

INTIMACY, FUSION, AND RELATIONSHIP  
QUALITY OF WOMEN IN LESBIAN AND  
HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

By

KRISTIN KAYE ANDERSON

Bachelor of Science  
Oklahoma Christian College  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
1983

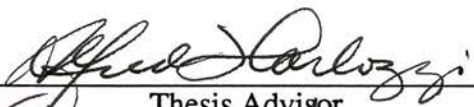
Master of Science  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, Oklahoma  
1985

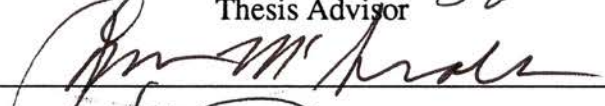


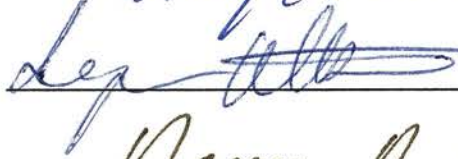

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
July, 1989

Thesis  
1989D  
A5471  
wp. 2

INTIMACY, FUSION AND RELATIONSHIP  
QUALITY OF WOMEN IN LESBIAN AND  
HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Thesis Approved:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Thesis Advisor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of the Graduate College

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this dissertation represents the culmination of many years of work, throughout which I have received an immeasurable amount of help and support. To these people I owe much more than an acknowledgment; nonetheless, I speak from my heart as I thank the special people in my life who helped me reach this goal.

I would like to thank Dr. Al Carlozzi who served as my committee chairperson, dissertation director and academic adviser. His mentorship guided me in my professional, as well as personal development, as he exhibited humanity and flexibility in an often inhumane and inflexible system. Special thanks to Dr. Sherry Maxwell whose support, friendship, and ability to emphasize my strengths served as a constant source of encouragement. I am grateful to Dr. Jim Seals who challenged my ideas, attitudes and beliefs which opened my mind to new experiences and ways of thinking. Thanks to Dr. Katye Perry for her excellent editorial contributions and to Dr. Lynn Atkinson for her feminist perspective and instructive comments.

In addition to my committee members, Dr. Ed Davidson and Laura Branam assisted me immensely with their editorial feedback. Ed provided structure and support when I continued to procrastinate getting started. With patience and love, Laura was there for me at the end of this paper when I felt I could not tolerate to look at it one more time. I am thankful to both for being so generous with their time and energy.

I am most grateful to a very special man in my life, Carrol Anderson, my father, whose unswerving support strengthened me and whose faithful reassurance cheered me on throughout my academic career.

As this dissertation is about women and for women, I wish to acknowledge the special women in my life who inspired me to reach for my dreams and assisted me in

monumental ways during my graduate program. I am especially thankful to my mother, Mary Anderson, who played a part in the inspiration of this dissertation topic by teaching me about intimacy and closeness. In addition, she encouraged me to be career-minded and self-sufficient and her belief in my abilities to accomplish that for which I aspired helped give me the strength to pursue my goals no matter how difficult my journey sometimes seemed. I am also very appreciative of my paternal grandmother, Evelyn Anderson Snow, whose love and nurturing continually reminded me of her support.

Dr. Pat Levy befriended me by being both a professional and personal mentor. Her friendship assisted me throughout my Ph.D. program and it was from one of our many intimate discussions that this dissertation topic was inspired. Karla Zemler's ability to focus on the positive never failed to bolster my spirits or push me when I needed the shove. Our friendship was invaluable to me throughout graduate school and she taught me much about intimacy and closeness. I am especially thankful for Lou whose moral support and enduring patience helped sustain me throughout the most difficult work of my dissertation. Her friendship has been more meaningful to me than I can express.

Lastly, I am grateful to the women who participated in this study and made this dissertation possible.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Definition of Terms .....	4
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Significance of the Study.....	5
Research Hypotheses .....	6
Limitations .....	7
Organization of the Study .....	8
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....	9
Introduction .....	9
Intimacy .....	9
Fusion .....	14
Intimacy and Fusion in Lesbians .....	16
Relationship Quality.....	19
Summary.....	26
III. METHODOLOGY .....	27
Subjects.....	27
Instrumentation .....	32
Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire .....	32
Dyadic Adjustment Scale .....	34
Demographic Data Sheet.....	36
Procedures. ....	37
Analyses of the Data .....	38
Summary .....	39
IV. ANALYSES OF THE DATA.....	40
Introduction.....	40
Tests of the Demographic Variables.....	41
Tests of the Research Hypotheses.....	44
Differences Between Groups.....	44
Relationship Between Variables .....	46
Prediction of Relationship Quality.....	48
Summary .....	49

Chapter	Page
V. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	51
Summary .....	51
Discussion.....	52
First Hypothesis .....	52
Second Hypothesis.....	55
Third Hypothesis .....	56
Recommendations.....	57
REFERENCES.....	60
APPENDICES.....	70
APPENDIX A -- COVERLETTER AND CONSENT .....	71
APPENDIX B -- DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE .....	73
APPENDIX C -- DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET .....	77

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Means and Standard Deviations of Continuous Demographic Variables .....	29
2. Frequency of Subjects Categorized According to Religious Affiliation and Relationship Type.....	30
3. Frequency of Subjects Categorized According to Church Attendance and Relationship Type.....	30
4. Frequency of Subjects Categorized According to Race and Relationship Type .....	31
5. Cell Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables.....	41
6. MANOVA Summary Table of Demographic Variables .....	42
7. Summary Table of Univariate F Tests of Demographic Variables.....	43
8. MANOVA Summary Table of Research Variables .....	45
9. Univariate F Tests of Research Variables.....	45
10. Cell Means & Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables and Covariates .....	46
11. Correlation Matrix of Research Variables for Lesbian Subjects.....	47
12. Correlation Matrix of Research Variables for Heterosexual Subjects.....	47
13. Multiple Regression Results for the Prediction of Relationship Quality of the Lesbian Group.....	48
14. Multiple Regression Results for the Prediction of Relationship Quality of the Heterosexual Group.....	49



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, literature on the nature of marital relationships has been steadily increasing (Spanier, 1976; Spanier & Lewis, 1980). However, until the past 15 years, the focus of the research on such dyadic relationships was based primarily on heterosexual married behavior which is often viewed in combination with and inseparable from family dynamics (Haley, 1984); hence, the term "marriage and family therapy."

In spite of the increase of cohabitation among heterosexual couples who are not married, research on cohabitating heterosexual couples has been fairly limited and focused on variables related to later marital satisfaction, loyalty and commitment (Macklin, 1983). In terms of homosexual couples, research has been even more limited, especially in regard to lesbian couples (Mannion, 1981; Peplau, 1982). The few studies that have examined homosexual relationships, particularly prior to 1973, reflect a bias toward a belief system that values heterosexuality as superior and/or more "natural" than homosexuality (Morin, 1977).

In 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders, and later, in 1975, when the American Psychological Association elected to support homosexuality as an acceptable and alternative lifestyle, a less biased approach to research on homosexuality seemed imminent. Even with the change of clinical status, attitudes toward homosexuality have been slow to change, even among mental health professionals (Garfinkle & Morin, 1978; Gershwin, 1981; Glenn & Russell, 1984; McDonald, 1981; Thompson & Fishburn, 1977). Nonetheless, research since this change in the clinical status of homosexuality has

increased in number and has begun to reflect a more objective view toward homosexuality. Several in depth studies have looked exclusively at homosexual relationships (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; McWhirter & Mattison, 1984; Mendola, 1980; Silverstein, 1981; Tripp, 1975), and others have included homosexual couples in their studies of couple relationships (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Jacobson & Gurman, 1986; Kurdeck & Schmidt, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c; Macklin & Rubin, 1983).

Although homosexuality is no longer classified as clinically "deviant," there continues to be a sparsity of literature when compared to the volume of research on heterosexuals and heterosexual couples. Therefore, unbiased studies involving homosexuals and homosexual relationships as an alternative and acceptable lifestyle rather than a pathological orientation seem warranted. Some researchers and clinicians have specifically underscored the need for studies concerning lesbians and lesbian relationships (Burch, 1986; Peplau, 1982; Peplau, Padesky, & Hamilton, 1983). Recognizing the need for further information regarding lesbian relationships, aspects of relationships experienced by lesbian and heterosexual women will be the focus of this study.

Given that differences exist in male and female socialization and subsequent ways of relating, it is important to study the unique issues each gender carries with them into relationships (Vargo, 1987). Because a homosexual relationship is comprised of two people of the same sex, the same sex couple receives a double dose of the positive and negative aspects respective to their gender socialization. This is in contrast to a heterosexual couple where the woman brings positive and negative components of her socialization into the relationship and the man contributes to the relationship negative and positive components respective of his gender socialization. Thus, studies based exclusively on heterosexual couples may not be generalizable to homosexual relationships. For example, while maintaining an emotional distance that is comfortable for both individuals in the couple (not too close--not too distant) is a common problem in all relationships, whether heterosexual or same sex couples are involved, this seems to be a particular

problem for lesbian couples. However, women, whether heterosexual or lesbian, tend to have difficulty separating oneself from others ( Chodorow, 1978; Rubin, 1983 ) which is likely to be increased two-fold in relationships comprised of two women. Although issues of emotional distance are reported to be an important and predominate concern for lesbian couples (Brown & Zimmer, 1986; Burch, 1986; Kaufman, Harrison, & Hyde, 1984; Roth, 1985), there are no empirical studies that explore this clinical observation.

Women have been socialized to place a great deal of importance on relationships and intimacy (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Rubin, 1983). Women in heterosexual relationships commonly complain of a lack of equal interest and effort put forth by men toward closeness and intimacy in their relationships (Rubin, 1976; Rubin, 1983). Often, heterosexual women turn to other women, rather than to their husbands, to fulfill their emotional needs for support and intimacy (Kahn, Zimmerman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Getzels, 1985; Rubin, 1985). In contrast, in lesbian relationships a woman relies on a woman for both emotional and sexual fulfillment and may experience a greater sense of intimacy and closeness given that the relationship consists of two partners similarly socialized to place an equally important emphasis on intimacy. (Burch, 1986; McCandlish, 1982; Nichols, 1987; Rubin, 1983). Yet, paradoxically, a lesbian couple's difficulty in maintaining separateness may be a barrier to intimacy (Burch, 1987; Nichols, 1987). It appears one possible strength of lesbian relationships may be their increased potential for intimacy. However, a major area of conflict is likely to be the difficulty each member has in separating oneself from the other. Aspects of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality in lesbian and heterosexual couples have not been studied empirically. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to empirically investigate the characteristics of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality as experienced by women in lesbian and heterosexual relationships.

## Definition of Terms

The following are definitions of terms used in this study:

Dyadic Relationship: Refers to a connection between two people that likely involves emotional, cognitive and sexual investment. For the purpose of this study, relationship will be used interchangeably with dyadic relationship.

Fusion: Refers to a lack of psychological distance within a relationship that leads to overinvolvement and embeddedness in the relationship. The psychological boundaries that separate where one person ends and the other begins are unclear. Various authors use the terms merger, enmeshment, and symbiosis as constructs similar to and/or synonymous with fusion (Bray et al., 1984b; Burch, 1987; Minuchin, 1974; Wright, 1985).

Heterosexual: Refers to an individual whose primary emotional, sexual, and social interests are directed toward an individual or individuals of the opposite sex.

Homosexual: Refers to an individual (female or male) whose primary emotional, sexual, and social interests are directed toward an individual or individuals of the same sex.

Individuation: Refers to the process whereby individuals are able to feel and behave separately and distinctly from their past or present relations. Individuation is on a continuum with fusion at the opposite pole.

Intimacy: Refers to a process in relationships whereby individuals voluntarily form close, affectionate, interdependent bonds while maintaining separate identities with clear, distinct boundaries. Intimacy is on a continuum with isolation at the opposite pole.

Isolation: Refers to a lack of connectedness to another individual or group of individuals. One who is isolated is unable to form bonds with others.

Lesbian: Refers to a woman whose primary emotional, sexual and social interests are directed toward other women.

Relationship Quality: Refers to a multidimensional construct in dyadic relationships which involves aspects of satisfaction, agreement, affectional expression, unity, and adjustment.

Spouse: Refers to the significant other in a dyadic relationship where each member considers herself to be in a committed relationship. For the purpose of this study, mate, partner, and significant other are terms used synonymously with spouse.

### Statement of the Problem

This study addresses spousal fusion, spousal intimacy, and relationship quality as experienced by women in lesbian and heterosexual couples. The problem of the study might be clarified by asking the following questions:

- 1) How does the degree of fusion, intimacy, and relationship quality for women in lesbian relationships differ from the degree of fusion, intimacy, and relationship quality of women in heterosexual relationships?
- 2) What are the relationships between fusion, intimacy, and relationship quality for women in lesbian relationships and women in heterosexual relationships?
- 3) To what extent does fusion and intimacy predict relationship quality for women in lesbian relationships and women in heterosexual relationships.

### Significance of the Study

The particular variables of intimacy and fusion as related to relationship quality warrant investigation. Previous research indicates an unsatisfying family life is a major contributor to mental health problems and the most common reason people seek individual outpatient psychotherapy (Berman & Lief, 1975; Stinnet & Sauer, 1977). Of the problems that families and heterosexual couples experience, intimacy issues appear to be among the most important and problematic (Berman & Lief, 1975; Horowitz, 1979; Rubin, 1983). On the other hand, clinicians report a major strength in lesbian relationships to be the value both partners place on intimacy (Burch, 1986; McCandlish, 1982; Nichols, 1987). Another common problem for couples is the balance of establishing closeness and togetherness while remaining distant enough to feel separate and autonomous

(Feldman, 1979; Karpel, 1976; Rubin, 1983). This problem of distance regulation is especially likely for lesbian couples. Therapists working with lesbian couples consistently report problems with fused relationships as being a major source of relationship difficulty (Burch, 1986; Kaufman et al., 1984; Krestan & Bepko, 1980; McCandlish, 1982; Roth, 1985).

The problems this study will examine are important for a number of reasons. First, information from this study can aid mental health professionals as they work with lesbian couples, as well as heterosexual couples by providing them with more information related to couple dynamics and relationship quality. Second, the study will add to the dearth of literature on lesbian relationships while expanding upon the already present research on heterosexual relationships. Third, this study addresses issues specific to women's socialization and can contribute to theory and research in the area of female psychology and gender socialization. Fourth, information gained from comparison studies such as this can benefit lesbian couples by helping them to put their relationship in perspective as compared to other couples. This is especially useful since lesbians have very few, if any, role models with whom to compare their relationships. Fifth, this study examines the generalizability of heterosexual studies to lesbian populations. Lastly, studies of lesbian couples can be useful by providing more objective information about lesbian relationships for the general public and mental health specialists.

### Research Hypotheses

Based on a review of the literature related to the research questions, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- 1) The degree of spousal fusion, spousal intimacy, and relationship quality for women in lesbian relationships will differ significantly from the degree of spousal fusion, spousal intimacy, and relationship quality for women in heterosexual relationships.

2) There will be significant relationships between spousal fusion, spousal intimacy, and relationship quality for women in lesbian relationships and for women in heterosexual relationships.

3) Spousal fusion and spousal intimacy will be significant predictors of relationship quality for women in lesbian relationships and for women in heterosexual relationships.

### Limitations

The following are limitations of the study:

1) Participants in this study will be volunteers. It is unknown whether the attitudes of persons not participating in the study differ significantly from the attitudes of persons participating. A significant difference between attitudes of volunteers and nonvolunteers could affect the generalizability of the study. It is beyond the scope of this study to assess this problem.

2) Extremely "closeted" lesbians ("closeted" refers to homosexuals who are not very open about their sexual orientation) are not likely to be represented in the sample since they typically have very few contacts with the lesbian community and are unlikely to participate in such a study. This could also affect the generalizability of this study since an important segment of the lesbian population will not be represented.

3) Because the focus of this study is on the woman's experience in both lesbian and heterosexual relationships, it is possible that information from both persons in a lesbian couple will be included in the lesbian sample. On the other hand, the heterosexual sample will include information from only one member in each heterosexual dyad. The degree to which this may or may not confound the results of this study is not known and is beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, this limitation needs to be kept in mind while interpreting the results of the study.

4) Information about women in dyadic relationships will be gained through pencil/paper questionnaires which may provide different information than would be obtained through direct observations or interviews. Surveys are subject to unclear understanding of the questions and rely on the respondents' awareness of self. Surveys are also subject to faking. However, surveys are standard forms of data collection in the study of human relationships and human sexual behavior (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953; Spanier, 1976).

5) Women living in sexual and emotional relationships with other women will be defined as being in a lesbian relationship. Women living in sexual and emotional relationships with men will be defined as being in a heterosexual relationship. However, these women may or may not define themselves as lesbian or heterosexual. It is beyond the scope of this study to identify or investigate how women choose to define themselves in terms of their sexuality (i.e., heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual).

6) This study will focus on relationships in which women are currently involved. There will be no attempt to investigate their past relationship history which may affect the generalizability of this study.

### Organization of the Study

Chapter I included an introduction, statement of the problem, significance of the study and research hypotheses. Also included were definitions of terms and limitations to the study. Chapter II consists of a review of related literature. Chapter III describes the selection and description of subjects, instrumentation, procedures and research design, as well as data collection and analysis. The results of the data analysis are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V includes the summary and discussion of the results, along with the recommendations for further research.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

In reviewing the research related to intimacy, fusion, and relationship satisfaction, it appears that intimacy and fusion are both highly correlated to relationship quality. Similarly, the literature indicates that males and females are likely to have different definitions and capacities in the areas of intimacy and fusion. The following review of the literature will discuss aspects of intimacy, fusion, and relationship satisfaction in terms of theories, definitions, and empirical studies of each concept with emphasis on their relation to gender specific issues of women in heterosexual and lesbian couples.

#### Intimacy

Intimacy, as a theoretical concept, has many definitions. Erikson (1959) defined intimacy in terms of a stage of human development. As a person matures and begins to establish a sense of identity, the subsequent developmental issues for establishment of intimacy involve achieving affiliation, partnership, commitment, and sexual union in a heterosexual relationship. The failure to integrate these experiences may lead to a sense of isolation and self-absorption (Erikson, 1963).

While Erikson defined intimacy as the subsequent developmental step after achievement of personal identity, it is important to note that his theoretical work was based primarily on male development. Gilligan (1982), took issue with Erikson's premise and, in contrast, proposed the likelihood that males and females differ in their development as a result of differences in male/female socialization. Her theory is based on empirical research

involving indepth interviews of persons' conceptions of self and morality, experiences of moral conflict and choice, and judgements of hypothetical dilemmas.

Chodorow (1978) suggests that because mothers (females) are most often the primary caretakers of children, both males and females begin their lives being dependent on a woman which, consequently, leads to a primary identification with and bonding to a woman. Thus, as a male develops, he must define his masculinity through separation and differentiation from his primary attachment figure. The masculine identity is based on separation and individuation while attachment may evoke fears of engulfment, dependence, and separation as was experienced with his first love object, his mother. The female, however, establishes her feminine identity by identification, closeness, and fusion with her primary attachment figure. Therefore, for a daughter, there is no prominent nor pressing need to separate from mother as there is the need for a son to separate. As a result, the daughter's personal identity is formed from relationships with and connections to other people while separation is experienced as threatening to personal identity. Gilligan (1982) points out that the differences in socialization lead to different roads of development for males and females, along with different emphases in relationships.

These developmental differences have important implications for mental health practitioners. In a society where the more masculine traits of separation and individuation are highly valued as ingredients of maturity, the more characteristically feminine traits of empathy, connection, and closeness in relationships may seem less important and may be considered less developmentally mature by many, including mental health professionals (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, & Vogel, 1970; Hotelling & Forrest, 1985). Gilligan (1982) suggests that the "female voices" and "male voices" are merely different from one another rather than one weak and one strong.

In order to facilitate the empirical study of intimacy, operational definitions have been developed by various researchers. Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser (1973) operationalized Erikson's definition of intimacy as a continuum ranging from

pseudointimate, isolate, stereotyped, preintimate, to intimate relationships. Orlofsky et al. (1973) defined individuals who maintain close same-sex friends and who have also made a loving in-depth commitment to a heterosexual partner as having attained the developmental milestone of intimacy as described by Erikson.

The research of Kahn et al. (1985) operationalized intimacy simply in terms of marital status. Thus, intimacy is considered by some to be a unitary quality present or absent as a function of marital status or an in-depth commitment to a heterosexual partner. However, this type of definition seems to be somewhat limited as it precludes or ignores the existence of intimacy between same sex partners.

Intimacy as a multidimensional construct is defined operationally into eight components by Waring (1984). These components include the following:

- 1) conflict resolution--the ease with which differences of opinion are resolved;
- 2) affection--the degree to which feelings of emotional closeness are expressed by the couple;
- 3) cohesion--a feeling of commitment to the marriage;
- 4) sexuality--the degree to which sexual needs are communicated and fulfilled by the marriage;
- 5) identity--the couple's level of self-confidence and self-esteem;
- 6) compatibility--the degree to which the couple is able to work and play together comfortably;
- 7) autonomy-- the success with which the couple gains independence from their family of origin and their offspring;
- 8) expressiveness--the degree to which thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and feelings are communicated within the marriage (p. 187).

Several studies empirically support this definition of intimacy (Waring & Chelune, 1983; Waring, McElrath, Lefco, & Weisz, 1981; Waring, Tillman, Frelick, Russell, & Weisz, 1980).

Waring et al. (1980) observed that self-disclosure, establishment of identity, capacity for conflict resolution, and perception of parents' level of intimacy are important dimensional constructs that influence one's own definition of and capacity for intimacy. A

separate study by Waring and Chelune (1983) supported the finding that intimacy and self-disclosure were highly related but separate constructs. Another study by Waring, McElrath, Mitchell, and Derry (1981) also observed that the sense of personal identity and an accurate perception of spouse's characteristics, as well as affection, cohesion, and marital adjustment are related to concepts of intimacy. The authors believed these findings suggested that marital choice based on neurotic needs, or inaccurate perceptions derived from neurotic needs, seldom lead to personal intimacy.

Research has indicated that there is a significant positive correlation between non-psychotic illness and lack of intimacy in a marriage (Waring, McElrath, Mitchell, & Derry, 1981). Findings also indicated that intimacy and marital adjustment are positively correlated. Another study with Waring, Patton, Neron, & Linker (1986) supported this relationship with results that suggested that absent and/or deficient marital intimacy was correlated with symptoms of non-psychotic emotional illness.

Traupmann, Eckels, and Hatfield (1982) defined intimacy as a multidimensional construct including mutual trust, support, understanding, and sharing of confidences. In their study of women ages 50 to 82, it was observed that the quality of intimacy was correlated with physical and mental health. Essex, Klein, Lohr, and Benjamin (1985) also found similar results in a study on older women. The lack of intimacy in relationships was correlated with depression.

Empirical studies investigating gender differences among intimacy concepts and its correlates supports theory that postulates differences among men and women. Patton and Waring (1985) found that females differ from males in their definition of intimacy. While both report equal degrees of total intimacy in their relationship, females include sexuality in their definition of intimacy, while males perceive intimacy and sexuality as separate. This study indicates a qualitative rather than quantitative difference between males and females in their perceptions of intimacy.

Research in the study of the Eriksonian paradigm (1959), whereby development of one's identity precedes one's capacity to be intimate with another, suggests that for males, intimacy follows identity resolution as men's developmental tasks focus on intrapersonal issues. Intimacy and identity merge for women, however, as women's developmental tasks emphasize interpersonal issues (Marcia,1980; Matteson,1975; Orlofsky, 1977). A study by Kahn et al. (1985) also suggested there are different routes for males and females in the development of intimacy and identity. Identity was important for males in the establishment of intimacy, while identity was important for females in the stability and maintenance of intimacy rather than the establishment of intimacy.

A study by White, Speisman, Jackson, Bartis, and Costos (1986) on the relationship of intimacy maturity (degree of attained intimacy) and marital adjustment, found that husbands' level of intimacy maturity was significantly correlated with degree of marital adjustment. This was not true for wives in the study. Although differences between males and females were found, further empirical studies are needed to assess causal attributions.

As is true of most research in the area of marriage and family, a large portion of studies focusing on intimacy investigate only heterosexual relationships (e.g., Kahn et al., 1985; L'Abate & Sloan, 1984; Patton & Waring, 1985; Schiedal & Marcia, 1985; Waring & Chelune, 1983; White et al., 1986). The definitions of Erikson (1963), Orlofsky et al. (1973), and Kahn et al. (1985) that define intimacy in the context of a heterosexual relationship appear to preclude, or at best, ignore the possibility of intimacy in homosexual relationships. Although the prevalence of studies including homosexual couples is increasing, studies exploring concepts of intimacy among lesbian and gay male couples remain rare. Given that scientists address gender differences in development, establishment, and definition of intimacy, studies that include homosexual couples are needed as relationships are likely to differ based on their gender composition.

This review of the literature on intimacy indicates the importance placed on intimacy in terms of human development and human interaction. Just as definitions among researchers vary, there is evidence that females and males differ in their definition and experience of intimacy. It has been found that these differences affect the way males and females interact in interpersonal relationships (Gilligan, 1982; Patton & Waring, 1985; Rubin, 1983; Schaef, 1985; White, et al., 1986). Based on the literature, women are likely to experience intimacy with a woman differently than intimacy with a man; however, this has not been studied empirically. One purpose of this study is to investigate how women experience intimacy in dyadic relationships with women compared to women in dyadic relationships with men.

### Fusion

Fusion is discussed by Minuchin (1974) in terms of poor boundary regulation--unclear, permeable lines separating where one person ends and the other begins. An enmeshed or fused couple tends to lack a sense of separateness and autonomy. They seem to talk and think for each other and are hypersensitive and hyperreactive to changes that occur in the partner and, thus, the couple. Minuchin (1974) does not define enmeshment as "pathological"; rather, he defines enmeshment in terms of particular advantages/disadvantages a fused system is likely to encounter. For example, an advantage to a fused system is the couple's sensitivity to changes that might enable them to be aware of areas in need of change before these conflicts become too extreme. On the other hand, a fused system is likely to encounter problems in situations requiring personal autonomy and separation. Not all family theorists view fusion in the same manner as Minuchin (1974). Bowen (1965) refers to fusion as an "undifferentiated ego mass" and views fusion as a pathological system of relating.

Kohut & Wolf (1978) define fusion in terms of the "merger-hungry personality" where the "fluidity of the boundaries between them and others interferes with

their ability to discriminate their own thoughts, wishes, and intentions from those of the selfobjects" (p. 422). This description seems to fit for females much more often than for males (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Rubin, 1983). Fusion with others is seen by Kohut and Wolf (1978) as a self-soothing function in that the adult has failed to internalize their own mechanisms of self-esteem regulation and must look for it from others.

Karpel (1976) defines fusion as a developmental process whereby one moves from fusion to individuation. Fusion is defined as embeddedness and lack of ability to differentiate oneself aside from the relational context. Individuation involves the capacity to see oneself as separate within a relationship--to define the "I" within the "We." Between these stages of fusion and individuation is a transitional stage where one becomes aware of the "I" and the "We" but they are experienced as conflicting alternatives. One either feels suffocated and fears loss of self to the "We" or feels lonely and isolated as an "I." This theoretical position sounds much like the conflict and ambivalence described by men and women, respectively, in Rubin's (1983) interviews of couples. Although women are becoming more aware of society's push to be independent and differentiated, the concept of autonomy may be experienced as lonely and isolating. This relates to Chodorow's (1978) theory of women's fear of separation and their desire for connectedness in a relationship.

Wright (1985) views fusion as an overriding issue in families and attributes this to a means of coping with death/existential anxiety. People use connectedness with others in defining self, as proof of the reality and existence of their lives, and as a means of reinforcing one's sense of specialness ( a major defense mechanism against death anxiety).

Olsen, Sprenkle, & Russell (1979) investigated connectedness in families on a continuum from enmeshed to disengaged. Enmeshment was observed as high dependence, blurred boundaries, excessive time together and lack of personal space. Disengagement was viewed as extreme independence, little time spent together with each member going their separate ways. Families that maintained a balance between

disengagement and fusion were viewed as more healthy than families on either end of the continuum.

Few empirical studies investigating the concept of dyadic fusion in spousal relationships are available in the literature. This is primarily due to the lack of an instrument to measure dyadic fusion. Olsen, Bell, & Portner (1978 and 1982) designed the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES and FACES-II) to measure enmeshment in families; however, these scales do not look singularly at dyadic fusion between the spouses or spouse figures. The Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (Bray, Williamson & Malone, 1984a) appears to be one of the few, if not the only instrument currently available for operationalizing dyadic fusion. Empirical studies utilizing the concept of fusion are important to provide more knowledge about the theoretical construct of fusion and how fusion affects people in relationships.

The review of the literature supports the theory that women, in contrast to men, have an increased tendency to become fused in relationships. Men, on the other hand, are more able to maintain boundary separateness. Although not previously studied empirically, it would seem that women would experience greater difficulty maintaining a separate sense of self with another woman, who, like her, has a tendency to become fused in dyadic relationships; whereas, women in relationships with men would be likely to be less fused than women in lesbian relationships because men are more resistant to fusion. One focus of this study will be boundary maintenance (i.e., degree of fusion) as experienced by women in relationships with women compared to women in relationships with men.

### Intimacy and Fusion in Lesbians

While women may appear to have a greater capacity and desire for intimacy than men (e.g., Kahn et al., 1985; Rubin, 1983), they also have greater difficulty in boundary maintenance and establishment of a personal identity apart from a relational



context (e.g., Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Kaufman, et al., 1984; Orlofsky, 1977; Rubin, 1983). Erikson (1959) contends that boundary maintenance is a very important aspect in the capacity for developing an intimate relationship. "The condition of a true twoness is that one must first become oneself" (Erikson, 1959, p.95). An intimate relationship as defined by Erikson would contain two people, close but separate. However, Gilligan (1982) postulates that for women, identity and intimacy occur simultaneously; thus, to be intimate a woman does not have to be separate. For women, fusion or enmeshment might define intimacy and/or be highly correlated with intimacy (Burch, 1987; Nichols, 1987).

A woman in a relationship with a man has a built in set of boundaries, both emotional and physical. The fact that men and women differ physiologically is an obvious physical delineation between a man and woman in a dyadic relationship. Also, men are socialized to develop their identity by being separate and autonomous from others. In a comparative study, Cotton (1975) found that lesbian couples were less likely to have outside interests and activities independent of one another than were gay male couples. The physical and emotional boundaries a man brings into a heterosexual relationship are not present in relationships between two women. A lesbian relationship with less clear emotional and physical boundaries appears more susceptible to fusion than does a heterosexual relationship with its more distinct boundaries.

While men tend to be successful in maintaining their sense of separateness, they sometimes fail to achieve closeness, i.e., intimacy, in their relationships. Studies indicate that women are often dissatisfied with the degree of emotional intimacy in their relationships with men and may turn to other females as their source of intimate emotional connectedness (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Kahn, et al., 1985; Lewis, 1978; Rubin, 1985).

Burch (1986) explains that lesbians may have a greater tendency toward fusion due to powerful forces outside the relationship. Couples experiencing hostility or lack of recognition from the outside world are likely to lead to a "you and me against the

world" attitude. Burch (1986) reports this is a common experience for lesbians living in a homophobic society where there is hatred, fear and/or contempt for homosexuals. This lack of external recognition causes the couple to "mirror their relationship for each other since they will not find it reflected outside of themselves" (Burch, 1986, p. 58).

Krestan & Bebko (1980) noted from their clinical experience that fusion seems to occur more frequently and with greater intensity in committed lesbian relationships than in heterosexual relationships. Because lesbians live in a world that is primarily disapproving of their relationship, fusion may be an effort to protect the relationship from the negative feedback received from others by attempting to shut out the world and become absorbed in each other. Systemically speaking, fusion may be a reaction of the lesbian couple to maintain their subsystem within the larger system whose feedback constantly suggests that the lesbian relationship be dissolved (Krestan & Bebko, 1980). The subsystem, i.e., the lesbian couple, becomes a closed system in order to maintain the permanence of the relationship and to protect itself from the constant threats of the larger system. Fusion is an understandable outcome of living in a tightly closed system.

In an empirical study investigating lesbian relationships, Peplau, Cochran, Rook, and Padesky (1978) explored two major value orientations that may influence lesbian relationships--dyadic attachment (defined as the need for dependence and connectedness in a relational context) and personal autonomy (defined as independence, self-actualization, and self-assertion). Balancing the desire for intimacy and the desire for independence is relevant to all close relationships.

Although attachment and autonomy may be considered as opposite ends of a continuum, Peplau et al. (1978), found in their research of 127 lesbians, that subjects attempted to balance intimacy and autonomy as two distinct but not mutually exclusive dimensions. Lesbians describing themselves as politically active feminists scored significantly higher on the personal autonomy dimension and lower on the dyadic

attachment dimension than lesbians describing themselves as apolitical or politically moderate.

Previous outdated studies indicate lesbians appear to have a higher degree of desire for autonomy and independence than heterosexual women (Freedman, 1968; Hopkins, 1969; Wilson & Green, 1971); nonetheless, the study by Peplau et al. (1978) would indicate lesbians desire a high degree of closeness and attachment in relationships, as well as a high degree of autonomy and independence. Balancing the desire for connectedness and autonomy is relevant to heterosexual relationships as well (Karpel, 1976; Olsen, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979). It is probable that comparable research on heterosexual women would also find autonomy and attachment to be important value orientations.

In terms of intimacy, Peplau et al. (1978) found that greater intimacy was reported among women who gave high importance to dyadic-attachment values. These findings should be interpreted cautiously, however, as the operationalization of intimacy and attachment was unclear and the instrumentation lacked reported validity and reliability.

Based on the literature, it appears evident that lesbians experience a high degree of intimacy and fusion in their relationships. The literature in this area is sparse, however. Fusion and intimacy as experienced by women in lesbian relationships, and how lesbian women's experiences compare with experiences of women in relationships with men, are major considerations in this investigation.

### Relationship Quality

In their review of the literature of the seventies, Spanier & Lewis (1980) noted that marital quality was the most frequently studied topic in the marriage and family area. Marital quality is defined as a subjective evaluation of a dyadic relationship on several dimensions such as communication, happiness, integration, and satisfaction (Spanier & Lewis, 1980). Anderson, Russell, & Schumm (1983) defined marital quality

in terms of satisfaction, mutual regard, empathy, discussion, and self disclosure. These definitions are equally applicable to homosexual relationships. However, the vast majority of research in the area of relationship quality concentrates solely on heterosexual relationships.

Berman & Lief (1975) point to marital difficulties as the most frequent reason persons seek individual psychotherapy. An unsatisfying family life is significantly correlated to mental health problems (Stinnet & Sauer, 1977). From a social psychological perspective, most research has been heavily focused on marital quality in order to provide information on quality and longevity that can enhance married life, while aiding therapists in working with distressed couples.

Studies in marital research have become increasingly interested in sex differences. Bernard (1972) discussed the view that there are actually two marriages in every union and that each person's perception of the union is likely to be different, particularly as a result of perspectives related to male and female socialization. Females are more likely to be dissatisfied with the marital relationship, while males are less likely to be aware of dissatisfaction on the part of their wives or themselves (Bardwick, 1979; Rubin, 1983).

Effective communication skills have been linked to higher adjustment in dyadic relationships (Stinnet & Sauer, 1977; Waring, McElrath, Lefcoe, & Weisz, 1981). Because women are socialized to be aware of the feelings of others and themselves, particularly in the context of a relationship, women are likely to be more effective communicators than men (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1984; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986c; Rubin, 1983). Women are also more likely to be dissatisfied with quality of communication from men than men are of women's communication to them (Rubin, 1983; Scarf, 1987).

Men and women are likely to place different meaning to forms of communication. In a study by Gaelick, Bodenhausen, & Wyer (1985), it was found that women (but not men) were likely to interpret their partners' lack of hostility as an indication

of love. Hostility in communication was negatively correlated with women's satisfaction in the relationship, but this was not true of men. Men (but not women) were more likely to interpret their partners' failure to express love as an indication of hostility.

When compared to masculinity and androgyny, Antill (1983) found femininity, defined as sensitive, nurturant, and gentle, as measured by the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974), to be the most important characteristic in a couple's happiness and adjustment. Also, the combination of a man with high feminine qualities and a woman with high feminine qualities was found to be significantly higher on scores of marital quality. The husband's feminine characteristics were found to be more important to the wife's marital satisfaction than the wife's feminine characteristics were for the husband.

Certain demographic characteristics are likely to affect relationship quality. The presence of children has been found to detract rather than contribute to marital quality, particularly for women (Anderson, Russell, & Schumm, 1983; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Ryder, 1973; Spanier, Sauer, & Larzelere, 1979). Other studies have found that individual age and length of relationship are significant predictors of marital quality (Spanier et al., 1979). Anderson et al. (1983) did not find length of relationship to be a significant predictor of marital quality but did find the family life cycle (developmental stage of the couple) and total number of children to be significant predictors of quality in the marriage. However, these predictors were not significant when controlled for by length of marriage.

Several studies have indicated a U-shaped curvilinear trend in satisfaction of married couples (Anderson et al., 1983; Rollins & Cannon, 1974; Rollins & Feldman, 1970) although Spanier and Cole (1975) found no curvilinear relationship in marital quality. Spanier and Cole (1975) attributes the differences in findings to misleading interpretations from cross-sectional (rather than longitudinal) data. Also, there is no built in control for response sets and the tendency for people in long lasting relationships to report their relationship as happy and satisfactory (Spanier et al., 1979). Many researchers suspect that cohort effects influence research on the marital quality. It is likely that different

generations have different expectations for marital quality which lead to spurious findings when cross-sectional data is summarized over time (Spanier & Lewis, 1980).

Studies on the quality of lesbian relationships are not as numerous as those of heterosexual married relationships. Nonetheless, a high percentage of lesbian couples express a desire for a long-term committed relationship (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Lewis, Kozac, Milardo, & Grosnick, 1981; Krajeski, 1986; Nichols, 1987; Riddle & Sang, 1978). Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) found that 70% of lesbians were currently in steady relationships. Bell and Weinberg (1978) found that lesbians place high importance on a permanent relationship with one partner and that lesbians have a pattern of establishing serious committed relationships lasting for an average length of one to three years. Although relationships tend to be short-lived in terms of a lifetime, Peplau and Amaro (1982) note that many of these relationships are high in satisfaction and as well-adjusted as heterosexual couples. In contrast to lesbians' expressed desire for long-term relationships, Blumstein & Schwartz (1983) found that lesbians had the highest incidence of break ups than any other couple type (i.e., heterosexual married, heterosexual cohabitating, and gay male couples).

In another study comparing relationship quality of lesbians, heterosexual married, heterosexual cohabitating, and gay male relationships, Kurdek & Schmitt (1986b) found that relationship quality differed by subjects' sex role self-concept. For all couple types, couples in which one or both partners were undifferentiated or masculine reported the lowest relationship quality while the highest reported relationship quality was among couples where one or both partners were androgynous or feminine. This concurs with a study of sex role effects on relationship quality of heterosexual married couples (Antill, 1983).

In terms of sex role self-concept among the couple types, Kurdek and Schmitt (1986b) found married and lesbian partners to be more feminine than either cohabitating heterosexual or gay male couples. On the other hand, lesbians were also

found to be more masculine than those in married relationships. Gay males were less likely to be androgynous than any other couple type.

In another comparison study among cohabitating lesbian couples, gay male couples, heterosexual married and unmarried couples, Kurdek & Schmitt (1986a) found a curvilinear relation between stage of relationship development and five dimensions of relationship quality: general agreement, satisfaction with affection and sex, shared activity, and beliefs regarding sexual perfection. Married couples differed in that they reported less tension than the other couple types. There were no other significant differences between couple types on dimensions of relationship quality.

A third study by Kurdek & Schmitt (1986c) compared relationship quality (defined as love for partner, liking for partner, and relationship satisfaction) among heterosexual married, heterosexual cohabitating, gay male, and lesbian relationships. This study found that the four partner groups did not differ in psychological adjustment or total relationship quality which concurs with the findings of a similar comparison study by Cardell, Finn and Maracek (1981). Kurdek and Schmitt (1986c) did find that the four types of partners differed in aspects of relationship quality and variables predictive of relationship quality. Compared to gay male couples and heterosexual cohabitating couples, lesbians and heterosexual married couples expressed a strong preference for reciprocal dyadic dependency and desire for lifelong commitment. Gay males were found to be the only couple type that expected mindreading from their partners. This was explained in terms of male socialization where men are expected to suppress their feelings and consequently lack empathic communication skills. Eisenberg and Lennon (1984) also found that males exhibit poor empathic communication skills, particularly in comparison to females.

Kurdek and Schmitt (1986c) found that lesbians exceeded all other couple types in reporting more shared decision making. This finding may be related to other

studies that indicate equality of power in the relationship is particularly important for lesbian couples (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Caldwell & Peplau, 1984).

Another difference between couple types indicated lesbian and gay male couples reported less social support from family than did married or cohabitating partners. This finding is possibly indicative of the social stigma placed on homosexuality (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986c).

The findings of Kurdek and Schmitt (1986a; 1986b; 1986c) were based on well-designed studies of 44 married, 35 heterosexual cohabitating, 50 gay, and 56 lesbian monogamous couples. To ensure comparability of all four partner types, demographic and background variables were controlled. The finding that lesbians reported the highest degree of shared decision making is consistent with other studies of the importance of equal power in lesbian relationships (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Caldwell & Peplau, 1984). The finding that lesbians had higher masculinity scores (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986c) was consistent with the tendency for lesbians to hold unconventional beliefs, particularly in sex role behaviors (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Lesbians high scores on femininity could be attributed to female socialization and/or feminist philosophy which emphasizes feminine characteristics of kindness, nurturance, and compassion (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983).

Research findings of the correlation between high femininity scores and higher relationship quality indicate the importance of feminine characteristics in relationships (Antill, 1983; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986b). Although high in feminine sex role self-concept, lesbians were not found to be higher in feminine sex role self concept than heterosexuals (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986b; 1986c). However, comparisons between partners, such as husbands and wives, were not made and it is not known if women in partnerships (whether with women or men) are more likely to exhibit feminine characteristics than males in partnerships. This would be important since the literature indicates relationships increase in quality and satisfaction when both partners are high in feminine self-concept. The findings of Kurdek & Schmitt (1986a; 1986b; 1986c) point to



similarities and differences in relationships based on partner composition and status of relationship in society. The need for further comparison studies among different couple types is indicated.

In a study by Oberstone and Sukonek (1976), lesbians expressed greater satisfaction in emotional, sexual and friendship aspects of their relationships than did heterosexual women. This may be related to the high emphases lesbians tend to place on reciprocity and nontraditional values in relationships as compared to heterosexual couples (Caldwell & Peplau, 1984; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986c; Peplau et al., 1983).

Peplau et al. (1983) studied satisfaction in relationships of 127 lesbians. These findings indicated the importance of closeness, love, liking, commitment, equal involvement and equal power in the relationship to relationship quality. Overall, lesbians indicated a high level of relationship satisfaction which is indicative that lesbian relationships can be highly rewarding.

Peplau et al. (1983) also found that conflicting attitudes about sex and monogamy, desire for independence, and differences in interests were negatively associated with relationship satisfaction. The effects of being lesbian (e.g., social stigma, lack of family support) were not found to be significant factors in the dissolution of relationships. The most important reasons given for breakups in relationships were boundary issues over desire for independence vs. attachment/dependence on the relationship (i.e., fusion). Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) found that romantic involvement with another woman was the most commonly cited reason for the breakups in relationships.

Friendship has been found to be a key factor in the development and maintenance of lesbian love relationships (Tanner, 1978; Vetere, 1982). As in heterosexual relationships, Caldwell & Peplau (1984) found that the balance of power in lesbian relationships was very important to both members in the relationship. Women expressing equal power in their relationship were more likely to endorse feminist philosophies which

may be related to a rejection of traditional sex-roles. The impact of traditional sex-roles on perpetuating male-dominant relationships (imbalance of power) has been noted by Bernard (1972).

As a review of the literature indicates, investigating characteristics contributing to or detracting from relationship quality is important as people seek personal satisfaction through significant relationships with others. Dyadic relationships, in particular, are especially important, whether the relationship is comprised of two same sex individuals or two opposite sex individuals. In spite of the vast amount of research on relationship quality, only a very small portion of the literature investigates same sex relationships. Even fewer studies explore lesbian relationships (as compared to gay male relationships). The need for more research in the area of homosexual relationships is evident. One purpose of this study is to investigate aspects of relationship quality as perceived by women in lesbian and heterosexual relationships. Research also shows differences between females and males in their perceptions and experiences of relationship quality. This study will also examine differences in relationship quality between women in lesbian relationships and women in heterosexual relationships.

### Summary

Presented in this chapter was a review of the literature pertinent to this study. The literature cited in this chapter indicates that differences exist between females and males in their definitions, perceptions, and experiences of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality. Based on this knowledge, it is likely that dyadic relationships comprised of two women differ in aspects of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality from dyadic relationships comprised of a woman and man. Empirical research in this area, however, is quite limited. This investigation compares aspects of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality between women in relationships with women and women in relationships with men.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter describes the methods and procedures utilized in this study. The procedure for subject selection is detailed along with a demographic description of the sample. Instruments used in the study are described as well. The chapter concludes with an overview of the procedures for data collection and analyses.

#### Subjects

The 139 subjects who volunteered to participate in this study were primarily from one large southwestern city and one small midwestern town. Each individual was currently involved in a committed relationship whereby they had been living with their partner for a minimum of six months. Subjects in lesbian relationships were recruited by the researcher and trained research assistants through lesbian contacts, women's groups, and networking in the lesbian/gay communities. Women in heterosexual relationships were recruited by the researcher and trained research assistants through personal contacts, women's groups, and community organizations.

Of the 350 questionnaires sent out, 151 were returned by self-addressed stamped envelope ( a return rate of 43%). However, 12 protocols were eliminated for not meeting inclusion criteria (e.g., incomplete data, less than six months living together, or did not define relationship as committed). Seventy-two of the remaining 139 protocols were those from women in relationships with women, while the other 67 protocols were

women in relationships with men. Of the 67 women in heterosexual relationships, all but six reported they were legally married.

The Demographic Data Sheet (Appendix C) was used to obtain demographic information from each subject. This information consisted of the age, length of relationship, ethnicity, religious affiliation and frequency of church attendance, number of children, number of children currently living in the home, level of education, and income of the subjects. The following tables depict the demographic information obtained from the two groups: Table 1 provides the means and standard deviations of the continuous demographic variables. Tables 2 and 3 are a breakdown of religious affiliation and church attendance, respectively. Table 4 describes the subjects according to race.

It should be noted that there appears to be a disproportionate number of Native Americans in this sample. Although subjects were obtained from states with a higher population of Native Americans, comments from some participants indicated a lack of understanding that Native American denoted Native *Indian* American. Thus, the number of Native Americans coded may not be an accurate representation of the sample.

Table 1Means and Standard Deviations of Continuous DemographicVariables According to Relationship Type

	Lesbian		Heterosexual	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Age	35.11	8.97	37.90	11.45
Length of Relationship	4.59	3.93	13.16	11.49
Income of Self	\$26,926	\$18,941	\$22,603	\$17,334
Income of Partner	\$26,675	\$17,253	\$45,235	\$40,538
Total Income	\$53,942	\$26,738	\$67,839	\$47,143

Table 2

Frequency of Subjects Categorized According to  
Religious Affiliation and Relationship Type

Church Type	Lesbian <sup>a</sup>	Heterosexual <sup>b</sup>
Unitarian, Unity	10	2
Methodist, Presbyterian	5	16
Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran	20	13
Baptist, Church of Christ, Pentecostal	5	20
Christian, Protestant	9	8
Jewish, Non-christian	1	2
None, Atheist, Agnostic	21	5

$a_n = 71$ .  $b_n = 66$ .

Table 3

Frequency of Subjects Categorized According to Church  
Attendance and Relationship Type

Church Attendance	Lesbian <sup>a</sup>	Heterosexual <sup>b</sup>
No Attendance	41	8
Infrequent	17	12
Occasional	5	9
Frequent	2	10
Regular	7	28

$a_n = 72$ .  $b_n = 67$ .

Table 4  
Frequency of Subjects Categorized According to  
Race and Relationship Type

Race	Lesbian <sup>a</sup>	Heterosexual <sup>b</sup>
Asian American	0	0
Black American	1	0
Caucasian American	63	55
Hispanic American	3	2
Native American	5	9
Non U.S. Citizen	0	1

$a_n = 72$ .  $b_n = 67$ .

Because recruitment procedures for gathering subjects were not conducted randomly, nor were the subjects matched, a lack of homogeneity between the two subject samples could result in confounding effects. To decrease this possibility, the following demographic variables were submitted to a one-way (couple type) multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA): age, length of relationship, number of children, education, and income. These variables were chosen based on existing research indicating these variables may affect relationship quality (Anderson et al., 1983; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Ryder, 1973; Spanier et al., 1979). The overall multivariate effect was found to be significant, therefore, a one-way (couple type) univariate analysis of variance was calculated for each variable. Demographic variables found to differ significantly between couple types were used as covariates in subsequent comparative analyses.

## Instrumentation

The instruments used in this study were the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q, Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a), the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS, Spanier, 1976), and a Demographic Data Sheet (DDS).

### Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire

The PAFS-Q was developed in response to the lack of psychometric instrumentation available to assess intergenerational concepts used by several prominent marriage and family theorists and therapists in clinical practice . The PAFS-Q was designed to assess various constructs in the three-generational family system as perceived by the individual (Bray et al., 1984b). The various constructs constitute eight nonoverlapping subscales which are as follows: Spousal Fusion/Individuation (SPFUS), Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation (INFUS), Spousal Intimacy (SPINT), Intergenerational Intimacy (ININT), Nuclear Family Triangulation (NFTRI), Intergenerational Triangulation (INTRI), Intergenerational Intimidation (INTIM), and Personal Authority in the Family System (PERAUT). For the purposes of this study, only two of the eight scales were utilized--Spousal Fusion/Individuation and Spousal Intimacy.

Spousal Fusion/Individuation (SPFUS) assesses "the degree to which a person operates in a fused or individuated manner in relationship with the spouse or significant other" (Bray et al., 1984b). Fusion is defined as involuntary closeness with a lack of distinct boundaries. Individuation is on the opposite end of the continuum from fusion. Spousal Intimacy (SPINT) assesses the degree of intimacy with the significant other as reported by the individual. Bray et al. (1984b) define intimacy as voluntary closeness with distinct boundaries. Intimacy is on a continuum with isolation at the opposite pole.

The PAFS-Q was originally comprised of 181 questions. Using pilot studies as guidelines, Bray et al. (1984b) omitted, reworded, or re-scaled some of the



questions to formulate the current revised version. All items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale.

Of the three versions of the PAFS-Q (Version A for adults with children, version B for adults without children, and Version C for college students without children) Version B was utilized as it was most appropriate for the selected sample. There was no need for information concerning the triangulation between the subjects and their children as measured by Version A.

Norms. Two studies were conducted by Bray et al. (1984b) to collect normative data. The first study consisted of 100 nonclinical volunteers from a local medical center community. The sample had the following characteristics: subjects were between the ages of 25 and 46; 52.2% of the sample was female with 47.8% male; 76.7% white and 23.3% non-white; 42.2% single, 10.1% separated or divorced, and 47.7% married. The average length of current marriage was 7.4 years. The average number of children was 1.6 per family while 57.8% had at least one child and 42% had no children (Bray et al., 1984).

The second study consisted of 400 nonclinical volunteers from the same local area as in the first study. Subjects were between the ages of 19 to 62 with several subjects being recruited from local church and civic organizations. The sample consisted of the following: 50.4% female and 49.6% male; 87.8% white and 12.2% non-white; 59.9% married, 7% separated or divorced, 30.9% single, and 1% widowed; average length of current marriage was 15.5 years; 41% had no children and 59% had at least one child; average number of children equaled 2.1 (Bray et al., 1984b). In both studies, participants were from middle-class backgrounds with a predominantly white sample.

Reliability. Internal consistency was measured for the two studies using Cronbach's alpha. Items were omitted if the average item total correlation coefficient was below .30. In the first study the coefficients ranged from .82 to .95 with a mean of .90. An average of .89 with a range of .80 to .95 was reported in the second study. Test-retest

reliability coefficients were calculated for both studies with a mean test-retest reliability of .74 and range of .55 to .95 (Bray et al., 1984b).

Validity. Content and face validity of items was assessed by two groups of mental health professionals with training and therapy experience in the area of transgenerational family therapy. Based on their evaluations in terms of clarity, wording, and the extent to which items looked like they measured what they purported to measure, items were reworded, omitted, or moved to a different subscale.

Concurrent validity was assessed by correlating the revised version of the PAFS-Q with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and the Family Adaptability and Cohesion and Evaluation Scales-I (FACES-I). The latter two scales were selected because of their already established validity and reliability in providing measures of nuclear family concepts. Correlations between the subscales of FACES-I, DAS and PAFS-Q were calculated producing an overall  $r = .27$ , ( $p > .05$ ). Bray et al. (1984b) suggested the low correlation coefficients are a result of scales measuring different constructs which supports the development of the PAFS-Q (Williamson, 1981).

Rather than developing an instrument that measures constructs similar to that of other instruments (i.e., nuclear family), the PAFS-Q measures concepts of transgenerational functioning which are related but not altogether similar to nuclear family relationships (Bray et al., 1984b). The factor analysis conducted by Bray et al. (1984) assessed construct validity in the areas of individuation and intimacy.

#### Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Marital adjustment is likely to be one of the most frequently studied dependent variables in the field of marriage and family (Spanier, 1976; Spanier & Cole, 1975; Spanier & Lewis, 1980). The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Appendix B) developed out of the need for a "theoretically grounded, relevant, valid, and highly reliable" instrument that assessed the quality of marriage and other similar dyads (Spanier, 1976, p. 15). The terms "adjustment," "satisfaction," "happiness," and "integration" are among the various

terms used to describe the general concept of quality in relationships. Relationship quality is a multidimensional construct reflecting how well a relationship functions and how the individuals are influenced by the functioning of the relationship (Spanier, 1979). Spanier (1976) defines dyadic adjustment as a process that can be assessed in terms of a continuum from good adjustment to poor adjustment. The DAS focuses on dyadic adjustment as the most general of the measurable indicators of marital quality (Spanier, 1979).

The initial construction of the DAS included a large pool of items from all instruments on marital quality currently available. From this item pool, items were methodologically reduced through elimination of duplicate questions and discriminative analysis. The items remaining were analyzed for content validity, criterion-related validity, construct validity, and reliability. The end result was a 32 item questionnaire with high levels of reliability and validity that are equally applicable to various types of dyadic relationships (e.g., married, heterosexual cohabitating, and homosexual couples).

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (32 item scale) can be completed in a few minutes and can be easily incorporated into a self-administered questionnaire (Spanier, 1976). The DAS represents the individual respondent's perception of the dyadic relationship rather than the couple's view of the relationship. The DAS has four subscales—dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and affectional expression, which can be used separately without losing reliability and validity of the measure (Spanier, 1976). The satisfaction subscale pertains to the amount of gratification, pleasure or contentment felt by the respondent in terms of the relationship. The cohesion subscale refers to the amount of togetherness and unity felt in the relationship by the respondent. The consensus subscale measures the amount of general agreement felt by the respondent pertaining to the relationship. The affectional expression subscale refers to the amount of expression of fond and tender feelings in the relationship as experienced by the respondent (Spanier, 1979). As an overall measure of dyadic adjustment, the 32 items constitute a total score on

a range from 0 to 151. The total score emphasizes the multidimensional aspect of relationship quality--satisfaction, cohesion, consensus, affectional expression, and adjustment; therefore, the total score will be utilized for this study.

Validity. Three judges evaluated the items in the DAS for content validity. To be included, items were judged for (1) relevancy in terms of dyadic adjustment for contemporary relationships; (2) consistency with definitions for adjustment and its components, and (3) clear wording with appropriate fixed choice responses. Criterion-related validity was established through assessment of significant differences ( $p < .001$ ) of total and subscale scores between married and divorced samples. Construct validity was assessed through a comparison with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (Locke & Wallace, 1959) which yielded a correlation of .86. The Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment scale was chosen as a comparison measure because of its frequent use and established acceptance as a reliable and valid instrument on marital adjustment. Construct validity was further assessed through factor analysis which supported the existence of four interrelated constructs--dyadic satisfaction, dyadic consensus, dyadic cohesion, and affectional expression (Spanier, 1976).

Reliability. Reliability was determined for each of the component scales as well as the total scale. A Chronbach's Coefficient Alpha yielded the following: a Total Scale reliability of .96, a Dyadic Consensus Subscale reliability of .90, a Dyadic Satisfaction Subscale reliability of .94, a Dyadic Cohesion Subscale reliability of .86, and an Affectional Expression Subscale reliability of .73. The Spearman-Brown average inter-item formula for internal consistency was also utilized as a separate measure of scale reliability which was found to be .96 (Spanier, 1976). These reliability coefficients are sufficiently high and warrant the use of the total scale and its components.

#### Demographic Data Sheet

A Demographic Data Sheet (Appendix C) was utilized in this study in order to provide a descriptive profile of the subjects in the sample and to control for possible

confounding of variables. Characteristics representing the profile included: age, length of relationship, cohabitation status with partner, educational level, religious affiliation, frequency of church attendance, number of children, and income. The Demographic Data Sheet also provided a question to check that all participants to be included in the study considered themselves to be in a committed relationship. Commitment was defined as a relationship in which the couple is working toward maintaining an emotional, cognitive, and sexual investment in one another.

### Procedures

Data was collected from July, 1988 through December, 1988. Volunteers who were interested in participating in the study were recruited through announcements at women's groups, through research contacts through word of mouth referral. These prospective subjects were asked to contact the researcher or one of the research assistants (contacts). Research assistants were trained by the researcher on methods of data collection in order to reduce bias and preserve uniform sampling. The assistants briefly discussed the nature of the study, confidentiality, anonymity, and the freedom to withdraw from participation at any time. Each assistant was prepared to answer, in a uniform manner, questions which subjects might ask regarding the study or questionnaires. Assistants also gathered information pertaining to specific criteria required for inclusion in the study ( i.e., must be female, age 18 or over, and currently living in relationship with partner for minimum of six months). If the volunteer fit the inclusion requirements and requested a packet, she was then personally handed a packet or a packet was mailed along with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Enclosed in each packet was a brief note from the researcher, directions for the self-administration of the instruments (Appendix A), the instruments themselves, and the Demographic Data Sheet. The note from the researcher explained the nature of the

study and assured the volunteer of confidentiality and anonymity as a participant in the study. No names were taken in order to ensure confidentiality and increase the likelihood of honesty in responding. Subjects were told that participation was voluntary and they were free to discontinue the survey at any time. The note also explained that by returning the questionnaires, they were giving their consent to be included in the study. Partners were directed not to discuss their responses with each other until the forms had been completed and returned. Because self-report questionnaires encourage reflection and introspection, the researcher left a number where she could be reached if any participant had questions or concerns.

### Analyses of Data

A correlation matrix was employed to establish the relationship between the variables of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality for both lesbian and heterosexual subjects. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was utilized to assess the predictive power of the independent/predictor variables (fusion and intimacy) upon the dependent variable (relationship quality) in lesbian and heterosexual couples. The resulting correlations were examined along with the major assumptions underlying multiple regression, including multicollinearity, singularity, normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. In testing the hypothesis, the significance criterion for  $R$  was set at  $\alpha = .05$ . Although a wide variety of variables can be examined through correlational designs, a major limitation of this design is the interpreter's inability to establish causal factors that contribute to variables found to be significantly related.

Since univariate experimental designs "require a highly restrictive set of assumptions concerning population treatment and covariances" (Kirk, 1968, p. 256), a multivariate set-up was employed to analyze differences between the women in lesbian relationships and the women in heterosexual relationships according to their degree of intimacy, fusion and relationship quality. Intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality scores

were submitted to a one-way MANOVA (couple type), with presence of children in the home and length of relationship entered as covariates. Because the independent variable (couple type) had only two levels, no post hoc comparisons were needed.

### Summary

The 139 subjects for this study were women from a small midwestern town and a large southwestern city. The instruments used in this study (Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and the Demographic Data Sheet) were discussed. Procedures for the administration of the instruments and the collection of the data were also discussed. A description of the statistical procedures used to analyze the data was provided. Details of the findings resulting from the application of the statistical techniques to the data obtained will be presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V will entail a discussion of the findings.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses of the data which were collected for this study. This investigation was designed to explore the relationship of fusion, intimacy and relationship quality reported by women in lesbian relationships along with those in heterosexual relationships. Also, the degree to which these variables differed between the two groups of women was statistically analyzed. A sample of 72 women in relationships with women and 67 women in relationships with men provided the data necessary to test the three major hypotheses.

A mixed model multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine if significant differences existed between the two groups (lesbian and heterosexual) on demographic variables that might confound the results of subsequent analyses of the hypotheses comparing the two groups. A multivariate analysis of variance was then used to test the hypotheses concerning the differences between the two groups on the variables of fusion, intimacy and relationship quality. The variables of length of relationship and presence of children in the home were found to differ significantly by group and were used as covariates to reduce the possible confounding effects of these variables upon the research hypotheses.

The degree to which fusion and intimacy predicted relationship quality was analyzed using a multiple regression analysis. Additionally, length of relationship and presence of children in the home were included as predictor variables to explore the possibility of their contribution to the dependent variable of relationship quality. In order to



control for the effects of length of relationship and presence of children in the home, a Pearson correlation matrix obtained during the multiple regression procedure provided information concerning the degree of relatedness between intimacy, fusion and relationship quality for each group individually. The means and standard deviations of the dependent variables for each group are listed in Table 5.

Table 5

Cell Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables

Group	Intimacy <sup>a</sup>		Fusion <sup>b</sup>		Relationship Quality <sup>a</sup>		n
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Lesbians	50.1	4.4	70.2	10.0	115.6	12.1	69
Hetero-Sexual	46.9	6.9	68.9	8.6	113.2	11.3	62

<sup>a</sup>The higher the intimacy and relationship quality scores, the higher the degree of intimacy and relationship quality. <sup>b</sup>The higher the fusion score, the lower the fusion which indicates a higher degree of individuation.

Tests of the Demographic Variables

The multivariate analysis assumptions of multivariate normality, univariate normality and homogeneity of variance-covariance are robust to modest violation, particularly if there is a sample size large enough to produce at least 20 degrees of freedom (Harris, 1975; Norusis, 1986; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1983). This study included a sample size well above 20 degrees of freedom. Outliers were checked for through SPSSPC histogram and frequencies tables. One subject with income over \$100,000 was deleted.

Another subject was deleted whose partner made \$300,000. Both of these outliers contributed to the skewness of income. Also, subjects in relationships for over 40 years (two subjects) were eliminated from the study to reduce skewness of relationship length. No other outliers were eliminated. This reduced the total subject sample for analyses from 139 to 135.

In order to better distinguish possible variables that might confound the effects of the research variables upon each group (lesbian or heterosexual), certain demographic variables were examined for significant differences between the two groups (lesbian and heterosexual). The variables of age, length of relationship, presence of children in the home (Inhome) and total income were included based on previous research that suggested these variables, in particular, had a major impact on a couple's relationship (Anderson et al., 1983; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Ryder, 1973; Spanier et al., 1979). A mixed model multivariate analysis of variance, using Wilks' Lambda produced a significant effect,  $F(3, 124) = 8.47, p < .05$ , of age, length of relationship and total income by group (lesbian or heterosexual) All values are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

MANOVA Summary Table of Demographic Variables

Effect	Test Name	Value of F	df	Significance of F
Group	Wilks Lambda	8.47025	3,124	.000

Upon further examination of the data, univariate F tests revealed that for only the variable, length of relationship, were statistically significant differences observed between the groups ( $p < .05$ ). Table 7 presents the scores of the univariate F tests.

Because presence of children was a factorial variable (yes or no), rather than a continuous variable, a chi-square test was utilized to detect if significant differences existed

between each group in terms of the presence of children in the home. Of the 72 lesbian subjects, 83% ( $n = 60$ ) reported there were no children currently living in their home. Of the 66 heterosexual subjects, 47% ( $n = 31$ ) reported there were no children currently living in their home. The results of the chi-square revealed a significant difference existed between the two groups ( $p < .001$ ).

The results of the chi-square, the MANOVA, and subsequent univariate analysis of variance tests suggest that the two groups significantly differ on length of relationship and presence of children in the home. Therefore, it was determined that length of relationship and presence of children in the home would be used in subsequent analyses as covariates to help reduce possible confounding effects of this variable upon the research variables.

Table 7

Summary Table of Univariate F Tests of Demographic Variables

Effect	Age		Length		Total Income	
	F	Sig. of F	F	Sig. of F	F.	Sig. of F
Group	.1450	.704	18.7571	.000**	3.0586	.083
Inhome	1.4460	.231	5.5769	.020*	3.4822	.064
Interaction	.0940	.760	4.1592	.044*	2.5166	.115

df = 1, 126

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Tests of the Research Hypotheses

### Differences Between Groups

The first research hypothesis for this study was as follows:

The degree of fusion, intimacy, and relationship quality for women in lesbian relationships will differ significantly from the degree of fusion, intimacy, and relationship quality for women in heterosexual relationships.

A mixed model multivariate analysis was used to determine if significant differences existed between the two groups on degree of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality. Although univariate differences were the focus of this hypothesis, a multivariate design was utilized due to the theoretically dependent relationship of the outcome variables. The MANOVA analyzed the relative contribution of each variable while parceling out the redundancy of the dependent variables (Huberty & Morris, 1989). Also, a multivariate design controlled for the effects of the covariates, presence of children in the home and length of relationship. The multivariate effect of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality by group was not found to be significant according to Wilks' Lambda,  $F(3,123) = 2.3696$ ,  $p > .05$ . The univariate F tests revealed, however, a significant effect of spousal intimacy while the other variables were nonsignificant. The results of the multivariate and univariate analyses are presented in Tables 8 and 9, respectively. These results suggest the research hypothesis is supported only for the variable of intimacy. In this study, lesbians scored significantly higher in spousal intimacy ( $X = 50.1$ ) than women in heterosexual relationships ( $X = 46.9$ ). However, there was no significant difference between the two groups on the variables of fusion or relationship quality. The relationship between the two groups, including the covariates of length of relationship and children in the home, can be more easily understood by comparing the cell means and standard deviations as presented in Table 10.

TABLE 8MANOVA Summary Table of Research Variables

Effect	Test Name	Value of F	df	Significance of F
Group	Wilks Lambda	2.3696	3,123	.074

Table 9Univariate F Tests of Research Variables

Effect	Intimacy		Fusion		Relationship Quality	
	F	Sig. of F	F	Sig. of F	F	Sig. of F
Group	4.3671	.039*	.0732	.787	.1170	.733

df = 1, 125

\*p &lt; .05.

Table 10

Cell Means & Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables & Covariates

Group	Intimacy		Fusion		Relationship Quality		Length		n
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Lesbians Without <sup>a</sup>	50.48	4.4	70.14	9.9	116.26	12.3	4.61	4.2	58
Lesbians With <sup>b</sup>	48.00	4.1	70.27	10.5	112.00	10.7	5.07	3.0	11
Hetero Without <sup>a</sup>	48.29	5.06	69.36	8.4	113.25	9.2	7.85	8.9	28
Hetero With <sup>b</sup>	45.64	8.1	68.18	8.8	112.97	13.0	14.06	9.0	33

N = 130

<sup>a</sup>Without = without children in home. <sup>b</sup>With = with children in home.

Relationship Between Variables

The second hypothesis of this study indicated there would be significant correlations between intimacy, fusion and relationship quality within each group. The following hypothesis was tested using a Pearson Correlation matrix:

There will be significant relationships between fusion, intimacy, and relationship quality for women in lesbian relationships and for women in heterosexual relationships.

The correlation matrix for the lesbian group is presented in Table 11. Results of the analysis indicate intimacy and relationship quality are significantly correlated in the positive direction while intimacy and fusion are not significantly correlated, nor are fusion and intimacy significantly correlated.

The correlation matrix for the heterosexual group is presented in Table 12. Results of the analysis indicate a significant positive relationship exists between spousal intimacy and relationship quality, intimacy and fusion, as well as, fusion and relationship quality. Thus the hypothesis that there are significant correlations between the research variables is supported, particularly for the subjects in heterosexual relationships.

Table 11

Correlation Matrix of Research Variables for Lesbian Subjects

---

	Intimacy	Fusion	Relationship Quality
Intimacy	1.0000	-.0258	.7509**
Fusion		1.0000	-.1216
Relationship Quality			1.0000

---

\*\*p < .001.

Table 12

Correlation Matrix of Research Variables for Heterosexual Subjects

---

	Intimacy	Fusion	Relationship Quality
Intimacy	1.0000	.4216**	.6991**
Fusion		1.0000	.3038*
Relationship Quality			1.0000

---

\*p < .01. \*\*p < .001.

### Prediction of Relationship Quality

The third research hypothesis indicated spousal fusion and spousal intimacy would be significant predictors of relationship quality for women in lesbian relationships and for women in heterosexual relationships. A multiple regression analysis was used to determine which of the variables (intimacy, fusion, and the covariates length of relationship and presence of children in the home) significantly contributed to the prediction of relationship quality. The multiple regression assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were evaluated through the use of SPSSPC Frequencies and Histogram programs, as well as the Multiple Regression program (Norusis, 1986). Results indicated no transformations of variables or further deletions of outliers were necessary. Presented in Table 13 are the results of the stepwise regression analysis for the lesbian sample. For the lesbian group, only one of the variables, spousal intimacy, contributed significantly to the prediction of relationship quality ( $p < .05$ ) and accounted for 56% of the variance. Table 14 shows the results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis for the heterosexual sample. For the heterosexual sample, intimacy but not fusion, contributed significantly to the prediction of relationship quality and accounted for 48% of the variance.

Table 13

#### Multiple Regression Results for the Prediction of Relationship Quality of the Lesbian Group

Predictor	Beta	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	df	F
Intimacy	.75223	.75	.56	.57	1,59	87.32*

\* $p < .05$ .



Table 14  
Multiple Regression Results for the Prediction of  
Relationship Quality of the Heterosexual Group

Predictor	Beta	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	df	F
Intimacy	1.1315	.69	.48	.48	1,59	54.10*

\* $p < .05$

### Summary

Presented in this chapter were the results of this study which included the statistical analysis and interpretation of the data collected. A MANOVA was utilized to determine if significant differences existed between women in lesbian and women in heterosexual relationships on the variables of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality. The results of the analyses indicated that lesbians scored significantly higher ( $p < .05$ ) on intimacy than did heterosexual women. No other significant differences between the two groups were indicated. Thus the first hypothesis was partially supported.

A Pearson correlation matrix indicated that for lesbians, only intimacy and relationship quality were significantly correlated ( $p < .05$ ). Fusion and intimacy and fusion and relationship quality were not significantly correlated. For the heterosexual group, however, the Pearson correlation matrix showed a significant relationship ( $p < .05$ ) between intimacy and relationship quality, as well as between intimacy and fusion and fusion and relationship quality. These significant correlations partially support the second hypothesis which stated significant relationships would exist between fusion, intimacy, and relationship quality for both groups.

Results of the stepwise multiple regression analyses indicated that for both groups, independently, only intimacy served as a significant predictor ( $p < .05$ ) of relationship

quality. For the lesbian group, intimacy provided 56% of the variance accounted for in relationship quality. Intimacy was responsible for 48% of the variance accounted for in relationship quality of the heterosexual group. For both groups, fusion added no significant predictive power beyond intimacy. Thus, the third hypothesis which stated that intimacy and fusion would be significant predictors of relationship quality for women in lesbian and women in heterosexual relationships was only partially supported.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to address fusion, intimacy, and relationship quality as experienced by women in lesbian couples and women in heterosexual couples. Differences between the two groups were assessed. Also, the correlation of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality reported by women in relationships with women and women in relationships with men was analyzed. Intimacy and fusion were examined in terms of their predictive power upon relationship quality for these two groups.

Subjects were 72 women in relationships with women and 67 women in relationships with men. Volunteers were obtained via the "snowball" method, i.e., word of mouth referral, from two southwestern states. Each volunteer completed two instruments and a demographic questionnaire. The Spousal Intimacy Scale and the Spousal Fusion Scale from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q) provided information concerning intimacy and fusion. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale was utilized as an indicator of relationship quality as perceived by each subject. A demographic data sheet was used to categorize subjects according to group (lesbian or heterosexual) and to provide information concerning various demographic variables including age, length of relationship, children, education, race, and income.

The first hypothesis in this study predicted significant differences would be found between the two groups on the variables of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality. The results of a multivariate analysis of covariance, using length of relationship and presence of children in the home as covariates, indicated that women in lesbian relationships yielded

significantly higher intimacy scores than did women in heterosexual relationships. However, the variables of intimacy and relationship quality were not found to be significantly different between the two groups; therefore, the hypothesis as a whole was not supported. Nevertheless, since intimacy was found to differ significantly, one aspect of the first hypothesis was supported. This suggests that the level of intimacy is higher among women in lesbian relationships than the level of intimacy of women in heterosexual relationships.

The second hypothesis predicted there would be significant correlations between fusion and intimacy, between intimacy and relationship quality, and between fusion and relationship quality for women in lesbian relationships and women in heterosexual relationships. A Pearson correlation matrix assessed the correlations of the variables for each group. For the lesbian group, a significant relationship existed between intimacy and relationship quality, but not for the other variables. For women in heterosexual relationships, all three variables--intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality--were significantly related to each other. Therefore, the second hypothesis was partially supported for the lesbian group and fully supported for the heterosexual group.

The third hypothesis stated fusion and intimacy would be significant predictors of relationship quality for women in lesbian relationships and for women in heterosexual relationships. Results of two stepwise multiple regressions indicated that for both groups, only intimacy significantly predicted relationship quality. Therefore, the third hypothesis was only partially supported.

## Discussion

### First Hypothesis

Although the results of this study do not fully support the first hypothesis, a significant difference was found between the two groups on degree of intimacy. This suggests that a woman in a relationship with another woman is likely to experience a

greater degree of intimacy than a woman in a relationship with a man. A review of the literature indicates that women are socialized to focus on relational issues such as intimacy. In contrast, men are socialized to focus on personal autonomy and independence (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Marcia, 1980). Two women in a relationship together might experience a high degree of intimacy since both partners are socialized to be the "intimacy gatekeepers." However, in a heterosexual relationship, only one partner, i.e., the woman, is socialized to invest energy in relational issues and intimacy. Therefore, intimacy may be higher in couples consisting of two women rather than couples consisting of a woman and man. The results of this study support that idea.

Another possible explanation for the higher intimacy scores among lesbians might be that they have fewer social sanctions keeping them in dysfunctional and dissatisfying relationships. Thus, relationships with lower intimacy may be more likely to be dissolved in a lesbian relationship than in a married heterosexual relationship (Zack et al., 1988).

Finally, research indicates lesbians are more likely to hold politically liberal views and more likely to lead a feminist lifestyle than heterosexual women (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Caldwell, 1984; Peplau et al., 1978; Zacks et al., 1988). Heterosexual women may be more likely to adhere to a traditional view of relationships which means that these women often forego their own needs in order to focus on the needs of their male partner. By doing so, they may be prone to ignore their needs for intimacy and/or be content with less intimacy than women with less traditional views of relationships.

In this study, data regarding the religious affiliation and church attendance of the lesbian subjects and heterosexual subjects (Tables 2 and 3) revealed heterosexual women were more likely to attend conservative churches and to attend church more frequently. The lesbian subjects were more likely to belong to liberal churches and to attend church less frequently or not at all. It seems likely that since conservative churches adhere to a patriarchal system which advocates traditional sex roles (e.g., the husband is to be head of the household while the wife is to be submissive and attentive to her husband's needs but

not her own), the heterosexual subjects may be less assertive about their own intimacy needs.

While women appear to be socialized in relational and intimacy issues, they are not socialized to be independent and autonomous (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Marcia, 1980). Therefore, two women in a relationship together would theoretically be less apt to be independent and more apt to be fused. In their work with lesbian couples, mental health clinicians report the existence of a high degree of dyadic fusion (Burch, 1986; Krestan & Bepko, 1980; Nichols, 1987; Riddle & Sang, 1978; Vargo, 1987). However, the results of this study suggest that women in lesbian relationships do not report themselves to be more or less fused than do women in heterosexual relationships. Perhaps clinicians sense a greater degree of fusion in lesbian couples because both individuals are likely to be fused to each other; whereas in a heterosexual couple, the woman is likely to be fused while the man remains less fused. The concentration of fusion in the lesbian couple may account for the higher degree of fusion observed by mental health clinicians.

Also, lesbian relationships may appear to be more fused than heterosexual relationships because as a group they have fewer social opportunities available to them that are affirming of their lesbian lifestyle. Because of this paucity, lesbians are less able to be involved in activities and organizations which allow them social independence from their relationships. However, heterosexual couples who have much more available to them in this social realm can more easily participate in activities independent of one another. For example, a heterosexual couple involved in church activities might participate in separate groups which are exclusively for men and exclusively for women; therefore, creating greater opportunity for each to have meaningful social involvements independent of their couple relationship. The dearth of relationship-affirming activities for lesbian couples may account, in part, for the discrepancy between clinicians' reports of higher degrees of fusion in lesbian couples when compared to the findings of this study that indicate lesbians do not report higher fusion than do heterosexual women.

The two groups did not differ significantly in relationship quality. This seems surprising since intimacy and relationship quality were highly correlated with lesbians yielding higher intimacy scores. Even though women in heterosexual couples reported less intimacy, they reported their relationship to be as high in quality as was reported by the women in lesbian couples. This might indicate that intimacy plays a less important role in relationship quality for women in heterosexual relationships than it plays for women in lesbian relationships. The implication that intimacy is of less importance to heterosexual women than it is to lesbian women contradicts the literature which suggests women desire a high degree of intimacy and are often disappointed by the perceived lack of intimacy in their relationships with men (Rubin, 1983; Rubin, 1985; Scarf, 1987; Schaeff, 1985).

Varying expectations of intimacy may also explain the lack of differences between the two groups on relationship quality. It is possible that because women are socialized to foster intimacy, women expect more intimacy and receive more intimacy from women. Conversely, women may expect less and be satisfied with less intimacy from men.

One caveat: the findings of this study on intimacy should be interpreted cautiously because the heterosexual women were more likely to have children in their homes than were lesbian women. Analysis of the data revealed 53% of the heterosexual sample consisted of women with children in the home while only 17% of the lesbian sample consisted of women with children in the home. A univariate analysis of variance indicated women without children in the home reported significantly ( $p < .05$ ) higher levels of intimacy than did women with children in the home. Although an attempt was made to statistically control for this confounding variable, prudence must be exercised when interpreting these results.

### Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis (fusion, intimacy, and relationship quality would be significantly correlated to each other) was partially supported for the lesbian group and wholly supported for the heterosexual group. Intimacy and relationship quality was

positively correlated for both groups. For the heterosexual group, fusion was negatively correlated to both intimacy and relationship quality. However, fusion was not found to be correlated to intimacy and relationship quality for the lesbian group. It would appear for this sample, fusion plays a less significant role for women in relationships with women than women in relationships with men. In other words, the lower the fusion the higher the intimacy and the higher the relationship quality of women in relationships with men. In the lesbian relationships, however, neither intimacy nor relationship quality was related to degree of fusion. This suggests that lesbian relationships with a high degree of intimacy are just as likely to be fused as they are to not be fused while women with men are more likely to be less fused when reporting high degrees of intimacy. It may be that individuation (the opposite of fusion) is not a prerequisite for the attainment of intimacy when women are in relationships with women, but may be more necessary for women in relationships with men.

### Third Hypothesis

The third hypothesis (intimacy and fusion would be significant predictors of relationship quality) was only partially supported. Fusion was not a significant predictor of relationship quality for either group; however, intimacy served as a significant predictor of relationship quality for both groups. This finding that intimacy is a significant predictor of relationship quality is consistent with previous empirical studies that have shown intimacy and relationship quality to be significantly correlated (Bray et al., 1984b; Waring, McElrath, Mitchell, & Derry, 1981). This is not surprising given the definition of intimacy is a "voluntarily close, affectionate, interdependent bond" with such constructs as trust, support, understanding, and self-disclosure (Traupmann et al., 1982). The fact that fusion held no predictive power for relationship quality above and beyond intimacy may be an indication that for a woman, whether in a relationship with a man or with a woman, the degree of intimacy is more related to relationship quality than is the degree of fusion. This



supports Gilligan's (1982) contention that development of a separate identity is not a prerequisite for women to attain intimacy.

### Recommendations

Considering the partial support of the three hypotheses, the following recommendations are suggested concerning future research:

1. In studies comparing lesbians and heterosexual women on intimacy, fusion and relationship quality, the two groups could be more closely matched on demographic variables, including presence of children in the home, length of relationship, and feminist/political beliefs. Although this study attempted to statistically control for confounding variables such as children and length of relationship, a more closely matched sample might yield different results. Problems exist, however, in finding two comparable but representative samples from the lesbian and from the female heterosexual population since both groups tend to differ significantly on political and lifestyle issues. For example, lesbians tend to live in larger cities, to hold more feminist and politically liberal views, and to be less religiously oriented than are heterosexual women (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Peplau et al., 1978; Zacks et al., 1988). To match groups on these variables would mean selecting an atypical lesbian or heterosexual sample and may yield a comparison that is not representative of lesbian or heterosexual couples. Therefore, while matching might help reduce some of the confounding effects of intervening variables, caution needs to be taken in assessing the representativeness of the matched sample to its population.

2. This study of intimacy, fusion, and relationship quality could be replicated to include men in relationships with men and men in relationships with women. This might help clarify differences that are more a function of gender than sexual orientation. Including men might also help distinguish which theories are generally applicable to men and women vs. theories applicable only to men or only to women. For example, such a study might find that for men, whether in a relationship with a man or a woman, fusion and

intimacy are negatively correlated. This would support the theory (Erikson, 1959) that individuation is important to attainment of intimacy. However, this would only support the theory as applied to men if there was no such relationship between intimacy and fusion for women.

3. The fact that this study relied solely on self-report measures may explain the discrepancy between the findings of this research that lesbian couples are not more fused than heterosexual couples and reports of mental health practitioners to the contrary. One method of investigating this contradiction further would be to replicate this study employing the use of observational techniques, as well as self-report measures.

In addition to these suggestions for further research, recommendations for mental health practitioners working with lesbian and heterosexual couples are as follows:

1. Based on the results of this study, a lesbian relationship can be fused and still have a high degree of intimacy and relationship quality. This appears to be less likely for women in heterosexual relationships. Because of this, it is best for clinicians to focus on the particular couple and the individuals involved to determine what is problematic for them rather than to assume that the apparent fusion of a lesbian couple is at the root of their problems. Therapists need to avoid applying "heterosexual standards and norms" to a lesbian relationship (e.g., the heterosexual norm in terms of the most healthy degree of fusion for the couple appears to differ from lesbian couples).

2. The findings of this study complement the literature which emphasizes the importance of intimacy for women in maintaining satisfaction in relationships. Relationship quality and intimacy were found to be more highly correlated than relationship quality and fusion for heterosexual women, and not correlated at all for lesbians; therefore, a more productive approach for therapists, particularly with lesbian couples, might be to explore barriers to intimacy as more important than to explore barriers to individuation.

3. In heterosexual couples, the degree of fusion appears to play a much more important role for women, in that, intimacy decreases as fusion increases. In terms of

relationship quality, therapists may need to be more concerned with individuation issues of women in relationships with men than of women in relationships with women. Further empirical studies in this area are recommended in order to determine why this might be true.

By examining and comparing the variables of intimacy, fusion and relationship quality of homosexual women and heterosexual women, it is hoped that this study has made a contribution toward increased understanding of women, lesbians, and couples. Conceivably, this study will stimulate further research in the areas of gender issues and sexual orientation.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, S. A., Russell, C. S., & Schumm, W. R. (1983). Perceived marital quality and family life-cycle categories. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 45, 127-139.
- Antill, J. K. (1983). Sex role complementarity vs. similarity in married couples. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 45, 145-155.
- Bardwick, J. M. (1979). In transition. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Bell, A., & Weinberg, M. S. (1978). Homosexualities: A study of diversity among men and women. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Bem, S. L. (1974). The measurement of psychological androgyny. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 42, 155-162.
- Berman, E. M. & Leif, H. I. (1975). Marital therapy from a psychiatric perspective: An overview. Journal of Psychiatry, 132, 583-592.
- Bernard, J. (1972). The future of marriage. New York: Bantam Books.
- Blumstein, P. & Schwartz, P. (1983). American couples. New York: Williams Morrow.
- Bowen, M. (1965). Family psychotherapy with schizophrenia in the hospital and in private practice. In I. Boszormenyi-Nagy & J. L. Framo (Eds.), Intensive family therapy (pp. 213-244). New York: Harper & Row.
- Bray, J. H., Williamson, D. S., & Malone, P. E. (1984a). PAFS: Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire Manual.
- Bray, J. H. , Williamson, D. S. & Malone, P. E. (1984b). Personal authority in the family system: Development of a questionnaire to measure personal authority in intergenerational family processes. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 10, 167-178.

- Broverman, I. K., Broverman, D. M., Clarkson, F. E., Rosenkrantz, P. S., & Vogel, S. R. (1970). Sex role stereotypes and clinical judgements of mental health. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 34, 1-7.
- Brown, L. S., & Zimmer, D. (1986). An introduction to therapy issues of lesbian and gay male couples. In N. S. Jacobson & A. S. Gurman (Eds.), Clinical handbook of marital therapy (pp. 451-468). New York: Guilford Press.
- Burch, B. (1986). Psychotherapy and the dynamics of merger in lesbian couples. In T. S. Stein & C. J. Cohen (Eds.), Contemporary perspectives on psychotherapy with lesbians and gay men. New York: Plenum Publishing.
- Burch, B. (1987). Barriers to intimacy: Conflicts over power, dependency, and nurturing in lesbian relationships. In the Boston Lesbian Psychologies Collective (Ed.), Lesbian psychologies. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Caldwell, M. A., & Peplau, L. A. (1982). Sex differences in same-sex friendship. Sex Roles, 8, 721-732.
- Caldwell, M. A., & Peplau, L. A. (1984). Balance of power in lesbian relationships. Sex Roles, 10, 567-599.
- Cardell, M., Finn, S., & Maracek, J. (1981). Sex-role identity, sex-role behavior, and satisfaction in heterosexual, lesbian, and gay male couples. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 5, 488-494.
- Chodorow, N. (1978). The reproduction of mothering: Psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Chronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. Psychometrika, 16, 297-334.
- Cotton, W. L. (1975). Social and sexual relationships of lesbians. The Journal of Sex Research, 11, 139-148.
- Eisenberg, N. & Lennon, R. (1983). Sex differences in empathy and related capacities. Psychological Bulletin, 94, 100-131.

- Erikson, E. H. (1959). Identity and the life cycle [Monograph]. Psychological Issues, 1, 1-171.
- Erikson, E. H. (1963). Childhood and society (2nd ed.). New York: Norton.
- Essex, M. J., Klein, M. H., Lohr, M. J., & Benjamin, L. S. (1985). Intimacy and depression in older women. Psychiatry, 48, 159-178.
- Feldman, L. (1979). Marital conflict and marital intimacy: An integrative psychodynamic-behavioral-systemic model. Family Process, 18, 69-78.
- Freedman, M. J. (1968). Homosexuality among women and psychological adjustment. Dissertation Abstracts. 28, 4294b.
- Gaelick, L., Bodenhausen, G. V., & Wyer, R. S., Jr. (1985). Emotional communication in close relationships. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49, 1246-1265.
- Garfinkle, E. M. & Morin, S. F. (1978). Psychologists' attitudes toward homosexual psychotherapy clients. Journal of Social Issues, 34, 100-112.
- Gershman, H. (1981). Homosexual marriages. The American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 41, 149-159.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Glenn, A. A. & Russell, R. K. (1984). Heterosexual bias among counselor trainees. Counselor Education and Supervision, 23, 208-212.
- Haley, J. (1984). Ordeal therapy: Unusual ways to change behavior. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Harris, R. J. (1975). A primer of multivariate statistics. NY: Academic Press.
- Hicks, M. & Platt, M. (1970). Marital happiness and stability: A review of the research in the sixties. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 32, 723-731.
- Hopkins, J.H. (1969). The lesbian personality. British Journal of Psychiatry, 115, 1433-1436.

- Horowitz, L. M. (1979). On the cognitive structure of interpersonal problems treated in psychotherapy. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 47, 5-15.
- Hotelling, K. & Forrest, L. (1985). Gilligan's theory of sex-role development: A perspective for counseling. Journal of Counseling and Development, 64, 183-186.
- Jacobson, N. S. & Gurman, A. S. (Eds.). (1986). Clinical handbook of marital therapy. New York: Guiliford Press.
- Kahn, S., Zimmerman, G., Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Getzels, J. W. (1985). Relations between identity in young adulthood and intimacy at midlife. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49, 1316-1322.
- Karpel, M. (1976). Inviduation: From fusion to dialogue. Family Process, 15, 65-82.
- Kaufman, P. A., Harrison, E., & Hyde, M. L. (1984). Distancing for intimacy in lesbian relationships. American Journal of Psychiatry, 141, 530-533.
- Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W. B., Martin, C. E., & Gebhard, P. H. (1953). Sexual behavior in the human female. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders.
- Kirk, R. E. (1968). Experimental design: Procedures for the behavioral sciences. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Kohut, H. & Wolf, E. S. (1978). The disorders of the self and their treatment: An outline. International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 59, 413-424.
- Krajeski, J.P. (1986). Psychotherapy with gay men and lesbians. In Stein, T.S. & Cohen, C.J. (Eds.), Contemporary perspectives on psychotherapy with lesbians and gay men (pp. 9-25). New York: Plenum Publishing.
- Krestan, J. & Bepko, C. S. (1980). The problem of fusion in the lesbian relationship. Family Process, 19, 277-289.
- Kurdek, L. A. & Schmitt, J. P. (1986a). Early development of relationship quality in heterosexual married, heterosexual cohabiting, gay, and lesbian couples. Developmental Psychology, 22, 305-309.

- Kurdek, L. A. & Schmitt, J. P. (1986b). Interaction of sex role self concept with relationship quality and relationship beliefs in married, heterosexual cohabitating, gay, and lesbian couples. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51, 365-370.
- Kurdek, L. A. & Schmitt, J. P. (1986c). Relationship quality of partners in heterosexual married, heterosexual cohabitating, and gay and lesbian relationships. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51, 711-720.
- L'Abate, L. & Sloan, S. (1984). A workshop format to facilitate intimacy in married couples. Family Relations, 33, 245-250.
- Lewis, R. A. (1978). Emotional intimacy among men. Journal of Social Issues, 34, 108-121.
- Lewis, R. A., Kozac, E. B., Milardo, R. M., & Grosnick, W. A. (1981). Commitment in same-sex love relationships. Alternative Lifestyles, 4, 22-42.
- Locke, H.L. & Wallace, K. M. (1959). Short marital adjustment and prediction tests: Their reliability and validity. Marriage and Family Living, 21, 251-255.
- Macklin, E. D. & Rubin, R. H. (Eds.). (1983). Contemporary families and alternative lifestyles. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Macklin, E. D. (1983). Non-marital heterosexual cohabitation: An overview. In E. D. Macklin & R. H. Rubin (Eds.), Contemporary families and alternative lifestyles. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Mannion, K. (1981). Psychology and the lesbian: A critical review of the research. In S. Cox (Ed.), Female psychology (pp. 256-274). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Marcia, J. E. (1980). Identity in adolescence. In J. Adelson (Ed.), Handbook of adolescence psychology. Toronto: Wiley.
- Matteson, D. R. (1975). Adolescence today: Sex roles and the search for identity. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press.



- McCandlish, B. M. (1982). Therapeutic issues with lesbian couples. Journal of Homosexuality, 7, 71-78.
- McDonald, G. J. (1981). Misrepresentation, liberalism, and heterosexual bias in introductory psychology textbooks. Journal of Homosexuality, 6, 45-60.
- McWhirter, D. P. & Mattison, A. M. (1984). The male couple: How relationships develop. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Mendola, M. (1980). The Mendola report: A new look at gay couples. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Minuchin, S. (1974). Families and family therapy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Morin, S. F. (1977). Heterosexual bias in psychological research on lesbianism and male homosexuality. American Psychologist, 32, 629-637.
- Nichols, M. (1987). Lesbian sexuality: Issues and developing theory. In the Boston Lesbian Psychologies Collective (Ed.), Lesbian psychologies. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Norusis, M. J. (1986). Advanced statistics for SPSSPC+. Chicago: SPSS Inc.
- Oberstone, A. K. & Sukoneck, H. (1976). Psychological adjustment and life style of single lesbians and single heterosexual women. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 1, 172-188.
- Olsen, D., Sprenkle, D., & Russell, C. (1979) Circumplex model of marital and family systems: I. Cohesion and adaptability dimensions, family types, and clinical applications. Family Process, 18, 2-26.
- Olson, D. H., Bell, R., & Portner, J. (1978). FACES-I: Family adaptability and cohesion evaluation scales. Family Social Science, University of Minnesota.
- Orlofsky, J. L. (1977). Sex-role orientation, identity formation, and self-esteem in college men and women. Sex Roles, 3, 561-575.

- Orlofsky, J. L., Marcia, J. E., & Lesser, I. M. (1973). Ego identity status and the intimacy versus isolation crisis of young adulthood. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 27, 211-219.
- Patton, D. & Waring, E. M. (1985). Sex and marital intimacy. Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 11, 176-184.
- Peplau, L. A. & Amaro, H. (1982). Understanding lesbian relationships. In W. Paul & J. D. Weinrich (Eds.), Homosexuality as a social issue. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Peplau, L. A. (1982). Research on homosexual couples: An overview. Journal of Homosexuality, 8, 3-8.
- Peplau, L. A., Cochran, S., Rook, K., & Padesky, C. (1978). Loving women: Attachment and autonomy in lesbian relationships. Journal of Social Issues, 34, 7-27.
- Peplau, L. A., Padesky, C. & Hamilton, M. (1983). Satisfaction in lesbian relationships. Journal of Homosexuality, 8, 23-35.
- Riddle, D. I. & Sang, B. (1978). Psychotherapy with lesbians. Journal of Social Issues, 34, 84-100.
- Rollins, B. C. & Cannon, K. L. (1974). Marital satisfaction over the family life cycle: A re-evaluation." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 36, 271-282.
- Rollins, B. C. & Feldman, H. (1970). Marital satisfaction over the family life cycle. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 32, 20-27.
- Roth, S. (1985). Psychotherapy with lesbian couples: Individual issues, female socialization, and the social context. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 11, 273-286.
- Rubin, L. B. (1976). Worlds of pain: Life in the working class family. New York: Basic Books.
- Rubin, L. B. (1983). Intimate Strangers. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

- Rubin, L. B. (1985). Just friends: The role of friendship in our lives. New York: Harper & Row.
- Ryder, R. G. (1973). Longitudinal data relating marriage satisfaction and having a child. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 35, 604-606.
- Scarf, M. (1987). Intimate partners. New York: Random House.
- Schaef, A. W. (1985). Women's reality. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Schiedel, D. G. & Marcia, J. E. (1985). Ego identity, intimacy, sex-role orientation, and gender. Developmental Psychology, 21, 149-160.
- Silverstein, C. (1981). Man to man: Gay couples in America. New York: Morrow.
- Spanier, G. B. & Cole, C. L. (1975). Marital adjustment over the family life cycle: The issue of curvilinearity. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 37, 263-275.
- Spanier, G. B. & Lewis, R. A. (1980). Marital quality: A review of the seventies. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 42, 825-839.
- Spanier, G. B., Sauer, W., & Larzelere, R. (1979). An empirical evaluation of the family life cycle. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 41, 27-38.
- Spanier, G.B. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing quality of marriage and similar dyads. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38, 15-28.
- Stinnett, N. & Sauer, K. H. (1977). Relationship characteristics of strong families. Family Perspective, 11, 3-11.
- Tanner, D. M. (1978). The lesbian couple. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath.
- Thompson, G. H. & Fishburn, W. R. (1977). Attitudes toward homosexuality among graduate counseling students. Counselor Education and Supervision, 17, 121-130.
- Traupmann, J., Eckels, E., & Hatfield, E. (1982). Intimacy in older women's lives. The Gerontologist, 22, 493-498.
- Tripp, C. A. (1975). The homosexual matrix. New York: The New American Library.

- Vargo, S. (1987). The effects of women's socialization on lesbian couples. In the Boston Lesbian Psychologies Collective (Ed.), Lesbian psychologies. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Vetere, V. A. (1982). The role of friendship in the development and maintenance of lesbian love relationships. Journal of Homosexuality, 8, 51-65.
- Waring, E. M. & Chelune, G. J. (1983). Marital intimacy and self-disclosure. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 39, 183-190.
- Waring, E. M. (1984). The measurement of marital intimacy. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 10, 185-192.
- Waring, E. M., McElrath, D., Lefcoe, D., & Weisz, G. (1981). Dimensions of intimacy in marriage. Psychiatry, 44, 169-175.
- Waring, E. M., McElrath, D., Mitchell, P., & Derry, M. E. (1981). Intimacy and emotional illness in the general population. Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 26, 167-172.
- Waring, E. M., Patton, D., Neron, C. A., & Linker, W. (1986). Types of marital intimacy and prevalence of emotional illness. Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 31, 720-725.
- Waring, E. M., Tillmann, M. P., Frelick, L., Russell, L., & Weisz, G. (1980). Concepts of intimacy in the general population. Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 168, 471-474.
- White, K. M., Speisman, J. C., Jackson, D., Bartis, S., & Costos, D. (1986). Intimacy maturity and its correlates in young married couples. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50, 152-162.
- Williamson, D. S. (1981). Personal authority via termination of the intergenerational hierarchical boundary: A "new" stage in the family life cycle. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 7, 441-452.

- Wilson, M. L. & Greene, R. L. (1971). Personality characteristics of female homosexuals. Psychological Reports, 28, 407-412.
- Wright, S. E. (1985). An existential perspective on differentiation/fusion: Theoretical issues and clinical applications. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 11, 35-46.
- Zacks, E., Green, R., & Marrow, J. (1988). Comparing lesbian and heterosexual couples on the circumplex model: An initial investigation. Family Process, 27, 471-484.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
COVER LETTER AND CONSENT

Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this dissertation research project. The purpose of this study is to examine various aspects of women in relationships.

Enclosed you will find three questionnaires: The Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q), the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), and a Demographic Data Sheet. Please complete the questionnaires in the order numbered at the top of each questionnaire and do not leave any answers blank. If you are unsure about a question, please mark your best guess. Please record your answers for the PAFS-Q on the answer sheet provided for the PAFS-Q. You may record your answers for the DAS and the Demographic Data Sheet directly on the questionnaires.

Please complete these forms without discussing your answers with others, particularly the person with whom you are living. I am interested in your personal responses without the influence of others.

Also, to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, please do not put your name on any of the materials. No one besides myself will have access to these completed questionnaires. When you have completed the questionnaires, please place all materials (questionnaires and answer forms) into the envelope. Returning the questionnaires indicates your consent to participate in this study. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may discontinue this survey at any time.

If you have any questions about this study, before or after you complete the questionnaires, please call me at (713) 792-8390. Again, I greatly appreciate your time and contribution to this study.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristin Anderson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kristin Anderson, Ph.D. Candidate  
Counseling Psychology Program  
Oklahoma State University



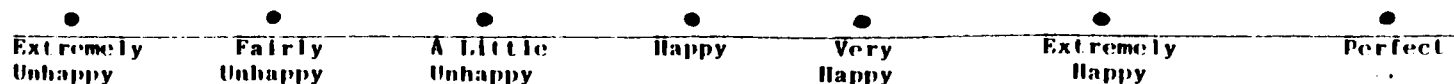
**APPENDIX B**  
**DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE**



	<u>All the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>More often than not</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>
16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation or terminating your relationship?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
19. Do you confide in your mate?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
20. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
22. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

	<u>Every Day</u>	<u>Almost Every Day</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>
23. Do you kiss your mate?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	<u>All of them</u>	<u>Most of them</u>	<u>Some of them</u>	<u>Very few of them</u>	<u>None of them</u>
24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

25. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.



How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate:

	<u>Never</u>	<u>Less than Once a month</u>	<u>Once or twice a month</u>	<u>Once or twice a <del>month</del> week</u>	<u>Once a day</u>	<u>More often</u>
26. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
27. Laugh together	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
28. Calmly discuss something	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
29. Work together on a project	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationships during the past few weeks. (Check yes or no.)

- |     | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |                          |
|-----|------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| 30. | _____      | _____     | Being too tired for sex. |
| 31. | _____      | _____     | Not showing love.        |

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

- \_\_\_ I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.
- \_\_\_ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
- \_\_\_ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.
- \_\_\_ It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.
- \_\_\_ It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
- \_\_\_ My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

**APPENDIX C**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET**

**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET**

**Please answer the following about yourself:**

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_ (2) Religious affiliation \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Over the past year, what has been your average church attendance?  
\_\_\_\_ No attendance  
\_\_\_\_ Infrequent (e.g., 4 times per year)  
\_\_\_\_ Occasional (e.g., once a month)  
\_\_\_\_ Frequent (e.g., two times a month)  
\_\_\_\_ Regular (e.g., one or more times a week)
  
3. Race  
\_\_\_\_ Asian American                      \_\_\_\_ Native American  
\_\_\_\_ Black American                      \_\_\_\_ Non U.S. Citizen  
\_\_\_\_ Caucasian American                      \_\_\_\_ Country of Origin  
\_\_\_\_ Hispanic American
  
4. Gender of person with whom you are currently living  
(1) Female \_\_\_\_\_ (2) Male \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Do you consider yourself to be in a committed relationship (a relationship whereby you and your partner are working toward maintaining an emotional, cognitive, and sexual investment in each other)?  
(1) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (2) No \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Are you legally married?  
(1) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (2) No \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. How long have you been involved in this current relationship? \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. Number of your own children \_\_\_\_\_
  
9. Number of children living in your household \_\_\_\_\_
  
10. Estimated annual income of yourself \_\_\_\_\_
  
11. Estimated annual income of your partner \_\_\_\_\_
  
12. Highest level of education achieved  
\_\_\_\_ No High School Degree                      \_\_\_\_ Undergraduate Degree  
\_\_\_\_ High School Degree                      \_\_\_\_ Graduate Degree  
\_\_\_\_ Vocational/Technical Degree

VITA

Kristin Kaye Anderson

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: INTIMACY, FUSION, AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY OF WOMEN  
IN LESBIAN AND HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Major Field: Applied Behavioral Studies

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Elk City High School, Elk City, Oklahoma in 1980; received B.S. *summa cum laude* in psychology from Oklahoma Christian College, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in 1983; M.S. in Community Counseling from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 1985; completed requirements for Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, July, 1989.

Professional Experience: Post-Doctoral Psychology Fellowship at University of Texas Mental Science Institute--Houston, 1988-1989; Psychology Instructor at Houston Community College, 1989; Clinical Psychology Internship at University of Texas Medical School-Houston, 1987-1989; Staff Psychologist, OSU Student Mental Health Clinic, 1984-1987; Staff Psychologist, Marriage and Family Counseling Service, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1984-1986; OSU Graduate Research Assistant, 1984-1986; OSU Graduate Teaching Assistant, 1986.

Professional Organizations: American Psychological Association; American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy.