphasized that "As a rite of passage, coming out takes place in an anti-homosexual environment where institutional and social support systems are absent. What coming out ultimately symbolizes is the individual's response to social stigmatization in a struggle to redefine self against a background of anti-homosexuality, prejudice, and discrimination. Only with reconstruction of social conditions and attitudes will individuals experience with pride and dignity, an integration of their feelings, behavior, and identity into a unified and positive self-concept" (p.58).

The Need For Coming Out

Unlike other minorities who are visibly identifiable (i.e. women) gays are in the unique position of being indistinguishable from the larger, dominant society (Cohan, 1982, Humm, 1980). Since gays can easily pass as straight, and since they are usually presumed to be straight, they must make an effort to rectify society's view of them, if they want to be known as gay. Correcting society's misconception requires energy and devotion to setting the record straight; in

short to correct the misconception, gays must come out (Corbett & Morgan, 1983; Lewis, 1984; Ponce, 1976).

Pros and Cons of Coming Out

Costs of coming out. Correcting society's erroneous conception via coming out is not without risk. In many cases, self-declaration carries with it severe penalties. There may be job loss, harassment, loss of parental custody rights, and even physical assault. On an interpersonal level, there may be ostracism and rejection from family, co-workers, and friends (Aiken, 1976; Cohan, 1982; Enck et al., 1984; Freedman, 1975; Krysiak, 1987; Lee, 1977; Lewis, 1984; Martin, A., 1982; Padelow, 1980; Ponce, 1976; Shavelson, Biaggio, Cross, & Lehman, 1980; Shernoff, 1984; Well & Kline, 1987; Wyers, 1987).

Costs of Not Coming Out. Yet, not coming out also has costs. It is difficult for closeted gays to maintain a positive self-image when they must conceal a major part of self from the world (Gartrell, 1981). Well & Kline (1987) contend that each time gays deny their sexual/affectional orientation they hurt themselves slightly; this has a cumulative effect on their energies and vitality.

Not being out can pose special problems for gays in committed gay relationships. For instance, closeted gay partners cannot share their primary relationship with family members, workmates, or friends (McCandlish, 1982; Peplau, Cochran, Rook, & Padesky, 1978; Peplau, Padesky, & Hamilton, 1982; Vetere, 1982; Winkelpleck, & Westfeld, 1982). Furthermore, it may be difficult for gay couples to go out on dates with each other, or to engage in certain routine activities (for heterosexuals) together, lest someone discern the nature of their relationship. This is of particular concern to closeted lesbians, since committed relationships are the norm within the lesbian community (Chafetz et al., 1974; Elliott, 1984; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986; Macklin, 1980; Morris, 1982; Roth, 1985; Sophie, 1982; Wilson, 1984; Winkelpleck & Westfeld, 1982).

Another problem for gay couples (relative to coming out) occurs when one partner wants or insists on greater openness than her or his partner prefers. The partner requesting greater openness may be viewed as demanding, selfish, and insensitive to the closeted partner. Or, the partner desiring greater openness may curb her or his actions in order to protect the closeted mate; this restriction on personal freedom may be resented. Another possibility is that the reluctance (for openness) expressed by the closeted partner, may be interpreted (by open partner) as either a personal rejection or a lack of commitment to their relationship (McWhirter & Mattison, 1982; Roth, 1985; and Winkelpleck & Westfeld, 1982).

Reasons to Come Out. Why, then should a person come out? For one thing, coming out allows for the establishment of congruence between personal and social life. As a gay person removes the "mask of heterosexuality", she or he becomes more authentic in personal relationships, allowing for greater depth and honesty of personal sharing, hence greater intimacy (de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Gartrell, 1981; Jourard, 1971; Ponse, 1978). Moreover, coming out allows for a sense of belongingness (with other gays) (Gartrell, 1981). Another reason for coming out is for the sake of personal freedom. As a gay person refuses to go along with the pressure to conform to society's standards (by pretending to be straight), she or he may engage in a variety of otherwise prohibited behaviors (i.e. taking same-sex partner to social functions) (Ponse, 1976). From a political standpoint, coming out acquaints society with gayness as a possible lifestyle option. Likewise, it provides other gays with much needed role models. Moreover, it may contradict negative stereotypes that otherwise go unchallenged (Christie & Young, 1986; Gartrell, 1981, Lee, 1977; Ponse, 1976). Another benefit of coming out is relief from the constant stress of impression management (working to maintain the public image that one is

heterosexual, when this is not the case) (Ponse, 1978). Hence, coming out results in the reduction of anxiety (Levine & Leonard, 1984; Schneider, 1986). Perhaps the most important benefit of coming out is the apparent increase in self-esteem associated with openness (Aiken, 1976; Christie & Young, 1987; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Freedman, 1975,; Gartrell, 1984 & 1981; Humm, 1980; Lee, 1977; Levy, 1984; Lewis, 1984; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Schneider, 1986; Wells & Kline, 1987). According to Freeman (1975), gays who come out, refuse to hide because they know they are not sick or immoral. Open gays blame the society that condemns them, rather than themselves. Hence, coming out is a self-validating experience for gays (Aiken, 1976; Christie & Young, 1986; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Freedman, 1975; Gartrell, 1984 & 1981; Humm, 1980; Kingdon, 1977; Lewis, 1984; Levy, 1983; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Ponse, 1978; Schneider & Tremble, 1986). de Monteflores encapsulated this idea by the statement "To be openly gay in such a society (American; oppressive) says a clear 'no more' to this oppression and both confirms the individual gay person and challenges society's norms" (p.66).

To Whom Should One Come Out?

Since coming out takes place in relation to other people, the responses of others can have a powerful effect. Two factors are important, the nature of the responses (supportive or disapproving), and the perceived importance of persons to whom one discloses. In general, a positive reaction from others enhances self-esteem, whereas a negative reaction is detrimental to self-esteem. However, the perceived importance of the reactor is also critical. If a highly respected significant other disapproves, the impact on self-esteem will be much stronger than if a veritable stranger disapproves. Another factor to consider is how far a person has progressed through the coming out process. For instance, if a newly acknowledged gay receives strong disapproval

following disclosure, this will likely have a stronger, negative impact than if the same reaction was received, some time later in the coming out process. After all, gays who have been out for some time, usually have a foundation of supportive experiences to help counteract negative reactions from others (Beane, 1981; Coleman, 1982; Enck et al., 1984; Faderman, 1984; Lewis, 1984; Minton & McDonald, 1984, Well & Kline, 1987; Wyers, 1987).

Coming Out to Family

According to Berg-Cross (1982), from an emotional standpoint, parents are often the most important people to inform of a gay sexual/affectional orientation. However, they are often the most difficult to tell, because gays may not want to hurt or disappoint their parents. Also, anticipated rejection from parents may inhibit disclosure; in fact, often gays most dreaded fear is rejection from family members. Consequently, many gays do not ever tell their parents. Even if the child's gay lifestyle is revealed, it may remain a taboo subject to discuss (Albro & Tully, 1979; Berg-Cross, 1982; Chafetz et al., 1974; Corbett & Morgan, 1983; Shernoff, 1984; Pinka, 1979; Ponse, 1976; Well & Kline, 1987).

Sometimes gays and their parents conspire together to avoid directly addressing knowledge of the child's sexual/affectional orientation. This counterfeit secrecy is sometimes maintained for years; the parents know their child is gay, the child is aware that the parents know, but it is never openly addressed for fear of parental rejection (Sophie, 1982). For some gays this becomes intolerable, since it keeps them emotionally alienated from family members, permitting only shallow relationships with what might otherwise be an extremely important support system (Enck et al., 1984; Kimmel, 1978).

When the costs of remaining closeted become unendurable, gays may decide to come out despite the risk of familial rejection (Albro & Tully, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Lewis, 1984; Martin, D.A., 1982). Unfortunately, as feared, the

initial reaction of many parents is rejection and disapproval (Gershman, 1983; Krysiak, 1987; Murphy, 1982, Sophie, 1982). Or, parents may blame themselves and ponder how they, as parents, failed their child (Gershman, 1983; Ponce, 1976). Parents may go through a grieving period as they adjust to the revelation of their child's sexual/affectional orientation. Just as it takes time for a gay person to acknowledge and accept gayness in self, parents of gays also experience a process of coming to terms with their child's lifestyle preference (Coleman, 1982; Enck et al., 1984).

Coming Out At Work

Most gays remain camouflaged at work because they fear job discrimination. These fears seem to be justified. For example Schafer (1976) discovered that about one in every seven lesbians has experienced difficulty at work because of her sexual orientation. Chafetz et al. (1974) found that two thirds of the lesbians in her study felt that their jobs would be jeopardized if their sexual/affectional orientation were known. Of the lesbians studied by Levine & Leonard (1984), three fifths expected to be discriminated against if their lifestyle was discovered. Around 25% reported incidences of job discrimination. Moreover, 29% reported that they had been either: Not hired, fired, or forced to resign because of their lifestyle. Likewise, approximately 59% of the lesbians studied by Schneider (1986) anticipated employment discrimination if their sexual/affectional orientation were known, and 22% reported actual job loss upon discovery of their lifestyle. McCrary & Gutierrez (1979/1980) found that 74% of gays in the military whose lifestyle was discovered were given dishonorable discharges. As a result of anticipated or actual discrimination most gays opt to remain closeted at work. For example, in Levine and Leonard's (1984) study, 77% of the lesbians remained partially or totally hidden at work.

Moreover, in assessing the attitude of others towards gays in the work place, Schneider (1986) found that only slightly over half (56%) of the study participants, felt that gays should have equal employment opportunity; and many of those thought that gays should be restricted from certain types of jobs, including teaching, the ministry, and medicine. So it can be seen that gays report anticipated or actual job discrimination and heterosexuals concur that they would, in fact, discriminate against known gay employees (Berger & Kelly, 1986; Chafetz et al., 1974; Hedgepeth, 1980; Levine & Leonard, 1984; McCrary & Gutierrez, 1979/1980; Schafer, 1976; Schneider, 1986; Sophie, 1982; Well & Kline, 1987).

In response to the employment risks associated with being gay, several coping strategies are employed. One strategy is to work in a field stereotypic of gays (i.e. hairdresser for gay males). Another strategy is to go into a profession that is relatively accepting of gays (i.e. counseling), and a final strategy and the one used by most, is passing (Chafetz et al., 1974; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Ponce, 1976; Schneider, 1986).

The problem of managing a disreputable identity in the work place is one of the most persistent and difficult problems faced by gays. Having to remain secretive at work, creates a great deal of strain. Secretiveness causes gays to either remain non-committal about themselves in conversations with workmates, particularly avoiding inquiries into their romantic involvements. Or, they may change the gender of their partners or dates, when entering in discussions. After hours socializing and business related entertaining becomes problematic. Some gays bring opposite-gendered dates to business functions in an effort to maintain the sham (Levine & Leonard, 1984; Martin, A., 1982; Ponce, 1976; Schneider, 1976).

When to Come Out

If a gay person decides that she or he would like to come out in a certain situation, it may nonetheless be difficult to calculate the optimal timing of disclosure. If the disclosure occurs at the beginning of a relationship, then there is an immediate risk of rejection, and the relationship is given no chance to develop. On the other hand, if a person waits until the relationship has been established, then she or he has presented a facade, in essence duping the other person. Rejection at this point may be even more devastating because it occurs at a more intimate level (Ponse, 1978; Sophie, 1982).

How to Come Out

Even if a gay person decides when to come out, she or he may not know how to accomplish the disclosure (Berg-Cross, 1982; Sophie, 1982).

Disclosure of sexual/affectional orientation may be inadvertent or purposeful and may be carried out by self or others (Adelman, 1977; Aiken, 1976).

Adelman (1977) reviews four possible ways of discovering someone else's sexual orientation: 1. public record, 2. participation in, or observation of a sexual act, 3. third party disclosure, and self-disclosure. According to Aiken (1976) there are three ways to come out: Conform to the stereotypes, openly declare gayness, or get caught, while attempting to pass. If a gay person opts to come out, disclosure may be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal disclosure can be achieved by dressing and conducting oneself in accordance with gay stereotypes. Verbal disclosure entails actually putting the secret into words. With verbal disclosure, the secret is irrevocably divulged and can never be hidden again. Moreover, the discloser loses control of the secret in that she or he cannot control further, unwanted disclosures (Aiden, 1976; Ponse, 1976).

Role Models

The difficulties encountered by gays in the coming out process are compounded by the lack of positive gay role models. Without visible role models, gays have no one to look to for guidance through the coming out process. They see no living examples that gays can lead happy, productive, and open lives. Moreover, since most gays were reared by heterosexuals, they do not have models of how to behave in gay relationships. Nor, are there many open examples of positive gay relationships. Very few well-respected, famous gays are visible to the population at large, to dispute negative stereotypes. There are no commercials on television depicting a happy gay couple, nor are there many television shows depicting well-adjusted, non-stereotypic gays (Coleman, 1982; Hess, 1983; Humm, 1980; Lee, 1977; Potter & Darty, 1981; Martin, A., 1982, Martin, D.A., 1982; Rochlin, 1982; Well U Kline, 1987).

Without visible role models of gays who have become successful despite the discrimination ever-present in our society, it is hard for gays to develop positive self-concepts. Without positive role models how are gays to believe that social change is possible? Where is the living proof? Without visible role models, hope for a better life is difficult to maintain. The gay mentors inspiring other gays to strive towards their example are unmistakably absent (Berg-Cross, 1982; Freedman, 1975; McWhirter & Mattison, 1982; Schneider & Tremble, 1986).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the Symbolic Interactionist view of self-concept development. According to this perspective, self-concept and its corollary, role identities, evolve via interaction with other people. It is through these interactions that a person develops a sense of how she or he is viewed by

others. The opinions of others about self become internalized and incorporated into a person's view of self (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Sullivan, 1953).

For gays, this involves internalizing the negative attitudes of others towards gays. As anti-gay attitudes become incorporated into self-concept, gay persons experience internalized homophobia. Moreover, an internalization of heterosexist dogma almost surely imposes a negative impact upon gay self-acceptance (Aiken, 1976; Coleman, 1982; Hess, 1983; Karr, 1978; Krieger, 1982).

The reality of sanctioned oppression against gays coupled with their resulting fear of negative social evaluation serves to keep most gays in the closet (Ademan, 1977; Martin, D.A., 1982). However, concealing sexual/affectional orientation from others prohibits establishing close personal relationships; it also impinges upon freedom of activities (i.e. hand holding in public). Therein lies the dilemma for gays; gays must decide between openness which will allow for personal authenticity, as it simultaneously invites anti-gay discrimination, and closetedness which disallows intimate relationships with others, but minimizes the direct effects of oppression (de Monteflores & Schultz; Freedman, 1985; Kingdon, 1977; Lewis, 1984; Schneider & Tremble, 1986).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Chapter three provides a review of the methods and procedures utilized in this study. This chapter is divided into the following sections; subjects, instrumentation, procedure, design, and analysis of data.

Subjects

Subjects for this study were volunteers selected from the population of gay and lesbian students attending universities in the Western and Midwestern regions of the United States. Altogether 122 subjects participated: 61 gay men and 61 lesbians. Subjects ranged in classification from freshmen to graduate students (see Table 1). The subject pool included members of the Black, Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American ethnic groups; the largest ethnic group was Caucasian (see Table 1). In terms of religious affiliation, many subjects reported non-participation in organized religion. However, those claiming religious affiliations represented every major religious group (Moslem, Jewish, Catholic, Protestant) except Hindu. Nonetheless, the greatest number of religious lesbians were Catholic, whereas the greatest number of religious gay men were fundamentalist Christians (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Information by Gender

Demographic Information	<u>Subjects</u>	
	Gay Men N=61	Lesbians N=61
ETHNICITY		
Asian	3	4
Hispanic	3	3
Native American	3	8
Caucasian	50	43
Other	1	0
CLASSIFICATION		
Freshman	4	2
Sophomore	6	3
Junior	15	19
Senior	16	15
Graduate	13	21
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION		
Fundamental Christian	10	8
Catholic	8	10
Protestant	4	3
Jew	5	2
Moslem	0	0
Hindu	0	0
Other	34	37

Note: Totals reflect fact that not all subjects completed all items.

Lesbians

The sample of lesbians ranged in age from 19 to 56 years, with a mean age of 28 years. On the average, lesbian subjects had self-identified as lesbian for approximately seven and one half years. Some, however, had considered themselves lesbian for up to 37 years, while others had considered themselves lesbian for 1 year or less (see Table 2). The age of first homosexual experience ranged from 3 to 40 years; the modal age was 19 years (see Table 2). Over half of the lesbians sampled were in committed relationships; length of relationship ranged from less than 1 year to over 10 years. Approximately 20% of the lesbian sample group was made-up of lesbian mothers (see Table 3).

In terms of coming out to family members, about 66% were out to their mothers, 50% were out to their fathers, and 66% were out to their siblings (see Table 3). For an indication of perceived attitude of family members towards gays, see Table 4.

Gay Men

The sample of gay men ranged from 18 to 48 years of age; the mean age was 25 years old. The men sampled had considered themselves gay for an average of eight and one half years, though the length of time varied from 1 to 37 years. The earliest age reported for first homosexual experience was 6 years, and the latest age reported was 28 years, with the modal age being 17 years (see Table 2).

Approximately one third of the men sampled were in committed gay relationships; the length of these relationships ranged from under 1 year to over 10 years. Only two men had children (see Table 3).

Regarding coming out to family, about 70% were out to their mothers, about 50% were out to their fathers, and about 64% out to their siblings (see Table 3).

Table four provides information about the perceived attitude of family members towards gays.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges For: Ages, Age of First Gay Experience, and Number of Years Gay

	X	SD	Range	N
AGE IN YEARS				
Gay Men	25.2	6.2	18-48	61
Lesbians	27.7	8.8	19-56	61
NUMBER OF YEARS CONSIDERED SELF GAY				
Gay Men	8.7	7.8	1-37	61
Lesbians	7.5	6.8	1-37	61
AGE OF FIRST GAY EXPERIENCE				
Gay Men	15.9	4.9	0-28	61
Lesbians	18.6	7.6	0-40	61

Table 3
Coming Out to Family Members

	<u>Shared Sexual Orientation With....?</u>			
Family Member	Yes	No	Not Applicable	N
<hr/>				
MOTHER				
Gay Men	42	19		61
Lesbians	40	20	1	61
FATHER				
Gay Men	31	24	6	61
Lesbians	40	20	1	61
SIBLINGS				
Gay Men	39	14	8	61
Lesbians	42	18	1	61
CHILDREN				
Gay Men	1	1		2
Lesbians	8	4		12

Table 4
Perceived Attitude of Family Member Towards Gays

	<u>Perceived Attitude</u>					Not Applicable
	Ext. Negative *	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Ext. Positive*	
<hr/>						
FATHER						
Gay Men	7	16	15	12	1	10
Lesbians	12	21	14	6	3	5
MOTHER						
Gay Men	6	14	19	18	3	1
Lesbians	11	21	10	13	3	3
<hr/>						
*Ext. = extremely						

Instrumentation

Each subject completed a research protocol consisting of the following: A Demographic Information Sheet, the Lesbian Degree of Overtness Scale (adapted for use with gay men), the Expressed Acceptance of Self Scale, the Attitudes towards Homosexuality Instrument, and the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale. With the exception of the Demographic Information Sheet which was routinely presented first, the instruments were arranged in random order.

Demographic Information Sheet

The Demographic Information Sheet (see Appendix C) contained general background information about age, gender, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, educational level, occupational status and the like. In addition to this standard information, certain questions were designed to elicit information specific to

gay/lesbian issues, with special attention devoted to information about coming out. The Kinsey Heterosexual to Homosexual Rating Scale was included as a means of assessing degree of homosexual orientation (Kinsey et al., 1948).

Lesbian Degree of Overttness Scale

The Lesbian Degree of Involvement and Overttness Scales (DIOS) was developed by Ferguson and two unidentified members of a lesbian organization (based in a Midwestern city population 350,000) (Ferguson & Finkler, 1978). DIOS was designed to assess both the degree of involvement in lesbian activities and the degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation. To that end there were two scales; the Involvement Scale and the Overttness Scale.

In constructing DIOS, each of the authors generated a list of statements describing behaviors thought to be indicative of homosexual involvement or overttness. When combined, the three lists totaled 39 items. Three independent judges put the 39 items through two separate Q sorts; the first sorting considered only the overt-covert dimension, while the second sorting considered only the degree of homosexual involvement dimension. Items were retained only if they were judged the same way by all three judges (Ferguson & Finkler, 1978). Altogether, 37 items were retained in the final version; the 22 items judged as solely measuring overttness/coverttness comprise the Overttness Scale, and the 11 judged as solely measuring involvement comprise the Involvement Scale. An additional 4 overlapping items were used on each respective scale. Only the Overttness Scale was used for this study, (Ferguson & Finkler, 1978).

Each item was composed of a sentence stem descriptive of a behavior related to overttness or involvement. Subjects were instructed to rate each statement according to their level of comfort with the behavior described.

Statements were rated on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (least comfortable) to 10 (most comfortable). Subjects took as long as they wished to complete this test (Ferguson & Finkler, 1978). Scores for each subject were obtained by summing comfort rating points for each item.

For the purposes of the present study, only the 26 items of the Overtness Scale were utilized. The final score on the overtness score could range anywhere from 26 to 260. A score of 26 would result if a subject selected least comfortable (rated one point) for each item. A score of 260 would result if a subject selected most comfortable (rated 10 points) for each item. Furthermore, since the original instrument was constructed for use with lesbians only, questions were modified for use with gay men as well lesbians.

Reliability. The Kuder-Richardson formula was used to calculate item homogeneity (Ferguson & Findler, 1978). This procedure was conducted on scores obtained by three groups of subjects: lesbians, feminists, and female introductory psychology students ($n = 72$) and yielded a KR20 coefficient of .70, $p < .01$ for the Overtness Scale, .70, $p < .01$). Using the Spearman-Brown (odd-even, split-half) formula to determine the internal consistency of the Overtness Scale, a reliability coefficient of $r = .92$, $p < .001$) was achieved. A second study, using a different sample of self-identified lesbians ($n = 63$), revealed a Spearman-Brown split-half step-up technique reliability coefficient of $r = .84$, $p < .01$ (Ferguson & Finkler, 1978).

Validity. To demonstrate evidence of construct validity, DIOS was administered to three discrete groups of subjects: 27 members of a lesbian resource center in a major, Northern city; 18 female students from an introductory psychology class in a medium-sized midwestern city, and 27 feminists from the same medium-sized Midwestern city. The three sample groups were expected to differ attitudinally and behaviorally on the dimensions

of overtness and involvement as measured by DIOS, with lesbians showing the highest comfort ratings, followed by the feminist group, and finally, the student group. As was expected, DIOS was able to discriminate between the groups, with the lesbians indicating the greatest comfort level, succeeded by the feminists, and finally by the students. Tukey's multiple mean comparison test indicated that all three groups differed significantly (Ferguson & Finkler, 1978).

To demonstrate evidence of construct validity for the Overtness Scale, several analyses were performed using scores obtained by the lesbian sample ($n = 63$). One analysis examined the relationship between the age at which a behavior occurred and the degree of comfort associated with that behavior (low comfort behaviors were those perceived as being threatening). There was an inverse relationship between level of comfort and age of engaging in a behavior, ($r = (24) -.52$, $p < .01$). This finding indicated that when discomfort level for engaging in a particular behavior was high, a woman was more apt to engage in that behavior with increased age. The implication being that behaviors requiring a high level of overtness cause high discomfort levels. Hence, lesbians do not engage in these behaviors until they are older.

Another correlation was performed to determine the degree of relationship between a behavioral occurrence in time, and the perceived threat associated with engaging in that behavior (high threat, low comfort level). Theoretically, less threatening behaviors would be expected to occur earlier in time than highly threatening behaviors. After all, if little risk is associated with engaging in a behavior (little overtness is required), there is nothing to discourage one from engaging in that behavior. Conversely, if a behavior is thought to be highly risky (high level of overtness required) it would not be expected to occur for a long time; engaging in the behavior would be too anxiety provoking. As expected, an inverse relationship was found between level of comfort

associated with engaging in a behavior and sequence of behavioral occurrence, $r(24) = -.83$, $p < .01$, indicating that highly uncomfortable behaviors (requiring high levels of overtness) occur later in time.

Finally, a correlation was performed between the number of subjects who engaged in a particular behavior and the perceived threat associated with engaging in that behavior (high threat, low comfort). Theoretically, if a behavior was perceived as being very risky to engage in (i.e. high level of overtness, low comfort level) relatively few lesbians would be expected to engage in that behavior. On the other hand, if a behavior was viewed as having minimal risk associated with it (i.e. low overtness, high comfort level) a great many people might be expected to engage in it. As expected, there was a positive correlation between the degree of comfort in engaging in a behavior and the number of women who engaged in that behavior ($r(24) = .88$, $p < .01$), indicating that if a behavior is perceived as being very threatening (high overtness), only a few people dare to engage in it. (Ferguson & Finkler, 1978).

In summary, high threat items as compared to low threat items were: Performed less frequently, acted upon at a more advanced age, and executed later in the behavioral sequence. Hence, DIOS was able to differentiate between lesbians who were highly comfortable engaging in a behavior and those who were highly uncomfortable engaging in a behavior. From this information it was inferred that if a person is comfortable performing an overt type of lesbian behavior (i.e. "informing an employer of same-sex involvement when she or he doesn't suspect") and these comfort levels could be measured by the test, then DIOS must have been measuring the construct in question, namely, degree of overtness (Ferguson & Finkler, 1978).

Expressed Acceptance of Self Scale

In writing his dissertation, Berger (1952) was interested in the relationship between the expressed acceptance of self and the expressed acceptance of others. To this end he developed an instrument made-up of two scales, the first being Expressed Acceptance of Self (EAS) and the second being Expressed Acceptance of Others (EAO). For the purposes of this study, only the EAS was used.

In constructing this scale, Berger defined acceptance of self as including the following traits: 1) relies primarily on internal values and standards to govern behavior, 2) has faith in his/her capacity to cope with life, 3) assumes responsibility for own behavior, 4) accepts praise or criticism from others objectively, 5) does not deny or distort limitations, faults, abilities or favorable qualities, 6) considers self to be worthy and equal to others, 7) does not expect to be rejected by others, 8) does not regard self as abnormal, 9) is not shy or self-conscious. Next, Berger constructed 47 statements intended to represent each of the nine characteristics listed for the acceptance of self variable. After carrying out an item analysis, he selected the 36 best discriminators from the item pool, which then became the actual scale items.

For each of these 36 statements, subjects responded on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 "not at all true" to 5 "completely true", indicating the degree to which the statement was descriptive of her or himself. To control for acquiescence set, roughly half the sentence stems were written so that an answer of 5 would be scored highest and the other half were written so that an answer of 1 would be scored highest. To obtain an overall score, the subject's rating on each item was summed. Scores could range from 36 to 180 (Berger, 1952; 1955).

Reliability. Berger (1952) stated that matched-half reliability for the EAS is satisfactory, although he failed to report the specific statistics. Additionally, he used the Spearman-Brown formula to measure whole test reliability and reported coefficients of .89 or greater for all but one of the groups. Though this group is not identified, the reliability coefficient for it is reported as being .75 (Berger, 1952; Robinson & Shaver, 1973). Robinson & Shaver (1973) reviewed the findings of Eagly. In an effort to demonstrate test-retest reliability, Eagly administered 16 items from the Expressed Acceptance of Self Scale before and after an experiment, he obtained a correlation coefficient of .91 (Robinson & Shaver, 1973). Since the findings of Eagly are cited as "personal communication" and since the type of "experiment" is not explained whatsoever, it is impossible to determine in what ways this "experiment" may have contributed to the above mentioned findings (Robinson & Shaver, 1973).

Validity. To establish construct validity, 20 subjects completed the EAS and were then asked to write freely about their attitudes toward self, using the nine characteristics listed in the variable definition as a guide. Four judges rated these paragraphs with a inter-rater reliability coefficient was .87. A significant Pearson-Product moment correlation was revealed between EAS scores and mean ratings on the free association, $r = .90$, $p < .001$ (Berger, 1952).

In establishing discriminant validity for the EAS, prisoners were found to score lower than college students. Additionally, the EAS discriminated between a group of speech impaired persons and a matched group of college students, with, as expected, the speech impaired group scoring lower on EAS (Berger, 1952).

As a demonstration of concurrent validity, the EAS was correlated with other established criterion measures believed to measure the same construct. Onwake (1954) obtained a correlation of .73 between EAS and the Phillips

Self-Acceptance scales. Moreover, she found a correlation of .49 between EAS and the Bills Self-Acceptance Scale. Eagly reported a correlation of .84 between EAS and the Janis-Field scale (Robinson & Shaver, 1973).

Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale

The Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale (ATH) was developed by Fitzpatrick (1982) as part of her dissertation. Though other more established scales (measuring homophobia) were available, they were developed for use with non-gays. Therefore, the wording of items was not suitable for gay subjects (Dunbar, Brown, & Amboroso, 1973; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Leitner & Cado, 1982; Mosher & O'Grady, 1979; Smith, 1971). ATH, on the other hand, was specifically designed for use with gay and lesbian subjects.

The items for ATH were generated by: 1) referring to gay activist literature to determine which derogatory, stereotypical statements about gays were used most frequently; 2) reviewing the gay activist literature for positive statements made about gays; 3) interviewing three lesbians, including a clinical psychologist; and 4) inverting negative stereotypical statements, so as to form positive statements. In this manner, a final item pool of 28 statements was created (14 positive and 14 negative). These were reviewed by six judges, including two lesbian, feminist therapists, one heterosexual, feminist therapist, one psychologist who had conducted extensive research into gay/lesbian issues, and two lesbian business professionals. From the item pool, 12 items were retained; each making a statement about gay people or about some aspect of gay lifestyles; six items were positive and six were negative (Fitzpatrick, 1982).

In completing the ATH, subjects responded to each item on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). Each response option was assigned a value ranging from one to five. Half the items were

worded so that option 5 scored highest and the other half were worded so that option 1 scored highest. To obtain overall score the responses for all 12 items were summed. Scores could range from 12 to 60 points.

Reliability. To measure test-retest reliability, four subjects were drawn from the research sample for the purpose of measuring test-retest reliability. The test was administered twice with a week interval between testing dates. The resulting coefficient of stability was .98 (Fitzpatrick, 1982).

Internal consistency measures and validity data had not yet been established for ATH. Consequently, it was necessary to run a pilot study for the purpose of evaluating test-retest reliability, internal consistency reliability, and measures of construct and concurrent validity. To that end, a pilot study was conducted prior to the main study. Subjects for the pilot study included nine gay/lesbian students affiliated with Oklahoma State University. Ten subjects began the pilot study, one subject dropped out (drop out subject informed researcher that post-test session was forgotten).

To establish evidence of test-retest reliability, ATH was administered twice with a two week interval between testings. During the pre-test session, subjects completed full-length research packets. During the post-test session, subjects completed only the first page of the Demographics Information Sheet and the ATH instrument. One subject failed to return for the post-test session. Internal consistency was calculated, using an odd-even, split-half method, corrected by the Spearman-Brown formula (McNemar, 1966). Criterion-related evidence of validity was addressed by correlating subjects' self-assessed level of internalized homophobia, with scores achieved on ATH. To determine self-assessed level of internalized homophobia, subjects were simply asked to indicate whether or not they considered themselves homophobic (yes or no). Moreover, subjects were asked to indicate their course of action in the event

that safe, highly effective methods were available to produce change in sexual/affectional orientation. Would they or would they not undergo a procedure designed to change their sexual/affectional orientation? The results of these analyses will be discussed further in chapter four.

Fear of Negative Evaluation

The Measurement of Social-Evaluative Anxiety Instrument was designed by Watson and Friend (1969) to measure Social Evaluative Anxiety. This instrument has two scales: the Social Avoidance and Distress Scale (SAD) and the Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE). The present study used only the FNE scale.

In constructing test items, efforts were made to distinguish between the measurement of social anxiety and its counterparts: Social desirability and test anxiety. Also, the authors tried to construct an instrument that would yield a discriminant relationship between the SAD and FNE scales. Therefore, items were worded in such a way that the opposite of a trait denoted the absence of that trait not the presence of some other trait. Hence, a high FNE score would be indicative of anxiety related to social evaluation. Conversely, a low FNE score would be indicative of the lack of anxiety related to social evaluation as opposed to a desire for positive social evaluation.

The Measurement of Social-Evaluative Anxiety instrument has a true-false format and it was appropriate for both genders. To control for an acquiescence response set, items were worded in such a way that roughly half of the items were scored if endorsed true and the other half were scored if endorsed false (for the FNE, 17 true and 13 false). Scores could range from 0 to 30 (Watson & Friend, 1969).

Reliability. Using 205 undergraduates of the University of Toronto, a Kuder-Richardson-20 reliability coefficient was calculated to be $r(204) = .94$, $p < .001$.

In a second sample of 154 summer school students attending the University of Toronto, a Kuder-Richardson-20 coefficient of $r = .96$ was achieved (Watson & Friend, 1969).

To assess test-retest reliability, the FNE was administered to the aforementioned 154 subjects on two occasions with one month between testing sessions. The product-moment correlation was .78. Using a second sample of 29 subjects, a coefficient of .94 was attained (Watson & Friend, 1969).

Validity. To assess discriminant validity of the FNE several approaches were used. One method involved the use of subjects scoring in either the top 25% or the bottom 25% of the range of FNE scores. From each quadrant, 48 high scorers and 48 low scorers were randomly selected. It was hypothesized that subjects scoring high on FNE would be most affected by the possibility of incurring disapproval, whereas subjects scoring low on FNE would be most affected by the possibility of gaining approval. Each subject (seated alone in a cubicle) was led to believe that she or he was part of a group effort and as such her or his performance would be evaluated by an unseen, unknown group leader. The subjects were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: approval or disapproval. Subjects assigned to the approval condition were told that the leader might approve of their work, but would never disapprove. Subjects assigned to the disapproval condition were told that the leader might disapprove, but would never approve of their work. The results indicated that high FNE subjects worked not only to avoid disapproval, but also to gain approval; as opposed to low FNE subjects who did not seek approval, but rather worked to avoid disapproval.

Another part of this experiment involved, subjects completing questionnaires that described how nervous they felt during the experiment. As expected, high FNE subjects reported greater uneasiness.

In the final part of this study, subjects were asked how they evaluated their performance and how they felt their group leader would evaluate their performance. Eighteen of the 96 subjects reported feeling that the group leader would think less of their work than they did. Of these subjects, 10 were high FNE and 8 were low FNE. All of the 10 high FNE subjects were in the approval condition, whereas the low FNE subjects were evenly split between the approval and disapproval condition. Using Fisher's exact test, this finding is significantly different from chance ($p < .05$). So, it would seem that high FNE subjects were inclined to expect the worst. For, in spite of evidence to the contrary, (being informed that their evaluator would approve, but never disapprove of their work) they still expected to receive disapproval (Watson & Friend, 1969).

In an effort to demonstrate concurrent validity, the FNE was correlated with Taylor's Manifest Anxiety (MA) scale, Rotter's Locus of Control scale (LC), the social and evaluative section of the Endler-Hunt S-R Inventory of Anxiousness (E-H), Pavio's Audience Sensitivity Index (ASI), and 11 of the Jackson's Personality Research Form subscales (Social Approval, Affiliation, Desirability, Autonomy, Defence, Achievement, Aggression, Dominance, Abasement, Exhibitionism, and Impulsivity). In a sample of 171 subjects, a significant correlation was found between FNE and MA ($r = .60, p < .01$ level). A moderate relationship was expected, since MA measures general anxiety and FNE is designed to measure a specific sort of anxiety. Likewise, the correlation between FNE and LC was significant ($r = .18, p < .05$). The correlation between the Endler-Hunter (requiring subjects to describe how they would respond in social-evaluative situations) and FNE was significant ($r = .47, p < .01$). Using a sample of 42 subjects the ASI (an instrument measuring reactions to audience situations and possible reasons for those reactions) significantly correlated with

FNE ($r = .39$, $p < .01$ level). The following significant correlations were reported between the FNE and Jackson subscales: Social Approval (.77), Affiliation (none), Desirability (-.58), Autonomy (-.32), Defence (-.42), Dominance (-.50), Exhibitionism (-.39), and (significant at $p < .05$ if $r = .30$) (Watson & Friend, 1969).

Procedure

Five hundred and twenty research packets were mailed or hand-delivered to contact persons at each of 22 universities in the Western or Midwestern region of the United States. Contact persons distributed research packets (consisting of a demographics questionnaire and a series of paper and pencil test instruments) to gay/lesbian students at their respective campuses. Completed packets were collected by contact persons and returned to the researcher in bulk (in pre-paid, pre-scanned envelopes). In some instances, individual participants were provided with return envelopes so that they could mail packets directly to the researcher, thus expediting the process.

As per instructions on the informed consent sheets, subjects were asked to detach signed consent forms, returning them separately from the research packets. Moreover, they were asked to detach and keep the unsigned consent forms (see Appendix D). After signing consent forms, subjects completed the remaining sections of the research packets which consisted of a Demographics Information Sheet and the following instruments: The Lesbian Degree of Overtness Scale (adapted for use with gay men), the Expressed Acceptance of Self Scale, the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale, and the Attitudes Towards Homosexuality Instrument. All subjects completed all instruments. The Demographics Sheet was presented first as a matter of course. The remaining research instruments were arranged in a random order. Subjects took as long as they wished to complete research packets.

Design

The design for this study was correlational in nature. Multiple regression analysis techniques were employed to analyze the data (Gay, 1981). There were three independent (predictor) variables: Fear of negative evaluation, internalized homophobia, and self-acceptance. There was one dependent (criterion) variable: Degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation. All of the variables were continuous.

Analysis of Data

Simultaneous multiple regression analyses were used to analyze the data. The independent (predictor) variables for this study were fear of negative social evaluation, internalized homophobia and self-acceptance. The dependent (criterion) variable was degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation. Semi-partial correlations were evaluated to determine the unique contribution each independent variable made to the variance accounted for on the dependent variable. R squared was determined for each analysis to measure strength of association. F tests were used to determine statistical significance. Also, shrunken R squared was examined for each multiple regression analysis. Herzberg's formula was used to cross-validate the regression equation derived for each group (Stevens, 1986).

Separate procedures were utilized for lesbians and for gay men. The means and standard deviations were calculated for each respective group. Likewise, separate regression analyses were conducted for each group. Comparisons were made of differences between correlation coefficients for each independent sample (gay men versus lesbians). Fisher's z test was calculated for each possible set of correlations to determine if observed differences were statistically significant. A Pearson correlation matrix was used

to investigate zero-order correlations among variables (for each independent sample).

A number of potentially confounding variables were evaluated to determine their possible effect(s) upon the dependent variable. These variables included the following: (1) degree of sexual/affectional orientation as assessed by Kinsey's Continuum ranging from 0 (exclusively heterosexual) to 6 (exclusively homosexual), (2) availability of a support system (both gay and non-gay support systems were considered), (3) type of occupation, (4) academic major being pursued, (5) involvement in a committed, gay relationship, and (6) length of time person considered self gay (Kinsey et al., 1948). Information about these potentially confounding variables was obtained via the Demographics Information Sheet. As the situation warranted, analyses were conducted to determine if confounding variables were systematically impacting upon the dependent variable. When it was impossible to adequately control for confounding variables, interpretations took their possible effect(s) into account.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The findings of this study are presented in two sections: Preliminary analyses and main analyses. The preliminary analyses include both an analysis of the Attitudes Towards Homosexuality Instrument (ATH) and an analysis of the potential confounding variables. The main analyses consider, in turn, each of the eight hypotheses postulated for this study.

Preliminary Analyses of Attitude Towards Homophobia (ATH)

The preliminary analysis of ATH took place in two parts. First a pilot study was conducted in order to assess the feasibility of utilizing ATH as a predictor in the multiple regression prediction equation for the main analysis. Obvious problems with the pilot study (which will be enumerated later) rendered its findings of questionable merit. Hence, further analysis of ATH was indicated. The continued analysis was based upon information gleaned from the entire sample.

Pilot Study

Since inadequate information existed as to the reliability and validity of the ATH instrument, a pilot study was conducted in an attempt to demonstrate the test-retest and internal consistency reliability of ATH. Furthermore, a correlation was conducted between subjects' self-assessment of their homophobia and the level of internalized homophobia as measured by ATH. Finally, a correlation was computed between subjects' scores on ATH and their expressed desire to

either change or not change their sexual orientation (if a safe and effective method for producing such a change was possible).

It should be noted that originally ten subjects participated in the pilot study. Of these, only nine subjects completed the study. All analyses for the pilot study were assessed at .05 alpha level.

Test-retest reliability. To assess test-retest reliability, ATH was administered twice with a two week interval between testings. The coefficient of stability was non-significant ($r = .04$).

Internal consistency reliability. A split-half method corrected by the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula (odd-even split) was used to evaluate internal consistency reliability. The coefficient of consistency ($r = .11$) was non-significant.

Self-assessed homophobia. All subjects answered "no" to the question, "Do you consider yourself to be homophobic?" This being the case, scores on ATH had seemingly no relationship with self-assessed homophobia.

Desired change of sexual orientation. All subjects selected "strongly disagree" to the following question, "If there was a highly effective, safe method available to produce change in sexual orientation, I would undergo this change." Therefore, regardless of differential degrees of internalized homophobia (as assessed by ATH), all subjects reported an unwillingness to change sexual orientations.

Though certainly the findings of the pilot study seemed bleak for ATH, findings were likely reflective of the low N rather than the true state of affairs. Such a low N rendered the results indeterminable. Therefore, it was clear that before any meaningful judgement could be made (as to whether or not ATH should be included as a predictor in the main regression analyses), further

investigation was warranted. Hence, the full sample was used for continued analysis of ATH.

Analysis of ATH Using Full Sample

For continued preliminary analyses of ATH, the entire sample ($N = 122$) was used. Alpha was set at .05 for these analyses.

Internal consistency reliability. Split-half reliability was calculated for the ATH scale using an odd-even split corrected by the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula. The resulting coefficient of stability ($r = .68$) was significant, indicating that the internal consistency of ATH was adequate to justify inclusion as a predictor in the main analyses.

Self-Assessed homophobia. Using a larger sample (than the nine subjects of the pilot study), self-assessed homophobia was found to be significantly correlated with scores on ATH ($r = .30, p < .01$). In short, subjects who declared themselves homophobic were more apt to achieve relatively high scores on ATH.

Desired change of sexual orientation. Desired change of sexual orientation was significantly related to scores on ATH ($r = .55, p < .001$). As predicted, those subjects who expressed a desire to change their sexual orientation (if a safe effective method were available to them) tended to score relatively high on ATH. Thus, it may be inferred that ATH was measuring the construct in question, namely, internalized homophobia.

Summary of the Preliminary Analyses of ATH

The findings of the pilot study (with regards to ATH) were inconclusive because of the low sample size. Therefore, further analyses were conducted on ATH using the entire sample. It was determined that the ATH instrument met the minimum standards for inclusion in the main analyses (in terms of reliability and validity); hence, it was included.

Preliminary Analysis of Possible Confounding Variables

To appraise the possible confounding influence of certain variables upon the dependent variable (degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation) two methods were implemented. If the potential confounding variable could be measured on a continuous scale, then its relationship to the dependent variable was assessed using a simple bivariate regression equation. If, however, the potential confounding variable was categorical in nature, a simple analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. The potential confounding variables considered were the following: 1.) academic major, 2.) type of career, 3.) whether or not the person was in a committed gay relationship 4.) years self-identified as gay, 5.) sexual orientation rating (as assessed by the Kinsey continuum), 6.) quality of support within the gay community and 7.) quality of support from non-gays. Each potential confounding variable was evaluated for the sample as a whole, and for each group (lesbians, gay men).

Academic Major

Respondents wrote their academic major in a space provided on the demographics information sheet. Information was sorted by the researcher into one of eight possible categories: 1.) social sciences 2.) business 3.) communication 4.) arts 5.) sciences 6.) engineering 7.) education, and 8.) other. (see Table 5). Given the disparate number of subjects per type of field there was no way to adequately assess the possible influence of academic major on degree of openness about sexual orientation, the reader should be advised of its possible influence as the results of this study are interpreted.

Type of Career

As with academic major, respondents wrote their career choice in a space provided on the demographics sheet. The career choice was then assigned to

one of eight possible categories: 1.) social sciences 2.) business 3.) communication 4.) arts 5.) sciences 6.) engineering 7.) education, and 8.) other (see Table 5). Since there was no suitable method for assessing the possible influence of career choice on degree of openness about sexual orientation, it should be taken into account as the reader interprets the results of this study.

Table 5

Frequency Information About Academic Major and Career Choice

	<u>Type of Field</u>							
	Soc. Sci.	Bus.	Comm.	Arts	Sciences	Engineer	Educ.	Other
MAJOR								
Gay Men	14	9	3	9	10	2	2	10
Lesbians	30	1	2	4	5	1	3	14
CAREER								
Gay Man	14	9	7	6	6	2	11	4
Lesbians	26	2	3	4	2	1	13	10

Soc. Sci. = Social Sciences
 Bus. = Business
 Comm. = Communications
 Educ. = Education

Lesbians N = 61
 Gay Men N = 61

Committed Gay Relationship

A simple One-Way ANOVA was used to determine if a significant difference existed between the means of subjects who were in committed gay relationships versus those not in committed gay relationships (relative to their degree of openness about sexual orientation). A significant difference between groups was found [$F(1,120) = 7.50, p < .01$]. However, this accounted for only six percent of the variance on the dependent variable (Eta squared = .06). A mean comparison exemplified that those who were in committed relationships ($X = 204.39$) were more open about their sexual orientation, than those who were not in committed relationships ($X = 188.34$).

Next, in order to determine whether or not involvement in a committed gay relationship differentially affected the degree of openness for lesbians versus gay men, separate One-Way ANOVAs were run for each group (because of unequal n s per group, a factorial ANOVA was not feasible; 33 women were in committed relationships, whereas only 22 men were in committed relationships). Results were as follows. For lesbians, there was a significant difference between the relative openness about sexual orientation for those in committed lesbian relationships as opposed to those not in relationships [$F(1,59) = .28, p < .05$]; this accounted for eight percent of the variance on the dependent variable (Eta squared = .08). Those in committed relationships were more apt to be open about sexual orientation ($X = 202.76$) than those who were not in relationships ($X = 184.57$).

However for gay men, involvement (or lack thereof) in a committed gay relationship did not significantly affect degree of openness [$F(1,59) = .23, p > .05$].

Number of Years Gay

The number of years a person considered self to be gay was significantly related to the degree of openness about sexual orientation for the entire sample ($r = .23, p < .05$). This accounted for five percent of the variance on degree of openness ($r^2 = .05$). Upon inspecting the relationship between number of years gay and degree of openness (by gender), it became clear that this relationship was significant only for the sample of lesbians ($r = .30, p < .05$). Number of years gay accounted for nine percent of the variance on degree of openness ($r^2 = .09$). In short, the more years a lesbian considered herself gay, the more open she was about revealing her sexual orientation (see Table 7). For gay men, the relationship between years gay and degree of openness was non-significant (see Table 6).

Kinsey Continuum

The relationship between degree of openness about sexual orientation and degree of homosexual orientation as assessed by the Kinsey Continuum (which includes fantasies, affections, attractions, and sexual behavior) was significant for the whole group and for each group (lesbians and gay men) treated separately. For the group as a whole (1 case missing) $r = .40, p < .001$; this accounted for 16% of the variance on the dependent variable ($r^2 = .16$). For lesbians (1 case missing) $r = .44, p < .001$, accounting for 19% of the variance ($r^2 = .19$); for gay men $r = .34, p < .05$, accounting for 12% of the variance ($r^2 = .12$). Since the relationships were positive for the sample as a whole and for each group (lesbians and gay men), it can be assumed that persons demonstrating a relatively high degree of gay/lesbian orientation were correspondingly more open about their sexual orientation. Likewise, those persons demonstrating a low degree of gay/lesbian orientation were correspondingly less open (see Table 6 and 7).

Quality of Gay Support

There was a significant, positive relationship (for the sample as a whole) between degree of perceived support within the gay community and degree of openness about sexual orientation ($r = .24$, $p < .05$). Thus, individuals who experienced support within the gay community were more open about their sexual orientation, than were individuals who experienced a lack of gay/lesbian support. This association accounted for five percent of the variance on degree of openness ($r^2 = .05$). Interesting to note that support within the gay community was significantly associated with degree of openness for the sample as a whole, yet the association was non-significant for either group (gay men or lesbians) when treated separately (see Tables 6 and 7).

Quality of Non-gay Support

There was a significant relationship between the perceived degree of non-gay support and level of openness about sexual orientation ($r = .24$, $p < .01$) for the sample as a whole. This accounted for six percent of the variance ($r^2 = .06$). Findings suggested that individuals who felt supported by non-gay associates tended to be correspondingly more open about their sexual orientation, while individuals who did not feel supported by non-gay associates were correspondingly less open.

A comparison by gender revealed that the relationship between non-gay support and level of openness was only significant for lesbians $r = .32$, $p < .05$. This accounted for eleven percent of the variance ($r^2 = .11$) (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6

Regression Coefficients For Gay Men:Relationship Between Degree of Openness and Nuisance Variables

Nuisance Variables	Degree of Openness	N
Years Gay	.17	60
Degree of Gay Orientation	.35 **	61
Gay Support	.19 *	61
Non-Gay Support	.13	61
<p>$p < .05$ *</p> <p>$p < .01$ **</p> <p>$p < .05$ ***</p>		

Table 7

Regression Coefficients For Lesbians:Relationship Between Degree of Openness and Nuisance Variables

Nuisance Variables	Degree of Openness	N
Years Gay	.30 **	61
Degree of Gay Orientation	.44 ***	60
Gay Support	.25 *	60
Non-Gay Support	.32 **	60
<p>$p < .05$ *</p> <p>$p < .01$ **</p> <p>$p < .05$ ***</p>		

Though significant relationships were discovered between degree of openness and several of the potential confounding variables (years gay, degree of homosexual orientation, involvement in a committed relationship, gay support, and non-gay support), none were strong enough to justify inclusion (as covariates) in the multiple regression prediction equation. In order to be included as a covariate, the relationship between confounding variable and dependent variable would need to equal or exceed ($r = .50$) (P. Miller, personal communication, November 9, 1988).

Main Analyses

Each of the eight hypotheses proposed for this study will be addressed separately in the sections to follow. Since alpha was set at the .05 level overall, each separate test was compared against a .006 alpha level. This more stringent level was used in order to minimize the risk of pyramiding the Type I Error rate (Kirk, 1982; Stevens, 1986).

Multiple Regression Analyses

Assumptions Underlying Regression

The basic assumptions underlying regression analyses (including linearity, homoscedastisity, normality of error, uncorrelated error, and independence) were evaluated. The assumptions of linearity, homoscedastisity, normality of error, and uncorrelated error were checked out via inspection of histograms of the studentized residuals, plots of the standardized residuals, and probability plots of the residuals. This inspection was carried out for the combination of the independent variables (collective group) with the dependent variable; also it was carried out for each possible individual pairing of independent with dependent variable. Independence was assumed to have been upheld. None of the underlying assumptions were violated, so it was possible to proceed.

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one postulated that for gay men there would be a significant relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and the following predictors: Fear of negative evaluation, self-acceptance, and internalized homophobia (see Table 8).

A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was used to examine this hypothesis. As predicted, for gay men there was a significant relationship between degree of openness and the set of predictors: $R(3,57) = .49, p < .001$. This accounted for 24% of the overall variance on degree of openness (R

squared = .24). For the sample of gay men, only internalized homophobia ($B = -.50$, $p < .001$) made a significant, unique contribution to the variance on the dependent variable (degree of openness). This inverse relationship indicated that incremental increases in openness about sexual/affectional orientation were associated with incremental decreases in fear of negative evaluation and the reverse (see Table 9).

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations for the Dependent and Independent Variables

For Gay Men N = 61

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Degree of Openness	197.26	33.71
Self-Acceptance	126.54	20.45
Fear of Negative Evaluation	10.11	6.53
Internalized Homophobia	15.49	4.36

Table 9
Simultaneous Multiple Regression Summary Table For Gay Men
 N = 61

Dependent Variable: Degree of Openness

Multiple R	.49
Multiple R Squared	.24
Adjusted Multiple R	.20
F (3,57)	5.93*

Predictor Variables	beta	Beta
X1 Self-Acceptance	- .39	-.24
X2 Fear of Negative Evaluation	- .61	-.12
X3 Internalized Homophobia	- 3.90	-.50*

Prediction Equation: $Y = 313.38 - .39X_1 - .61X_2 - 3.90X_3$

$p < .005 *$

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two postulated that for lesbians there would be a significant relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and the following predictors: Fear of negative evaluation, self-acceptance, and internalized homophobia (Table 10 provides means and standard deviations for the dependent and independent variables).

A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was used to investigate this hypothesis. As predicted, (for lesbians) there was a significant relationship between degree of openness about and the combination of: Fear of negative evaluation, self-acceptance, and internalized homophobia $R(3,57) = .54, p < .001$. Overall, 30% of the observable variance degree of openness could be attributed to the combination of predictors (fear of negative evaluation, self-acceptance and internalized homophobia) ($R = .30$). An examination of the semi-partial correlations revealed that both fear of negative evaluation ($B = -.48, p < .001$) and internalized homophobia ($B = -.34, p < .005$) made significant, unique contributions to the variance noted on degree of openness. In terms of the prediction equation, there was an inverse relationship between degree of openness and fear of negative evaluation, such that as degree of openness increased, there was a corresponding decrease in fear of negative evaluation and conversely, as degree of openness decreased, there was a corresponding increase in fear of negative evaluation.

Likewise, there was an inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and internalized homophobia such that increases in openness were associated with like decreases in internalized homophobia and the reverse (see Tables 10 and 11).

Multicollinearity. A quick examination of the correlation matrices (see Tables 12 and 13) revealed the presence of considerable redundancy between fear of

negative evaluation and self-acceptance. This was particularly pronounced for men. Hence, it is likely that a better prediction equation would remove self-acceptance as a predictor.

Shrunken R Squared. In order to give the reader a more realistic estimate of the population R squareds (for each group), shrunken R squared was calculated for gay men and lesbians respectively. Results were as follows: For lesbians, shrunken R squared = .27 and for gay men, shrunken R squared = .20. These can be compared to the sample R squareds of .30 for lesbians and .24 for gay men.

Herzberg's formula for cross-validation. Since it was impossible to cross-validate the prediction equations derived by this study on other independent samples, Herzberg's formula for cross-validation (using a single sample) was implemented. Using Herzberg's formula, it can be surmised that if the prediction equation derived for this sample of lesbians was applied to other samples drawn from the same population, it would account for roughly 21% of the variance on degree of openness. Similarly, if the prediction equation derived for this sample of gay men was applied to other samples from the same population, it would account for roughly 14% of the variance on degree of openness .

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations for the Dependent and Independent VariablesFor Lesbians

N = 61

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Degree of Openness	194.41	32.77
Self-Acceptance	119.03	24.00
Fear of Negative Evaluation	12.70	8.00
Internalized Homophobia	14.46	2.75

Table 11
Simultaneous Multiple Regression Summary Table For Lesbians
N = 61

Dependent Variables = Degree of Openness About Sexual Orientation		
<hr/>		
Multiple R	.54	
Multiple R Squared	.30	
Adjusted Multiple R	.26	
F(3,57)	8.00*	
<hr/>		
Predictors	beta	Beta
X1 Self-Acceptance	-.17	-.13
X2 Fear of Negative Evaluation	-1.97	-.48*
X3 Internalized Homophobia	-4.01	-.34*
<hr/>		
Prediction Equation $Y = 298.15 - .17X_1 - 1.97X_2 - 4.01X_3$		
$p < .005 *$		
<hr/>		

Correlational Analyses

Pearson Product Moment correlations were used to test hypotheses three through eight. Findings are presented for each group (lesbians and gay men) in Tables 12 and 13.

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three predicted that there would be a significant, positive relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and self-acceptance (for gay men).

This hypothesis was not supported. The relationship between degree of openness and self-acceptance was non-significant (see Table 12).

Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four predicted that there would be a significant, positive relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and self-acceptance (for lesbians).

Hypothesis four was not substantiated by data from this sample; the relationship between degree of openness and self-acceptance was non-significant (for lesbians). However, it is interesting to note that though weak, the correlation between openness and self-acceptance was positive. Whereas, when self-acceptance was entered into the multiple regression prediction equation the direction of the relationship between openness and self-acceptance was negative (see Tables 11 and 13). The differences between correlation coefficients (for lesbians versus gay men) were calculated using Fisher's z ; differences were non-significant.

Hypothesis Five

Hypothesis five asserted that there would be a significant, inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and fear of negative evaluation (for gay men).

This hypothesis was not supported. No significant relationship was found between degree of openness and self-acceptance (see Table 12).

Hypothesis Six

Hypothesis six asserted that there would be a significant, inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and fear of negative evaluation (for lesbians).

As predicted, a significant inverse relationship was detected between degree of openness and fear of negative evaluation ($r = .42$, $p < .005$). Hence, incremental increases in degree of openness were associated with incremental decreases in fear of negative evaluation, and the reverse. Eighteen percent of the variance was shared between degree of openness and fear of negative evaluation ($r^2 = .18$). As was the case for the multiple regression analysis, the simple correlation between fear of negative evaluation and degree of openness was substantially different for gay men versus lesbians. For gay men, the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and openness was non-significant. Conversely, for lesbians, fear of negative evaluation had a stronger relationship with openness than did any other variable (see Tables 12 and 13).

Fisher's z test was applied to determine whether or not significant differences existed between the correlation coefficients for lesbians versus gay men (with regards to the relationship between degree of openness and fear of negative evaluation). It was determined that the correlations (for lesbians and gay men) differ significantly from each other ($z = 2$, and $2 > 1.96$, $p < .05$).

Hypothesis Seven

Hypothesis seven proposed that there would be a significant, inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and internalized homophobia (for gay men).

Indeed, for gay men there was a significant inverse relationship between internalized homophobia and degree of openness such that as levels of openness increased, there were corresponding decreases in levels of

internalized homophobia and vice versa ($r = -.45, p < .001$). Internalized homophobia and degree of openness share 20% of the combined variance ($r = .20$). In fact, internalized homophobia was the only variable significantly associated with the degree of openness for gay men.

Hypothesis Eight

Hypothesis eight proposed that there would be a significant, inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and internalized homophobia (for lesbians).

As predicted, there was a significant, inverse relationship between degree of openness and internalized homophobia for lesbians ($r = -.33, p < .005$). Thus, as levels of openness inclined, there were corresponding declines in internalized homophobia. The strength of association was $r = .11$, accounting for 11% of the shared variance (see Table 13).

Fisher's z test was performed in order to compare the correlation coefficients (for the relationship between internalized homophobia and degree of openness) for lesbians versus gay men. The coefficients were not found to be significantly different.

Table 12

Pearson Correlation Matrix of Dependent and Independent VariablesFor Gay Men

N = 61

Variables	<u>Dependent Variable</u>		<u>Independent Variables</u>	
	Degree of Openness	Self-Acceptance	Fear of Negative Evaluation	Internalized Homophobia
Degree of Openness	1 .00			
Self-Acceptance	- .00	1.00		
Fear of Negative Evaluation	- .09	- .58 ***	1.00	
Internalized Homophobia	- .45 ***	- .33 ***	.22 *	1.00
one-tailed,	p < .05 *			
	p < .01 **			
	p < .005 ***			

Table 13

Pearson Correlation Matrix of Dependent and Independent VariablesFor Lesbians

N = 61

Variables	<u>Dependent Variable</u>		<u>Independent Variables</u>	
	Degree of Openness	Self-Acceptance	Fear of Negative Evaluation	Internalized Homophobia
Degree of Openness	1 .00			
Self-Acceptance	.17	1.00		
Fear of Negative Evaluation	- .42 ^{***}	- .52 ^{***}	1.00	
Internalized Homophobia	- .33 ^{***}	- .13	.03 [*]	1.00
one-tailed,	p < .05 [*]			
	p < .01 ^{**}			
	p < .005 ^{***}			

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and the following predictors: Self-acceptance, fear of negative evaluation, and internalized homophobia. Separate analyses were run for lesbians and gay men.

Two simultaneous multiple regression analyses were run (one for each gender) using the combination of self-acceptance, fear of negative evaluation, and internalized homophobia to predict degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation. Both multiple regression equations were significant.

Pearson Product Moment correlations were run in order to assess the zero-ordered correlations between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and each of the following variables: Self-acceptance, fear of negative evaluation, and internalized homophobia. Separate Pearson *rs* were conducted for each group (lesbians and gay men). For lesbians, two significant relationships were found (both inverse): 1.) degree of openness and fear of negative evaluation, and 2.) degree of openness and internalized homophobia. For gay men, one significant relationship was found (inverse): Degree of openness and internalized homophobia. It should be noted that only internalized homophobia was significantly related to degree of openness for both lesbians and gay men.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation, and the following variables: Self-acceptance, fear of negative evaluation, and internalized homophobia. Separate investigations were conducted for the populations of gay men versus lesbians.

One hundred and twenty-two subjects participated in this study: 61 men and 61 women. The sample was drawn from the population of gay/lesbian students attending universities in either the Midwestern or Western region of the United States. Subjects for this study attended one of twenty possible participating universities. All subjects were volunteers.

Each subject completed a research packet made-up of a Demographics Information Sheet and the following instruments: Lesbian Degree of Openness Scale (DIOS; adapted for use with men), Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (FNE), Expressed Acceptance of Self Scale (EAS), and Attitudes Towards Homosexuality Instrument (ATH). Scores from these instruments were used to analyze the data. To that end, scores on DIOS were used to measure the dependent variable (degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation). Likewise, the independent variables were measured as follows: scores on EAS measured self-acceptance, scores on FNE measured fear of negative evaluation, and scores on ATH measured internalized homophobia.

Following preliminary analyses of both the ATH instrument and possible confounding variables, the main analyses were carried out using simultaneous multiple regression analyses to investigate the relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and the combined effects of: Self-acceptance, fear of negative evaluation, and internalized homophobia (for gay men and lesbians separately). Further analyses were conducted using Pearson Product Moment correlations to examine the zero-order relationships between degree of openness and each of the other variables (self-acceptance, fear of negative evaluation, and internalized homophobia). Each particular analysis was run separately for the sample of gay men versus the sample of lesbians.

Eight research hypotheses were generated altogether (four were expressly for lesbians and four were expressly for gay men). The outcome of tests to these hypotheses are presented below.

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one postulated that there would be a significant relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and the following predictors: Fear of negative evaluation, self-acceptance, and internalized homophobia (for gay men).

Using a simultaneous multiple regression analysis it was evident that the set of predictors (fear of negative evaluation, self-acceptance, and internalized homophobia) significantly contributed to the prediction of degree of openness [$R(3,57) = .49, p < .001$]. However, upon closer inspection, it became obvious that the key predictor of degree of openness (for gay men) was internalized homophobia (in a negative direction); this variable alone made a unique contribution to the overall variance (on degree of openness).

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two postulated that there would be a significant relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and the following predictors: Fear of negative evaluation, self-acceptance, and internalized homophobia for lesbians.

Hypothesis two was supported. The simultaneous multiple regression analysis used to test this hypothesis evidenced a significant relationship between the combination of predictors (fear of negative evaluation, self-acceptance, and internalized homophobia) and degree of openness [$R(3,57) = .54, p < .001$]. Moreover, both fear of negative evaluation and internalized homophobia made unique contributions (negative direction) to the overall variance observed on degree of openness for lesbians.

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three predicted that there would be a significant positive relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and self-acceptance for gay men. Hypothesis three was not supported.

Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four predicted that there would be a significant positive relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and self-acceptance for lesbians. Hypothesis four was not supported.

Hypothesis Five

Hypothesis five predicted that there would be a significant inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and fear of negative evaluation for gay men. Hypothesis five was not supported.

Hypothesis Six

Hypothesis six predicted that there would be a significant inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and fear of negative evaluation for lesbians.

Hypothesis six was supported; a significant relationship between fear of negative evaluation and degree of openness was found (in the predicted direction) ($r = -.42, p < .005$). For the lesbians sampled it appeared that as their fear of negative evaluation decreased, there was a homologous increase in degree of openness and vice versa.

Hypothesis Seven

Hypothesis seven predicted that there would be a significant inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and internalized homophobia for gay men.

Hypothesis seven was supported. There was a significant inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and internalized homophobia ($r = -.45, p < .001$). Hence, as levels of internalized homophobia increased, there were corresponding decreases in levels of openness. On the other hand, as levels of internalized homophobia decreased, there were corresponding increases in levels of openness.

Hypothesis Eight

Hypothesis eight predicted that there would be a significant inverse relationship between degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation and internalized homophobia for lesbians.

Hypothesis eight was supported; there was a significant inverse relationship between degree of openness and degree of internalized homophobia such that as levels of one variable inclined, there were corresponding declines in the other variable and vice versa ($r = .33, p < .005$).

Conclusions

Rather than providing tidy conclusions, this section will be devoted to preponderances, speculations, implications, and possible explanations as related to, and roused by, the research findings. In addressing questions, this section raises still more perplexing questions worthy of consideration. Moreover, this section will call the reader's attention to known or suspected weaknesses of this study.

Fear of Negative Evaluation As Related to Openness

An inspection of the multiple regression analysis for each group (lesbians and gay men) provided interesting findings. For example, the unique contribution of predictor variables differed by group. For lesbians, both fear of negative evaluation and internalized homophobia made unique contributions to the variance on degree of openness. For gay men, only internalized homophobia made a unique contribution to the variance on degree of openness. For lesbians, fear of negative evaluation was the single best predictor of degree of openness (inverse relationship). Contrary to this, for gay men, fear of negative evaluation made no significant contribution to the overall variance. This trend was continued on a zero-ordered correlation level, wherein a significant inverse relationship (between degree of openness and fear of negative evaluation) was apparent for lesbians, but not for gay men.

Indeed, the primary observable differences between the genders related to the variable, fear of negative evaluation. If the present findings reflect the true state of affairs, then for some reason, fear of negative evaluation must be more highly associated with degree of openness for lesbians than for gay men. Why this finding? What does it mean? Certainly, these questions warrant further investigation. However, several possible explanations may, in part, account for the observed phenomenon. Perhaps lesbians are more prone (than gay men)

to refer to external sources for information about self. Lesbians may be more invested (than gay men) in securing the approval of others. This conjures up locus of control questions, particularly as related to gender differences. Another possible explanation is that gay men may be more reluctant (than lesbians) to admit to having fear. Certainly, many contend that the socialization process discourages men from acknowledging or expressing fear (Ross, 1978). So, the relationship between fear and openness (for gay men) may be masked by a desire to appear socially acceptable. Moreover, men's fear of negative evaluation may be denied even to self which, of course, would camouflage any relationship between fear and openness for men. Regardless of the reason, if differences truly exist between the genders (and are not merely artifacts of these particular samples) then treatment strategies should be designed accordingly. Differential treatment approaches (by gender) may be necessary in order to adequately address the distinct coming out needs of lesbians versus gay men. Certainly, more information is needed to clarify these findings; hence further research would be advisable.

Self-Acceptance As Related to Degree of Openness

Another provocative finding concerns the failure of this study to detect a relationship between self-acceptance and degree of openness. The absence of a significant relationship was observed for both the sample of lesbians and gay men. Indeed, when reviewing the multiple regression prediction equation, it was clear that self-acceptance did not enhance the ability to predict degree of openness (for either gender). Moreover, it was interesting to note that according to the Beta coefficients there was an inverse relationship between self-acceptance and degree of openness for both lesbians and gay men (these however were extremely weak and did not approximate significance). When the analysis was simplified to a Pearson correlation level, again the correlation

coefficients (for each gender) were non-significant. However, there was a directional change in the coefficient for the sample of lesbians such that the semblance of a relationship changed in nature from negative to positive. For gay men, the extraordinarily weak relationship remained negative in nature (see Tables 12 and 13).

The sizable multicollinearity evidenced between self-acceptance and fear of negative evaluation may have enervated the capacity of self-acceptance to significantly to contribute to the overall variance on degree of openness (for multiple regression analyses). Further, it should be noted that these findings (of negative relationships between fear of negative evaluation and self-acceptance for each gender) mimic the findings of Schmitt & Kurdeck (1984) and Ross (1978) each of whom also found an inverse relationship between self-acceptance and social anxiety (it should be noted that fear of negative evaluation is a type of social anxiety). However, for the present purposes, the importance of finding a strong relationship between fear of negative evaluation and self-acceptance may be summed as follows. To reiterate an earlier point, for this study, the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and self-acceptance creates redundancy (for the multiple regression analyses) and it is the redundancy that proves problematic when interpreting the results.

The reader may be wondering, "Why mention any of this since the findings were non-significant?" These findings seem important for several reasons. First, literature about the coming out process frequently proffers that coming out leads to self-affirmation and improved self-esteem (Coleman, 1982; de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Rand, Graham, and Rawlings, 1982; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Shacher & Gilbert, 1983; Sophie, 1982; Steinhorn, 1983; Weinberg, 1984). Why then, was this study unable to detect a relationship between openness and self-acceptance? Of the three key studies exploring the

relationship between coming out and self-esteem only one of the three (Hammersmith & Weinberg's in 1973) found that coming out was associated with increased levels of self-esteem (Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1973). The other two, Jacobs & Tedford (1980) and Myrick (1974) actually found that open gays had lower levels of self-esteem than did closeted gays.

The researcher surmised that by changing the variable of interest from self-esteem to self-acceptance, a positive correlation (between levels of openness and self-acceptance) might be observed. This, however, was not the case and indeed the findings of this study appear to be in keeping with the work of Jacobs & Tedford (1980) and Myrick (1974).

Prior to the present study the measurement of self-esteem and openness was limited to explorations of the gay male population. Yet these findings were indiscriminately generalized to both gay men and lesbians, despite possible differences between the genders. Hence, though only a weak trend appeared (pointing to possible differences between the genders as related to self-acceptance and degree of openness) it nonetheless should not be overlooked. More sophisticated measurement techniques might uncover distinguishing characteristics between the populations of gay men and lesbians (with regards to degree of openness and self-acceptance).

A final point to ponder is this: Self-disclosure in general seems to be associated with increased levels of self-esteem and self-acceptance (Coleman, 1982; Jourard, 1971; Lee, 1977; Rand et al., 1982; Strassber et al., 1977; Well & Kline, 1987). Yet, this study was unable to discern a significant relationship between self-disclosure (of sexual orientation) and self-acceptance. Is sexual/affectional orientation so trivial an issue that such disclosure has no effect on increased levels of self-acceptance? Or, is the repudiation of society so intense (towards revelation of a gay sexual/affectional orientation) and the

consequent penalties for disclosure so costly that such disclosure is associated with harm to self-acceptance? Another possible explanation is that a positive relationship exists between openness (about sexual/affectional orientation) and self-acceptance, but because of flawed research designs and ineffectual instrumentation, the relationship has remained illusive. It seems premature to adamantly disavow the existence of a relationship between openness and self-acceptance. More refined means of isolating and exposing this relationship should be pursued in the future; only then, can the question (of whether or not a relationship between openness and self-acceptance exists) be put to rest in good conscience. Another question worth exploring concerns gender related differences; Is self-acceptance differentially related to degree of openness in accordance with gender? Carefully designed research needs to explore these questions in detail.

Internalized Homophobia As Related to Openness

Internalized homophobia was the only variable that made a unique contribution to the overall variance on openness (as per findings from the multiple regression analyses) for both lesbians and gay men. Moreover, internalized homophobia was the only variable that significantly correlated (negative direction) with degree of openness (in zero-ordered relationships) for both genders.

Apparently, for the present samples, as internalized homophobia increased subjects tended to become correspondingly more closeted, whereas when internalized homophobia decreased subjects tended to be correspondingly more open. This finding makes sense intuitively. Indeed, logically speaking, gays/lesbians who had difficulty accepting their sexual/affectional inclinations would be less apt to disclose their shameful secret to others. On the other hand,

gays/lesbians who felt comfortable with self as gay would be disinclined to seek defensive protection via non-disclosure.

Another point for consideration concerns acceptance of self in general compared to acceptance of self as gay. The present study found a significant relationship between internalized homophobia and openness, while it did not find a significant relationship between self-acceptance and openness. This seems contradictory, in that internalized homophobia and self-acceptance are, by definition, simply different aspects of the same dimension, that being self-acceptance. Internalized homophobia seems to entail one particular type of self-acceptance, self-acceptance as gay. Low levels of internalized homophobia imply acceptance of self as gay; conversely, high levels of internalized homophobia imply failure to accept self as gay. Certainly, acceptance of self as gay presents a formidable challenge within the context of a homophobic society. According to Aiken (1976) "Self-hatred is carefully and thoroughly instilled into gay people by the anti-gay training received during the socialization process....training received by the family, the church, the legal system, print media, television, and lyrics in popular songs" (p.26). Accepting self as gay must necessarily involve successfully countering years of anti-gay training.

In light of the discussion above, it may be speculated that the important distinction to consider (when contemplating various aspects of self-acceptance as related to coming out) may be the distinction between acceptance of self as gay versus acceptance of self in general. Perhaps the construct self-acceptance may be too global to be of much use in measuring gay/lesbian attitudes towards self (as related to the coming out process).

Weaknesses Of the Study and Potential Problem Areas

Sampling Problems. The original intent of the researcher was to use gay/lesbian university students (who were members of gay alliance groups) as subjects. Also, the questionnaires were to be distributed (to each group) at the end of regularly scheduled group meetings. This was not possible for several reasons. For one thing, attendance at group meetings was irregular. Consequently, by distributing questionnaires only during select meetings, many potential subjects would have been excluded from participation. Also, groups frequently had pre-arranged schedules and were unable to include questionnaire distribution during their meetings. Moreover, many gay/lesbian students did not participate in gay alliance groups, for a variety of reasons. Subject acquisition was a difficult process. Since gay/lesbian students represent a hidden population, potential subjects were hard to identify. Therefore, the primary method for acquiring subjects was through word of mouth. The contact person from each university notified gay alliance members and other known gay and lesbian students who, in turn, notified others; all packets were distributed through the contact person from each campus. Of the 520 research packets mailed to contact persons at participating universities, 130 were returned and, of these, only 123 were usable (one male research packet was randomly removed from the analysis in order to allow for equal numbers in each group). For the above mentioned reasons, caution should be foremost when generalizing these findings; it is unknown in what ways the sampling procedures, per se, have contributed to the findings.

Another sampling issue relates to the double-blind nature of this study. The researcher intended to control for geographic location of subjects (as possibly influencing degree of openness). However, in order to protect the confidentiality of subjects as much as possible, the research packets were

returned in prepaid, pre-scanned envelopes. Hence, the researcher did not know who returned any particular set of packets or from whence they came. Needless to say, this precluded controlling for the possible unwanted effects of geographic location upon the degree of openness.

This brings to mind another unavoidable problem. Because of the nature of this study, a person would have to be open (at least to some degree) about her/his gay orientation in order to participate in this study. In short, it would be virtually impossible to identify extremely closeted persons. Therefore, the range of scores on the dependent variable would necessarily be somewhat restricted.

Attitudes Towards Homosexuality Instrument. Though efforts were made to justify the use of ATH, in the main analyses, it should be remembered that more work needs to be devoted towards further assessing ATH in the future. For the purposes of this research, ATH was found to suitably measure the construct in question, namely internalized homophobia. If this judgement is in error, then it has tremendous implications for the entire study. After all, internalized homophobia was the only unique contributor to the variance in degree of openness for men. Moreover, it was one of two variables that attributed to the overall variance in degree of openness for women.

Degree of Openness As Related To Possible Confounding Variables. The reader may recall that several possible confounding variables were significantly related to degree of openness. Most notably, for lesbians, involvement in a committed lesbian relationship influenced level of openness. Also for lesbians, the number of years a woman considered herself to be lesbian had a bearing on her degree of openness. For both gay men and lesbians, degree of homosexual orientation (as assessed by the Kinsey continuum) significantly influenced the dependent variable. Furthermore, (for both gay men and lesbians) the quality of support within the gay community was significantly

associated with degree of openness. Finally, the quality of support from non-gay associates affected the level of openness for lesbians.

Though none of the aforementioned correlations were significant enough (would need to be a minimum of .50) to warrant inclusion as a covariate in the main regression analysis, the potential influence (of confounding variables) should be taken into account as the reader interprets the results. Furthermore, future research is needed to decipher the extent to which and nature of their ("confounding" variables) influence upon degree of openness.

Rather than viewing the "confounding" variables as hindrances, they might better be looked upon as additional sources of information for this exploratory research. Certainly, degree of openness about sexual/affectional orientation is a complex construct. Surely, a myriad of factors are involved in producing the observed or self-reported level of openness, for any particular person. Further unfettered research needs to be conducted in order to better understand how various factors work together to impact upon the degree of openness.

In a sense, this research should be viewed as diagnostic. Its primary purpose has been to provide a foundation for understanding an intricate and complex construct, namely, the psychological correlates of gay/lesbian coming out. Hopefully, this study can serve as a starting place; a needed base upon which to build a more precise understanding of the nature of the coming out process. To that end, the next section will discuss specific recommendations for future research.

Recommendations

Though many of the following recommendations have been alluded to in the previous section, for the sake of clarity, they will be listed here.

1. More research should be devoted towards measuring the similarities and differences between gay men and lesbians. Too often research conducted on a

sample of gay men has been generalized heedlessly to the population of lesbians; the findings of this study suggest that such generalizations may be erroneous (Elliott, 1984; Morin, 1977; Watters, 1986).

2. This study found a significant relationship between fear of negative evaluation and degree of openness for lesbians, but not for gay men. Further exploration of this phenomenon should be carried out. In particular, it would be of interest to determine if the differences noted between lesbians and gay men (with regards to fear of negative evaluation) would hold true for heterosexual men versus heterosexual women, or if this finding is somehow connected with sexual/affectional orientation.

3. This study did not find a significant relationship between degree of openness and self-acceptance. More research should be conducted in an effort to ferret out the ways in which degree of openness and various aspects of self-concept may be related. Also, it would be of interest to discover if the relationship between self-concept and degree of openness differs by gender.

4. This study was unable to detect a relationship between self-acceptance and degree of openness. However, it is too soon to conclude that no meaningful relationship exists between these variables. Therefore, further research is indicated to more fully explore the possible existence of a significant relationship between self-acceptance and openness.

5. Since this study was conducted on a sample drawn from the population of gay/lesbian university students, a replication study using a non-student population is recommended.

6. Since this study utilized university students in the Midwestern and Western regions of the country, a replication study using university students from other regions of the United States is recommended.

7. Continued efforts should be made to identify a more powerful equation for predicting degree of openness. It is recommended that self-acceptance be dropped from the prediction equation and that another means of measuring self-regard be implemented.

8. The relationship between variables labeled "confounding variables" for this study should be incorporated as independent variables or covariates in future research related to coming out.

9. This study utilized quantitative research methods. Qualitative methods should be used to measure the variables of interest: Degree of openness and self-acceptance, fear of negative evaluation, and internalized homophobia. Qualitative methods might uncover or further explain relationships that remain otherwise hidden or vague.

10. Clinical research should be conducted to determine how counseling efforts geared towards helping a person accept the gay/lesbian part of self may influence coming out.

11. Internalized homophobia is a crucial issue for gay/lesbian persons, yet to date no adequate instrument is available to measure this important construct. Hence, continued efforts should be employed in order to further assess and improve the ATH instrument.

12. Based on the findings of this study it appears that an inverse relationship exists between coming out and internalized homophobia; therefore it is recommended that efforts be made to develop therapeutic strategies that would assist gay/lesbian clients with the coming out process. This, in turn should help gay/lesbian clients be more accepting of, and comfortable with their lifestyle.

13. Open gay/lesbian therapists should serve as role models for gay/lesbian clients. Besides helping these clients explore and work through coming out

issues, open therapists manifest real-life examples that it is possible to be open despite homophobic oppression.

14. A mentoring program is recommended for gays/lesbians progressing through the coming out process. Open gay/lesbian persons should serve as mentors who could answer questions and provide information about their own life experiences noting strategies they used to deal effectively with difficult situations.

15. Structured coming out groups are needed for the purposes of: 1.) Providing support for gays/lesbians throughout the coming out process, 2.) teaching gays/lesbians about the stages of coming out, 3.) assessing the pros and cons of coming out in various situations, and 4.) devising strategies that might be implemented for coming out to specific persons or in specific situations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

STAGES OF GAY IDENTITY FORMATION: A COMPARATIVE MODEL

Theoretical stages of homosexual identity formation as compared with Habermas' stages of ego development

Habermas' Stages of Ego Development	Stages of Homosexual Identity						
	Plummer	Troiden	Lee	Hencken & O'Dowd	Dank	Coleman	Cass
1. Symbiotic (lack of identity)							
2. Egocentric (natural identity)	Sensitization	Sensitization				Pre-coming out	
3. Sociocentric-Objectivistic (role identity)	Signification	Dissociation and signification	Signification	Awareness	Identification	Coming-out (acknowledgment)	Identity confusion Identity comparison
4. Universalistic (ego identity)	"Coming Out"	"Coming Out"	"Coming Out"	Behavioral acceptance	Self-acceptance	Exploration	Identity tolerance Identity acceptance
	Stabilization	Commitment				First relationships	Identity pride
			Going public	Public identification		Identity integration	Identity synthesis

APPENDIX B

STAGES OF COMING OUT: A COMPARATIVE MODEL

Identity Labels Chosen by Participants

General stage description	Theory		
	Cass (1979) (both males & females; clinical; Australia)	Coleman (1982) (both males & females; clinical; U.S.)	Raphael (1974) (females; non-clinical; U.S.)
1. <u>First awareness of homosexual feelings/ relevance</u>	Identity confusion: first awareness	Pre-coming out: preconscious awareness	Awareness
2. <u>Testing; explora- tion.</u> No gay iden- tity; testing self.	Identity comparison: possible gay identity; alienation from all others	Coming out: self- admission. (stages 2 and 3 reversed)	Testing: explore lesbian world; no lesbian identity.
3. <u>Identity accep- tance</u>	Identity tolerance: probably identity Identity acceptance	Exploration: testing, contact with gay community	Entering lesbian community: lesbian identity; resocialization
4. <u>Identity inte- gration.</u> Positive identity; integration with other aspects of identity	Identity pride Identity synthesis	First relationship Integration	Compartmentalization: lesbian identity only with lesbians Decompartmentalization

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

For the following questions or statements: Please circle the appropriate response (when no blank is provided) or fill in the provided blank with the most appropriate response.

1. Gender:

Male Female

2. Age: _____

3. Ethnicity:

Asian Black Hispanic Native American Caucasian

4. Religious preference:

Fundamental Christian Catholic Protestant Jewish Moslem
Hindu Other _____ (please specify)

5. How involved are you in your religion?

not at all minimally moderately highly

6. Classification in college:

freshman sophomore junior senior graduate student

not applicable

7. What is your academic major? _____

8. Towards what career are you aspiring (if you are currently involve in a career, please list)?

_____ career

9. Describe your involvement in the gay community?

not at all	minimally	moderately	highly
involved	involved	involved	involved

10. I am presently in a committed gay/lesbian relationship:

yes no

11. How many years have you been involved in your present relationship?

less than	1-2yrs.	3-4yrs.	5-6yrs.	7-8ys.	10yrs.	over ten
one year						years

12. At what age did you first come to identify yourself as gay/lesbian or bisexual?

_____ age

13. At what age did your first homosexual experience occur?

_____ age

14. Have you ever been sexually involved in an opposite-sex relationship?

yes no

15. Have you ever had a "crush" on a person of the opposite sex?

yes no

16. How would you describe yourself?

Heterosexual Bisexual Homosexual

As you answer items 17-21 PLEASE REFER TO THE FOLLOWING LIST RANGING FROM 0-6. FOR EACH ITEM CIRCLE THE NUMBER CORRESPONDING TO THE MOST ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF THE WAY YOU THINK, FEEL, OR BEHAVE.

- 0 Exclusively for/with the opposite sex
- 1 Mainly for/with the opposite sex, and infrequently for/with the same sex
- 2 Usually for/with the opposite sex but sometimes for/with the same sex
- 3 As much for/with the same sex as for/with the opposite sex
- 4 Usually for/with the same sex but sometimes for/with the opposite sex
- 5 Mainly for/with the same sex and infrequently for/with the opposite sex
- 6 Exclusively for/with the same sex

17. You feel attraction:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

18. Your sexual fantasies are:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

19. Your romantic affections are:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

20. You feel emotional closeness:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

21. Your sexual behavior is:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

28. Do your sister(s) know about your sexual orientation?

all know some know, some don't none know

29. Do your brother(s) know about your sexual orientation?

all know some know, some don't none know

30. In terms of family members other than parents and siblings, how would you rate their level of knowledge about your sexual orientation?

all know some know, some don't none know

31. Do you have children?

yes no

32. If yes, are they aware of your sexual/affectional preference?

yes no

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT SHEETS

**PLEASE DETACH THIS FORM AND TURN IN TO RESEARCH
ASSISTANT SEPARATE FROM PACKET OF QUESTIONNAIRES**

Researchers: Pat Alford and Dr. Al Carlozzi

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. This questionnaire is part of an ongoing study to understand about various aspects of the gay coming out process. In participating you are asked to complete a demographics sheet and four additional questionnaires. This should take approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Your participation is strictly voluntary; however, your decision to take the time to complete the study will provide important information. You may withdraw from participating in this study at any time for any reason whatsoever without penalty.

All information will be gathered in strict conformance with American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for human subjects participation. Your responses will be completely anonymous; no attempt will be made to attach your name to responses. The results of this study will only be reported as group data, not individual responses. If you should have any questions about this study, please contact Pat Alford at (213) 985-4001, or Dr. Al Carlozzi at (405) 744-6036. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Terry Maciula at the Office of University Research Services, Oklahoma State University 001 Life Sciences East, (405) 744-6991. Your cooperation and efforts are greatly appreciated.

I have read these instructions and understand my rights. I further understand that this sheet will be immediately removed from the rest of the packet and that I will receive a copy of this form outlining my rights as a research participant.

name

date

PLEASE KEEP THIS FORM

Researchers: Pat Alford and Dr. Al Carlozzi

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. This questionnaire is part of an ongoing study to understand about various aspects of the gay coming out process. In participating you are asked to complete a demographics sheet and four additional questionnaires. This should take approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Your participation is strictly voluntary; however, your decision to take the time to complete the study will provide important information. You may withdraw from participating in this study at any time for any reason whatsoever without penalty.

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I have read these instructions and understand my rights. I further understand that this sheet will be immediately removed from the rest of the packet and that I will receive a copy of this form outlining my rights as a research participant.

-7
VITA

Patricia Alford-Keating

Candidate for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: THE DEGREE OF OPENNESS ABOUT A GAY/LESBIAN
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SELF-ACCEPTANCE, AND INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA

Major Field: Applied Behavioral Studies Specialty: Counseling Psychology

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