Unconscious Bonding in Lesbian Relationships: The Road Not Taken

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UNCONSCIOUS BONDING IN LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS: THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

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We hereby approve the dissertation

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation develops a theoretical conception of attraction and bonding, or complementarity, in certain lesbian relationships. Neither psychoanalytic theory nor homosexual studies have attempted to address the dynamics of complementarity in homosexual relationships except in a superficial way: either accepting or refuting the common conception of role-playing (i.e., mimicry of heterosexual gender roles) as the pattern for gay relationships. This study looks at a particular kind of lesbian bonding, that between a "primary" lesbian and a more bisexual lesbian, to explore the nature of the unconscious complementarity there.

Both psychoanalytic theory and homosexual studies lack a theoretical construction for distinguishing psychosexual differences between primary and bisexual lesbians. This thesis accounts for these differences, using elements of both psychodynamic theory and the social interactionalist approach of homosexual studies. It employs a broad definition of projective identification as a conceptual vehicle for understanding complementarity: mutual projective and introjective identifications of significant dimensions of the self occur between partners, forging a bond out of their differences. This analysis of unconscious complementarity is suggested as a means of understanding bonding in all relationships. For lesbians, these significant dimensions are variations in sexual orientation and sense of deviancy, as well as explorations of non-stereotypical gender identities. The study does not offer a new theory of psychosexual development per se; instead it shifts the emphasis from "what causes homosexuality?" to "what is homosexuality and how does it work in (some) relationships between lesbians?"

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

> *And sometimes, it appears as though the Lover-Shadow represents a buried or unexpressed part of the self rather than an earlier significant Other.*
>
> E. S. Person, Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters

Complementarity and Conceptual Problems in Thinking about Couples

Understanding the attractions at work when two individuals make the mutual choice of each other as romantic and sexual partners is a somewhat mysterious matter. What is metaphorically referred to as "chemistry" in common terms is not much better understood in psychological theory. The folk wisdom that "opposites attract" seems to underlie what is claimed to be scientific thinking as well. For example, psychoanalytic theory postulates that object choice always rests ultimately on unconscious oedipal ties. But behind the complexity in the psychoanalytic literature about oedipal experience, there still seems to be a sort of default theory that human beings are "naturally" attracted to the "opposite" sex.

Freud (1905) proposes universal innate bisexuality and writes of the pathways by which heterosexual object choice is established for most people, an explicit rejection of the idea that heterosexuality is innate. In his (and other analytic theorists') writings about homosexuality, however, we discover the bias. Here, despite occasional recognition that homosexuals do not manifest more disturbance than heterosexuals, something "unnatural," "abnormal," or "inverted" is inevitably found. Freud argues that homo-

sexual ("passive") object choice relies upon cross-gender identification, i.e., he could not conceive of attraction to the same-sex parent except in the terms of heterosexuality.

In The Symposium, Aristophanes relates the myth of primordial beings who are cut in half by the gods and then go in search of their other half. Psychoanalyst Ethel Spector Person (1988) locates the concept of complementarity in this myth: "Plato bequeathed to us the original Western conception of love, that through love one seeks the other half of one's soul, in order to form a union that will make one whole again" (p. 18). Freud (1905) referred to this myth as well, but had trouble conceiving of such complementarity in homosexuality:

> The popular theory of the sexual instinct corresponds closely to the poetic fable of dividing the person into two halves--man and woman -- who strive to become reunited through love. It is, therefore, very surprising to find that there are men for whom the sexual object is not woman but man, and that there are women for whom it is not man but woman (pp. 553-4).

Murphy (1983/84) replies to Freud's concern in this way:

> to the reader of Plato's Symposium...it comes as no surprise at all, since Plato clearly states that the gods...had created three kinds of human beings: those with heterosexual desire and those with either female or male homosexual desires (p. 69).

Specifically, Aristophanes' myth in the Symposium states that "in the first place the sexes were originally three in number, not two as they are now; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature" (Jowett, 1933, p. 315). These three types of humans were then divided in half. He holds a low opinion of the men

and women who came from the androgynous beings: they are "lascivious" and "adulterous." Those who were once the original woman simply "don't care for men, but have female attachments; the female companions are of this sort." Likewise, the men who were once part of the original male being "follow the male," and "they have the most manly nature" (p. 317). In this account lesbians are quintessentially female and homosexual men quintessentially male. The heterosexuals are the androgynous beings.

Observing the fate of this myth in its successive re-interpretations as a template for heterosexuality tells us something about the biases inherent in psychoanalytic thinking about human sexuality. In psychoanalytic thinking (and elsewhere) homosexuals are either androgynous or express cross-gender confusion. The myth further suggests that thinking of male and female as the only "opposites" also arises out of heterocentric thinking.

This study develops a theoretical perspective that addresses the question of complementarity in a different way. It is concerned first of all with the nature of complementarity in certain lesbian relationships, and secondly, with the implications of this theoretical perspective for understanding complementarity in any relationship. In lesbian relationships, as in those between gay men, the notion of the attraction of opposites is difficult to apply. What would comprise "oppositeness" where there is apparently only "sameness"?

There are other ways of conceiving of complementarity however. The process of projective identification has occasionally been employed to explain connections and attractions between people. Although Freud did not himself develop and use this theoretical approach, we can understand it as the basic mechanism by which early oedipal objects come to be re-found in adult love

objects as he suggested. Other writers (Knight, 1940; Klein, 1955; Huneeus, 1963; Ellis, 1964; Murstein, 1976; Bergmann, 1980; Money, 1980; Crisp, 1988) have employed concepts of identification (both projective and introjective) to explain attraction and bonding, but only in the most general terms or in terms of neurotic complementarity or "unconscious collusion". This study will further develop the concept of projective identification as a source of complementarity in relationships.

Projective identification provides the capacity to transform or expand the self as well as to deny or defend against undesirable parts of the self. The present study elaborates upon the transformative aspects of projective identification, showing how it functions as a basis for attraction and mutual development which bonds two individuals. It demonstrates how the concept may explain some specific aspects of lesbian relating which have not been addressed previously or have been addressed in ways which do not match empirical evidence.

This study is undertaken within the framework of psychoanalytic theory, specifically that of the British school of object-relations theory. The concept of projective identification and the analysis of its use as a mechanism of complementary relating occurred largely within the British tradition (see Chapter Six). There are some problematic areas with this approach however. Psychoanalytic (as well as lay) thinking tends to be unable to conceive of homosexual relationships in terms other than those of heterosexuality. Freud's confusion about the nature of coupling not based on opposite-gender attraction is a clear example of the narrow range within which notions of homosexuality have been placed. This limitation has led to several fallacies, or we may say prejudices, in psychoanalytic conceptions of homosexuality.

First, homosexuality is considered to be pathological per se, even in the absence of symptomotology. That is, it is pathological simply because it is not heterosexuality. Second, the terms of psychosexual development reflect similar prejudice. Gender identity, object-choice or sexual preference, sexual identity, and sex-role behavior are practically equated, as one is presumed to define the other in consistent ways. Being a genetic female then means being feminine which in turn means being attracted to men and behaving as a counterpart in the role of wife. Although considerable cultural changes have occurred in the expression of these dimensions, psychoanalytic theory has not made fundamental changes in reconceiving either these variables or the interrelationship between them.

In addition to these conceptual problems, many authors who have examined lesbian relationships note differences in the dynamics and patterns of lesbian relationships that distinguish them from either heterosexual or gay male relationships (see Chapter Five for specific reference to these differences). Because lesbian relationships are entirely female, they tend to reflect the desires, values, norms, and problems which are more common to women. The absence of male influence means they express somewhat different psychological dynamics.

These problems point to some of the difficulties in thinking about complementarity in lesbian relationships. Traditional psychoanalytic thinking linked with historical and cultural prejudices about masculinity, femininity, and homosexuality exert a pull of their own, somewhat like a gravitational field. This project is another effort to launch an alternative analysis past the the force of that field.

Differences between Lesbians

There is a common idea (sometimes adopted by psychoanalytic thinkers) that homosexuality is an entity which bears explanation. But, as many writers (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Stoller, 1985; McDougall, 1986b; & Wolfson, 1987) have pointed out, it is more accurate to think of homosexualities--in the plural--which manifest many internal and external differences (just as we need to conceive of heterosexualities in the plural). This study develops the thesis that there are significant differences between lesbians and that one particular dimension of difference serves as a complementary bond in some lesbian relationships. This difference is a complex one, not easy to define precisely. Expressed most succinctly, the difference is a fundamental distinction between a more bisexually-oriented lesbian and what we might call a more strictly homosexually-oriented lesbian. (Note: the terms homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual are used throughout the study to refer to both sexual and affectional/relational preferences unless otherwise noted).

This difference is expressed in several ways. There may be obvious variations in the individuals' relationship histories. There may or may not be an overlap with subjective experiences of gender, i.e., femininity or masculinity. There may be a difference in the process of developing a gay identity or in its final clarity. Some women consider themselves to have "always" been lesbian; from an early age they knew their interest was in other women. Others came to this identity later in life through a very different path, one which included significant heterosexual experience.

The distinction between lesbians according to their different paths of identity development is made in some of the literature on lesbian identity and communities (e.g., Ponse, 1978; Golden, 1987). Women in the first group,

women who began to identify themselves, however tentatively, as lesbians at an early age, often by adolescence, never developed a stable identity as heterosexual, however conflicted their struggle toward a lesbian identity may have been. They either had no significant sexual and emotional relationships with men or related to men only in an effort to hide or deny their lesbianism. Ponse (1978) and Golden (1987) call these women "primary lesbians." In her study of college women who identified as lesbian, Golden writes:

> Some of the these women had from an earlier age (usually between six and twelve) considered themselves to be different from other girls. Whether or not they had a label for it, they experienced themselves as different in that they felt sexually attracted to and oriented toward other girls or women....[T]hey may or may not have had lesbian relationships, and they may even have had heterosexual ones, but regardless, they felt themselves to be different in that they were attracted to females. Furthermore, this was experienced either at the time, or in retrospect, as something beyond their control....Some of these women offered comments to the effect that they were "born" lesbians (p. 25).

In the second group are women who identified as lesbians later in life. They often had significant relationships with men; some married, some lived with men, others had long-term relationships with men with whom they felt they were in love and to whom they were sexually attracted. Often they had a clear identity as heterosexual in their early years. Nevertheless, they "discovered" women as sexual and emotional partners at some point and came to identify as lesbians. Ponse and Golden call these women "elective lesbians." Golden notes that even among younger women this distinction prevails. This second group of her college-age subjects experienced their sexual preference as a choice:

> Unlike primary lesbians, these women did not have a conscious sense of being different from other girls at a younger age....These women usually had some heterosexual experience as they got older, and even when they had not, they had heterosexual identities....[Some] did not view sexual attraction to women as an essential and unchanging aspect of who they were, although they strongly believed they would continue to have their primary (if not all) relationships with women. Some said they considered themselves to be lesbians whose sexual feelings could be most accurately characterized as bisexual, or just sexual (pp. 25-7)

The terms "primary" and "elective" are not absolutely fitting. Women in the first group sometimes also speak of being lesbian as a choice, while the question of whom one is truly attracted to is probably not really a choice, that is a conscious choice, for anyone. "Primary" and "elective" are terms which make sense only as applied to identity, not in reference to object choice. This distinction is not made in psychoanalytic literature, but it is an important one in homosexual studies.

"Homosexual identity" is not precisely equivalent to "same-sex object choice" although both psychoanalytic and common usage tend to assume equivalence. There are numerous instances of individuals whose behavior, fantasies, and desires do not match their identity or self-labelling as heterosexual or homosexual. For example, there is the woman who states, "I'm not lesbian. I just happen to be in love with this woman." Her object choice and her personal identity are not consistent. There is also the woman who identifies as lesbian although she is involved in a sexual relationship with a man or is essentially asexual.

Homosexual identity, then, is a social construct incorporating psychological elements. Psychoanalytic theory has had little concern with the development of sexual identity per se, instead focusing on origins of object choice.

Sexual identity (i.e., identity as homosexual or heterosexual), where this term is used at all, is treated as synonymous with sexual orientation, or, again, object choice (cf. Erikson, 1963). The genesis of object choice is itself a matter of considerable debate however. Further, there is the question of whether object choice is relatively fixed at an early age or a fluid construct that may change over a lifetime.

Richardson (1984) argues that we cannot explore the development of sexual identity until we first abandon the idea that it flows from a relatively permanent, underlying sexual orientation. She suggests an alternative conception: that of a socially constructed identity which is open to change. In this case identity development rests on the social and personal significance which an identity has for the individual, not on anything fundamental to the organization of sexual desire. This approach does not deny the existence of an underlying sexual orientation, but recognizes identity and object choice as independent variables. It requires that our conception of individual sexual orientation include the dimension of "restricted and rigid" vs. "open and flexible" (Richardson, 1984). We may entertain an idea like "unconscious orientation"--even though this can only be a theoretical construct. Richardson proposes another alternative: orientation and identity development proceed on parallel tracks, each one influencing and organizing the other. Childhood, adolescent, and adult experiences are then selected or deselected to help organize both desire and identity.

Identity is itself a concept with imprecise definitions. Self-concept, self-image, self-representation and identity are terms used in the literature often without clear definitions or distinctions between them (Cass, 1984a). For example, Erikson (1963) uses the term to refer variously to individuals,

groups, and cultures, as well as to sexual identity itself. This study will employ Cass' (1984a) definition of identity: "It represents the synthesis of own self-perceptions with views of the self perceived to be held by others. Where self-perceptions and imagined other's views of self are in accord, then identity may be said to have developed" (p.110). The various crises, conflicts, and resolutions inherent in formation of a lesbian identity play their part in shaping adolescent and/or adult development. They may also come to bear on the partnership of two lesbians.

The distinction between these two groups of lesbians, the primary lesbian and the more bisexual lesbian, is the important one in this study. From a number of different sources there are indications that long-term lesbian relationships not uncommonly consist of pairings between women from these two groups. These sources are not "hard data" however--a reflection of how little is known about lesbian couples. Most homosexual studies have been centered on men, and even those tend to neglect the dynamics of relationship. A search of the literature on lesbians finds that this dimension of difference in sexual histories has simply not been explored; there is no study which considers this issue (see Chapter Five). Perhaps this is no surprise as there are relatively few explorations of complementarity even in heterosexual relationships.

The observations which led to the initial formulations of this proposition, that lesbians from the two groups not uncommonly pair up, came from clinical work, discussions with colleagues and associates within the lesbian community, an early exploration of the subject in a small pilot study, and finally, a small informal survey of therapists who work with lesbian couples. From these sources a pattern of coupling between women whose sexual and

identity histories are quite different emerged. The pattern is far from inclusive--there are certainly other bases of complementarity in lesbian relationships--but it occurs with some frequency. As Morin (1977) has pointed out, there is no such thing as representative data from a "hidden" population. We cannot know with any assurance how widespread such a pattern may be; we can only observe its recurrence in relationships that are openly identified as lesbian. In studies of lesbian relationships, information about partner choice or sexual histories is almost always missing; these studies neither provide evidence of frequency of this pattern nor dispute it. There are some suggestive accounts in the literature on lesbian relationships, but because the data is so scarce these serve more to illustrate the proposition than to prove it.

A Pattern of Attraction

The evidence from my own clinical work shows not only that differences in sexual histories often exist between lesbian partners, but that they are a source of fascination, disturbance, appeal, and threat. A woman might report that her partner had been a lesbian "all her life," while she was newer to relationships with women. Another would relate that her partner had been "seriously involved with men." These disclosures were given spontaneously, and their significance might easily have been missed except for the tone or the particular inflection with which they were expressed. They conveyed experiences of mingled awe, alienation, intrigue, wonder, or threat. These emotions sometimes recalled the way heterosexual clients spoke of differences with their partners which were ascribed to gender.

These differences were most apparent when they were most extreme, e.g., when one partner had no sexual/romantic interest in men and the other had been happily involved with a man or men. Some life-long lesbians talked about an interest in women who appeared to be straight but might not be. This interest could be interpreted in various ways--e.g., competitiveness with men--but it seemed to suggest something else, a sense of this somewhat-heterosexual woman as an Other. However, the differences were usually more subtle. For example, in a relationship where both women had previously been involved with men, those relationships were experienced very differently by the two women. The first woman felt her relationships with men had been either false or relatively unimportant, while her partner felt her heterosexual experiences were serious and authentic.

On the other side of this difference, a woman might recognize that her underlying sexuality was rather bisexual even though she identified herself as lesbian. This was clearly distinct from her partner, and the difference was not a comfortable one to either. There was always the threat that she might be interested in men again, but something other than that threatened as well, something about how they were fundamentally different. In one specific case that pointed to the significance of this difference, a woman described feeling some attraction to women friends (heterosexual) all her life, but usually vague and easy to overlook. It was when she felt drawn to a woman who was clearly lesbian that something shifted internally. She was frightened by and also drawn to that other world. The attraction became focused and compelling.

A significant feature of these differences in actual relationships was the fascination they held for the individual women. One woman whose partner

had come out when she was a teenager would report how she never tired of hearing what it was like being with women at such a young age. A life-long lesbian would question her partner: what was it like, being in love with a man? was it the same? how could it be? This interest seemed to go beyond the usual interest lovers have in each other's past love affairs; it seemed to be intrinsically tied to the sex of the former partner. In the first case there was a hunger to know what that early world of female love was like. In the second there was a sense of trying to comprehend the incomprehensible.

The affective charge, both positive and negative, attached to these differences alerted me to their significance. As always in clinical work, the threatening nature of an emotional response serves to signal deeper roots in unconscious meaning.

Once this pattern had suggested itself, it began to be apparent in other quarters as well. Observations made within the lesbian community, conversations with colleagues (some of whom also worked extensively with lesbians in therapy), and an informal pilot study among lesbian friends affirmed it as an unnamed but easily recognized pattern, one which might have dynamic implications. In this sense it seemed to be a matter of "pretheoretical" or "tacit knowledge"; as Salner (1986) discusses it, this is knowledge which "participants in a communal existence" carry, that which is known but has not yet been articulated. The picture which began to come into focus was that many lesbian relationships show some meaningful ("meaningful" is a highly subjective term here, designated as such by the individuals themselves) degree of this difference in underlying sexual orientation, as reflected in differences in past relationships, clarity of identity as lesbian, or sense of self in relation to heterosexuality.

Some relationships do not show this difference. For example, early relationships between young women seem less likely to be founded on such a difference. This can be understood in at least two ways. First, an obvious practical explanation: both being young, both women generally knew themselves to be lesbian rather early and have little experience with men. Second, there may be a strong need to affirm one's identity as lesbian by finding a partner who reflects and reinforces it through her own experience. Later, as personal identity is consolidated, the need for a partner who mirrors one's own identity may decrease. In other cases, older women who have both had traditional married heterosexual experiences get involved with each other. Here there may also be a need to confirm each other in a life-changing decision. Sometimes when these relationships end, each partner makes a very different kind of choice (see below).

Some relationships seem to be founded on other dynamics altogether, ones outside the scope of this study. One woman in the pilot study reported that it was important for her to find a partner who was not deeply involved in lesbian experience and community; she had always lived within a primarily heterosexual world and needed someone who fit into that world with her. This woman had been married for many years and felt her choice of women as lovers to be a very conscious one. Her sexuality was so flexible she simply chose what was most comfortable. Women were easier to relate to, but she wanted a partner who fit her mainstream world with her, i.e., who was not so gay identified herself. Again, it is important here to think in terms of homsexualities--a loosely-related labelling of diverse experiences.

The pilot study consisted of discussions with 6 individuals and 2 couples about this dimension of their relationships. This study was an opportunity to

explore in an informal way the observations made in clinical practice. The requirements of therapeutic treatment limit active exploration of the question, while the pilot study afforded more freedom to probe. This project did not examine the meaning of such differences so much as it simply inquired into the presence of them in each woman's relationships, both present and past.

Except for the one woman noted above, the individuals in these interviews found distinct differences in their own histories and those of their partners, some more meaningful than others. Three of the remaining five identified their current partner as strikingly different from herself either in the presence or absence of relationships with men. The other two women felt their partners were also different: all of them had come out in their twenties, but the partners' relationships with men were more serious involvements than their own.

The two couples interviewed in this study showed great differences in their histories. One was a four-year relationship between a woman who considered herself bisexual and a woman who had never been with men. The first woman had been married for ten years, had two children, and had enjoyed sex and love with men. She expected her current relationship to endure and didn't imagine she would be with men again. The other relationship, also a four-year one, involved a woman who had been happy in her marriage to a man for thirteen years but now felt clear that she was a lesbian. The partner had been with men also, but only rather briefly in her early 20's. She was unclear about her sexuality as an adolescent and at peace with it only after she came out.

In the literature one finds little to support or deny such a pattern. Usually no information is given about identity development or relationship history. The psychoanalytic literature tends to report differences only in terms of the "masculinity" or "femininity" of lesbians. These distinctions have a questionable basis in definition. For example, Freud (1920) writes of a young woman whose antipathy to men provided the impetus to her homosexuality, but who herself adopted "the characteristic masculine type of love." Here is his evidence of her masculinity:

> Her humility and her tender lack of pretensions...her bliss when she was allowed to accompany the lady a little way and to kiss her hand on parting, her joy when she heard her praised as beautiful--while any recognition of her own beauty by another person meant nothing at all to her--her pilgrimages to places once visited by the loved one, the oblivion of all more sensual wishes: all these little traits in her resembled the first passionate adoration of a youth for a celebrated actress whom he regards as far above him, to whom he scarcely dares lift his bashful eyes (p. 218).

This description applies to young infatuation rather than male infatuation.

Similarly Havelock Ellis (1928) attributes masculinity to a certain kind of lesbian who:

> ...may not be, and frequently is not, what would be called a "mannish" woman....[The woman's masculinity] may, in the least degree, consist only in the fact that she makes advances to the woman to whom she is attracted and treats all men in a cool, direct manner, which may not exclude comradeship, but which excludes every sexual relationship, whether of passion or merely of coquetry (p. 223).

How else, one might ask, would a lesbian meet other women or respond to men? In other words, she is identified as masculine because she is actively lesbian, not because she is "mannish." The question of whether differences

in masculinity or femininity play a part in complementarity of lesbian relationships needs to be considered, but such interpretations are difficult because notions of masculinity and femininity are so culturally-bound and shift so much over time.

A brief look at recent literature on lesbian couples serves not to provide solid evidence of this pattern but rather to illustrate it. In her recent book-length guide to gay couples, B. Berzon (1988) notes this difference in her own fifteen-year relationship:

> My partner and I are about as different as two people can be. I come from a Midwestern, middle-class Jewish family. She comes from an East Coast, working-class Italian Catholic family. My parents are divorced, and I have had five stepmothers. Her parents, on the other hand, were married to each other for over fifty years.
>
> I have struggled with my sexual identity for most of my adult life, coming out after I was forty. She knew she was a lesbian at an early age and has never tried to be anything else. I have had more romantic liaisons with men and women than I can possibly remember. She has had two relationships, one with me and one with her former (female) lover of twelve years (p. 34).

In this list of differences, those of the first paragraph are common to many types of relationships. It is those of the second one that may be significant for lesbians. The author seems to acknowledge its special place here.

In the only example of complementarity, or "completion fantasies" as Berzon calls them, between lesbians, she describes a woman who "still carries with her the pain of an adolescence in which she felt different from the others." This woman enters a relationship with another who is a "prom queen" type. Berzon notes that in this affiliation the first woman "in a sense borrows that aspect of [the other's] identity, and the longstanding pain of her

teenage years is somewhat ameliorated." This notion is very close to the thesis of this study. However, Berzon, who does not explore unconscious dimensions of relating, is pessimistic about this basis for relating, noting its potential for mutual disappointment.

Blumstein and Schwartz' (1983) sociological study of couples included interviews with five lesbian couples. In this small sample, scant information is provided about partner choices:

-one couple is characterized as a more traditional role-playing, butch-femme couple (no other background given)

-one couple includes one previously-married partner (who has some bisexual feelings still) and another who has been strictly lesbian

-a third includes one previously-married woman and another who was unclear about her sexual identity

-the other two couples involve women who were both married when they met each other

Apparently only the second couple in this group of five fits the pattern under investigation. Blumstein & Schwartz' data seem to lend no support to such a pattern. However, a closer look suggests that differences may simply be more subtle in nature. In the last two couples, one woman in each states that although she was married, the relationship never touched her deeply and that she clearly belongs with women. That is, one partner of each couple feels she was in reality always lesbian but married anyway for other reasons. The other partner in one of these couples returns to men after they break up, suggesting her underlying bisexuality. No further information is given about the remaining woman's sexuality. Even in the traditional role-playing couple, there is reason to question the nature of their connection. The

woman who is identified as "femme" strongly influences her partner to give up her "butch" appearance and behavior, which she does to some extent. The "femme" does not seem to desire that kind of gender-differentiated complementarity after all.

Tanner's (1978) study of lesbian couples is also sociologically rather than psychologically grounded and likewise does not explore partner choice. Nevertheless, her work does drop some clues about complementarity. She notes that "some" (number unspecified) couples began their relationship when one was gay and one was straight. She categorizes couples into three groups: traditional-complementary (based on some degree of role-playing); flexible nurturing-caretaking (in which some economic dependence is involved); and negotiated-egalitarian (based on "equality and mutual independence"). In both the first and third types, she notes that typically when they meet, one partner is gay while the other is not.

Because data on differences in sexual orientation between partners in lesbian relationships is so difficult to find, an informal survey of therapists who work with lesbian couples was made. A letter was sent to twelve therapists explaning the nature of the study and seeking information via a questionnaire about how many of the couples they saw in treatment during the past two years fit this pattern, how many did not fit the pattern, and how many could not be specified (see the Appendix for a copy of the letter and questionnaire). Of the twelve questionnaires mailed out, eight (67%) were returned. Two respondents were unable to specify data relevant to the existence of this pattern. The remaining five provided the following information: of the 74 couples which could be categorized, 46 (62%) fit the pattern and 28 (38%) did not. Another 23 couples could not be categorized;

the therapist did not know whether the individual partners were primary or bisexual lesbians. This information tends to support the suggestive evidence above that many lesbian relationships do involve such a fundamental difference. The results of this survey likewise do not provide "hard data." They simply show that couples of this type exist and are not uncommon. (It also raises other questions: Are such couples more or less commonly seen in treatment? If more, does such a difference create special problems for couples? If less commonly in treatment, do such differences create stability? Obviously, these questions are unanswerable without empirical evidence concerning patterns of lesbian couples in the population as a whole.)

Unfortunately, other studies of lesbian couples address complementarity only on the basis of whether a masculine-feminine dichotomy is involved. This was of course the stereotypical view of lesbian couples until recent times. Its origin can be traced to the early sexologists (see Chapter Two), most especially Krafft-Ebing and Ellis. Ellis' portrayal of two kinds of lesbians who are drawn to each other is worth quoting at length because it was so influential and because it bears re-analysis:

> A class in which homosexuality, while fairly distinct, is only slightly marked, is formed by the women to whom the actively inverted woman is most attracted. These women differ, in the first place, from the normal, or average, woman in that they are not repelled or disgusted by the lover-like advances from persons of their own sex. They are not usually attractive to the average man, though to this rule there are many exceptions. Their faces may be plain or ill-made, but not seldom they possess good figures: a point which is apt to carry more weight with the inverted woman than beauty of face. Their sexual impulses are seldom well-marked, but they are of strongly affectionate nature....[T]hey are always womanly. One may perhaps say that they are the pick of the

> women whom the average man would pass by. No doubt, this is often the reason why they are open to homosexual advances, but I do not think it is the sole reason. So far as they may be said to constitute a class, they seem to possess a genuine, though not precisely sexual preference for women over men, and it is this coldness rather than lack of charm, which often render men rather indifferent to them.
>
> The actively inverted woman usually differs from the woman of the class just mentioned in one fairly essential character: a more or less distinct trace of masculinity. She may not be, and frequently is not, what would be called a "mannish" woman, for the latter may imitate men on grounds of taste and habit unconnected with sexual perversion, while in the inverted woman the masculine traits are part of an organic instinct which she by no means always wishes to accentuate. The inverted woman's masculine element may, in the least degree, consist only in the fact that she makes advances to the woman to whom she is attracted and treats all men in a cool, direct manner, which may not exclude comradeship, but which excludes every sexual relationship, whether of passion or merely of coquetry. Usually the inverted woman feels absolute indifference toward men, and not seldom repulsion. And this feeling, as a rule, is instinctively reciprocated by men (p. 222-3).

This depiction of lesbian partner-choice became a kind of standard view of masculine-feminine connection, or role-playing, that was adopted by many writers, both psychoanalysts and publishers of homosexual material in journals and books for the lay public. A close look at its content, however, reveals slim evidence of masculinity or femininity in either partner. Lack of interest in men seems to be a common element, not unexpectedly. In the latter case there is a clear lesbian choice, while in the former it is either more vaguely defined or more passively received, even by default. The masculine-feminine distinction seems to rest upon this active-passive dimension.

As the quoted passage suggests, Ellis' distinction between the two kinds of lesbians is not based on consistent differences in gender identifications at all. Faderman (1981) notes that most of Ellis' subjects were actually not masculine in any respect. The distinction he makes seems instead to be close to the distinction explored in the present study. There is the "true invert" who is inevitably lesbian and the *faute de mieux* (for lack of a better choice) lesbian. The lesbian by default is a "normal" woman who, when given the opportunity, will have relationships with men. As Faderman points out, in making this distinction, Ellis ignored both the economic necessity of marriage for most women and that fact that many women of his second category had in fact fled marriages to be involved with a woman. Their participation at some point in relationships with men, however, sets them apart from the other group of lesbians. Ellis does not ponder the meaning of this distinction, but resorts to a superficial assignment of gender attributes to account for it. He also continually sought to equate lesbianism and transvestism. His work was largely responsible for the creation and dissemination of stereotypes about lesbians which persist into the present.

Numerous studies have shown that role-playing is an uncommon feature of lesbian (or gay male) relationships (see Chapter Five for specific data about this). This is not to insist that there are no masculine and feminine dimensions to lesbian relationships, but that for the most part they have been observed or understood only superficially and stereotypically. There often is some play between subjective experiences of gender and role identifications, but it is rarely enacted in the stereotypical ways depicted in the literature. A deeper level of interpretation of the presence and the meaning of these dimensions will be part of this study (see Chapter Eight), and the way in

which these differences intersect with those of underlying sexual orientation will be considered.

Complementary Connection

The present study assumes that these differences in identity and sexual histories is a consequence of intrapsychic differences. In psychoanalytic thinking, adult relationships manifest internal traces of earlier ones. Object choice reflects oedipal and pre-oedipal experience. Briefly stated, each individual has some experience with both aspects of oedipal love, both the so-called positive and negative manifestations of it, with mother or father as cathected object. One of these is usually repressed while the other comes to dominate erotic choice in adult life. The repressed oedipal experience generally remains unconscious, disowned in conscious life. Nevertheless, it always persists as a kind of road-not-taken.

The traditional explanation of lesbianism is that it is based on the "negative" oedipal complex, with the "positive" version of it either never experienced or experienced then closed off for defensive purposes. The basis for romantic and sexual relationships with men has thus been foreclosed. The case of lesbians who have had considerable (and often satisfying) heterosexual experience has received relatively little attention in the analytic literture. For these women, the turn to other women as erotic and affectional partners comes later in life, and they clearly had the capacity to be involved with men erotically and emotionally.

This study suggests that the polarity between these different experiences of lesbianism--between the more exclusively lesbian and the more bisexual lesbian--may be an element of attraction. This dissertation explores how this

difference in some lesbian relationships may provide a basis of complementarity for the relationship and what the nature of that complementarity would be.

Traditional conceptions of heterosexual coupling assume that complementarity is based on gender difference. They suggest that access to another world is gained through the gender difference of the partners: men are enabled to partake more fully of the internal world through union with women, while women gain greater access to the external world through men (cf. Rubin, 1983). The concept of projective identification is suggested in this formulation: each partner projects, or lends, a part of himself or herself to the other, while the other takes it on, incorporates it as a part of the self. Each is enriched through this psychological sharing and the bond between them is strengthened by mutual identification (both projective and introjective) and a sense of the other as a part of oneself.

When women who have such different relational histories--one predominantly with women, the other previously with men--form a couple, do they too gain psychological access to a different world? The pertinent question here is whether the relationship is a means of expanding the self through affiliation with an "Other" who embodies a difference of particular significance to the self.

CHAPTER TWO:

PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY AND HOMOSEXUALITY

> *Then, too, analysts have been most comfortable theorizing in areas they thought were fundamental to human nature , and not so culturally variable as romantic love....But as psychoanalysts have come to acknowledge, sometimes to their chagrin, very little of fundamental interest to analysts is ahistorical--not even the behavioral expressions of sex.*
>
> E. S. Person, Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters

Psychoanalytic theory has had an enormous influence on both professional and popular thinking about homosexuality. This chapter explores its contributions and critiques the biases, inconsistencies, and theoretical gaps often found in analytic writings about lesbianism. Theoretical material about homosexuality needs to be grounded in the context of the historical and cultural influences in which it emerged. These forces played a significant role in the evolution of theories about sexuality in general and account for some of the conceptual difficulties in them. They begin with the birth of the new discipline of "sexology." During the middle of the nineteenth century, psychologists were intent upon establishing psychology as a science, as legitimate and rigorous in its methodology, as capable of being subjected to empirical verification as physics. Sexology was an offspring of this thrust, and it was here that homosexuality became the object of systematic study for the first time. The conservatism of the Victorian period, especially regarding sexual matters, further determined the tone and direction of these theories.

The concept of "the homosexual" as a person, a particular kind of person, did not even exist prior to the work of the sexologists. (The term was first used in 1869 by a Hungarian writer named Benkert [Weeks, 1977]). Startling as it is to us now, the fact remains that "the homosexual" is a relatively recent notion, created largely by German and British theorists who wished to make a science of sexual behavior. Same-sex eroticism and relationships have existed in every known culture, but systematic identification of people on the basis of same-sex relations was not thought of. Even now, cultures relatively untouched by modern scientific thought do not conceive of "the homosexual person," yet they tolerate widespread homosexual practice (Tripp, 1975; Blackwood, 1984; Stoller, 1985). As Foucault writes, in the 19th-century the homosexual "became a personage, a past, a case history and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology" (quoted in Danneker, 1984, p. 1). In other words as soon as the deviation became a deviant, theories of etiology began to appear.

Etiological theories have been the primary concern of most inquiries. An underlying belief in these etiological studies has been a belief in "essentiality": the idea that something is essentially different about homosexuals. Research has been preoccupied with defining that essence, that something that differentiated homosexuals from heterosexuals, and locating its source. Essentiality has been framed in different terms as changes in the cultural and the scientific milieu have occurred, and correspondingly different answers have been offered to the question of etiology.

The mid 19th-century "science" of sexology approached homosexuality as a condition of being. Some factor which characterized the whole person, not

just her or his sexual desires, was thought to determine the essence of a person with same-sex interests. A number of the early sexologists were themselves homosexual men concerned with lifting the Victorian stigma of homosexuality as a moral crime. They argued that the condition reflected a congenital gender inversion, a product of biology, and therefore a natural variation. Karl Ulrichs, for example, called homosexuals the "third sex," individuals who had the body of one sex and the soul of the opposite sex. Magnus Hirschfield, a reformer as well as researcher, explained it as a hormonally-determined state. He attempted to gather data on sexual variation from the general population rather than use clinical or incarcerated populations, but he was arrested and charged with disseminating indecent information (Bullough, 1979). (Kinsey's attempts to do essentially this same research almost one hundred years later also met intense resistance and condemnation.)

In Britain theorists used the argument of gender inversion to suggest that homosexuals might even be especially gifted as progressive leaders because they embodied characteristics of both sexes (Weeks, 1977). Havelock Ellis (1928), also a social reformer as well as researcher, believed "inversion" was congenital but thought that some people engaged in homosexual behavior without being inverts. However, others used the concept of congenitality to argue in favor of repressive measures. Krafft-Ebing (1886/1965), the most influential of the early sexologists, felt the condition was incurable, and society could only institutionalize inverts. In his view, one who engaged in homosexual behavior without being a constitutional invert was a pervert.

For these theorists, the "essential" aspect of homosexuality was disturbance in gender; i.e., a female homosexual was "essentially" male. What

defined the gender disturbance, however, was not necessarily role behavior or appearance, but choice of sexual object. For example, again quoting from Ellis, the female "active invert" shows "a distinct trace of masculinity" not in her appearance, taste, or habits, but "only in the fact that she makes advances to the woman to whom she is attracted and treats all men in a cool, direct manner" (p. 223). His circular argument is a result of having one poorly defined concept (inversion) to cover theoretical constructs which we now generally understand to be distinct., i.e., gender identity, sexual preference, and sex-role behavior or identity. In particular, it reflects Ellis' prejudices about the nature of women. He strongly believed in innate differences between the sexes. For Ellis, a primary difference was the male's aggressiveness and the female's passivity in sexual matters (Jeffreys, 1985). To him, lesbianism was an aberration of these "natural" roles.

Freud and Psychoanalysis

Freud's approach to etiology moved essentiality from biological determinants to psychological ones (1905). He believed bisexuality characterized early infantile erotic life, but also posited individual differences in innate tendencies--which might contribute to later object choice. In establishing psychoanalysis as a theory and a form of treatment, he departed from the sexologists even though his early work (1905) relied upon much of Ellis' conclusions. His major contribution to sexual theory was to shift the source of etiology to vicissitudes of drive functioning within the family.

The means by which the child's bisexuality becomes channeled into "monosexuality," (as McDougall [1986a] calls it) is the oedipus complex, in which the child's erotic love interest is focused on the parent. This early love

goes into repression, but is manifested in adult relationships by choice of an erotic and romantic partner who is a later edition of the repressed parental love object:

> We have then been compelled to affirm as one of the most striking discoveries, that this early flowering of the infantile sexual life (from the second to the fifth year) also brings to maturity an object choice with all its rich psychic activities (1905, p. 622).

In "The Passing of the Oedipus Complex" (1924), Freud described how, under the sway of castration anxiety, this early love "succumbs to repression" as the child is forced into a realization of its impossible fulfillment. Nevertheless, the process is equally determined by innate factors: the passing of the oedipus complex is also "a phenomenon determined and laid down...by heredity" (p. 270).

The usual course of oedipal experience organizes sexual desire into a pattern of heterosexuality. Freud argued that the child may choose either parent as love object, but it is here that his heterocentric thinking is apparent:

> The Oedipus-complex offered the child two possibilities of satisfac-tion, an active and a passive one. It could have put itself in its father's place and had intercourse [in masturbation fantasy] with the mother as he did...or else it had wanted to supplant the mother and be loved by the father (p.272, 1924).

In other words, love of the same sex parent is always based upon heterosexual fantasy and identification with the opposite-sexed parent.

In "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925), he again equates active and passive, masculine and feminine respectively, and explains homosexuality by means of cross-gender identity:

> The matter is made more difficult to grasp by the complicating circumstance that even in boys the Oedipus complex has a double orientation, active and passive, in accordance with their bisexual constitution; a boy also wants to take his mother's place as the love-object of his father--a fact which we describe as the feminine attitude (p. 188).

If bisexuality is constitutional, what need is there to posit cross-gender identification in the boy's love for the father? Like Ellis and other sexologists, he confuses gender identification with determination of object choice, insisting upon an underlying heterosexually-oriented nature to homosexuality. Bisexuality is an ambiguous term, as used by Freud, reflecting a lack of differentiation of gender identity from object choice. Sometimes the term refers to constitutional endowments of aggressive vs. passive drives, sometimes to dimensions of gender rather than sex, and sometimes to choice of object (Lewes, 1988). It is not always clear when Freud's usage denotes one or all of these attributes. And, as noted in Chapter One, Freud's distortion of the Platonic paradigm of re-union reveals him as unable to conceive of sexual attraction in terms other than gender heterogeneity.

The usual course of female heterosexual development which Freud (1925 & 1931) outlined involves a shift by the girl from the mother to the father as love object. This shift occurs when the girl discovers her lack of a penis, feels injured and outraged, blaming her mother. Because the mother also lacks a penis, she is devalued. The father then becomes the more desirable object. The girl hopes to redress this narcissistic wound through her father's love and, by having his baby, make up for her lack of a penis. Later certain women analysts rejected this explanation. Both Horney (1926) and Klein (1928) viewed Freud's explanation as unnecessarily convoluted and argued instead

that heterosexuality was innate. They also criticized the theory as an artifact of male narcissism which devalued female anatomy.

The psychoanalytic literature on homosexuality is extensive and often contradictory. Freud's papers alone contain several different formulations. As Lewes (1988) writes:

> A...difficult issue in Freud is the relation of homosexuality to psychopathology. One extreme position is that homosexuality is in itself a psychopathological entity that necessarily involves other inhibitions of function. A more moderate position is that homosexuality is a feature of other pathological conditions, and, while it may generally be thought of as pathognomonic, it cannot be used for diagnostic specification. The other extreme position is that no necessary connection exists between homosexuality and psychopathology. According to this view, homosexuality represents a variation in the direction the sexual instinct may take, and it can be considered "abnormal" only in a statistical sense. To the end, Freud seemed to have been undecided on the relationship between homosexuality and psychopathology, and he advanced statements that can be located in all three positions (p. 29).

Freud attributes lesbianism variously to fixation on the mother (1920), presence of some congenital factor (1920), narcissism and castration anxiety (1922), and failure to resolve a "masculinity" complex (1931). He argues that cross-gender characteristics, both physical and psychological, "can be expected with some regularity only in female inverts" (1905, p. 558), although he later appears to repudiate this position:

> Publications on homosexuality usually do not distinguish clearly enough between the questions of the choice of object, on the one hand, and of the sexual characteristics and sexual attitude of the subject, on the other, as though the answer to the former necessarily involved the answers to the latter. Experience, however, proves the contrary...

> mental sexual character and object-choice do not necessarily coincide (1920, p. 229).

In "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman" (1920), Freud sets the stage for development of lesbianism: there is rivalry between the daughter and the mother; the mother prefers her sons; the somewhat autocratic father is idealized and intensely cathected. When the daughter experiences disappointment and defeat in her love for the father, she is "furiously resentful and embittered" and turns away from him and all men. In overcompensation for her hostility towards her mother, she then turns toward women, especially mother figures. This solution serves both to defy the disappointing father and, by "retiring in favor of the mother" (from pursuit of men), removes one source of the mother's disfavor. Freud calls this a "regression to narcissism" and further attributes penis envy and a "masculinity complex" to the woman, adding "...she was a feminist". Nevertheless, he also posits congenital factors in the case. This complex formulation covers a wide scope of etiological factors, so wide that it is overdetermined to the point of being somewhat contradictory.

In his later paper on "Female Sexuality" (1931) Freud attempts to deal with the little girl's sexuality on its own terms, not as something symmetrical with the boy's. Here, as in other papers, he insists upon the inferiority of women anatomically, psychologically, emotionally, and morally, and asserts again his disagreement with the feminist position of equality between the sexes. He notes that the mother is the original love object for the girl as well as the boy and labels her sexual life as masculine in character, not only for being mother-oriented, but also because it is active and clitorally-centered. He revises his account of early female development to allow for a much longer

and more complex pre-oedipal period, "a very rich and many-sided" relationship between the daughter and her mother.

> I learnt [through analysis] that the duration of this attachment to the mother had been greatly underestimated. In a number of cases it... comprised by far the longer period of the early sexual efflorescence. Indeed one had to give due weight to the possibility that many a woman may remain arrested at the original mother-attachment and never properly achieve the change-over to men (p. 253).

In order not to have to revise the centrality of the oedipus complex as the "nucleus of neurosis," he makes another theoretical shift:

> For, on the one hand, we can extend the content of the Oedipus complex to include all the child's relations to both parents or, on the other, we can give due recognition to our new findings by saying that women reach the normal, positive Oedipus situation only after surmounting a first phase dominated by the negative complex (p. 253).

Here another contradiction appears. If the oedipal complex can be conceptualized to include the girl's love for the mother, then her development is not necessarily "arrested" by her continuation in this love any more than it is for the boy. Only by insistence that heterosexuality can be the only normal or mature attitude, even in the absence of "other" pathology, can such a position be maintained.

Although Freud does clearly locate homosexuality in the arena of pathology, he paradoxically expressed attitudes that could almost be called benign and dispassionate for his day. In his famous 1935 letter to the concerned mother of a homosexual man, he wrote: "it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness" (1951). He saw no reason why homosexuals should not be candidates for analytic training, although later analysts largely disallowed homosexual analytic candidates

(Lewes, 1988). Freud argued that same-sex object choice was present in individuals "who otherwise show no marked deviation from the normal.... whose mental capacities are not disturbed, who on the contrary are distinguished by especially high intellectual development and ethical culture" (1905, p. 556). He further observed:

> ...a very considerable measure of latent or unconscious homosexuality can be detected in all normal people. If these findings are taken into account,then, to be sure, the supposition that nature in a freakish mood created a 'third sex' falls to the ground (1920, p. 230).

About treatment, he wrote:

> One must remember that normal sexuality also depends upon a restriction in the choice of object; in general, to undertake to convert a fully developed homosexual into a heterosexual is not much more promising than to do the reverse (p. 207).

Later Psychoanalytic Writers

In the late forties and fifties, as American culture was undergoing pressure for more conservative values, a number of psychoanalysts developed theories of homosexuality which moved same-sex erotic choice further into the realm of the pathological. Deutsch's (1944) assessment of homosexuality as disturbed seems also to rest ultimately upon the simple fact that it is not heterosexuality. Her ideas are also confounded by cultural assumptions about what is necessarily masculine and feminine; she continually equates femininity with passivity and masculinity with activity. She argues that features of lesbian sexuality, such as interest in breasts, in oral sex, in nurturing elements, are evidence of regression since they reflect a "deep unconscious relation to the mother." Of course, male heterosexuality also

seeks a later edition of this early relationship, yet no pathology is attributed there.

Deutsch (1944) distinguishes between homosexuality which has a "biologic" basis and that which is psychogenic in origin. Women of the first group, which she believes constitute a small minority, "show definitely masculine interests, try to follow masculine professions, strongly emphasize their masculinity and are masculine in their entire emotional life" (p. 333). What precisely is a masculine emotional life, and how much of this description still pertains after the cultural changes in sex-roles during the past forty years? To the second group she attributes a range of etiological factors: fear of or disappointment in the father, guilt or hatred towards the mother, and narcissistic identification that serves to bolster a weak ego. Deutsch also finds this same narcissism even in a "best-friends" relationship between heterosexual women (p. 339).

In her clinical analyses of relationships between women, Deutsch makes some astute observations; their value is limited by the extent to which they are riddled with cultural prejudices. For example, she writes:

> The differences and similarity, nonidentity and yet identity, the quasidouble experience of oneself, the simultaneous liberation from one part of one's ego and its preservation and security in the possession of the other, are among the attractions of the homosexual experience (p. 346).

These complex dimensions of interrelationship between women are echoed later by lesbian writers (see Chapter Five) and are closely allied with the concerns of the present study. Yet Deutsch betrays the neutrality of psychoanalytic pursuit in her clinical assessments of the success of treatment based solely on presence or absence of heterosexuality. A lengthy report of a

married woman's therapy describes the depression and guilt the woman suffered over the felt "sinfulness" of suppressed homosexual desires. Treatment relieved her symptoms and freed her from these feelings. Deutsch writes: "She found happiness in a now uninhibited love relation with a woman....It goes without saying that the experience fell far below what psychoanalysis demands of an adult personality" (p. 353).

Caprio (1954) wrote the first book-length account of female homosexuality. He also considered lesbianism narcissistic and "a regression to mother love." Bergler (1957) saw it as a masochistic regression to an oral level. Concerning lesbian relationships, Caprio is especially revealing. He says such relationships founder on possessiveness and jealousy, reporting that many lesbians "expect the same kind of loyalty and fidelity from their partners as exists between husband and wife" (p. 171).

Like Freud's (and Deutsch's) determination that a too-intense attachment to the mother is a fundamental source of female homosexuality, current psychoanalytic theory focuses on the pre-oedipal period of female development. Socarides, who has become the "leading expert and spokesman [on homosexuality] for psychoanalysis" (Lewes, 1988), takes this position. Similar to male homosexuals, female homosexuals have nuclear conflicts belonging to the earliest period of life which force them into choosing partners of the same sex for ego survival. The female homosexual, unable to pass successfully through the separation-individuation phase of early childhood, has suffered maturational (psychological) failures and thereby incurred severe ego deficiencies (1968, p. 193).

Socarides further argues that the lesbian is "severely handicapped... afraid of the opposite sex...[and] harbors considerable aggression against both men

and women" (1981, p. 511). Because lesbianism reflects "fixation ...in the later phases of the separation-individuation process," it reflects "a disturbance in self-identity as well as in gender identity" (p. 514). He finds that female homosexuality rests upon the daughter's distorted identity with her father: "In all homosexual women identification with the father is marked since any approach to femininity is heavily banned" (1968, p. 176).

That so many of these authors' betray the neutral, objective stance advocated by psychoanalysis (and the scientific approach in general) points toward underlying bias. Their personal prejudices, even animosity, are revealed in the tone of their writing or the gratuitous denigrations found in their characterizations of homosexuals. Lewes (1988) remarks: "What is so extraordinary about Bergler's work on homosexuality is the intemperate and abusive tone he adopted when describing his patients" (p. 113). Socarides (1968) writes that calling female homosexuality "lesbianism" is an "attempt to romanticize it," and that a female homosexual who is married is "living out a masquerade of womanliness" (p. 48). At the same time, he states unequivocably that homosexuality is "a masquerade of life" and homosexual relationships are characterized by "hate, destructiveness, mutual defeat, exploitation of the partner and the self, oral-sadistic incorporation, aggressive onslaughts, attempts to alleviate anxiety and a pseudo-solution to the aggressive and libinal urges which dominate and torment the individual" (p. 8).

McDougall (1980) is more moderate in tone, but she places her theory in a direct line with Deutsch and Socarides (p. 95). From her perspective, lesbianism is an effort to contend with inadequate separation from the mother, to achieve "detachment from the maternal imago in its more

dangerous and forbidding aspects" (p. 87). She finds that a consistent picture of family dynamics can be found in the background of the adult lesbian: "My female homosexual patients might all have been of the same family, so much did the parental portraits resemble one another" (p. 95). There is the denigrated, dangerous, disgusting father who fails to help the daughter in her task of separating from the mother and the idealized, all-pure and all-good, but nevertheless narcissistic, mother. The mother is so idealized that the daughter cannot identify with her; instead, she unconsciously identifies with the father, especially in his disgusting aspects. Idealization of the mother is necessary to protect her from the daughter's excessive hostile and destructive feelings toward her. The daughter feels herself to be an indispensable part of the mother; there is a symbiotic union between internal images of the mother and the self, leaving the daugther believing that the mother would die if she separated from her.

This developmental failure, according to McDougall, renders the adult woman incapable of whole object relationships, evidenced by severe psychopathology in lesbians and the tendency toward fusion in lesbian relationships. Still, lesbian relationships may have a reparative function. McDougall writes that many lesbians harbor the fantasy that

> being a woman is equivalent to being a pile of feces....Such deeply destructive feelings, along with the damaged self-image, are partially healed by the homosexual relationship, where each partner may play the 'holding function' of the good-enough mother" (pp. 130-131).

This reparative potential is not unlike the kind of transforming psychological exchange proposed in the present study, although very different reasons are given for a lesbian's "damaged self-image." Social stigmatization of

homosexuaity as well as cultural devaluation of women may wound a lesbian's sense of self; that is, her "damaged self-image" is not necessarily intrapsychic in origin. Chapters Three, Four, and Seven discuss this issue in greater detail. In spite of this positive potential, McDougall finds "analysis invariably reveals the greedy, destructive, and manipulatory anal-controlling aspects of the relationship" (p. 132). She founds her argument on clinical work with four patients who are all severely disturbed. Khan's (1979) similar formulation is based on a single lengthy case study of a woman who was not even, as Khan saw it, "a case of true female homosexuality."

Elise (1986a) has criticized the relevance of these studies to an explanation of lesbianism in general as they are based on very small clinical samples of extremely disturbed women. There is much evidence, presented more fully in Chapter Three, that lesbians do not show greater pathology than hetero-sexual women. The problem of fusion in lesbian relationships may more accurately be attributed to gender than to homosexuality (Burch, 1985 &1986; Elise, 1986a & 1986b; Lindenbaum, 1987; see below and Chapter Five for further discussion of this interpretation).

Nevertheless, variations of these theorists' ideas have largely determined the psychoanalytic stance up until the present. For example, a recent book on female homosexuality by Siegel (1988) relies upon Socarides' position of developmental arrest. In addition, she adds another dimension to the theory of pathological underpinnings of female homosexuality: "When schema-tization of the body and the inner representation of the body as useful body image were being laid down, the vagina and inner space per se were not included" (p. 23). Again, her work is based on clinical work with a group of severely disturbed women from which she extrapolates to a theory about

homosexual women in general; and again, she neglects to consider whether similar distortions of body image may also be found in heterosexual women. This failure to consider how much of the pathology specified in clinical work with lesbians is also found in other patients is almost universal in psychoanalytic accounts. Because such "evidence" that pathology characterizes homosexuality has not been subjected to this basic tenet of scientific thinking, it suggests a pursuit after data to support pre-existing bias.

This stance has been criticized by other theoretical approaches, but only in the past decade has criticism emerged within psychoanalysis. Recent analytic writers point to the prejudices, theoretical inconsistencies, and exclusive reliance upon clinical populations which render the accepted approach scientifically suspect (Mitchell, 1978 & 1981; Marmor, 1980; Leavy, 1985; Stoller, 1985; Friedman, 1986; Isay, 1986; Wolfson, 1987; Lewes, 1988). A few psychoanalytic writers have made beginning efforts toward a psychodynamic understanding of homosexuality that does not depend upon pathology. Mitchell (1978) notes that even where conflict and anxiety played a role in determining homosexual orientation, "the original conflicts and anxieties may no longer be the salient motives for the behavior, which has now become secondarily autonomous" (p. 258). He also notes that the presumption of the "normality" of heterosexuality has been a barrier to theoretical research on the nature of sexual development: "what looks like heterosexuality often derives motivationally not from erotism but from power and dependency strivings" (p. 263).

Wolfson's (1987) report from a panel presentation at the American Psychoanalytic Association on homosexual women notes that "three aspects of psychoanalytic theory central to the subject of female homosexuality are

believed to be inadequate by many analysts: the establishment of gender identity, sexual object choice, and the urge toward motherhood" (p. 165). Another observation, especially relevant to this study, compared "exclusive" lesbians who have had little interest or adult sexual experience with men and lesbians with heterosexual histories or conflict: "there are significant differences between their inner psychic worlds" (p. 169). These differences are not specified, however, only the finding that both groups expressed the desire for children. Finally, the Wolfson report concludes:

> Recent studies indicate little if any psychological difference between nonpatient homosexuals and nonpatient heterosexuals, and certainly no pathological indications in the former group. Even earlier studies, which reported a higher incidence of psychopathology among homosexuals, should perhaps be viewed in much the same way as research showing women are more likely to be depressed than men: are the groups inherently pathological, or do social practices and attitudes subject them to more stress and even load the definitions against them (p. 172).

Eisenbud (1982) suggests a revision of lesbian etiology that is based on "progressive, not regressive" developmental moves:

> [I]t originates in a precocious turn-on of erotic desire mandated by the ego and...[I]t is progressive, not regressive. It occurs when the child has been excluded from 'good enough' or 'long enough' primary bliss and seeks inclusion by a sexual bond and sexual wooing" (p. 86).

The pre-oedipal daughter "calls upon sexual feelings within the self to reach out to forge a bond to mother and to arouse mother...[as] an erotic solution for miscarried weaning, envy, jealousy, insecurity and feelings of exclusion" (p.98). She may or may not also develop erotic attachments to the father and

may or may not have heterosexual as well as lesbian interests. Sometimes one wins out, sometimes the other.

Eisenbud's theory is of course still squarely placed in dysfunctional family relations, and she draws upon doubtful evidence about family constellation. For example, she cites "findings" that 50% of lesbians are only children, fathers are "alcoholic, distant and indifferent," and "inadequate mothering" prevails. The lesbian-as-only-child statistic has been refuted a number of times (Kinsey, 1953, Gundlach, 1977, & Perkins, 1978). Shavelson, et al. (1980) point out the discrepancy of the variables supposedly identifiable in lesbians' backgrounds: father-daughter relationships that are disruptive, father-daughter relationships that are closer (than those of heterosexual women), mother-daughter relationships that are distant, mother-daughter relationships that are too close, and poor relationships with both parents. Using a non-clinical sample of lesbians and heterosexual women, validated measures (the Child Report of Parental Behavior Inventory), and a standardized structured interview, they found no significant differences between family relationships of the two groups. This study indicates the problem with psychoanalytic theories of homosexual etiology--contradictory family variables are posited by different writers, and empirical data have not supported the premises of any of these positions. The methodology of psychoanalytic theories of homosexuality reveal the inadequacy of these conceptualizations. Marmor (1980) notes:

> The fact is that *all personality differences are the result of individual variations in developmental background.* Excluding genetic factors, the idiosyncratic way in which every person lives and acts can almost always be plausibly "explained" by a careful psychoanalytic reconstruction of his or her life history and family background (p. 396).

In the same vein Elise (1986a) writes:

> Most psychoanalytic theory rests on clinical impressions of a very few cases. These cases are not a representative sample due to both the smallness of the sample and the fact that they are a patient population....The most important factor in considering the questionable validity of these theories is the pre-established bias of the investigators....At bottom, the basic assumption of psychoanalytic theory is that homosexuality is the result of "abnormal" family relationships. However, no data exists establishing that consistent differences occur in the family patterns of homosexuals and heterosexuals (pp. 26-27).

A Brief Detour: Revisions of Female Development

As noted above, some analytic thinkers have called for a revision in the theory of female development. Even relatively early in the psychoanalytic movement, Horney (1924) criticized the phallocentric bias of psychoanalytic theory and attempted some reformulation of women's development. She was ultimately expelled from the New York Psychoanalytic Society for "deviations" such as this (Garrison, 1981). Over the last two decades, feminists have pointed to this bias as well and taken up the task of reconceiving female development. A particular focus of this work has been the nature of separation-individuation, or gender differences in the process and outcome of separation from the mother. Because the shift from mother to father as love object has been theorized in traditional analytic theory as an intrinsic part of the separation process for girls, and because inadequate separation from the mother is often viewed as the source of homosexuality, the issue needs to be considered more fully here.

The object relations school of psychoanalysis shifted the focus from the oedipal to the pre-oedipal period of development. Concepts of separation from the mother and the movement from part-object to whole-object relating play a primary role in this theory. Object-relations theory had its first flowering in Britain, beginning with Klein's work. Based on her conception of internal objects and the internal object world, she changed the emphasis from drives to object relations as the center of her developmental theory. This shift put the mother-child relationship into greater prominence (Klein 1946 & 1955), a place it retains in object-relations theory. In Klein's (1959) view internal objects (part-objects) are an inherent part of psychic structure, present to some degree even from birth. The internal object world which Klein conceptualizes is constructed primarily by internal phantasy. Fairbairn (1941) added an emphasis on the role of the real mother-child relationship. He reconceptualizes the internal object world such that it is not simply the object that is internalized, but the relationship of self and object (Ogden, 1986). Development proceeds from primary identification of self and object to gradual differentiation. Adult relationships rest upon this process: "mature dependence involves a relationship between two independent individuals who are completely *differentiated* from one another as mutual objects" (Fairbairn, 1941, p. 42).

Winnicott's work elaborates object relations theory by drawing from his detailed observations of mothers and children in his pediatric practice. Mother and child are initially merged in psychic union, the mother being absorbed in a state of "primary maternal pre-occupation" (1956) and the child living through the illusion of oneness with the mother. The mutual gaze of mother and infant is an experience of merger:

> What does the baby see when he or she looks at the mother's face? I am suggesting that, ordinarily, what the baby sees is himself or herself. In other words the mother is looking at the baby and *what she looks like is related to what she sees there.* (1971, p. 112).

Development is a journey from absolute dependence to relative dependence and on towards independence, but absolute independence is never achieved (1960 &1963). Winnicott speaks of the baby's "separating-off of the not-me from the me" and "the separating-out of the mother as an objectively perceived environmental feature" as vital processes in human development (1971, p. 111). The baby becomes "a person with a limiting membrane, with an inside and an outside" (1954). The separating out of the mother permits whole object relating (or "usage" in Winnicott's terms), as the mother is not seen to be a person in her own right. Yet for Winnicott, separation, like independence, is not absolute. In the areas of play and of love, in the concept of "potential space" between self and object, one finds "the separation that is not a separation but a form of union" (1971, p. 98). These kinds of paradoxes which characterize Winnicott's work reveal him to be a theoretical forerunner of feminist contributions to object-relations theory.

Mahler's (1975) study of early infant development systematically describes the processes of "separation-individuation" and differentiation. An American ego psychologist who embraces drive theory, she nevertheless conceives of ego development as necessarily embedded in interpersonal relationships. She formulated a developmental model defined by progressive stages of separation and individuation, as the infant moves from autism to symbiosis to a gradually emerging sense of self with "emotional object constancy." Objects are internalized, permitting comfortable separateness from real, external ones: "Mother is clearly perceived as a separate person in

the outside world, and at the same time has an existence in the internal representational world of the child" (p. 289).

Mahler does not explicitly deal with the oedipal period; she simply states "the fate of the oedipal complex" determines in part the resolution of the rapprochement crisis (p. 108), and conversely, that failure of the rapprochement crisis to be resolved by the oedipal period "interferes with repression and with the successful passing of the Oedipus complex" (p. 227). She does not spell out a precise relationship between these developmental events, but she does seem to suggest that adequate separation from the mother and a "normal" outcome of the oedipal period are intimately related. Recent neonatal studies have questioned much of Mahler's work. For example, they find no early autistic state, question her early symbiotic state, find object-relatedness present at birth, and describe a "fair-degree of self and other differentiation" much earlier than Mahler (Stern, 1983). Nevertheless, her account of separation-individuation as a process has been highly influential on both theoretical and clinical conceptions of mature development.

In the 1970's a number of feminist writers addressed the question of gender differences in development of object relations and intrapsychic structure. Chodorow's (1978) exploration of this question suggests that girls will experience more boundary confusion and greater difficulty with differentiation than boys because they share gender sameness with the mother. It is not only, or not even primarily, the daughter's awareness of this sameness, but the mother's, that influences boundary development. The mother will likely experience her daughter as more like herself than she experiences her son to be. She will form a different relationship with her than with the son. As the child does begin to be aware of gender and to

develop an identity based on gender, differences will again be seen. The son will need to differentiate himself from the mother more thoroughly in order to feel a sense of "maleness" (cf. Greenson, 1968), while the daughter does not require such clear differentiation to know herself female. She can continue in her sense of oneness with the mother as she experiences herself to be female. For her, the boundary between self and other may remain more permeable.

In adult relationships these gender differences come to bear on the distinction between self and other between the partners. Women are more likely than men to seek a continuing sense of oneness in relationship (Miller, 1984; Surrey, 1985). With male partners that search is less likely to be mirrored; in fact the male's clearer personal boundaries provide a relationship boundary which both feel. Thus it may be argued that the woman's boundaries are not pathologically absent, rather that they are differently constructed (cf. Elise, 1986a). Her relational fluidity is both an asset and a liability, granting greater capacity for closeness and attunement on the one hand, but more difficulty with separateness and a sense of "not-me" on the other.

Other reformulations of women's development are discussed in Chapter Five. They differ in certain ways, but all point to the centrality of relationships in women's lives and argue that separation is never so clear-cut for women as it has been conceived of theoretically, that women's development continues within a context of great interrelatedness, and that indeed separation may to some degree be a defensive maneuver more required by males than females. Both heterosexual and lesbian women experience a less-separate sense of self than men of either sexual orientation. The

phenomenon of merger in relationships is not uncommon in lesbian relationships and has been seen as evidence of pre-oedipal fixation by those who adhere to this theory of lesbian etiology. But intense merger is also seen in friendships between heterosexual women (see Chapter Five). Several writers (Burch, 1985 &1986; Elise, 1986a & 1986b; Lindenbaum, 1987) have made the point that vulnerability to merger is an indication of a fundamental difference between men and women, not homosexuality and heterosexuality.

Assessment of the Psychoanalytic Contribution

Freud's conception of the role of oedipal experience, in which the child's early love for one or both parents determines to a large degree the choice of love objects in later life, remains the basic contribution of psychoanalytic theory to understanding adult love relationships. His contention that "love consists of new editions of old traces" (p. 387, 1915a) gives us some understanding of how individuals find partners who grant emotional as well as sexual satisfaction in adult relationships. The role of projective identification in effecting this transference onto later objects is discussed in Chapter Six.

Freud's ideas, however, like those of his successors, contain contradictions and biases determined by cultural influences which are rarely acknowledged. The primary failure of psychoanalytic theories of homosexuality is their unfounded assertion that homosexuality is necessarily pathological. Little attempt is made even within psychoanalysis to support this view in a logical or methodical way--its "obvious" truth is more often assumed. The evidence offered is that of clinical data, with its limitations as noted above. But these clinical accounts do not attempt to compare data with that of

heterosexuals in treatment. They do not address the question of whether heterosexuals in treatment show pathology identical to that of homosexuals in treatment. However, as Elise (1986a) notes: "Unfortunately, no amount of empirical data can combat the blanket assertion that a sexual and emotional love relationship with a person of the same sex is, in and of itself, pathological" (p. 60).

This assumption of inevitable pathology is intertwined with other cultural assumptions about the congruence of sexual orientation with gender and sex-role identity along heterosexual lines. There is an implicit and tautological argument that could be paraphrased in this way: a lesbian is masculine-identified because she is a lesbian and she is a lesbian because she is masculine-identified. There is little concern with the many observations of lesbians who do not fit this characterization (found frequently even in psychoanalytic case studies as well as literature and the population at large), with defining masculinity in any way that endures through cultural changes, or with masculinity in heterosexual women.

A further problem is that psychoanalytic theory does not explore the variations in lesbian women. If female homosexuality inevitably means pre-oedipal fixation on the mother or foreclosure of interest in males, how do we account for women who begin their adult sexual lives with authentic sexual relationships with men but go on to equally authentic relationships with women, who then may come to identify as lesbian without renouncing their early or continuing interest in men? The "unitary theory of sexual perversion," as Socarides' work has been called (Siegel, 1988) does not hold up to this empirical evidence. In fact, a number of recent writers have called for a reconceptualization of sexual development into a model of multiplicity,

with "homosexualities" and "heterosexualities" rather than a unitary model (Stoller, 1985; McDougall, 1986; Wolfson, 1987).

The failure of psychoanalysis to address women's development on its own terms rather than as a variation on male development (the "*primacy of the phallus* " was how Freud [1923b] characterized early sexual development) is frequently acknowledged now. The ways in which this failure has distorted efforts to understand lesbianism as distinct from male homosexuality needs to be explored as well. Some revision of psychoanalytic formulations of lesbian orientation is needed. This task will be considered in Chapter Four. Part of the task includes taking into greater account the role of social values and experience in the culture at large as well as within the family. Chapter Three reviews studies of homosexuality based on social psychology and sociology, which have addressed these factors on their own terms.

CHAPTER THREE:

HOMOSEXUAL STUDIES

Because of its intensity, love has the capacity to disrupt social norms and conventions, giving lovers both cause and sanction to escape the established order.

E. S. Person, Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters

Psychoanalysis has not been the only discipline to investigate homosexuality and its "essential" nature. Behaviorism, social psychology, and sociology have examined human sexuality, each from their own perspective. These disciplines are often critical of the exclusive focus on intrapsychic factors in psychoanalytic theory. They each make some contribution, although often not direct, to a view of homosexuality as not intrinsically pathological. Nevertheless, they still tend to be concerned primarily with the etiology of homosexuality and to neglect other questions. The field of homosexual studies arose out of this background, using the perspective of social psychology and sociology. It began to address other issues such as the nature of homosexual identity, cultural contributions to homosexual experience, and characteristics of homosexual relationships. The contributions and limitations of these approaches is explored in this chapter.

In addition, the question of whether there may be a "constitutional" or genetic determination of sexual inclinations has continued to be explored by biologically-based theorists. Freud (1905) believed in universal bisexuality as a constitutional endowment in human development. Krafft-Ebing (1886), Ellis (1928), and most of the other early sexologists argued that "inversion" was biologically determined, but scientific tools sophisticated enough to

substantiate or disprove this assumption were lacking in their time. Technological advances in biology eventually allowed a scientific pursuit of hormonal or genetic keys which might be a factor in sexual orientation. The search for aberrant chromosomal configurations in homosexuality quickly failed (Bullough, 1979). Hormonal research attempted to link higher prenatal levels of androgens with lesbianism, again on the assumption that lesbianism was linked to masculinity in females, but these studies have also been unconvincing (Mannion, 1976). Money (1980) summarizes them in this way:

> There is a possibility that, heterosexualism, bisexualism, and homosexualism--maybe transexualism and transvestitism also--are to some degree determined in a rather direct way by the amount of androgenic influence on the brain in prenatal life. If so, then there is no known way of specifying this degree, and the hypothesis itself, though scientifically legitimate, is still largely science-fictional with respect to proof. It is equally feasible to hypothesize that all people are potentially bisexual when born, and that some become postnatally differentiated to become exclusively heterosexual or homosexual, whereas others always retain their original bisexuality (p. 32).

The biological question is thus unanswered and unanswerable at this point. Freud's original proposition remains a possibility, leaving the field open for social and psychological theories to formulate other determinants.

Behaviorism

Homosexuality is a subject which particularly interested behaviorists. Conditioning principles were used to develop a theory of etiology that leads directly to a treatment approach: reconditioning. Behaviorists shifted the psychoanalytic emphasis on homosexuality as a state of mind to a view of it

as learned behavior. There was no homosexual personality, per se, but only homosexual behavior. They saw sexual desire as an undifferentiated force which became channeled into specific behavior patterns through conditioning factors. Positive same-sex or negative opposite sex experiences, with reinforcing circumstances at critical developmental periods, were cited as the source of homosexual behavior (Bandura, 1964; Feldman & MacCullough, 1971). As evidence of the cultural conditioning of sexual arousal, Bandura (1964) writes:

> What has been endowed with erotic arousal properties in one society -- corpulence, skinniness, upright hemispherical breasts or long pendulous ones, shiny white teeth or black pointed ones, deformed ears, nose, or lips, broad pelvis and wide hips or narrow pelvis and slim hips, light or dark skin color--may be neutral or highly repulsive to members of another social group (pp. 511-2).

He argues, incorrectly, that where homosexuality is socially disapproved, it rarely occurs, and vice-versa. Tripp (1975) has pointed out, however, that both the highest and lowest rates of homosexuality are found in cultures that have no rules against it. Still, certain sexually repressive cultures, such as Moslem ones, produce high rates of homosexuality.

As early as the late 19th century, Binet held the opinion that sexual deviations were learned. He favored the idea of "one trial learning from a crucial, although possibly accidental, sexual experience" (McGuire, Carlisle, & Young, 1965). This idea did not account for why many heterosexuals who had been exposed to early homosexual experience did not become homosexual, but it set the stage for elaboration of conditioning factors. By the 1960's and 1970's behaviorists were attempting to define circumstances under which homosexual orientation might become a patterned behavioral response.

McGuire, et al. (1965) published data suggesting a more gradual process of conditioning. They presented individual case studies of gay males to support their view that sexual conditioning takes place through masturbation to a memory. "It is in accordance with conditioning theory that any stimulus which regularly precedes ejaculation by the correct time interval should become more and more sexually exciting" (p. 186). The central event in the memory need not have been initially stimulating and may have gone through many changes over a long period of time. They hypothesize that the "prospective deviant" chose to masturbate to his particular fantasy because it may have been the first real sexual experience he encountered. This situation prevailed for 75% of their sample of 45 men: fetishists, pedophiliacs, voyeurists, exhibitionists, transvestites--and homosexuals.

Another factor in more than half of their cases was a belief by the subjects that a normal sex life was not possible or desirable because they had encountered early aversive heterosexual experiences or suffered early feelings of being different from others. These feelings of difference are not accounted for in behavioral terms however. The deviant behavior continues, not extinguished even by massive guilt, because the conditioning effects of sexual pleasure continue. Their findings about the initial circumstances of sexual arousal were not replicated by other researchers, however, nor were their efforts to recondition subjects to heterosexual response successful (Feldman & MacCulloch, 1971).

Bandura (1969) identifies three variables as determinants of deviant sexual behavior: 1) the degree of parents' instigation or modelling of the behavior; 2) whether the response elicited by parental behavior becomes endowed with "exaggerated sexual significance and strong positive valence... from positive

association with intense, affectionate demonstrativeness, with close physical intimacy or from masturbatory conditioning"; 3) the degree to which parents maintain behavior over a long period through vicarious and direct reinforcement (p. 514). As evidence of his theory of masturbatory conditioning, Bandura cites data that 79% of "sexual deviates" used deviant fantasies. One wonders what else they would use, and whether "non-deviates" also use "deviant" fantasies without the same result.

In order to account for differences between groups of gay men who proved treatable with behavioral techniques and those who did not, Feldman and MacCulloch (1971) adopt a theory of primary and secondary homosexuality. The primary homosexuals are "preconditioned" prenatally as a resul of an imbalance in intra-uterine sex steroids. As children they show behavior "inappropriate" to their gender, such as low aggression, interpersonal deference, a preference for female friends and "feminine" toys. Such a child, they say, would have increased likelihood of developing "another form of inappropriate behavior, namely emotional and sexual attachments to persons of the same sex." They consider transsexuals to be homosexuals by definition and primary homosexuals to be closer to transsexuals than secondary homosexuals. Feldman and MacCullough conceptualize a continuum of individuals, with some less "typed" prenatally than others; those closer to the primary end of the spectrum are most likely to be therapy failures. This approach falls quickly into confusion of sex role behavior, gender identity, and sexual preference, and parallels Ellis' distinction between the true invert and one who simply happens to engage in homosexual behavior as the partner of the true invert.

Feldman and MacCulloch's secondary homosexuals have a more usual developmental history, including sexual encounters with other males and some encounters with girls as well. Eventually unsuccessful heterosexual encounters causes them to reevaluate their experiences with both sexes. Cognitive dissonance arises between their behavior and attitudes, both heterosexually and homosexually. A revision of attitude may be easier than of behavior, since heterosexual approach behavior is now associated with anxiety and fear. Homosexuality begins to look more acceptable.

Since many young males are likely to have some kind of unsuccessful early heterosexual experience, the researchers had to account for differences between those who make this change and those who don't. Eysenck's (1960) theory of incubation and of constitutionally-based obsessive and hysterical types was adapted to their own theory. According to incubation theory, an induced painful response (such as the painful heterosexual encounter) itself becomes a stimulus for anxiety and fear through cognitive rehearsal (obsessive thinking). The original conditioned response grows in strength because a positive feedback loop is set in place cognitively (such that thoughts of girls and encounters with them are inevitably anxiety-provoking from that point on). Behavioral reinforcement of the response (avoidance of heterosexual approach) is not needed; extinction does not happen because of the conditioning effects of the conditioned response itself through incubation. That is, the boy stops thinking about girls, or approaching them, and that in itself gives relief or reinforcement. Using Eysenck's theory, Feldman and MacCullough argue that some individuals, anxiety types (obsessives), are more likely to incubate experiences while others (hysterics) are less likely to, and that these differences are genetically determined. So ultimately even the

secondary homosexual can be traced back to an indirect congenital precondition.

In general, behaviorists focused their attention on male homosexuality. About gay women, Feldman and MacCullough say only:

> ...our impressions from the relatively small number of female homosexuals we have interviewed is that their heterosexual attitudes are rather more complex than are those of the male homosexual...such a difference [may be] related to the possible differences in the sexual roles of the two sexes (p. 194).

There are several critical problems with these theories. Their work failed to account for absence of such conditioning experiences in many cases. For this reason, many behaviorists retained a role for constitutional factors as a determinant of sexual orientation. Frequently they were concerned only with individuals who had exclusive homosexual histories. They tended to lump "perversions" together, equating fetishism, homosexuality, transvestitism, and other sexual behaviors that deviated from the norm. For example, Rachman (1966) was able to demonstrate artificial induction of a sexual fetish (arousal generated by female boots) through conditioning. This work was then used to support the principle that sexual response could be conditioned in any direction. Further, they do not account for individuals who come to homosexual experience or identity later in life, after positive heterosexual experience.

Sexual arousal is not equivalent to relationships, however, or a desire for ongoing experience with the same partner. Ignoring these distinctions leaves basic questions unanswered. Why wouldn't successive sexual encounters with different partners be enough to satisfy? Why do individuals stay attached to partners who are not necessarily sexually (or emotionally)

satisfying, i.e., where continued positive reinforcement breaks down? The theory has little to offer in terms of choice of partners or the dynamics of relationships. The meaning of behavior to the individual is considered unimportant to behavioral theorists. These meanings play an essential role in subjective experience of emotional and sexual relationships for humans in a way that behaviorists ignore (Stoller, 1985). Nevertheless their emphasis on the power of social approval or disapproval as a factor in development of sexuality is a valuable contribution.

Sociology and Social Psychology

Sociologists and social psychologists took up the task of understanding homosexuality as well. The Kinsey studies (1948 &1953) revealed widespread variations in sexual patterns, with shifts occurring over the lifetime of an individual. In their conception, an individual could not be classified as heterosexual or homosexual; too many people showed a range of behaviors and desires for such distinct categorization to be made. Behaviors, not persons, are homosexual.

The Kinsey researchers account for homosexuality in social terms (1953). Human beings are understood to be capable of responding sexually "to any sufficient stimulus" and social conditioning factors, such as social codes and the opinion of valued others, play a major role: "Exclusive preferences and patterns of behavior, heterosexual or homosexual, come only with experience, or as a result of social pressures which tend to force an individual into an exclusive pattern of one or the other sort" (p. 451). They attribute lesbianism to socio-cultural variables such as class and gender codes:

> We are inclined to believe that moral restraint on pre-marital heterosexual activity is the most important single factor contributing to the development of a homosexual history, and such restraint is probably most marked among the younger and teenage girls of those social levels that send their daughters to college. In college these girls are further restricted by administrators who are very conscious of parental concern over the heterosexual morality of their offspring...There may also be a franker acceptance and a somewhat lesser social concern over homosexuality in the upper educational levels (p. 460).

This account does not hold up well, as there is no evidence that lesbianism is more prevalent in middle or upper class families. Further, it is difficult to understand why families with tight moral restrictions on heterosexual behavior would somehow be tolerant of lesbianism. The intent, however, is to remove any suggestion of inherent pathology from homosexual inclinations.

Researchers since the original Kinsey group have continued to challenge the view that homosexuals constitute a homogeneous category. Bell and Weinberg (1978) found widespread divergence within the homosexual population and argued that no such homogeneity could be described. Others have compared heterosexual and homosexual populations for similarities and differences. Simon and Gagnon (1967) found that heterosexual and homosexual women were more profoundly alike in their common female socialization than they were different. These studies lend support to the view that homosexuality is a socially constructed identity with diverse meanings. Inversion was no longer considered to be an appropriate term for homosexuality. The term is derived from animal behavior studies and

applies to reversal of male and female behavioral patterns; it has nothing to do with choice of sexual partners (Tripp, 1975).

In the late fifties Evelyn Hooker's (1957) studies of gay men further dismantled some of the prevailing conceptions of essentiality in homosexuality. She used projective tests to examine the relative health or pathology of a group of matched pairs of homosexual and heterosexual men, then submitted the results to "blind" judges. The conclusions overwhelmingly showed no differences between the groups, 2/3 of each group having an average or better adjustment rating as measured on Rorschach tests. Other researchers have followed up on her studies, and her results have been replicated many times (Friedman, 1986; Gartrell, 1981). Armon (1960), for example, used similar methodology to establish that projective testing was unable to distinguish lesbian profiles from those of married heterosexual women on established dimensions of pathology, concluding that "homosexuality is not a clinical entity" (p. 309). A more recent study utilized Loevinger's scale measuring ego development. It found no significant differences in ego levels between homosexual and heterosexual subjects, and a low, but significant, correlation between higher levels of ego development and more positive attitudes toward homosexuality in both groups (Weis & Dain, 1979).

According to Richardson (1984), such findings led to a "definitional crisis." Homosexuality as a pathological condition found in a small number of individuals did not fit with newly emerging evidence that same-sex interests exist in many people and that gay people show more commonality than difference with heterosexuals. The whole conception of a discrete homosexual category was in jeopardy. A variety of theoretical constructs

were employed to deal with this paradox: "real vs. pseudo, incidental vs. exclusive, acquired vs. congenital, genuine vs. situational, chosen vs. determined, and temporary vs. permanent" (Richardson, 1984, pp. 82-83). These contrasts made it possible to preserve a belief in homosexuality as an essential state of being, while still accounting for the widespread occurrence of same-sex behavior, desires, and fantasies .

The social and political changes of the 60's and 70's liberation movements (gay and feminist) led to another theoretical shift which changed the terms altogether. The emphasis in this shift has been on "coming out," or the process of personal identity development rather than on the issue of development of object choice. The gay liberation movement felt that the question of etiology was inherently pathologizing and should be abandoned. Theoretical approaches within the movement drew on sociological perspectives, such as labelling theory or symbolic interactionalism. Labelling theory analyzes how individual identity and development are shaped by interaction with the social context, by the labels which are attached to a person or behavior through these interactions and what they come to mean to the individual.

Goffman's (1963) study of the effects of stigma on identity formation is a prototype of this approach. The social response to the stigmatized characteristic leads to internal alterations; one's self-perception goes through changes in correspondence to other's perceptions of self. In this view the idea of a homosexual personality is an artifact of social reaction to homosexual behavior. Goffman (1963) illustrates this perspective by the example of a woman who suddenly finds herself relieved of a social stigma, as in

successful plastic surgery. She will often be seen by herself and others to have altered her personality, an alteration in the direction of the acceptable.

Goffman's approach has been applied specifically to homosexuality in order to demonstrate how a sweeping change in social identity may generate intrapsychic changes (Fein and Nuehring, 1981). Social reality undergoes a process of breakdown and reconstruction in relation to oneself: "(N)ewly self-acknowledged homosexual individuals cannot take for granted that they share the world with others who hold congruent interpretations and assumptions; their behavior and motives, both past and present, will now be interpreted in light of their stigma" (p. 6). Only the individual's sexual identity has changed, yet everything else seems to have changed along with it. For example, a parent's capacity to parent a child whom she/he has parented for ten years is suddenly in question. The person has abruptly acquired a homosexual personality.

This new analysis of the old approach changes the basic nature of the question being asked. The old question was "Who or what are homosexuals and how do they get that way?" Now the question shifts to "How does the state of being a person who self-defines as a homosexual come about?" (Richardson, 1984). The first question is based on an assumption that sexual orientation is relatively fixed, so the question is directed toward etiology of that orientation. It is not concerned with whether the individual considers him or herself to be a homosexual or with the process of identity formation. Sexual identity and sexual desire are presumed to be equivalent. The second approach is based on sociological theories: labelling theory, symbolic interactionalism, or social constructionism, where the important determinant of identity is social interaction. No core identity or enduring

characteristic is presumed. This theory allows for a variety of phenomena in which behavior, desire, and identity are not necessarily congruent, such as a woman whose sexual activity is with other women although she does not identify as lesbian, or a woman who identifies herself as a lesbian but is married, asexual, or bisexually active.

In the framework of social constructionist theories, the cultural and historical context in which the behavior occurs or the identity develops is a highly significant factor. Esther Newton (1984) offers us an example of how cultural factors influence sexual expression through her analysis of the lesbian subculture in the 1920's. In Victorian England and the United States, lifelong female partnerships found a marginal social acceptance in the form of "Boston marriages." "Respectable" women lived with each other and were recognized or tolerated, at least within certain bourgeois circles, as partners. Whatever their actual sexual behavior was, they were regarded as an asexual couple. It was assumed that they, like most women, had little interest in sex. In the expatriate culture of Paris in the 20's, however, a radical group of literary and artistic women, such as Radclyffe Hall, Natalie Barney, and Renee Vivien, determined to establish themselves and their relationships as sexual as well:

> For many women of Radclyffe Hall's generation, sexuality--for itself and as a symbol of female autonomy--became a preoccupation...For male novelists, sexologists, and artists rebelling against Victorian values, sexual freedom became the cutting edge of modernism.... Women who wished to join the modernist discourse and be twentieth century adults needed to radically reconceive themselves (p. 564).

Some women used cross-dressing in public as a means of establishing themselves as sexual beings. Female "masculinity" had become associated

with lesbianism by the sexologists of this period, especially Havelock Ellis. Cross-dressing could be recognized now as a bold and public statement of sexual identity. It was also a way of announcing their entry into the (male) world of sexuality: "To become avowedly sexual, the New Woman had to enter the male world, either as a heterosexual on male terms (a flapper) or as --or with--a lesbian in male body drag (a butch)" (p. 573). To abstract this sexual behavior entirely from its cultural context would be to lose an important aspect of its meaning. That is, to give it a purely psychological interpretation, such as confusion about gender identity, would be a distortion of both the internal and external reality of the individual.

Jonathan Katz' (1976) criticism of studies of homosexuality makes this same point:

> There is no evidence for the assumption that certain traits have universally characterized homosexual (or heterosexual) relations throughout history. The problem of the historical researcher is thus to study and establish the character and meaning of each varied manifestation of same-sex relations within a specific time and society. The term "situational homosexuality" has been applied to same-sex relations within prison and other particular institutional settings. The term is fallacious if it implies that there is some "true" homosexuality which is *not* situated. All homosexuality is situational, influenced and given meaning and character by its location in time and social space.
>
> ....Almost no research has been undertaken on the history of homosexuals as a social group living in a hostile environment, on the effect on homosexuals of, for instance, a changing sexual division of labor and roles, or on the character, causation, and treatment of heterosexuals' seemingly obsessive antihomosexuality" (pp. 6-7).

Concepts of sexual identity and the effect of sexual labelling have broad social dimensions. Richardson notes (1984) that the more radical French theorists such as Foucault and Lacan question whether sexual desire and its expression may not themselves be historical and cultural phenomena. Foucault believes that the labelling process has created an artificial construct around which a false "science" has developed and that this event has negative consequences on both a social and cultural level. Others, however, such as Danneker (1984), believe that some of the consequences of this process have been negative for homosexuals, but that it has also paved the way for liberation movements to occur. Individuals had to develop an identity as homosexuals before they could begin to "take up the fight against anti-homosexual repression."

Homosexual Studies

Homosexual studies generally follow the social constructionist viewpoint; a primary interest of this field is the developmental process through which sexual identity is formed. From this perspective identity formation is understood to involve some degree of others' awareness of one's identity, as well as personal acknowledgement. Gay individuals take on a "deviant" identity. They may limit or restrictively manage others' awareness of their identity. Goffman (1963) subtitles his study of social stigma, "Management of a Spoiled Identity," laying out the problem.

Following Goffman, De Monteflores (1986) detailed strategies gay people have used to handle the "spoiled" aspect of their identity: assimilation or passing (concealing one's identity), confrontation (coming out openly), ghettoization (restricting one's connections to those who share a similar

identity), and specialization (ascribing to oneself a superior or exotic identity). Each strategy carries with it liabilities and advantages, and they are not mutually exclusive. Only "coming out" allows identity to become fully developed and then ultimately integrated into a broader social identity not specifically related to homosexuality.

"Coming out," the term common to gay culture, is roughly synonymous with taking on a homosexual identity. The experience of coming out is understood throughout the literature as a significant developmental step. Early writers tended to treat it as an event, a kind of social and psychological "debut" (Hooker, 1967; Dank, 1971). Later writers have emphasized it as a process, one which occurs over a lengthy period of time (de Monteflores & Schultz, 1978; Cass, 1979; Minton & MacDonald, 1984). Homosexual identity formation is now generally conceived of as a developmental process that begins with first awareness that "homosexual" may be a personally relevant term and continues until a stable homosexual identity is in place. Plummer (1975), Cass (1979), Troiden (1979), and Coleman (1981/2) have proposed models of homosexual identity development. Some models (Dank, 1971; Troiden, 1979) are concerned exclusively with male homosexuality. All of them differ primarily in detail rather than in basic conception. Cass (1984b) notes that they universally include four elements: 1) the individual's increasing acceptance of the label homosexual; 2) development of a more positive attitude towards this identity; 3) a growing wish to disclose this identity to both gay and non-gay people; and 4) increasing social contacts with other gay people. Minton and MacDonald (1984) conceive of homosexual identity formation as a life-spanning "developmental process that is part of

the general maturational process of achieving a coherent sense of personal identity" (p. 91).

Social work has incorporated this perspective on homosexual identity. Berger writes in the 1983-84 Supplement to the Encyclopedia of Social Work:

> ...homosexual identity formation is a developmental process characterized by three independent tasks: sexual encounter, social reaction, and identity.... Being labeled as homosexual often exerts a formative effect on the development of a homosexual orientation, but it is neither necessary nor sufficient for the development of such an orientation. The importance to the individual of those doing the labeling, the period of time over which the labeling occurs, and, most important, the individual's perception of how others regard him or her...are other important factors (p. 142).

Cass' model (1979 &1984b) is the most detailed description of this process and has been subjected to empirical testing. She finds six sequential stages which a developing identity undergoes: confusion, comparison, tolerance, acceptance, pride, and finally, synthesis. The tension of incongruency between one's thoughts, feelings, and behavior and others' perceptions of self will either propel one forward to the next stage or require various cognitive and behavioral strategies or defenses to resolve the tension. Negative internal or external experiences at any one stage may stall or even foreclose the process, leading to a retreat or partially-formed identity. For example, identity confusion may be dealt with by proceeding on to comparison; by inhibiting any behavior, thoughts, or feelings related to homosexuality; or by continuing participation in homosexual activity while denying the significance of it. If one cannot manage to recast the socially-proscribed identity in a new light which has positive value to the individual, successful identity development will not proceed. At this point pathological

consequences may ensue, such as depression, self-hatred, avoidance, or even suicide.

A common feature of coming out is "recasting the past" (Ponse, 1978; Stanley & Wolfe, 1980), in which earlier experiences are reinterpreted in light of the newly-developing identity. For example, a woman may feel that earlier adolescent relationships had homosexual significance although she did not experience them in that way at the time. She may decide that earlier relationships with men were a flight from lesbianism even though they were not thought of in that way at the time. These revisions of personal history provide a sense of continuity with a former self, differently experienced, and help to forge a stronger sense of identity.

Developmental models frequently locate the beginnings of identity formation in adolescent years, whether or not any overt homosexual behavior occurred (Minton & MacDonald, 1984). Often a sense of "difference" is the earliest subjective experience:

> the initial phase of homosexual identity formation appears to emerge in childhood and adolescence as a sense of being different from one's peers.... During adolescence the earlier childhood feelings of isolation combine with a specific sense of sexual difference to sensitize the teenager to the possibility of his or her homosexuality (p. 97).

DeMonteflores and Schultz (1978) note some differences between men and women in the coming out process. They find that sexual activity itself is a more significant determinant for men than for women. Some validation of this observation is seen in Cass' model. It is perhaps significant that Cass, a woman, does not assign sexual activity to any stage of the process, while male theorists are more inclined to do so (cf. Dank, 1971; Troiden, 1979; Coleman, 1982). Men also tend to move through stages of identity development in a

shorter period of time than women. Violations of sex-role expectations related to heterosexuality may be more threatening to men as well.

Assessment of Theories of Sexual Identity Development

The existing models assume a relatively straight-forward or linear emergence of sexual identity. Ponse (1978) calls this linearity "the gay trajectory." Five elements of homosexual experience--experiencing same-sex attraction, attributing homosexual significance to this attraction, accepting the feelings and their implications regarding identity, searching for gay community, and becoming involved in a same-sex relationship--are presumed to be so inherently related that "given one of these elements, irrespective of their order in time...the others will logically come to pass" (p. 125).

Cass's (1979) theory of identity development, for example, follows this principle and attributes any hiatus in the trajectory to a foreclosure of identity based on negative internal or external responses to gay identity. In fact much evidence exists that the gay trajectory does not match empirical observation any better than the psychoanalytic principle of consistency regarding gender identity, object choice, etc. does (Ponse, 1978; Golden, 1987). Human beings come in all varieties and live their lives without the sort of consistency which theorists are ever pursuing.

The models which Cass and others propose involve a stage-sequential construction of identity. As such, they are subject to objections which any stage model of development encounters. They do not allow for regressions, fluctuations, back and forth movement in which different levels of identification may co-exist. It is possible, for example, for an individual to tolerate

the paradoxical experiences of pride *and* guilt or shame. Cass' empirical testing (1984b) of her own model precluded such possibilities by requiring subjects to designate only one stage as the best description of their identity. Some subjects chose more than one stage anyway, but they were automatically excluded from the study. She does not test the premise that individuals move progressively through these stages; she simply establishes that different stages do exist for different individuals. Further, these models do not allow for a change in the other direction, from homosexual to heterosexual identity, to be seen as anything other than a defensive process.

Nevertheless, such models have made a significant contribution to understanding gay lives. They direct our attention to the powerful role which social attitudes play in developmental processes related to sexual identification. They indicate that gay identity is a choice, undergone with awareness, whether or not one's underlying feelings or sexual orientation is experienced as a choice. Finally, they assert that establishment of a clear homosexual identity is an achievement which requires mastery of conflict and furthers ego development. Cass' (1979) final stage of identity synthesis means that homosexual identity is "given the status of being merely one aspect of self," indicating that emotional and psychological conflicts have been resolved and the issue itself has moved into the background. The individual who fails to resolve the issue of sexual identity, leaving it open or eschewing "labels" may be at a disadvantage. Minton and MacDonald (1984) question "whether it is possible to achieve an integrated personal identity or have authentic relationships while concealing fundamental aspects of the self" (p. 102).

Differences in Identity Development

The assumption of fairly uniform progress through stages of development also takes little account of differences in the experience of identity development at different ages and in tandem with other developmental experiences which may be occurring simultaneously. Relatively little attention has been paid to a change of identity later in life. Cass (1979) does note that the process may begin at any age and that an individual's age "has considerable influence on his/her mode of coping with the developmental process" (p. 220). She postulates that everyone begins with an identity that is "nonhomosexual and heterosexual," but in fact women who come out early often do not begin with heterosexual identity at all. They describe themselves as "born lesbians," "always lesbian," or lacking a specific sexual identity until awareness of homosexuality (Stanley & Wolfe, 1980; Sablonsky, 1981). Coping with a sense of differentness and finding a social place for themselves has been an issue from an early age. The distance between these two routes is thus a considerable one. Lack of attention to this distinction is one of the problems with models of homosexual identity development.

The distinction between "primary" and "elective" lesbians (Ponse, 1978; Golden, 1987) suggests very different paths through which women may have arrived at lesbian identity. In the first group are women who began to identify themselves, however tentatively, as lesbians at an early age, often by adolescence. These women never developed a stable identity as heterosexual, however conflicted their struggle toward a lesbian identity may have been. They either had no significant sexual and emotional relationships with men or related to men only in an effort to hide or deny their lesbianism.

Women who have described their own identity development in early years give us a sense of what this experience was like. One woman writes:

> The day I accepted my label I still didn't know the word lesbian. The label I accepted was homosexual. Still, I had problems with even that since what little I could find in the literature that was available to me in 1950 was about men or about women in prison. Since neither of those categories included me I concluded that I had to be what I had suspected all along--I was alone in my affliction--so horribly deviant there were no others like me. (Stanley, & Wolfe, 1980; p. 57).

Another describes her teenage years this way:

> My adolescence was very lonely. I read a lot, never dated (even once), and spent my time mooning over one teacher or another. I knew I was supposed to be having crushes on boys so I went to the library and read everything I could on "sexual deviance" (that's where the card catalog made you look if you looked under homosexuality). I decided I was gay, though I called it being a "homo" (1980, p. 100).

In the second group are many women who had significant relationships with men; some married, some lived with men, others had long-term relationships with men with whom they felt they were in love and to whom they were sexually attracted. Often they had a clear identity as heterosexual in their early years. Nevertheless, they "discovered" women as sexual and emotional partners at some point and came to identify as lesbians.

Ponse (1978) quotes some accounts of identity development that differ in the extreme from the former women:

> At my age [50] I consider it expedient to be a lesbian. It's a smart choice for me....So when I say I'm a lesbian, I'm saying that I choose to relate to women at this time in my life and that I'll probably continue to do so. But I'm not closed to relating to a man again. I'm certainly not. At the same time women who have always been lesbians, real lesbians,

> absolutely fascinate me....You may not agree with me, but I think there is really something different about them (p. 131).

Another woman credits the woman's movement with allowing her to turn toward women:

> I had become close to the women's movement....It started as kind of an intellectual statement I made to myself. I felt so comfortable with women and was really turned on by the exciting changes I saw in women around me--they certainly seemed be changing and growing a hell of a lot more than the men of my acquaintance. I began thinking, well--what is so terrible?...why not express my feelings sexually with a woman?...It so happens that for me--I find relationships with women to be much more equal and free....For me it started off as an idea that progressed to experience and now, I would say, is probably the way I'll live my life (p. 154).

These quotations reflect the significant differences that exist in lesbian development. The first women felt their sexuality to be a given, the other two saw it as a choice. The possibilities in choice of erotic partners are probably not really a matter of absolutely open and conscious choice for anyone (after all, something drew these latter two women to other women and allowed them to begin rethinking their possibilities), but clearly some women feel greater flexibility or fluidity in sexual choice. The terms "primary" and "elective" are most appropriate with reference to identity, as the process is described by models of homosexual identity formation, where some conscious choice in interaction with social experiences operates to develop identity.

This distinction is an important one. It conveys a notion of identity formation at variance with psychoanalytic theory, which does not attend to sexual identity as a separate line of development from sexual orientation. At

the same time, homosexual studies fail to address the underlying differences between women whose basic sexual orientation is bisexual even though they identify as lesbian and women who are "primarily" or exclusivey lesbian. There is no concept in homosexual studies of fundamental intrapsychic differences. An example of the need for both theories is the matter of how the lesbian whose identity is developing in adolescence copes with the sense of social difference this engenders.

Homosexual studies merely acknowledge this difference and assert, like Cass (1979), that ability to tolerate a sense of difference is a crucial determinant of whether the young lesbian can go on to develop a healthy lesbian identity or whether she will resort to defenses such as denial. Psychoanalytic theory, even while it argues that lesbianism is pathological in itself, also posits the ability to tolerate differences as a major developmental achievement. How this dilemma for the adolescent lesbian is handled is an important question, requiring both perspectives.

This example is an especially salient one for the present study. The early-developing lesbian sometimes finds herself attracted later in life to lesbians who did not have this experience, who went through their adolescence with an identity as heterosexual. The adolescent experience of difference may have been tolerated but still have left some scar to the sense of self which seeks redress through alliance with a partner who feels closer to the mainstream. Meanwhile her capacity to tolerate such a difference may be a source of attraction to later-developing lesbians who question whether they would or could have tolerated it. Here we see again the need for some bridge between the two fields which allows us to consider both the internal and external

dimensions of sexual development and to explore the interplay between the two in lesbian relationships.

CHAPTER FOUR:

BRIDGING PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY AND HOMOSEXUAL STUDIES

> *Yet, psychoanalysis cannot be the only tool with which to examine the subject. Love cannot be conveyed or understood through the language of any single discipline. ...one must view it through a philosophical perspective ...[and] one must utilize a cultural perspective.*
>
> E. S. Person, Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters

Theoretical Conflict Between Psychoanalysis and Homosexual Studies

Divergent approaches to homosexuality often co-exist in more or less willful ignorance of each other, each within its own discipline--the pursuit of a biological key, the reworking of psychoanalytic theories, the anti-psychoanalytic social psychology approach, and sociological analysis. Their mutual indifference is not surprising considering the chasm between theoretical viewpoints which they encompass.

As discreditors of analytic theory have long pointed out, psychoanalysis focuses almost exclusive attention on internal factors. The more relationally-oriented schools of analytic theory understand intrapsychic development within the context of interpersonal relating between parent and child, but little weight is given to the social and cultural environment which also profoundly shape personality--that of the parent as well as the child. Cross-cultural studies reveal striking differences in development, as Erikson's (1963) work has shown, but perhaps because the task is daunting, these

analyses are rarely made. The body of psychoanalytic theory continues to develop with little account of this very powerful determinant.

Social psychology and its heirs, such as homosexual studies, attempt to redress this failure, but perhaps because the social approach has been so critical of the intrapsychic approach, it is equally unbalanced in its perspective. Social psychologists tend to explore conscious aspects of development, sometimes even denying the role of the unconscious altogether. They attend to issues of gender and sex-role identity in terms of socialization, looking not only at the family but at other institutionalized influences such as school, church, peer group interactions, class, and race. Differences in how people respond to environmental influences need to be accounted for as well, however. Idiosyncratic dimension of the individual personality are already shaped in important ways before the environment outside the family plays a major role. For this, we must turn back to infant development. The parents themselves function as agents of social institutions to some extent, carrying the values and attitudes of the culture at large into the home. Allowance for constitutional differences must be made as well.

With respect to homosexuality, psychoanalytic theory has been preoccupied exclusively with the genetic question: how does sexual orientation develop? Because this question is almost always framed in terms of pathology, the pursuit is actually one of specifying pathological strains in homosexuality. Psychoanalytic theory ignores homosexual studies and is unconcerned with sexual identity development per se, treating sexual identity as equivalent to sexual orientation. Its course of development and its significance to integrated functioning is overlooked. The role of strong

cultural sanctions against homosexuality is almost non-existent in this analysis.

The field of homosexual studies in turn denies interest in a psychodynamic consideration of the question of etiology. Oddly, this attitude implies agreement with the psychoanalysts on this one point, equating the question itself with an assumption of pathology. Homosexual studies all the way back to their roots in the Kinsey research set themselves up against psychoanalytic ones as an alternative approach. Homosexual studies in recent times have been influenced by the liberation movement; many writers in this field are gay men and lesbians, and they emphasize homosexuality as a matter of personal identity development. Grounded in sociological and social psychological perspectives, it is either antagonistic or indifferent to psychodynamic approaches. Perhaps the original antagonism between homosexual studies and psychodynamic theory required little accommodation of the two to each other. It now seems theoretically wasteful for these various lines of thought to co-exist without much interest or knowledge of the other's development. Each theoretical perspective has a contribution of its own to make; each addresses deficiencies in the other.

The definition of pathology needs to be considered nevertheless. Exactly what a healthy person is, or what defines healthy sexuality, is difficult to state. In general the answer is framed in terms of two dimensions: the degree of deviation from social norms and the degree of psychological suffering in an individual life. These dimensions are themselves always confounded by cultural values which vary enormously in different societies and at different times within the same society. Whole societies can be seen as pathological

themselves, based on political or religious forces that are repellent to those outside (or inside) of them. What then characterizes a healthy person? This constitutes a major philosophical dilemma which most psychological theories can do little more than recognize. However, it serves to caution us against an authoritative attitude in descriptions of health and pathology. In this vein, Stoller (1985) writes:

> Beware the concept "normal." It is beyond the reach of objectivity. It tries to connote statistical validity but hides brute judgments on social and private goodness that, if admitted, would promote honesty and modesty we do not yet have in patriots, lawmakers, psychoanalysts, and philosophers (p. 41).

Some voices within psychoanalytic theory have always acknowledged that clear-cut distinctions concerning health and pathology are difficult to make. Certainly the original Freudian model of normal female sexual maturation included a large degree of compromised development. Again, Stoller (1985), writing about psychoanalytic conceptions of sexuality, expresses the problem:

> What evidence is there that heterosexuality is less complicated than homosexuality, less the product of infantile-childhood struggles to master trauma, conflict, frustration, and the like?
>
> As a result of innumerable analyses, the burden of proof (providing demonstrable evidence) has shifted to those who use the heterosexual as the standard of health, normality, mature genital character-hood, or whatever other ambiguous criterion serves one's philosophy these days....Thus far, the counting, if it is done from published reports, puts the heterosexual and the homosexual in a tie: 100 percent abnormals (pp. 101-2).

When we relinquish the focus on who is normal and who is not and instead try to understand what is (i.e., what works best for a given individual, and how do we understand it?), we find that both homosexuality and hetero-sexuality require a more thorough exploration. It is within this framework that the present study draws from both psychoanalytic and homosexual studies.

Before looking at how the contributions of both theories need to be utilized, some brief revision in each is necessary. Neither theory adequately addresses the reality that not all lesbians develop in the same way. There are, as several theorists have argued, a multiplicity of homosexualities (Stoller, 1985; McDougall, 1986; & Wolfson, 1987). The particular distinction here is that between a primarily lesbian orientation and a more bisexual one. This distinction is itself not a clear-cut one in reality; a continuum is actually a more appropriate model than two discrete categories. For purposes of discussion, however, the two ends of the continuum will be treated as two groups.

Alterations in Psychoanalytic Theory

The traditional analytic view of lesbianism is not sufficient to account for the difference between the two groups. Whether one regards lesbianism as an "oedipal failure," i.e., a retreat from the positive oedipal relationship, or as a pre-oedipal fixation in which the "positive" oedipal relationship is never attained, a continuing bisexually-inclined orientation is not included. The traditional view is that the daughter turns from the mother as early love object to the father out of anger and the narcissistic injury she sustains from

discovery of her lack of a penis (Freud, 1925 & 1931). The girl's relationship with her mother is an ambivalent one, full of frustration and deprivation. Ultimately her hostility toward her mother consolidates this turn to the father as she can have a less ambivalent relationship with him. From this point on, the father is the daughter's exclusive love interest, while the mother is only her sexual rival. Thus in the "normal" heterosexual woman's intrapsychic oedipal configuration, love for the father takes over, and love for the mother undergoes repression.

Deutsch (1944) gives a somewhat different account:

> ...the little girl gradually turns from her almost exclusive attachment to her mother toward her father, wavers between the two and wants to have them both, until finally she turns toward her father with greater intensity, although still not exclusively (p. 32).

Chodorow (1978) has developed this position more fully. She suggests that the normal oedipal configuration even for most heterosexual women is a bisexual one. Chodorow is referring to a relationally-oriented preference rather than a sexually-oriented one. [This distinction may not be particularly meaningful, however, as sexuality is much more likely to be inseparable from relational desires for women than for men (Stoller, 1985; Nichols, 1987)]:

> A girl's father does not serve as a sufficiently important object to break her maternal attachment, given his physical and emotional distance in conjunction with the girl's desperate need to separate from her mother but simultaneous love for her. While the father in most cases does activate heterosexual genitality in his daughter, he does not activate exclusive heterosexual love or exclusive generalized attachment. This "failure" is because of his own emotional qualities, because he is not her primary caretaker but comes on the scene after his daughter's

> relationship to this caretaker (her mother) is well established, and because he is not so involved with his children, however idealized and seductive he may be (p. 128).

Thus when the girl does turn to her father, the turn is not necessarily away from the mother at all:

> When a girl's father does become an important primary person, it is in the context of a bisexual relational triangle. A girl's relation to him is emotionally in reaction to, interwoven and competing for primacy with, her relation to her mother....[A] girl retains her pre-oedipal tie to her mother...and builds oedipal attachments to both her mother and father upon it (pp. 192-3).

These analytic writers thus suggest that bisexuality is the more common outcome of female oedipal development. From this perspective it is much easier to understand that object choice for many women may be a more flexible matter, with much room for later developmental factors to have a significant role. Interactions with siblings, peers, teachers, may play their part. Social and cultural attitudes about sexuality from schools, churches, and the media also contribute. Finally, life circumstances may tip the balance. Sexual identity may then shift accordingly over a lifetime.

The psychoanalytic approach to homosexuality tends to focus on defensive reactions against love interest in the father, such as protection from the mother's jealousy. The potential for triangular conflict may be a factor that forecloses a turn to the father, but it is not the only one. Chodorow emphasizes the role of the father in response to his daughter's interest, reminding us that the daughter's turn to the father is only one side of the equation. Relationships are two-sided, not unilateral as traditional theory posits them. When the father is available to enjoy, encourage, support, and

mirror the child's interest, his participation may consolidate object choice. This perspective gives new possibilities for understanding the more exclusively lesbian woman. Lack of responsiveness from the father as well as his absence, unavailability, or unattractiveness to the daughter may mean that he never becomes a love object equal to or greater in strength than the mother.

On the other hand, the mother may likewise discourage a daughter's courtship of her. Flax (1978) and Caplan (1981) both point out that the mother's response to her daughter is likely to be more inhibited, due to her own conflicts over sexuality. There is not only the incest taboo, which applies to a child of either sex, but there is also the mother's homophobia, or fear of her own homoerotic feelings. The mother may be uneasy over her daughter's wooing, and the daughter may feel that her sexual interest in her mother is rejected. Thus heterosexuality can also be a defense against rejection or unavailability.

These perspectives which point to the two-sided nature of oedipal relationships add new dimensions to the original conception of female object-choice. The father's oedipal role may be too weak to supplant the love relationship to the mother. It remains as a relatively unelaborated intrapsychic configuration for the woman whose love interest is primarily lesbian. On the other hand, the mother's failure to respond to her daughter's wooing leads to a defensive turn to the father for some women, who will then be primarily heterosexual in their adult loves.

The need for separation from the mother may be another motivating factor in the daughter's turn to the father. Here again, this is ultimately a defensive move: "An oedipal girl's 'rejection' of her mother is a defense

against primary identification....attempting by fiat to establish boundaries between herself and her mother" (Chodorow, 1979, p. 124). It could be argued that where separation from the mother is achieved without such a defensive turn, it may even be fundamentally stronger, more resilient to threats toward dedifferentiation.

Ogden (1987) proposes a new formulation of female oedipal experience which also addresses this issue. He criticizes traditional theory because it provides no basis for healthy whole-object love relations for females: "A love relationship entered into as a result of flight from shame and narcissistic injury is almost certain to be constructed for the purpose of narcissistic defense, and is unlikely to involve genuine object love" (p. 486). He regards the Oedipal period as a "pivotal point of development" in establishing the externality of objects, the mother as "not-me," an object independent of one's self.

In his explanation of female oedipal experience, separation from the mother is effected by using the mother as a transitional object, not by turning away from her. The transition here is toward whole object relating and oedipal love, or the object as Other, an eroticized Other. His approach employs Winnicott's (1951) idea of the transitional object as something that is "both reality and fantasy; both me and not-me; both omnipotent, protective, internal-object-mother and external-object-thing with its own fixed sensory qualities" (Ogden, 1987, p. 488). The child's psychic world expands to include externality and separateness without giving up what preceded it. Ogden writes:

> This reorganization takes place non-traumatically because it is mediated by a relationship with the mother that embodies the following paradox: *the little girl falls in love with the mother-as-father and with the father-as-mother*....[T]he little girl falls in love with the (not yet fully external) mother who is engaged in an unconscious identification with her own father in her internal set of oedipal object relations....The role of mother as oedipal transitional object is to allow herself to be loved as a man (her own unconscious identification with her own father). In so doing, she unconsciously says to her daughter, "If I were a man, I would be in love with you, find you beautiful and would very much want to marry you." (p. 489).

The transitional experience allows the daughter to participate in an erotic-romantic relationship with an Other without in fact giving up the mother. Eventually an actual Other, typically the father, will take this place for the daughter as someone who "lives beyond the realm of the little girl's omnipotence" (p. 490). In this transitional relationship the mother "gives her blessing to the little girl's oedipal love of her father and from there, her love of other men" (p. 490). The transitional relationship is dependent on the mother's comfort in engaging in an identification as male, being able to experience the "dialectical interplay between masculine and feminine identities" in a creative way (p. 496). Ogden considers Freud's narrative of the girl's turning to the father out of shame over discovery that she has no penis as "an accurate description of a very common pathological development and a subtheme of normal female development" (p. 493).

This paradigm opens up new possibilities for understanding female oedipal experience. Ogden distinguishes his version from the "negative" female oedipal experience: there the little girl wishes to get rid of the father as a rival rather than ultimately to include him as a new object. However,

nothing in Ogden's account is actually dependent on gender. What is essential to it is the mother allowing herself to participate in a "play" relationship with her daughter, being able to be an Other, drawing upon her own oedipal internalizations. The mother might mediate her daughter's transition to a relationship with an Other based on her own internalized oedipal mother. This would also effect a shift to externality and grant permission to fall in love with other real, external figures who may be important to the child. The mother's own partner may be a woman. The child may go on to eroticized attachments to other females--relatives, teachers, family friends. The same developmental advance might be effected in this way, and the mother may come to take her place as well as a figure who can be perceived as a whole object, separate and external.

The major object-relations theorists (Klein, Winnicott, Mahler) do not base the capacity for object-relatedness upon heterosexuality; instead, they invoke the child's growing awareness of external reality and the separate-ness of the mother. Transitional objects (Winnicott, 1951) help to mediate this shift by attenuating the anxiety it arouses (too much anxiety could disrupt a necessarily-gradual integration of awareness of external reality). These theorists were of course primarily concerned with pre-oedipal relations rather than oedipal ones. In fact, in all of the interpersonal or object-relations theories, "infantile sexuality, like sexuality in general, has been underplayed" (S. Mitchell, 1988, p. 92).

Ogden does not argue that whole object relations are dependent upon heterosexual development, but in his perspective a shift is required from mother as a subjective object (Winnicott, 1962) to a fully external object. In a

somewhat parallel account of male oedipal development, Ogden (in press) emphasizes that the boy is shifting from one mother to another: "the Oedipal mother is and is not the same mother the little boy loved, hated and feared prior to his discovery of her (and his father) as external Oedipal objects" (p. 2). This distinction may apply to the girl who retains her mother as love object as well; the mother is a different mother now, an oedipal rather than pre-oedipal mother, more external and objectively-perceived, rather than a subjective object. Now the daughter's possession of her mother is more tenuous, no longer omnipotently created and controlled.

A recent study by Steckel (1985) suggests that traditional accounts of child development relative to the gender of the parents are incomplete. This study compared levels of independence, ego functioning, and object relationships as manifestations of separation-individuation in children of lesbian parents (where there was never a male parent) with children of heterosexual parents. Eleven children of lesbian parents were matched for age and birth order with eleven children of heterosexual parents. The ages ranged from 3 to 5 years (with a mean age of 3 years, 9 months), and 8 boys and 3 girls were included in each group. The study utilized reports from both parents and teachers as well as Structured Doll Interviews with the children. No significant differences on the dimensions in question were found between the two groups.

Her study asks: "Can women 'father'? Can a female co-parent provide that nurturing and guidance and allow the child to utilize her presence as a differentiating force to triangulate out of the mother-daughter dyad?" (p. 192). Her findings answer the question in the affirmative. Steckel concludes that her results "support the idea that a female co-parent can fulfill the functions

of a father to facilitate a child's intrapsychic separation from the mother" (p. 193). In other words, it is not the different gender of the other parent which is crucial.

The primary difference noted between the two groups, was that the separation process in children of heterosexual parents was more aggressively tinged. These children were more domineering, more often involved in power struggles, and had a more aggressive self-image. This outcome may reflect the presence of a male role model in the home, who might himself be more aggressive; it may also reflect less involvement by fathers than by female co-parents, rendering the mother-child dyad a tighter one and requiring a more aggressive struggle in the separation process (Steckel, 1985). Her results can be accounted for only by acknowledging that separation from the mother is not dependent upon a different-gender parent to help mediate this shift. Children of either sex can separate from the mother without the presence of a male parent. Thus neither in the pre-oedipal nor the oedipal period is a shift (either in identification or in erotic strivings) to a male object essential to object constancy or whole object relating.

Lewes' (1988) comprehensive survey of psychoanalytic theories of male homosexuality suggests that in drive theory the association of homosexuality with inadequate object-relatedness derives from a misunderstanding of Freud's use of the term "narcissistic object choice," especially as used in reference to male homosexuality:

> For Freud, anaclitic object choice was characteristic of the heterosexual male, while narcissistic object choice was characteristic of most homosexual males and, an extremely important point to note, of the female. But from this close connection between homosexuality and

> narcissism, several mistaken conclusions were drawn: that homosexuality is not truly object-related, that it involves impoverished object relations, and that its general organization is essentially preoedipal (p. 74).

In Freud's terms objects may be anaclitic ("transformations or derivatives of external figures") or narcissistic ("transformations of the ego"), but narcissistic objects are not "inferior" nor are they necessarily more primitive (p. 74). It was the use of the word narcissistic, easily associated with the condition of pathological narcissism, that led later theorists to attribute pathology:

> Freud's coinage, narcissistic object choice, was particularly unfortunate since it suggested a closer relation of that choice to the psychosexual stage of narcissism than Freud himself would have maintained. He was at pains to deny that narcissistic object choice was characteristic of narcissism, since for him the choice of any external object was not possible during narcissism....[Also] there is nothing in this theory to suggest that narcissistic objects, when they are true objects, are not just as suitable...[for superego development] as are anaclitic ones (p. 75).

Different psychoanalytic formulations suggest different routes to object choice. Defensive maneuvers may interact with innately emerging developmental shifts from pre-oedipal to oedipal relating in either a homosexual or heterosexual direction. This discussion, drawing from both drive theory and object relations theory, is meant to show (1) that establishment of object choice is more complex than the oedipal resolution conceptualized in traditional drive theory without entirely negating its contribution, and (2) that it is possible for a male object choice, a female object choice, or a more bisexual one to be established along with achievement of whole object relationships. In the case of an underlying bisexual object choice, the sex of

the partner(s) actually chosen may be especially affected by external, situational influences since intrapsychic requirements are somewhat flexible. None of these outcomes must be based on a predominantly pre-oedipal level of relating or precludes whole object relationships. The point is not to declare one view the correct one, but to demonstrate that there is more than one path toward final object choice.

Of course developmental failures occur. Again, as Stoller (1985) states, it is an easy matter to find symptoms, defenses, and defects within most people's sexuality. In asserting that the traditional analyses are inadequate, there is no denying that conflicts or developmental deficiencies may exist in homosexuality. Rather, these revisions are suggested in the interest of promoting a wider view of variations in human sexual development. Children are often confronted with enormous psychological tasks in the course of development, and either homosexuality or heterosexuality may represent a necessary defensive solution or a strategic triumph.

Alterations in Theories of Homosexual Identity Formation

Turning to homosexual studies, we again find that differences in lesbian development are given inadequate consideration. Models of identity formation tend to assume that homosexual identity begins developing early, often in adolescence, and follows a fairly straight-forward path unless a defensive retreat is made. What is missing in this account is the interaction of other developmental events with those of identity formation.

The present study suggests that the experience of coping with an identity labelled deviant by the society is quite different for lesbians whose identity

develops earlier than for those who change their identity later. "Primary" lesbians generally have to struggle to establish a positive sense of themselves as lesbians during adolescence, when other issues of social identity are being negotiated. It is a time of great vulnerability about one's identity. Erikson (1963) writes:

> ...in puberty and adolescence all sameness and continuities relied on earlier are more or less questioned again....The growing and developing youths...are now primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are (p. 261).

He notes that adolescents can be "clannish" and "cruel" about differences, preoccupied with in-group and out-group status, relying on stereotypes to deal with deviations in social behavior. In this context coping with an identity seen as deviant can be painful and thoroughly conflicted.

Women who come to an identity as lesbian later in life may have already negotiated other issues of social identity before they assume a "deviant" sexual identity. It may feel like a choice, not an inevitability. They may have established a sense of self as relatively "normal," fitting in with the mainstream, at least in terms of their sexuality. Taking on a lesbian identity at this stage means coping with somewhat different issues. It may involve a sense of loss in terms of acceptability and social ease, but losing something one has had is an experience quite different from never having had it.

The presence of social support systems is highly significant for women who come out later in life after first having made a heterosexual identification (Sablonsky, 1981; Butler,1983). Specifically, the emergence of a visible gay community and the support of feminist ideology provided a positive context for later development, which was either missing or not relied upon

by women who came out during adolescence. As Cass (1984b) notes, one of the four major components of the process of homosexual identity formation is altering the social valuation of homosexuality so that it is now positively imbued. When the process of coming out begins in adolescence, this necessary alteration is more difficult. It commonly presents the major obstacle to constructing a positive identity. Often there is little awareness of a gay community or other external support.

Vargo (1987) describes the difficulties lesbians encounter in developing a positive identity in interaction with social expectations for women, which are inherently limiting, and social expectations of heterosexuality:

> Lesbians do not escape the major themes of female socialization in that as women we are trained to different degrees to be other-oriented, dependent, and passive rather than self-assertive. However, lesbians start at a different point in the process of resolving the conflict between being gender inappropriate and having a positive self-image. Lesbians are already being seriously gender inappropriate in their sexual preference for other women. Their positive self-image cannot come only from gender appropriateness--it has to involve a positive valuing of gender inappropriateness if they are to value their lesbianism.
>
> In the process of incorporating lesbianism into self-image, lesbians may suffer from gender confusion and isolation as they experience themselves as...being different from other women in some fundamental way. How individual lesbians resolve their self-image...varies immensely in terms of individual psychologies, norms of their immediate community be it heterosexual or gay, and their socio-economic situations. Lesbians living in feminist and well-supported gay communities may arrive at a more radical vision of self that includes a positive sense of choosing a blend of so-called male and female behaviors for self (p. 163).

Vargo's account suggests situational differences which may render identity development an easier matter for bisexual lesbians than primary ones. Women who come out later have frequently already altered their ideas about homosexuality either through positive contact with gay people and/or exposure to more progressive ideas of the liberation movements. The hardest part of the task of identity formation has been dealt with to some degree *before* these women considered the personal significance of homosexuality. Their transition to a lesbian identity may be considerably smoother.

Briefly stated, an important difference between the two groups lies in sense of self as deviant. The identity of women who begin to think of themselves as lesbian very early in life is likely to include undesired feelings of being different, not in the mainstream, not typically feminine, and often, not normal. Women who have previously identified as heterosexual or even bisexual are likely to have experienced themselves as somewhat closer to the mainstream culture. Their participation in heterosexual relationships has been authentic to a large degree, and they may more easily identify themselves as feminine. The change of identity does not carry the same significance for the totality of their identity, allowing them to feel less different, or more normal.

On the one hand, the identity of the primary lesbian may be consolidated very clearly as lesbian, but it is more likely to include a sense of self as deviant even after a positive reevaluation of homosexuality is made. On the other hand, the identity of the later developing lesbian may never be as clear; although she comes to identify herself as lesbian, some confusion,

ambivalence, or doubt may persist. At the same time she may think of herself as more normal, less deviant, than the primary lesbian; indeed, she may always hold out some part of her identity as non-lesbian because of, or even to preserve, this sense of normality.

Common Ground: Toward an Interactional Approach

A basic task in approaching some kind of interweaving of theories is sorting out the confusion of terminology. For purposes of this study some of these terms will be defined here. Both psychoanalytic theory and social psychology (including homosexual studies) use the terms identity and self (Cass, 1984a). In analytic theory these are viewed primarily as intrapsychic constructs which are derived from both internal and external (or interactive) experience. In social psychology these terms also represent internal constructs, but greater relative emphasis is given to socialization factors. In both disciplines the terms are sometimes used interchangeably and sometimes differentiated, but they are used without any consistency from one theoretician to the next (Cass, 1984a).

The basic definition of identity (also stated in Chapter One) used in this study reflects the emphasis on social construction: identity refers to "the synthesis of own self-perceptions with views of the self perceived to be held by others" (Cass, 1984a, p.110). Definitions of specific types of identity, such as gender identity, are given below. Self is used in the sense of self-representation (also sometimes referred to as self-image) meaning "that organization which represents the person as he [she] has consciously or unconsciously perceived himself [herself]" (Sandler & Rosenblatt, 1962, p.

134). Although social psychology and related disciplines speak of self, they are generally referring to conscious images of self. Here both conscious and unconscious dimensions of sense of self are included.

The terms "sexual identity" and "gender identity" are given a confusing range of meanings in both disciplines. The concept of "sexual identity" is the offspring of various generations of theoretically confused terms, paralleling the history of conceptualizations of homosexuality. The confusion began with the sexologists' treatment of sexual orientation, sex roles, and gender identity as roughly synonymous terms, terms so developmentally congruent that there was little need to distinguish between them. Although these terms are now more widely recognized as distinct but related concepts, many psychoanalysts have continued to treat them as essentially congruent. For example, Tyson (1982) attempts to trace the development of core gender identity, gender role, and object choice (she does not consider sexual identity, as there is no need for this construct in her framework). Tyson promotes the distinction between these terms, but still thinks it appropriate to lump them together under the concept of "global" gender identity: "These separate strands join together and intermingle to make up what we view globally as 'gender identity'" (pp. 83-4). For her, a homosexual male is always expressing femininity, and a lesbian is always expressing masculinity, simply by virtue of their object choices. This approach has not progressed very far from the ideas of Havelock Ellis (see Chapter Two).

Core gender identity is "the most primitive, conscious and unconscious, sense of belonging to one sex and not the other" (Tyson, 1982). It is generally understood to be consolidated around 18 months of age and relatively

unchanging after that. Sexual preference or orientation "refers to the preferred sex of the love object" (Tyson, 1982). Sex-role behavior is one's behavior in accordance with the prescribed norms for a given gender. The specifics of these norms obviously vary according to cultural dictates.

Another dimension of these interrelated terms which none of the above quite expresses is one's sense of masculinity or femininity, which may be experienced somewhat independently of both core gender identity or sex-role behavior. For example, a woman may have a rather masculine sense of herself even though she has no question about whether she is female and in many ways conforms to prescribed female behavior. Some writers use gender identity in this way, to refer to the individual's own sense of self as masculine or feminine. Psychoanalytic theory argues that it is based on identification with a given parent, who may or may not be the same sex as oneself. From the perspective of social psychology, gender identity is developed in social interactions throughout one's life. Money (1980) defines gender identity as "the sameness, unity, and persistence of one's individuality as male, female, or ambivalent, in greater or lesser degree, especially as it is experienced in self-awareness and behavior" (p. 214). Inconsistency between biological sex and gender identity as defined here does not indicate the major disturbance that confusion about core gender identity is--and may not reflect pathology at all. Unfortunately many writers do not distinguish between gender identity and core gender identity, especially in regard to homosexuality.

At present we are in an uncomfortable theoretical position between the two concepts of sexual orientation and sexual identity. Are they independent variables or do they usually determine each other in a predictable way? The

conceptual relationship between sexual orientation, sexual identity, gender identity, and sex roles is vague. The traditional assumption that as any one of these variables is known, the others then follow, rested on formerly secure cultural assumptions which have become highly insecure ones, especially with respect to masculinity, femininity, and sex-roles. Because the cultural determinants of these concepts are still very much in flux, the relation of these concepts to each other needs to be reconceived. They may overlap quite a lot, or they may be quite distinct.

Because many writers use the term "sexual identity" in basically different ways--to mean gender identity, sexual preference, or sexual attributes --one must pay close attention to usage to avoid confusion. Cass (1984) argues that because of such confusion we cannot use the term sexual identity in reference to homosexuality or heterosexuality, but must use the specific terms homosexual identity or heterosexual identity. As used in this study, however, sexual identity does mean one's identity as homosexual or heterosexual. Cass raises a number of interesting questions about the concept of homosexual identity:

> Is homosexual identity essentially similar to or different than ethnic, occupational, or status identities? Can we assume homosexual identity and heterosexual identity are structurally alike? To what degree is homosexual identity time and place specific? What effects do particular sociological, psychological, political, or economic conditions have upon the nature of homosexual identity? (p. 109).

What we desire from an integration of psychoanalytic theory and theories of homosexual identity development is a deeper look at the interaction between internal and external processes. This interaction will always be

complex and never easy to specify, but the effort can afford a greater understanding of the vicissitudes of homosexual identity development. Identity formation is a variable experience. At one extreme, the process can be a highly conflicted, even traumatizing, experience which leaves scars of its own that affect later growth. At the other extreme, it can be a relatively smooth, ego-syntonic, unfolding of awareness in which confrontation with the painful effects of social disapprobation are minimal. The distance between these extremes can only be accounted for by the interaction of identity development with other developmental issues, both determining them and being determined by them.

Internal determinants are the early developmental achievements which grant greater or less flexibility and strength in coping with difficult tasks. The external ones include the social era, the values of one's family of origin, and the nature of one's community which will determine how difficult the task is. For example, a small town environment will present one set of problems and advantages, while a cosmopolitan one another; a family which holds deep religious beliefs which denigrate sexuality will provide a very different environment than one with liberal beliefs. The presence or absence of support systems or of respected individuals who identify as homosexual are important variables.

Cass (1979) suggests that one's ability to move through the stages of homosexual identity development rests on an ability to tolerate being different and to resist the pressure of social norms. This is an indication of how the sexual identity formation process may interact with other developmental accomplishments in separation-individuation, differentiation of self

and other, and establishment of a secure positive social identity. The events of the coming out process in their turn have an impact on other aspects of development: self-esteem, ambition, autonomy, capacity for relatedness and interdependence, etc. An integrated identity relieves one from excessive defensive maneuvers and is itself a foundation for further growth.

The thesis of the present study requires such an interactional approach between the theories. It examines how differences between lesbian partners in such fundamental variables as sexual orientation and sexual identity development determine the complementary interplay between them. Traditional analytic theory tends to ascribe to the primary lesbian more difficulty with tolerating differences because of her inadequate separation from the mother. Cass turns this idea around, however, by pointing out that the lesbian who establishes a positive homosexual identity early in life has a greater ability to tolerate differences than one who is unable to do so, perhaps more than "normal" adolescents who cling to conformity. Her ability to overcome social disapproval and formulate a favorable sense of herself which includes a "deviant" sexuality is a developmental triumph indicating a high degree of ego strength. Nevertheless, she may still bear wounds from the process which are alleviated in her intimacy with the more "normal" lesbian. Likewise the more ambivalent lesbian may be drawn to the woman who embodies this ability to handle being different. While she lends her own sense of normalcy to the relationship, she partakes of an experience of being different which may expand her own capacity for comfort with difference.

We can easily understand how the interplay between these factors has not been properly articulated. There are too many variables and too much

complexity in their potential for interaction. Only in the arts and in clinical descriptions do we find studies of the infinite variety of individual experience. As our theoretical sophistication grows, our ability to synthesize these different perspectives will also be enlarged. Psychodynamic theory needs to include a greater comprehension of how social meaning contributes to internal experience, and homosexual studies need an early developmental basis for approaching adult growth.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DYNAMIC ISSUES IN LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS

> *The longing at the heart of love is almost literally the longing for merger.*
>
> E. S. Person, Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters

Friendship, Intimacy and Lesbian Relationships

While the literature on lesbian couples is not extensive, in the past fifteen years a number of papers and books have appeared which address relationship issues. These works will be discussed with respect to their contributions toward understanding the dynamic aspects of lesbian relationships or other relational elements that may be of interest to this study. Many of these works lie outside the psychoanalytic domain and reflect more eclectic psychotherapeutic approaches or derive from feminist or sociological perspectives.

The existence of lesbian relationships as recognized partnerships has a curious history. Smith-Rosenberg (1975), Katz (1978), Rich (1980), and Faderman (1981) have all noted the ambiguous position of relationships between women in past centuries. Recognized partnerships between women, some of them life-long, were granted a kind of social tolerance on the assumption that they were non-sexual, sometimes referred to as "passionate friendships" or "Boston marriages." During the same periods, sexual relationships between men were subjected to strong social and legal penalties because their sexual nature was acknowledged. Faderman argues that it was the work of the sexologists, particularly Ellis and Krafft-Ebing, that

awakened awareness of the sexual nature of women's couplings and eventuated in their censure. At the same time growing social awareness of women's sexuality led some women to proclaim openly the sexual nature of their relationships specifically by cross-dressing, a bold confrontation through the very mode which the sexologists identified as characteristic of lesbians (Newton, 1984). (Chapter Three gives an analysis of this cultural "coming out" in the 1920's).

The element of friendship continues to be identified as a major source of bonding and satisfaction in relationships between women. Vetere's (1982) study of lesbian relationships explores this dimension. She found that 77% of the women in her study (a small sample of 23 women) thought of their lovers as their closest friends, and many women found it quite difficult to specify a distinction between "lover" and "friend," most (65%) ultimately relying on sexual activity as the only distinction. Peplau (1981) likewise argues that the relationship model which best characterizes lesbian relationships is not that of heterosexual couples, but of best friends, with the added element of romantic attraction. These formulations somewhat beg the question, at least in regard to dynamics, for what characterizes friendships? Are they based on sameness or difference as the primary connection? Does the friendship of a lesbian relationship differ from that of a heterosexual one? Certainly friendships come in different forms. What we do find in these descriptions is that the crucial dimension is one of emotional closeness. As we shall see, again and again, this theme prevails in discussions of lesbian couples. The desire for a close emotional connection seems to be the primary mark of lesbian relationships.

Becker's (1988) recent study of relationships between lesbian ex-lovers underscores the central role of friendship in lesbian relationships. Ex-lovers often become a kind of extended family for lesbians, and many women are willing to devote enormous effort to the transition from lover to friend once the couple relationship ends. These "unbroken ties" may interfere in forming new relationships, but they also enrich the sense of connection, continuity, and community--which supplement and sometimes replace what families of origin provide to heterosexual couples. Becker writes:

> To varying degrees, lesbian ex-lovers retain their ties to one another after their breakup and use these bonds to rebuild their lives. An ex-lover remains an important part of a woman's evolving identity: as a woman, as a lesbian, and as a participant in intimate relationships (p.211).

Continuing with the theme of closeness and connection, by far the largest number of papers on lesbian relationships has been devoted to the issue of merger or fusion between two women in relationship (Krestan & Bepko, 1980; Burch, 1982, 1985 & 1986; Krieger, 1982 &1983; Kaufman, Harrison, & Hyde, 1984; Roth, 1985; Elise, 1986a &1986b; Lindenbaum, 1987; V. Mitchell, 1988). Merger is generally understood as an extreme closeness involving some loss of personal boundaries:

> Merged couples have a hard time with separate activities....Decisions to do anything independently are difficult to make *and* to actualize. There is a strong desire to be close emotionally at all times and to have almost identical interests, values, and ideas. These tendencies are most noticeable in decisions over the issue of time: when to spend time together, when to spend time apart (Elise, 1986b, p. 305).

While many, if not all, intimate relationships, including friendships, probably involve experiences of merger (Karpel, 1976), a prolonged or endur-

ing fusion between partners may ultimately be destructive both to the individual sense of self and to the relationship.

Krestan and Bepko (1980) find fusion to be the major problem which brings lesbian couples to therapy. They argue that fusion is the consequence of the social position of lesbians couples. Women are "trained" to invest deeply in relationships; facing a hostile world, the lesbian couple tends to turn in on itself. Kaufman, Harrison, and Hyde (1984) likewise point to women's socialization and cultural homophobia as determinants of merger. They also argue that the presence of children tends to dilute the intensity of a relationship, and that lesbian relationships are less likely to include children than heterosexual ones. As Elise (1986b) points out, however, the social factors do not suffice as explanation. Gay male couples face the same social hostility, yet merger is not a primary issue in male couples. Indeed, it is the opposite. Male needs for independence can interfere with emotional closeness. Elise also notes the psychoanalytic explanation of merger in lesbian relationships: homosexuality is an indication of "arrested or distorted libidinal and ego development" (see Chapter Two). However, she argues:

> Psychoanalytic theory considers both homosexual women and men to be immature and fixated on the mother. The theory would not account for differences between gay male and lesbian relationships. Gay male couples should be just as merged as are lesbian couples. However, this is not the case (p. 309).

The significant variable seems to be gender, not the social place of homosexual relations nor pre-oedipal pathology. Other observers look to deeper dimensions of female development than socialization as the source of merger between women (Burch,1982, 1985, &1986; Elise,1986a &1986b; Lindenbaum,1987). To understand their analysis of intrapsychic gender

differences, a detour into feminist object-relations theories of women's development is necessary.

Merger and Women's Psychological Development

Chapter Two traced the development of object-relations theory and its implications for gender differences in development. A brief recapitulation is given here. Klein's work in Britain shifted the emphasis from the child's relations (actual and fantasized) with the father to those with the mother, especially the progress of development of whole object relations, which depend upon awareness of separation from the mother. The theory evolved from Klein to Fairbairn to Winnicott in the conception of development as a journey from absolute dependence to relative dependence and on towards independence (Fairbairn, 1941; Winnicott, 1960 &1963). Absolute independence is never achieved, and psychological separation of the child from the mother is also a relative matter. Winnicott writes: "It can be said that with human beings there can be no separation, only a threat of separation" (1970, p. 108). The work of Mahler, et al. (1975) in America stressed the importance of separation from the mother as the cornerstone of mature development. She too acknowledges the relativity of this accomplishment, but always in her work the emphasis is on the necessity of psychological separateness.

In the 1970's many feminist writers questioned the role of gender differences in development of object relations and intrapsychic structure, especially in the dimension of psychological separateness. Chodorow's (1978) study of this issue concluded that girls will inevitably experience more boundary confusion and greater difficulty with differentiation and separation

than boys because of the identity of gender between mother and daughter. It is not only, or not even primarily, the daughter's awareness of this identity, but the mother's, that influences boundary development. The mother's experience of her daughter as more like herself than her son will create a different relationship between them. Because, unlike the son, the daughter does not require differentiation to establish her gender identity, she continues in her sense of oneness with the mother. For her, this means the boundary between self and other remains more permeable.

One consequence of women being the primary parents for most children is this fundamental difference in the psychic structure of boys and girls. This difference will come to bear on the distinction between self and other between partners in adult relationships. It appears that women are more likely to seek a continuing sense of oneness in relationship (Miller, 1984; Surrey, 1985). With male partners that search is not mirrored to the same extent; in fact the male's clearer personal boundaries provide a relationship boundary which both feel. The woman's relational fluidity is both an asset and a liability, granting greater capacity for closeness and attunement on the one hand, but more difficulty with separateness and a sense of "not-me" on the other.

Dinnerstein (1976) argues that men's fear of "sinking back wholly into the helplessness of infancy" (p. 161) engenders a need for dominance and power and an intense fear of merger. Indeed, to some degree the legacy of infancy for all adults is fear of merger. Other feminist reconceptualizations of development address differences in orientation to relationships. Miller (1976) believes that "women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliation and relationships" (p. 83). In a later paper (1984) Miller argues that a woman's self-esteem and sense of

competence are based in emotional connections. Traditional developmental theories are inadequate for women:

> ...the concept of a 'self' as it has come down to us has encouraged a complex series of processes leading to a sense of separateness from others....[T]hese realms delegated to women [tending to relatedness]...have not been incorporated into our perceptions as sources of growth, satisfaction and empowerment (pp. 13-14).

Surrey (1985) envisions "the core self in women" unfolding through mutual empathic processes, never becoming "an isolated or separated autonomous individual." She writes:

> To put it another way, all of us probably feel the need to feel understood or "recognized" by others. It is equally paramount, but not yet emphasized, that women all through their lives feel the need to "understand" the other--indeed desire this as an essential part of their own growth and development, as an essential part of self-worth and the ability to act or empowerment (p. 7).

Gilligan's (1982) study of women's development locates the sense of morality within relatedness to others, not in principles of right and wrong as abstractions. Hancock's (1981) exploration of adult development in women finds developmental milestones in terms of relational events: leaving parental homes, forming adult relationships or enduring disruption of them, and assuming responsibility for the care of others. Looking in the other direction at new infant studies, Silverman (1987) cites research that supports the special significance of attachment for girls. Data on early bonding suggests that even in neonates, "its salience is more compelling for female infants" (p. 315). This research suggests that in females there may be a genetic predisposition toward bonding. In summary, all of these writers are pointing

to the centrality of attachment, care, responsibility, and interdependence as the predominant issues in women's development.

These are the same issues which reverberate in lesbian relationships. This relational-orientation in women's psychology is expressed, for example, in the tendency of lesbians to maintain ties to ex-lovers, a phenomenon not so common in heterosexual relationships. Both the value of attachment per se and the discomfort with separation are manifested here.

To return to the discussion of merger as a phenomenon in lesbian couples, it is a gender-related determinant, some writers have argued, that accounts for women's greater desire for closeness as well as for difficulty with moving out of a merged state (Burch, 1982, 1985, &1986; Elise, 1986a & 1986b; Lindenbaum, 1987). The negative consequences of merging within a relationship, the difficulty of knowing who one is apart from the other, can be seen in loss of sexual expression, difficulty with autonomous functioning, perpetual conflict between the partners (in an effort to differentiate), or even the dissolution of the relationship. A flexible merger in a lesbian relationship may nevertheless have some positive aspects (Burch, 1985). The continuing tension between merger and separateness as each partner contends with her own fears of and desires for merger extends the process of differentiation; that is, this struggle may contribute to the developmental journey. For this to occur, a woman must become aware of both sides of the polarity within herself.

In a discussion of heterosexual relationships that also draws from both psychodynamic and system theories, Karpel (1976) makes some distinctions that are useful here. As a couple moves from a relatively fused state to an "ambivalently fused" one (a progressive move on the way to greater differ-

entiation), the stress of the change destabilizes the relationship. Different couples use different relational strategies in response to these changes: a) one partner distances; b) both partners alternately distance; c) both partners move through cycles of fusion and unrelatedness; and d) the partners are engaged in continual conflict. All of these patterns reflect an underlying ambivalently maintained merger.

When one of these patterns becomes a fixture of the relationship, its effects are destructive. A common pattern which lesbian couples present in therapy is like Karpel's first category (a): one partner pursues closeness, the other pursues boundaries (Burch, 1986). In their respective stances each feels unable to move. Two closely-related functions of this polarizing can be distinguished. First, we can understand the phenomenon in terms of projective identification (see Chapter Six). Each disowns one aspect of her own needs, either for closeness or distance, and projects it onto her lover, who identifies with the projection and "carries" it for both of them. The positions of the two partners may be incorrectly perceived as representing an unchanging need in the partner for closeness or distance. Instead it is an enduring state of projective identification between the two women in which, as Ogden (1982) describes it, an interpersonal press is exerted to induce the one to experience the disavowed feelings of the other. Each partner is expressing not only her own need for closeness (or distance), but her partner's need for the same as well; the partner no longer experiences this need as her own.

Although complementary relationships may be established through projective identification, this enduring state of merger is a defensive use of projective identification in which part of the self is thoroughly disowned and the ego feels depleted (see Chapters Six and Seven). If the two partners are

able to tolerate such polarizing and begin to reown the lost parts of the self, something transformative for each may occur in the process. This is where therapy is of help. In fact, the transformational power of therapy often relies upon this process. On the other hand, the partners may be unable to contain each other's projections and begin to act them out in ways destructive to the relationship. Rather than the drawing together of opposites in a complementary fashion, we find an antagonism which may lead to dissolution of the relationship. Polarizing tends to render differences more extreme; they may eventually become so extreme that a repelling force is generated.

Looking at this ambivalent merger pattern in a slightly different way, we find a reflection of the need for differentiation within connectedness which is an essential aspect of female development (as suggested by feminist object-relations theory). The gender sameness of lesbian couples invites an illusion of a more total sameness between the partners. And because both are women, the desire for oneness and fear of its regressive pull creates dynamic tension. Differences, real or projectively created, may be threatening, but they are also pursued. It is a complex experience, one that is not easily untangled (cf. Burch, 1985). The issue of differences in underlying sexual orientation is not addressed in studies of lesbian relationships. We may wonder whether a relationship between two women of different orientations would show differences in the pull toward or resolution of merger.

Krieger (1982 &1983) described the social manifestation of merger in the larger lesbian community as well. The community serves as a haven for lesbians within an often unfriendly world. It sanctions the social different-ness of lesbianism. Yet the community may demand a uniformity of values

and identity that undercuts the individual's need for personal identity. Ponse's (1978) study of a lesbian community also noted the expectation of conformity within the group. Krieger questions: "What happens to female identity in an all-female society or, more broadly, what happens to the individual in a community of likeness?" (1982, p. 106).

In a critical commentary on Krieger's (and others') analysis of the problems of merger and the question of closeness in lesbian relationships, Bristow & Plearn (1984) argue for a different perspective. In response to Krieger, they write:

> We suggest that fusion in a couple context has little to do with lesbian identity; rather, it is a heterosexist, male-defined concept. Fusion more accurately describes male-female relationships, in which part of the patriarchal plan is female subjugation to male identity....The distinction between friends and lovers, for example, is heterosexually inspired and more descriptive of heterosexual than lesbian relationships. In the lesbian community, boundaries between romantic attachments and friendships are less well defined, affectionate bonding is common and valued, and the challenge of maintaining friendships with ex-lovers is supported. In addition to asking, 'What happens...to identity when so much that is consequential is hastened over and merged?' ([Krieger, 1982], p. 107), we might also ask, "What happens to identity when our bonds with other women weather the comings and goings of intimate involvement?" (p. 730).

This concern with applying concepts from heterosexual relationships directly to lesbian relationships is echoed by others (see below) and is part of an on-going struggle to understand what characterizes a healthy lesbian relationship.

V. Mitchell (1988) also offers a positive view of the role of merger between lesbians. Using Kohut's (1971) self psychology she begins with "the premise that all important relationships derive their importance from permeability of the boundaries of the self so that the loved object is included within as a selfobject, performing important *intra* personal functions." Because lesbian relationships may value and seek more closeness than other relationships, she argues, theories of lesbian dynamics must allow for this difference:

> Researchers and clinicians interested in lesbian relationships need a conceptual language and psychological theory that are compatible with the strong relational values and expectations of lesbian clients and research subjects....an over-emphasis on the need for autonomy and separateness can carry an implicit devaluing of lesbian relationships altogether....The ability to open the boundaries of the self, in this theory, is far from pathological. Rather, it is seen as the basis for profound relationship and the necessary condition for psychological growth (pp. 164-5).

Adults continue in their needs for mirroring and idealizing beyond childhood (Kohut, 1971). Mitchell argues that a relationship based on flexible merger allows the partners to provide these functions for each other. The emphasis is on the flexibility of merging, not on separateness per se. A particular kind of complementarity is generated here, with mutual mirroring and idealization of each other. Mitchell is addressing the function of this complementarity in maintenance of the relationship. She does not ask in what way the potential for this mutuality may be intuited and provide a basis for object choice, but we may wonder if this sort of intuitive choice occurs.

Some empirical support for the notion that merging between women is not inherently pathological, but may even enhance development, is found in a study by J. Berzon (1988). She is concerned with friendships between

heterosexual women, not lesbians in a sexual/romantic relationship. Berzon selected women who had high scores on the Loevinger ego development scales, a measure of adult ego development, and who also had a very close and highly-valued relationship with another woman. She found that the women who obtained the highest scores, indicating highly developed autonomous functioning, were also the women who reported the most intense experiences of merger or threatened loss of identity in the relationship with their best friend. These findings throw into question the assumption that merging is antithetical to autonomy or mature development. Berzon notes:

> Empathy and access to the deepest inner experiences of others requires a high level of self differentiation. Traditional theories which have held that finding oneself means moving away from others do not fully account for adult women's experiences of empathy and connectedness....Such temporary losses of self need to be understood not as regressive or pathological losses, but as potential articulations of the self in the context of an intimate other (pp.14-16).

It is important, however, to note that Berzon also emphasizes the temporary nature of this progressive merger.

Person (1988) writes:

> But the exaltation of love is most of all attributable to the new expanded sense of self that results when two separate beings come together as one. In large measure, exaltation is made possible by the lovers' periodic achievement of "merger," with its sense of release from the burdens of the self, the immersion in something larger than self....the usual ego defenses are less rigidly maintained. Furthermore, the influence of earlier experiences may be mitigated or changed and new resolutions to old conflicts achieved so that the lover has less of a stake in maintaining those defenses. This overall lessening of defensiveness allows for a flux in personality that permits a creative

> synthesis, a rediscovery of buried parts of the self, and these may in turn be incorporated with newly developed parts of the self (p. 129).

Further Themes

A few other studies are also relevant. Peplau, Cochran, Rook, & Padesky (1978) investigated lesbians' values concerning attachment and autonomy in relationships. Using questionnaires from 127 subjects, they found these values were not necessarily mutually exclusive; they are "not polar opposites, but rather are independent dimensions." Further, while high valuing of attachment cut across demographic factors, higher autonomy concerns were indicated in younger women. We may wonder whether this reflects a developmental need or perhaps whether it is a consequence of changing norms of female development, with autonomy more highly valued in younger generations. High levels of satisfaction with their current relationship were expressed by 75% of the women. Virtually all women valued both intimate self-disclosure and a balance of power in the relationship.

McCandlish (1982), in a clinical study of problems in lesbian relationships, also noted the value placed on intimacy, communication, and open expression. She too cautions against misunderstanding the high level of closeness desired between lesbians: "Traditional therapists see these difficulties as indicative of intrapsychic problems. Yet, to a great extent these issues are characteristic of normal lesbian relationships" (p. 78). Roth (1985) is another clinician who observes the same quality of closeness in lesbian couples, sometimes accompanied by "periods of extreme and unbreachable distance, in part a response to a fear of loss of self, or fusion" (p. 274). She also discusses problems arising from identity differences, where one partner is less

comfortable with a lesbian identity, arousing feelings of alienation or rejection in the other.

Another paper on lesbians who have difficulty with intimacy in their relationships offers an analysis of problems with dependency, nurturance, and concerns about the balance of power within the relationship (Burch, 1987). It is again the female matrix of development, the mother-daughter bond itself, that gives these issues their emotional charge and makes them so threatening to both partners. Based on clinical observations and feminist object-relations theory (Dinnerstein, 1976; Chodorow, 1978; & Flax, 1978), the analysis again points both to the attractions of female bonding and the fears of being subsumed once more into intrapsychic struggles with the internalized mother-figure.

Two book-length studies, primarily sociological, address non-dynamic aspects of lesbian relationships. Tanner (1978) conducted individual interviews with 12 couples. She offers a descriptive study covering such issues as division of labor and roles, how money is handled, and the couple's relationship to both the gay community and the larger heterosexual society. Her work uses a behavioral perspective and offers little insight into relationship dynamics.

Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) led a large scale study of four kinds of cohabiting couples: married heterosexuals, unmarried heterosexuals, gay males, and lesbians. Their results point to some of the ways lesbians differ from other couples. Lesbians are the most relationship-centered couples and are most likely to spend their leisure time together. This seems to correspond with the earlier discussion about lesbian relationships: closeness is a primary desire of many lesbian couples. Lesbian relationships show greater equality of

power between the partners regardless of differences in income, work, physical attractiveness.

In sexual matters lesbians are most like other (heterosexual) women in the study and least like gay men. Sex frequently declines with the longevity of the relationship for all types of couples, but more so for lesbians. The researchers believe this is a result of all women's generally stronger inhibitions about sex and of their greater discomfort with aggressiveness in sex.

> In heterosexual couples, initiating sex is usually left to men. Should we therefore expect lesbians to be uncomfortbale with taking the lead? And find gay men ready and able? Our interviews tell us that this is the case. We feel that many lesbians are not comfortable in the role of sexual aggressor and it is a major reason why they have sex less often than other kinds of couples (p. 214).

Blumstein and Schwartz call kissing "the height of intimacy" and note that kissing is more consistent among lesbians regardless of other sexual dimensions. Possessiveness seems to be equally common to all but gay male couples. Lesbians are about as monogamous as other women: in 2-10 year relationships, nonmonagamy was practiced by 13% of wives, 20% of cohabiting heterosexual women, and 19% of lesbians. Again these findings indicate that somewhat different norms pertain to lesbian couples and that this difference is based at least in part on gender.

Role-playing and Complementarity

A final issue to be addressed concerning lesbian couples is previous conceptions of complementarity in lesbian relationships. The early sexologists viewed polarities primarily in terms of gender confusion and deviant sex-role behavior. A passage by Ellis (1928), quoted at length in Chapter One,

argues that lesbians come in two types who are then attracted to each other: there is the "womanly" lesbian who may not be quite successful in the heterosexual world and therefore is open to the advances of the "true invert", and there is the "true invert", a more masculine lesbian whose masculinity is defined not by appearance but simply by the fact that she makes advances toward other women. Contradictorily, however, Ellis does also frequently associate the true lesbian with transvestitism.

Again, his distinction rests upon behavioral dimensions of activity and passivity which he invariably equates with masculinity and femininity. The dimension which actually seems to underlie Ellis' distinction of two kinds of lesbians is orientation toward relationships with men. One group of lesbians (the "true invert") has no real interest in heterosexuality, while women in the other group may be involved with men at some point in their lives. For the second group, he assumed in spite of his own evidence to the contrary, that these women were lesbian by default. They would prefer to be with men, but are not quite successful in the heterosexual world. He states that they are not necessarily unattractive, but their lack of interest in men makes them uninteresting to men; because they are uninteresting to men, they are receptive to women! The circularity of thought here obscures his own evidence that many of these women obviously preferred to be with women. Some of them left heterosexual situations to be with women. He also ignores the economic reality for women of his time which served as a social force propelling women into marriages; thus heterosexuality itself was not necessarily a matter of choice. In other words, he seems to have observed the same difference between lesbians as the present study observes, but instead

inaccurately categorized the two groups on the basis of gender identity (see Chapter Seven for further discussion of Ellis' studies).

Katz (1976), Faderman (1978), and Jeffreys (1985) have noted the popularity and influence of Ellis' ideas. These ideas became a powerful repressive force against lesbian relationships and against deviant sex-role behavior of women in general. Echoes of Ellis' ideas persisted in popular sensationalized novels and confessional magazines for decades (Faderman, 1978). We can see many of the stereotypes of lesbians which still exist in popular culture today in the "authoritative" description by Ellis. Ironically, as noted in Chapter Three, some women used his conceptions of lesbian relationships to establish the sexual nature of their relationships with other women by openly cross-dressing.

Certain psychoanalysts in the 40's and 50's, notably Bergler (1957) and Caprio (1954), continued to disseminate these ideas (cf. Katz, 1976). They saw lesbian relationships as commonly involving role-playing which mimicked heterosexual relationships. Within the gay community these roles were identified as "butch" and "femme" and sometimes adopted as a relational style. More recent researchers and writers, many of them gay, consistently find true role playing to characterize only a small minority of lesbians (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Jay & Young, 1977; Tanner, 1978; Lewis, 1979; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Another group of studies finds that lesbians are most satisfied in their relationships where equality prevails: relationships are most desired when the partners share equal power, decision-making is mutual, and there is an absence of roles (Marecek, Finn, & Cardell, 1982; Peplau, Padesky, & Hamilton, 1982; Caldwell & Peplau, 1984; Lynch & Reilly, 1985/6). Some (Lewis, 1979; Grahn, 1984) have noted that role-playing was

more common in the 30's, 40's, and 50's, but that even then roles might be interchanged. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) offer this analysis of the rise and decline of role-playing among gay couples:

> It is our impression that homosexual couples went through the familial fifties right along with the rest of the country. At a time when traditional assumptions about sex roles in marriage remained unchallenged (husband as protector and provider, wife as homemaker and nurturer), many gay and lesbian couples fell into a pattern of role playing....How prominent or widespread these patterns were among lesbians and gay men in the 1950's and earlier is impossible for us to know because of the lack of research, but it is probably true that they were more common when gender roles were more rigidly adhered to by everyone (p. 44).

Others have found contemporary role-playing, when it exists, primarily limited to an initial period in the coming out process, i.e., a way to establish identity (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Stanley & Wolfe, 1980; Grahn, 1984). Still others have suggested it to be a sexual matter for some lesbians: role-playing as an enhancement of sex, but not characterizing other aspects of the relationship (Hollibaugh & Moraga, 1983; Nestle, 1984). (Heterosexual couples may similarly exaggerate gender roles for sexual enhancement.) Feminist ideology has largely opposed role-playing, and feminist lesbians often have criticized lesbians who participated in roles or power differences in sexual or other aspects of their relationships (cf. Vance, 1983; Snitow, Stansell, & Thompson, 1984; Grahn, 1984; Wilson, 1984; Nichols, 1987). Some of these authors suggest that feminist ideology has stifled what may be a vital dimension of lesbian relationships: the possibility for creative exploration and play with gender-defined experiences. Chapter Eight addresses this issue more fully.

This review of the literature indicates the scope of current understanding of lesbian relationships. It is clear that many lesbians find satisfaction and fulfillment in their relationshis, contrary to the doomed portrait drawn by traditional psychoanalysts. Recurring themes are the salience of sameness vs. difference, the tensions between emotional closeness vs. distance, and the potential of lesbian relationships to further the development of the individual. Lesbian relationships are generally more relationship-centered than other kinds of couples. Female psychological development imparts a special vulnerability to merger, which may be both problematic and potentially transformative.

These themes indicate the desire for a partner who will match one's interests and needs but somehow also be an Other. That is, they point to a desire for psychological complementarity. Differences between primary and bisexual lesbians are not addressed by these studies. Exploring the dimensions of complementarity for lesbians requires us to conceive these dimensions in terms meaningful to the culture of lesbianism--which may have similarities to heterosexual and gay men's cultures in some respects and differ from them in others.

Lesbian relationships are a relatively new area of investigation, and many questions remain. For example, what does the presence of children contribute to the bonding, allocation of roles, and relational dynamics in lesbian couples? Do differences in attitudes of the families of origin contribute to the longevity of lesbian relationships? Do the "extended families" of lovers, close friends and ex-lovers survive over the years? How do the boundaries of the primary relationship shift or consolidate through time and in relation to the extended family (both lesbian and family of

origin)? How do lesbian communities change as the social tolerance of homosexuality changes--and how do these community changes affect individuals and couples?

Clearly, much is still to be explored. Person's (1988) study of love relationships repeatedly points to the healing and transformative effects of loving and intimacy: "Love does more than restore; love catalyzes change in the self. Love may be regressive, but it is also progressive, giving direction and content to the maturation of the self" (p. 93). In subsequent chapters this study focuses on the specific nature of unconscious bonding in certain lesbian relationships, those between primary lesbians and bisexual ones. Here, a kind of "progressive" bonding, capable of "catalyzing change," is conceptualized.

CHAPTER SIX:

PROJECTIVE IDENTIFICATION AS A MECHANISM OF COMPLEMENTARITY

> *But here is the paradox that needs explaining: in mutual identification the self is not obliterated, but, strangely enough, enlarged.*
>
> E. S. Person, Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters

To understand complementarity we must look for the sometimes mysterious fit between two partners, that which is often unknown even to the individuals themselves. Psychoanalytic theory offers only a limited exploration of the nature of complementarity in relationships, largely that of the transference-countertransference relationship in an analytic setting. There is some attention to love relationships, but, given its significance in human lives, love and choice of love objects is remarkably unexplored by psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is clear in its belief that the fit ultimately can be traced back to some aspect of the early parent-child relationship of both partners. Freud (1915a) writes: "...love consists of new editions of old traces and...it repeats infantile reactions....[T]his is the essential character of every love. There is no love that does not reproduce infantile prototypes" (p. 387).

In her recent book-length exploration of love, Person (1988) notes:

> Freud's great insight into love was to demonstrate the continuity, despite appearances to the contrary, of the lover's emotional life, and to flesh out the Platonic insight that the union in love is really a reunion.... The enormous power the beloved seems to exert on the lover can in part be explained by the love object having been invested with the mystique of all the lost objects from the past....In love the

> lover regains his lost omnipotence, takes total possession of the beloved and achieves Oedipal victory (p. 114-5).

Not only lost objects are found in the beloved, however; one also re-finds the lost self, or part of the self: "one's love object may also embody some buried aspiration of the self" (p. 116). These elements of re-union are interwoven and sometimes difficult to distinguish. According to Aristophanes' fable in Plato's Symposium (1933), the other is actually a part of the originally-whole self. In psychoanalytic theory, this is somewhat true as well. New objects are loved because they have been invested with qualities of the internal objects of the lover through the mechanism of projection. Thus from the beginning, the distinction between self and other is never absolute.

As Person (1988) and others (Stein, 1956; Bergmann, 1980) have noted, most psychoanalytic studies focus primarily on neurotic or otherwise pathological variations of the bonds of love, an implicit devaluation of passion for its irrational aspects. Love is also transformative however. It is an urge to expand the self, even an impulse toward healing the self. Ross (1975) describes falling in love as like a mystical experience; it is an experience of merger, a crossing of the boundaries between self and other, a regression to an undifferentiated state in which knowing and feeling are again united. This is not a literal return to a symbiotic state but a transient partaking of it, which is both healing and expansive. Through immersion in an other, whether a person or an experience, such as art or religion, "the sense of self is continuously enriched" (p. 91). (See Chapter Five for further discussion of merger.) Person likewise points to the transforming character of love through merger:

> Having transcended the boundaries of the self by identifying with the Other, the lover is empowered beyond the usual, and no longer bound by old patterns, habits, and other rigidities of character. This is one of the reasons that falling in love and achieving mutual love are often accompanied by spurts of energy, growth, and change and by a sense of richness and abundance (p. 122).

Development of the Concept of Projective Identification

Before considering the mechanisms of immersion, projective and introjective identifications, a brief look at the psychoanalytic exploration of the therapeutic relationship affirms that it rests upon the same complementarity as well--a search for new experiences with both the self and the other, ultimately arising out of early object relationships. Transference of these early object relationships onto the present one reveals their highly individualistic character. In "The Dynamics of Transference" (1912) Freud points out that

> ...every human being has acquired, by the combined operation of inherent disposition and of external influences in childhood, a special individuality in the exercise of his capacity to love....As we should expect, this accumulation of libido will be attached to prototypes, bound up with one of the cliches already established in the mind of the person concerned, or, to put it another way, the patient will weave the figure of the physician into one of the "series" already constructed in his mind (pp. 312-3).

Countertransference occurs through the human capacity to partake of complex communicative processes on an unconscious level: "the basic assumption is that the analyst's unconscious understands that of his patient" (Heimann, 1950). The earliest and most narrow views of countertransference interpreted it as the analyst's own unresolved conflicts which in effect draw

the patient into the analyst's unconscious and are largely an obstacle to treatment. Langs (1981) notes that classical Freudian analysts have made few contributions to understanding countertransference because they held to this restrictive position:

> By contrast, the Kleinians, Winnicott and his followers, and a number of classical analysts who have extended the basic Freudian position into the interactional realm--e.g., Searles and myself, have rather courageously investigated what is for many analysts...an anxiety-provoking subject...(p. 138).

Perhaps the fullest expression of the intricacies of the analyst's response is Racker's (1957). In his view the analyst resonates either with the patient's self experience (concordant countertransference) or with the patient's experience of the object (complementary countertransference):

> The concordant identification is based on introjection and projection, or, in other terms, on the resonance of the exterior in the interior, on recognition of what belongs to another as one's own ('this part of you is I') and on the equation of what is one's own with what belongs to another ('this part of me is you'). The processes inherent in the complementary identifications are the same, but they refer to the patient's objects....[They] are produced by the fact that the patient treats the analyst as an internal (projected) object, and in consequence the analyst feels treated as such; that is, he identifies himself with this object (p. 312).

Again, the therapeutic relationship has received more scrutiny and has been analyzed more thoroughly than other kinds of relationships. It should not surprise us that this is so; after all, analysts have immediate access to this relationship in a way that they do not have access to others. Even the love relationships of the analysand are once-removed and are often known best through their vicarious manifestations in the therapeutic relationship. It is

only in analyses of the therapeutic relationship that we get a detailed look at both sides of a relationship. Racker (1957) notes that the parent-child relationship is studied almost exclusively from the child's perspective and that the originally-sparse investigation of countertransference paralleled this neglect. He attributes the oversight to analysts' continued unresolved idealizations of their own parental figures.

In both love relationships and therapeutic ones, the important mechanism of linkage between the unconscious of each partner, that which creates and helps sustain the bond between the two, is identification of one kind or another (introjective or projective). A brief review of the development of these concepts will help to ground their meaning in this context. As Knight (1940) notes, identification is probably used with more different meanings than any other psychoanalytic term. He attempts to clarify definitions:

> Introjection seems to be...equivalent to and synonymous with incorporation and may be defined as an unconscious inclusion of an object or part of an object into the ego of the subject....Projection may be defined as a method whereby the subject attributes his own unacceptable unconscious tendencies to an object and then perceives them as tendencies possessed by the object (pp. 334-5).

His work antedates the first use of the term projective identification per se (by Klein in 1946), but he argues that identification is the result of introjection or projection, rather than an activity in itself.

In "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915b), Freud theorized that the infantile ego distinguishes between inner and outer reality through the activity of the instincts: stimuli which can be removed through motor activity belong to the external world, those which cannot belong to the inter-

nal world. The reality-oriented ego becomes pleasure-oriented, however, and introjection and projection begin. Pleasurable aspects of the external world are incorporated, while painful ones in the internal world are expelled. The distinction between inner and outer becomes blurred.

In other papers Freud also noted the use of projection as a defense, but he did not develop the concept of projective identification as we now understand it. His concern with identification was largely limited to the introjective kind, the incorporation and ultimate assimilation of the object into the ego, explored in "Mourning and Melancholy" (1917), and in the formation of the superego (1923a). He did suggest the mechanism of projective identification, however, without explicit use of the term. In "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1921), he writes that "A path leads from identification by way of imitation to empathy, that is, to the comprehension of the mechanism by means of which we are enabled to take up any attitude at all towards another mental life" (p.110, n.2). More specifically, he differentiates between identification of the ego with an object by introjection and putting the object in place of the ego ideal and subsequently identifying with it. In this case, he states (anticipating Klein's formulation), the ego is impoverished; "it has surrendered itself to the object" rather than having "enriched itself with the properties of the object" as in introjective identification (p. 113).

In "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms" (1946) Melanie Klein first named the process of projective identification and distinguished it from simple projection. In another paper written during the same period but published later, Klein (1952) wrote:

> In these various phantasies the ego takes possession by projection of an external object--first of all the mother--and makes it into an extension of the self. The object becomes to some extent a representative of the ego, and these processes are in my view the basis for identification by projection or 'projective identification'. Identification by introjection and identification by projection appear to be complementary processes (pp. 68-9).

Klein was intensely concerned with introjection and projection, as well as splitting, in early development, believing these to be the basic means by which infants form connections with external objects (projection) and build intrapsychic structure through continually modifying internal objects (introjection). The necessity to rid the ego of aggressive impulses and then to control the objects of these projections lead the infantile ego into a continual process of exchange between internal and external reality. When projection includes identification of the ego with the object (i.e., projective identification), the ego suffers depletion and new anxieties are created:

> Projective identification is the basis of many anxiety-situations ....The phantasy of forcefully entering the object gives rise to anxieties relating to the dangers threatening the subject from within the object. For example, the impulses to control an object from within it stir up the fear of being controlled and persecuted inside it (1946, p. 11).

However, projection does not always involve aggressive impulses, nor is it always depleting:

> The projection of love-feelings--underlying the process of attaching libido to the object--is, as I suggested, a precondition for finding a good object. The introjection of a good object stimulates the projection of good feelings outwards and this in turn by reintrojection strengthens the feeling of possessing a good internal object (1952, p. 69).

As the ego becomes more integrated, partly through the beneficial effects of the now-internalized good object, projections become more coherent ones rather than fragmented or split-off parts of the self. In "On Identification" Klein (1955) discusses adult processes of projective identification. Some common ground with the object of the projection appears to be necessary, although a sense of commonality is created simultaneously with the projection process. Projective identification may determine object choice in love relationships: the search for the lost ideal self and the lost ideal objects give impetus to projective identifications which then pave the way for falling in love with the object.

A few writers used other terms for the same mechanism. In 1936 Anna Freud (1946) called it "altruistic surrender." Unacceptable id impulses are projected onto another with whom the ego comes to identify. The other person may then be championed in carrying out these impulses. She reports the case of a young woman who projected her sexual and narcissistic desires onto another woman, then felt bonded with this woman and encouraged her friend's enjoyment of suitors and beautiful clothes, with no concern for her own happiness. This mechanism, Anna Freud wrote, enables "us to form valuable positive attachments and so to consolidate our relations with one another" (p.133.)

Wangh's paper, "The 'Evocation of a Proxy'" (1962), continues the development of the concept by describing how the subject induces the object to identify with the projection and thus to carry out the subject's disowned impulses. He draws upon Winnicott's conception of transitional relation-ships:

> we are dealing here with a thing, a person, or an image, created and invoked to play a role in the service of the self without any regard for the object involved. Residues of transitional object relationships persist normally throughout life (p. 453).

Of particular interest to this study, he notes that evocation of a proxy is a universal phenomenon and is especially likely among couples.

Jaques (1955) applies the concept to social institutions. Through projective identification, individuals externalize "those impulses and internal objects that would otherwise give rise to psychotic anxiety, and pool them in the life of the social institutions in which they associate" (p. 479). Individuals are bound into cohesive groups in the church, the state, the army, business corporations, labor unions, etc. through this mechanism.

Several analysts from the Kleinian tradition employed the concept of projective identification to explain the unconscious communication between patient and therapist. Racker (1957) describes the workings of complementary countertransference this way: "complementary identifications are produced by the fact that the patient treats the analyst as an internal (projected) object, and in consequence the analyst feels treated as such; that is, he identifies himself with this object" (p. 312). Here again is the idea that the subject induces the object to experience him or herself according to the projection, creating a one-way complementary relationship.

Grinberg (1962) uses the term projective counter-identification to describe the analyst's unconscious response to "excessive" projective identification by the patient. When the process is not apprehended by the analyst, he or she behaves as if he or she had "really and concretely" acquired or assimilated the projected aspects and plays out the assigned role: "In certain cases, the analyst may have the feeling of being no longer his own self and of unavoidably

becoming transformed into the object which the patient, unconsciously, wanted him to be" (p. 437).

Malin and Grotstein (1966) expand the concept by insisting that there is no real distinction between projection and projective identification. Projection always carries with it some measure of identifying with the object of the projection, and identification always involves some projection:

> ...we must tentatively project out a part of our inner psychic contents in order to be receptive to the object for introjection and subsequently to form an identification with it. When we start with the projection it is necessary that there be some process of identification or internalization in general, or else we can never be aware of the projection. That is, what is projected would be lost like a satellite rocketed out of the gravitational pull of the earth. Eventually all contact with the satellite will be lost (p. 27).

Knight (1940) suggested this same point earlier, arguing that introjection and projection are always a part of identification, and vice-versa. Grotstein takes up this argument at length in his book (1981).

Malin and Grotstein (1966) also stress that projective identification is both a defense and "a way of relating to objects," that it is part of mature as well as infantile relating. They use the transference-countertransference paradigm to illustrate how these processes are intrinsic to intrapsychic growth and development:

> If we accept a broad view of transference to include all object relations... then we are stating that all object relations and all transference phenomena are examples, at least in part, of projective identification....We suggest, moreover, that this method of projecting one's inner psychic contents into external objects and then perceiving the response of these external objects and introjecting this response on

> a new level of integration is the way in which the human organism grows psychically, nurtured by his environment (p. 28).

Langs' concern with the interactive elements of the therapeutic relationship emphasizes projective mechanisms. He suggests that treatment affords a great opportunity for the analyst to project sick parts of his or her own psyche into the patient--both to disown them and to work them over. This opportunitiy, he notes, is one of the unconscious attractions which the profession may hold for an individual (1976a, p. 547). He also finds projective identification to be both a mechanism of defense and of healing:

> This process may be utilized in the presence of relatively fluid self-object boundaries, or in the setting of secure self-object differentiation; it has both primitive and more structured forms. It may be based on pathological needs and motives or nonpathological ones, especially those with curative intentions (1976a, p. 575).

In The Bipersonal Field (1976b) Langs makes other important points. The recipient of the projection is not simply passive, but may either invite it or communicate reluctance to accept it. Unlike Malin and Grotstein, he insists on the distinction between projection and projective identification: the first lacks interactional intentions, while the latter is implicitly interactional and involves an effort by the subject to evoke the complementary identification in the object. Here we begin to see some of the confusion about the term "identification" in this process. Some writers stress the subject's continuing identification with the contents of the projection, and thus with the object, while others imply that it is the object's identification with the contents that defines the mechanism.

Ogden's book Projective Identifications and Psychotherapeutic Technique (1978) addresses these points. He is clear that the object of the projection is identified with the contents of it:

> Projective identification is a concept that addresses the way in which feeling states of one person (the projector) are engendered in and processed by another person (the recipient), that is, the way in which one person makes use of another person to experience and contain an aspect of himself (p.1).

There is always some kind of interaction between the two in which the recipient is pressed "to engage in identification with a specific, disowned aspect of the projector" (p. 2). Like some of his predecessors, he is especially interested in the transformative effects of projective identification. When the recipient accepts the projection, the contents may be changed in some way: e.g., the recipient is able to assimilate the projector's unwanted feelings and handle them in a new, more constructive way. This response of the recipient is then introjected by the original projector, but the feelings have been changed into something manageable. The new capacity for dealing with difficult internal states is acquired along with the transformed feelings.

Ogden (1978) points to the broad range of functions which projective identification may serve:

> As a defense, projective identification serves to create a sense of psychological distance from unwanted, often frightening aspects of the self. As a mode of communication, projective identification is a process by which feelings congruent with one's own are induced in another person, thereby creating a sense of being understood by or "at one with" the other person. As a type of object relations, projective identification constitutes a way of being with and relating to a partially separate object. Finally as a pathway for psychological change,

> projective identification is a process by which feelings like those that one is struggling with are psychologically processed by another person and made available for reinternalization in an altered form (p. 21).

Grotstein's Splitting and Projective Identification (1981) makes other important points. Again, he argues against a distinction between projection and projective identification, and perhaps in keeping with this perspective, does not emphasize the interactional aspects of the mechanism. He discusses two forms of projective identification: one is a defense and involves disowning the projected material because it is disturbing to the subject; the other is non-defensive and growth enhancing, in which the material is not disowned. This second form is somewhat confusing, and not conceptualized in this way by other authors--if not disowned, is it still an unconscious mechanism? Even more confusing, he calls it "externalization," a term usually referring to defensive disowning of one's participation in some guilt-inducing process. Grotstein seems clear that it is the projector, rather than the recipient, who does the identifying (as is Klein). Influenced both by Klein and Kohut, he believes that the internal objects of Kleinian theory are equivalent to the self-objects in Kohutian theory, and that both are the result of projective identification (pp. 84-5). He uses the image of Siamese twins, partially fused and partially separate, to describe the relatedness of projective identification (p. 214). Like other writers he believes it is a universal phenomenon.

In spite of certain differences between these authors, common principles defining projective identification emerge. Along with introjective identification, it is a primary mechanism of both primitive and mature relating between individuals and in social groups. It is also a primary mechanism of both early and later growth and development. Its effect is to bond individuals

either as couples or within groups through the deep investment one then has with the other who carries part of the self. It reflects an effort to control the other as well. The defensive value of projective identification is well-established, but it also serves to expand the self: while the feature of disowning part of the self in defensive projection depletes the self, the re-introjection of transformed material and acquisition of new capacities also enriches the self.

The major points of disagreement among these writers derive from differences in how the mechanism is conceptualized. The dispute can be expressed in the following questions:

Is the distinction between projection and projective identification accurate?

Is it the projector, the recipient, or both who identify with the contents?

Is the object of the projection also changed by the process?

Projective Identification in Intimate Relationships

Psychoanalytic theory has addressed the nature of complementarity in object choice or in maintaining the bonds of a relationship largely by means of the concept of projective identification. Knight (1940) explains hetero-sexual relationships in terms of transference of the oedipal relationship onto a new object who resembles the old one, that is, who has the attributes of the introjected object. The new object may seem to have these attributes, however, simply because the lover has projected them onto him or her. Further:

> He [the lover] also projects onto her [the beloved] his own femininity and his own wishes and then tries to live up to her imagined expectations of him. A kind of identification is thereby effected through which he is partly in love with himself as he sees himself reflected in his conception of her (p. 340).

In a somewhat different way Murstein (1976) comments that disowned attributes of the self draw one "like a magnet":

> A man may be attracted to a very narcissistic woman because the narcissism which his conscious idealization forces him to renounce continues to pull him unconsciously. A woman may be drawn to a man for the boyish qualities she herself possessed before she had to abandon them for "girl's" behavior (p. 26).

Bergmann (1980) makes the point that the new object must evoke the old, but not too closely: "it must not awaken incestuous guilt" (p. 60). To some extent the love object will reflect an integration of parental object images:

> Each object of infancy demands its own re-finding. There are other tasks of integration which the ego must perform. Bisexuality is a universal human endowment, but individuals differ in the strength of their respective masculine and feminine components, and they seek in the partner a corresponding mixture of the two components (p. 68).

In heterosexual coupling, "feminine wishes in the man and masculine wishes in the woman are projected onto the partner, enhancing one's own gender identity and therefore the boundaries of the self" (p. 74).

This analysis of masculine and feminine projections points to what McDougall (1986a) describes as "one of the greatest narcissistic wounds of childhood... our ineluctable monosexuality" (p. 215). Reality requires the child to accept that he or she can't be both sexes. Such acceptance is traumatic in nature, however, leaving each of us with the consequent "problem of what

to do with our psychic bisexuality." This dilemma plays a vital role in both conscious and unconscious elements of object choice. In lesbian relationships of the kind with which this study is concerned--a life-long lesbian paired with a formerly heterosexual one--the relevance of this problem to object choice has not yet been explored.

Money's (1980) draws an analogy between the lover and the Rorschach ink-blot. With this metaphor he captures the subjectively-defined nature of love partners:

> In many instances, a person does not fall in love with a partner, per se, but with a partner as a Rorschach love-blot. That is to say, the person projects onto the partner an idealized and highly idiosyncratic image that diverges from the image of that partner as perceived by other people (p. 65).

Money goes further: "pair-bonding" is a growth experience, like a religious one, as each partner "accedes to being made over in the image of the other, at least to some degree" (p. 67). Some kind of "complementary cues and collusive signals" are probably necessary ahead of time, cues that indicate a willingness for this exchange. Long-term relationships are created when there is sufficient mutuality in this process. It is this reciprocity of fit that is most important, Money argues. Complementarity is not determined by principles of sameness or difference:

> A long-lasting reciprocal love-match between two partners is one in which there is reciprocally a very close love-blot match. That means there is a very close fit between the actuality of each partner and the love-blot image projected onto him or her by the other partner, and this is a two-way fit. For this high degree of fit to take place, it is irrelevant whether the two partners are replicas or polar opposites of one another in temperament, interests, achievements, or whatever.

> What counts is that they fulfill each the other's ideal in imagery and expectancy, even though neither may be able to spell out this expectancy in words. Over the years, what also counts is that change of imagery and expectancy, it if takes place, is mutual and not one-sided (pp. 67-8).

Person speaks of the ways this conscious and unconscious exchange of roles enriches the loving relationship:

> In idyllic love, the lovers achieve an oscillating balance between giving and receiving, active and passive roles, pleasing and being pleased, enacting the role now of the child, now of the parent. In moving back and forth between these two roles, the lover experiences the vital interests of the beloved as his own, and he values her pleasure and happiness as much as his own. His identification with her is so complete that she assumes an importance commensurate with his own.

Few writers have attempted to be more specific than this. Several clinical papers examine individual relationships in terms of projective bonds between the partners. (The family therapy literature also addresses complementarity, of course, but generally not from a psychoanalytic object-relations perspective.) These papers are concerned with the defensive nature of projections in marital relationships.

Stein (1956) notes how few psychoanalytic studies of marriage exist and suggests that unconscious fantasies of completion of one sort or another play a prominent role in initiating and perpetuating marriages. He focuses on four cases which illustrate one particular type of fantasy: the man's unconscious belief (involving projection) that his wife is his penis, or more generally, an appendage of his body. Stein proposes that the wife may carry a counter-fantasy--"I am my husband's penis"--but he gives no evidence of this. The projection, or "girl-phallus equation," binds the marriage, giving greater

force to "the adhesive character of the marital bond." He speculates that this may even be a universal fantasy, and in abusive marriages it may be especially powerful.

The theoretical work on marital relationships developed by the Tavistock Clinic in London, especially in the 60's, drew upon British psychoanalytic theory (object relations theory) and examined how projective identification may provide a marital bond. Social workers were among the first to apply these principles to clinical work with couples. A 1963 paper by Huneeus describes the partners of a couple relationship as "the two halves of a whole...the parts of one partner's personality that he does not recognize are projected onto the other partner, who acts them out and expresses them" (p. 142). She explores a case in which the wife carries the husband's harsh superego and depression, while the husband carries the role of the wife's rejecting mother. This process is one of growth as well as defense: "The projected part of oneself can appear less destructive and frightening when it is experienced in someone else. Consequently, projection facilitates one's acceptance of his feared attributes" (p. 143).

Ellis (1964) refers to this mechanism as "unconscious collusion" in a relationship. Through projective identification one partner lives out some part of the other's reality, often from a pathological perspective, but the collusive interaction may be benevolent and have a positive effect on both partners. The potential of a relationship to serve this function may determine object choice, with an underlying urge toward growth and health:

> Projective identification often forms the basis of a kind of unconscious wisdom in choosing a marital partner. It reflects the marital partners'

> efforts to make contact with the unrecognized, disowned characteristics that they have projected onto each other (p. 79).

A recent paper by Crisp (1988) returns to the Tavistock approach. Like the others, she argues that complementarity is both discovered and created through projective identification. Each partner hopes to find something of himself or herself in the other, especially unconscious or disowned parts of the self. The projections may involve splitting along dimensions of the good and bad self or active and passive elements. She notes that "the issue of complementarity as oppositional conflict versus a positive state of balance" (p. 401) remains to be explored.

In summary, the psychoanalytic conceptualization of object choice and complementarity through projection and introjection has a long history. Support for this concept has largely been found in clinical work, however. Murstein's (1976) review of research data reveals that it gives scant support even for the idea that object choice is determined by the nature of the oedipal object. But, as he points out, this research has mostly been conducted by psychologists and sociologists, not psychoanalysts or clinicians. They have tended to focus on objective criteria, such as age, appearance, or reported personality traits, factors which may have little to do with the internalized objects of introjection and projection.

> It is in interpersonal exchanges--intimate conversations, the therapeutic dialogue, and the intersubjective approach of qualitative research--that the unconscious roots in the past make their appearance: How are we to be so sure that in forward-looking love, the lover is also looking back? Searching for and re-finding the lost "object" is a process which oftentimes leaves visible residues in the series of adult love dialogues. The subjective experience of re-finding is part of happy love; it is revealed in the lover's words: "I feel as though I've always

> known you." The sense of refinding is probably the unconscious source of the lover's belief in elective affinities, marriages preordained in heaven, destiny fulfilled. "We were made for each other" is how it's usually expressed (p. 116).

Because most analyses of projective exchanges between partners come out of clinical experience, they focus on defensive or pathological manifestations. What is largely missing in this literature is an understanding of how projective exchanges work in positive ways: how they attract and hold partners to each other in ways that promote growth and development. These theorists who have written about projective identification invariably point out its transformative capacity, yet the idea has been put to little use in thinking about what Person (1988) calls "good love." The concept is ripe with possibilities for further exploration. This study develops such an analysis for a lesbian relationship.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

UNCONSCIOUS COMPLEMENTARITY IN LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS

Love is an affirmation of who one already is , yet at the same time one uses it to escape to a new self.

E. S Person, Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters

We return now to the question of complementarity in certain lesbian relationships with more pieces of the puzzle in hand. These pieces consist of an enlarged understanding of possible intrapsychic configurations in lesbian orientation, the interplay of internal and external experience on development of lesbian identity, and the role of projective identification in creating and maintaining complementarity in intimate relationships. A brief review of these pieces will set the stage for a new analysis of the issue.

First, differences in lesbian orientation such as that between the so-called primary lesbian and the previously heterosexual one reflect intrapsychic differences. For the primary lesbian, her basic orientation is toward women as love objects, with men as potential objects much further in the background, either repressed or relatively undeveloped. For the later-emerging lesbian (Ponse's "elective" lesbian), the fundamental intrapsychic position is bisexual. Both men and women may be objects of erotic interest, but the balance has tipped toward women as partners. Why the balance has shifted in this direction is idiosyncratic for the individual woman. No one explanation suffices, and a combination of intrapsychic and situational circumstances in later life may play their parts. The important point here is

that the woman's internal and external experiences include both women and men as love objects.

Second, there is the influence of social experience interacting with developing identity. This includes the important element of sense of self as more "different" or more "normal." The primary lesbian knows herself to be different from the dominant culture and has suffered to some degree from the stigma of deviance. The bisexual lesbian has a foothold in both worlds; she has experienced "normal" heterosexuality and now moves into "deviancy."

There is also the question of differences in gender identification. Again, this is not a matter of core gender identity, but that more socially-deter-mined sense of self as masculine, feminine, or androgynous; as Money (1980) defines it: a sense of "one's individuality as male, female, or ambivalent, in greater or lesser degree, especially as it is experienced in self-awareness and behavior" (p. 214). Thus it is a largely conscious sense of self in cultural terms. This question will be addressed in Chapter Eight.

These polarities or differences constitute a potential basis for complementarity in relationships between women who embody them. They may be positively valued, negatively valued, or ambivalently valued. The unconscious exchange between partners in intimate relating will likely include these dimensions. The concept of projective identification provides the mechanism through which this relational exchange occurs. The previous chapter detailed the growth of this concept in psychoanalytic theory and pointed to the need for further development of its application to a broad, rather than strictly defensive, understanding of projective and introjective

bonds in all human relationships. This chapter continues to explore this essential understanding.

Unconscious Communication in Relationships

We might ask what we need from a concept of complementarity. It is obvious, perhaps, that we need some way to understand why one individual is drawn to a particular other individual, male or female--why one invites intimacy with a relative stranger, allowing an unpredictable other, an apparently unknown entity, to enter one's deepest psychic and emotional life. Intimacy gives access to one's essential vulnerability in ways that are inevitably filled with risk. What need or desire impels individuals to take such risks, often again and again in spite of painful experience and failed hopes?

Object relations theory answers this question by positing that the nature of the human psyche is inherently object-seeking (Fairbairn, 1946), not pleasure-seeking, as Freud proposed. The need for relatedness to others is built into the organism, so to speak, and all growth and development takes place in the context of object relating. Pathological consequences are understood to arise from the failure, or absence, of the object. Indeed, as Green (1975) argues, here it is relating to the absence of the object which defines development.

Further, it is not simply the object which is important, but the relationship between self and object. The link between the two is itself the arena for development. This abstraction leads us to Winnicott's (1971) idea of "potential space:"

> It is useful, then, to think of a third area of human living, one neither inside the individual nor outside in the world of shared reality. This

> intermediate living can be thought of as occupying a potential space, negating the idea of space and separation (p. 110).

Potential space is a hypothetical area created between the self and object, characterized by imaginative elaboration (or "playing" as Winnicott calls it), in which the boundary between "me" and "not-me" is transcended. This is the space of transitional phenomena, the intermediary between self and other, created by the self, but only with the cooperation of the other. Here unconscious illusion exists without the interference of reality.

This psychic dimension is important in adult relating which transcends the constraints of reality, especially that of separateness:

> The potential space is thus the place where meaningful communication takes place. It is the common ground in affectionate relationships.... Here communication comes about through "mutuality in experience" or the overlap of potential spaces (Davis & Wallbridge, 1981, p. 65).

The link between self and other then is the area of expansion of the self, the means, perhaps the primary means, by which growth and development occur. Here one can imaginatively take on (and finally take in) new dimensions of reality, such as separation (in Winnicott's [1951] original conception of transitional objects) or the existence of new objects (in Ogden's [1987] conception of female oedipal experience). In other words internal reality itself enlarges.

Wangh (1962) describes the use ("no doubt...universal") of transitional objects in adult relationships. The individual evokes in the other a proxy who will carry unaccepted parts of the self. These "omnipotent self-extensions" are strictly a defensive strategy in Wangh's analysis. His use of Winnicott's concept of transitional objects converges with Klein's concept of

projective identification. (Wangh does not use the term projective identification, perhaps because he follows Anna Freud's conception of "altruistic surrender" rather than Klein's concept, but he discusses the projective and introjective mechanisms involved in creating this "transitional object.") Because he addresses the phenomenon only as a defensive one, however, he fails to consider its more benign manifestations.

Green (1975), a follower of Winnicott, offers a complex exploration of the formation of the "analytic object" in treatment. He notes that "in the phrase 'object relation' the word 'relation' is the more important one": "In other words, the study of relations is that of the links rather than that of the terms united by them" (p. 11). In the analytic setting the process between patient and analyst creates a "double" of the other in each--the analytic object:

> ...when the work of analysis compels the analyst to make great efforts, which lead him to form a picture in his mind of the patient's mental functioning, he supplies what is missing in the patient. I have said that he replaced the part which is missing...through observing homologous processes in himself. But the real analytic object is neither on the patient's side nor on the analyst's, but in the meeting of these two communications in the potential space which lies between them....If we consider that each party present, the patient and the analyst, is composed of the union of two parts (what they live and what they communicate), one of which is the double of the other...one can see that the analytic object is formed of two doubles, one belonging to the patient and the other to the analyst.... For, in order to have a formation of an analytic object, an essential condition is the establishment of homologous and complementary relations between the patient and the analyst....From this point of view the analyst does not only unveil a hidden meaning. He constructs a meaning which has never been created before the analytic relationship began (p. 12).

Here Green finds the original meaning of the word "symbolic." A symbol is "'an object cut in two constituting a sign of recognition when those who carry it can assemble the two pieces'" (p. 12). His concept of the analytic object can be extended to a different kind of "object" in ordinary relating, again that of relationship itself or what may exist only within it. Intimate relationships parallel analytic ones in that they create a new space which contains meanings that did not exist before. The relationship itself is an imaginative extension of self into other and other into self, creating a double of each individual. There is the "you" I both apprehend and create, the "you" I relate to, who is different from the "you" you experience yourself to be. There is the "me" you apprehend, create, and relate to, who is different from the me I know. I can partake of this "me" through you, and vice-versa. This is one of the meanings of the idea that through relationship with an Other, one finds oneself. This other "you" and other "me" may contain what has been lost to each of us about ourselves, is unconscious or even inchoate. In other words, this is the area of projective and introjective identifications.

Of course, this different "me" may not be one I can relate to or partake of. It may contain perceptions of me which I resist experiencing. It may seem not to be me at all, but simply more of you. That is, it may be too entirely a product of your own projection of self. On the other hand, your projections of yourself onto this "me" may contain elements with which I can identify or wish to incorporate; these enrich my sense of self. They in turn affect the you I perceive and send out to you. I can enter this intermediate zone of the relationship in which I am both myself and some of you--which allows me to find even more of myself. I can give you some unknown part of myself and

discover what it is like. You may in turn alter and send back a new "me." These exchanges constitute the unconscious play of relationship.

It is now more clear how complementarity is a necessary concept. One's willingness to partake of these exchanges occurs only where there is some sense of fit. This relational play must take place with an other whose projections will suit and will to some extent be welcomed (or at least tolerated). Thus complementarity is determined by some unconscious perception of prior familiarity, that is, by the nature of one's internal objects. Equally important, it holds the promise of enrichment in a direction that is meaningful to the self.

Freud (1922) noted that projections require some basis in reality. The individual does not make projections "into the sky, so to speak," but is guided by "knowledge of the unconscious" (p. 236). A recent paper by Crisp (1988) concerned with projective mechanisms in intimate relationships raises questions about how objects are chosen as recipients for this process. She points out that "it is easier to project or projectively identify into someone who is complementary to oneself" and laments the fact that "almost nothing exists in the literature concerning this specific question" (p. 390).

Crisp posits several possible variables which may determine a "fit." The recipient may be more receptive to projections as a consequence of "ego-boundary weakness or sensitivity." Or perhaps the "projector 'tunes in' to the recipient's weakness in a specific area and projectively identifies into this area of the recipient." This latter alternative represents a kind of complementarity. An interactive balance is necessary between the two possibilities:

> There is not simply the idea of a lower general threshold for projective identification in the recipient, but the added concept of an even lower threshold for specific areas. Some propensity exists for ego-boundary fluidity in general. This fluidity applies to certain areas more than others.... [However] with too much ego-boundary fluidity, a projective identification would not be taken in or adequately contained....Ego fluidity may be indicative of underlying vulnerability or pathology, or of a form of mature sensitivity (p. 396).

Again, the emphasis in Crisp's paper is on the pathological possibilities for such exchanges, although there is some recognition of creative potential in the process and its role in maintaining "a positive state of balance" in relating. This failure to explore the role of complementary projective and introjective mechanisms as a progressive vehicle, rather than a regressive or defensive one, in relationships is found throughout the literature. All of the major theorists of projective identification make note of its universal use and even its transformative capacities (Klein, 1952 & 1955; Wangh, 1962; Malin & Grotstein, 1966; Ogden, 1978; Grotstein, 1981), yet by far the bulk of their work is devoted to how it is employed in pathological ways. In fact, the presence of projective identification is often regarded as evidence of disturbed functioning. Perhaps this emphasis is understandable as excessive (however one may come to that determination) and pathological manifestations draw more attention to themselves. One of the intentions of the present study is to deepen the analysis of projective and introjective identifications in mature relating.

Unconscious Exchanges in Lesbian Relationships

It is the premise of this analysis that the Other's potential as a recipient for certain kinds of projection is a source of attraction, while the identification engendered serves as a bond. When the process is two-sided, with each partner engaged in a form of projective identification with the other, complementarity exists. The nature of this complementarity proposed in some lesbian relationships rests upon differences in the experiences of lesbians who have "always" and primarily been oriented toward women and those who formerly were heterosexually involved.

First, there is an exchange of unconscious oedipal experience. Each has some opportunity to partake of her previously disowned oedipal configuration through identification with that of the other. The woman whose experience has primarily been lesbian projects onto her more bisexual lover her own foreclosed oedipal experience of love for the father. However she may feel about her lover's sexual interest in men, she may find there some sense of her own lost experience. The point is not that she wishes to live out this experience, to become heterosexual, but simply that she has unconscious knowledge of her own lost experience which in effect constitutes a lost part of herself. She may be able to find this experience more comfortably in her partner. Paradoxically, she may experience an unconscious reunion with her own heterosexuality within a lesbian relationship. Again, this is a transformation into a fuller experience of herself rather than into new desire to be with men. Her fundamental object choice, an intrapsychic construct which may be relatively fixed at this point, continues to be women.

Projective identification provides a vicarious experience which is an entry to this unexplored part of herself. This may be predominantly unconscious,

occurring largely through unconscious fantasies about the lover: who she is (was) as a heterosexual woman, what she embodies or represents, and what her "possession" of the lover means now to her own sense of self, i.e., what she has incorporated through her. These fantasies may or may not coincide with the lover's actual experiences or sense of self. She may also actively pursue this vicarious experience by exploring with the lover her previous sexual and romantic relationships. Lovers tend to be curious about each other's prior love affairs. When she inquires about her partner's past relationships with men, she is perhaps quite unconsciously trying them on herself, so to speak. She is seeking a greater understanding of women's sexual and emotional intimacy with men and the sense of self engendered therein.

For her partner, the nature of the projection is rather opposite. She projects onto her lover her own unlived, but perhaps unconsciously desired, experience of exclusivity with women. This may include a denied loyalty to the mother or a disowned desire to have remained true to that early love affair. The lover is then symbolic for her of an all-female world in which men have never intruded. The lover is thus an Other for her who carries her projected fantasies of what existence in that imagined world would be like. The relationship between them lets her lover carry these experiences while she unconsciously identifies with them. Again, she may pursue these largely unconsciously through her own fantasies or she may actively question her lover about her relationships with other women, about early lesbian experiences, about the world of lesbians.

Why does each seek such exchanges if she finds fulfillment in her own experience? The desire for an Other, one who is different in some personally

significant way, is in part a consequence of the frustrations and limitations inherent in human psychology. Any life is built upon choices which necessarily exclude other options. In the inner world these limitations are simultaneously known and denied. There is always the "road-not-taken" which remains ripe with possibilities never to be tasted or tested. To some extent the unlived potential beckons and entices in the imaginative realm. As Freud (1905) first argued, one's bisexual potential always exists, yet the vicissitudes of both internal and external demands force a direction to be taken. According to Freudian theory, Lewes (1988) states, "any adequate analytic description of an individual would necessarily have to deal with the fate of bisexual strivings and the way they inform both heterosexual and homosexual wishes and behavior" (p. 17).

McDougall (1986a) writes:

> In point of fact, every child wants to possess the mysterious sexual organs and fantasized power of *both* parents. And indeed why not? Whether we are male or female, one of the greatest narcissistic wounds of childhood is inflicted by the obligation to come to terms with our ineluctable monosexuality--its scar of course, the problem of what to do with our psychic bisexuality....In the world of dreams we are all magical, bisexual, and immortal! (p. 215).

And further:

> [Universal] homosexual desires in children of both sexes always have a double aim. One is the desire to *possess*, in the most concrete fashion, the parent of the same sex, and the second is the desire to *be* the opposite sex and to possess all the privileges and prerogatives with which the opposite-sex parent is felt to be endowed.... Thus the little girl not only wants to possess her mother sexually, create children with her, and be uniquely loved by her in a world from which all men are excluded; she also desires ardently to be a man like her father, to have

> his genitals as well as the power and other qualities she attributes to him (pp. 219-220).

In the potential space of the relational world one may partake imaginatively and unconsciously of these foreclosed experiences. Such desires and possibilities exist in all relationships, of course, not only in lesbian ones (see Chapter Nine). This analysis of unconscious exchange in lesbian relationships simply explores the ways in which these relationships provide such an arena.

Further, for lesbians, there may even be some greater intensity to the search for the unexperienced part of the oedipal relationship. It is not enough for her that she finds her greatest satisfaction in relationships with other women or that it feels "right" to her. The deviancy or "perversion" attributed to her desires cannot fail to be internalized in some way. She is told she hates or fears men or that women are inadequate as partners for other women. These often strident judgments may leave her with a greater need to find some psychic counterpart which allows her to experiment with variations on her own experience. If she does in fact have negative responses to men, she may vicariously experience a potentially different relationship through a lover who has enjoyed men. If she herself feels some devaluation of women as partners, she may find a new evaluation of this choice through a woman who has joyously embraced women as lovers. The particular wounds to which lesbian experience is inevitably vulnerable may be redressed in the relationship. Indeed, there may be a "lowered threshold," as Crisp (1988) calls it, to projective exchanges in this area.

This type of projective exchange is not based upon ridding oneself of unwanted parts, but quite the opposite. It is a search for wanted but unknown

or undeveloped parts of the self. The unconscious match between the partners is one in which each finds an Other who embodies an expression of that desired self. Again, for lesbians, there may even be some propensity toward projective exchange. The greater potential of women, and especially of women in relationships with each other, to move toward merging reflects women's more fluid boundaries. This fluidity lends itself to the kind of psychological exchange of complementary projective bonding.

Klein (1952) speaks of projective identification as a process in which "the ego takes possession...of an external object...and makes it an extension of the self" (p. 68). This is the aspect of projective identification which has largely been neglected in explorations of relational mechanisms. Its role in guiding the self toward objects (an agent of attraction), in sustaining these connections through the mutual identifications engendered (an agent of bonding), and in enriching the self (an agent of transformation) suggest a cumulative power which can explain the endurance of relationships through time in spite of innumerable obstacles.

A secondary dimension of complementarity in lesbian relationships is already suggested by the first. The sense of self as deviant is likely to be experienced somewhat differently by women who have such diverse histories of sexual experience. Chapter Three discussed the ways that acquisition of a lesbian identity in adolescence or early adulthood may do injury to the girl's sense of self. While the fundamentals of social identity are being developed in adolescence, the primary lesbian has two other interrelated tasks. She must find within herself the strength to tolerate being deviant at a time when social conformity is most highly valued; and she must, usually in isolation, reevaluate the social construction of what is acceptable sexual behavior. Will

she deny her felt sexual inclinations? Will she accept herself as lesbian, but perverse? Will she come to perceive herself as disturbed on even broader dimensions, feeling that there is something wrong with her very being? Or will she manage rather independently to affirm her identity or to assert that the culture's evaluation is somehow at wrong? What defenses will be required to accomplish this enormous task, and how much of her psychic resources will then be tied up in self-protection?

We can hypothesize that the more primary lesbian first experienced her own sexuality as normal, i.e., her love for a woman felt natural. Later experience may have altered this sense. When she is involved in a relationship with a lover who has not been so deviant, who seems to fit mainstream requirements for sexuality better than she, yet who also chooses women, that original sense that "loving a woman is natural" may be projected and refound in her. The lover may have emerged from adolescence relatively unscathed (in this sense) as she participated in the usual heterosexual encounters and did not think her sexuality to be abnormal. She becomes an embodiment of normality that includes loving other women.

On the other side of the equation, the previously heterosexual woman finds a partner who has tolerated being different, who can lead her into a new capacity for the same in herself. The new lover's ability to tolerate such a sense of deviancy may be a source of attraction to her when she questions whether she herself would or could have done so. In other words, if she knows (consciously or unconsciously) that she lacks something here, some further development in this dimension, the relationship offers both impetus and support in this direction.

This dimension recalls certain aspects of the feminist psychoanalytic revisions of female development (Miller, 1976; Chodorow, 1978; Surrey, 1985). These writers suggest how difficult it may be for women to handle difference per se. Differences do not serve the same defensive function of establishing gender identity for women as they do for men; they present a threat to the sense of oneness in relationship which is more characteristic of women's psychological experience. Separateness remains a problematic area in female development, just as its opposite, intimacy, may be a greater source of trouble in male development (cf. Person, 1988). Yet difference, or Otherness in McDougall's (1986a) language, is inescapable. Finding a comfortable way of incorporating differentness may be a continuing part of women's adult development.

Again, we encounter a paradox within development of lesbian identity. Early lesbian development fosters a greater sense of difference, even requires it. As Cass (1979) points out, ability to traverse the stages of homosexual identity development depends upon the individual's capacity for tolerating difference. Traditional analytic conceptions which ascribe greater difficulty with separateness to lesbians ignore this rather obvious necessity to be able to be different. In some respects the early lesbian has a kind of developmental advantage here. She must incorporate differentness within her sense of self. Even if this process is somewhat defensive in nature, as it is for men, she emerges with a greater familiarity and ease with differentness. The later-developing lesbian, through identification with her lover, immerses herself in this same experience and thereby enlarges her own capacity for tolerating difference.

This analysis is weighted toward the positive aspects of complementarity. The potential for negative experiences of the partner and for defensive projective exchanges is certainly there as well. Either or both partners may project disowned parts of the self onto the other, continue to disown them and find these differences to be a source of conflict or on-going threat. They may persist as unwanted or undesirable attributes; the partner may carry them too uncomfortably for transformation to occur. They may be seen as desired qualities, and envied rather than introjected. The positive introjection of attributes may never occur and identifications may persist in negative ways. In other words, that which once attracted the partners to each other may become that which most disturbs or threatens them. These differences hold the possibility of destroying the bond as well as preserving it.

This raises the complex question of the relationship between merger (see Chapter Five) and complementarity. Merger relies upon a sense of complementarity: one joins oneself to another, crossing the boundary between self and other through projective and introjective processes, a union offering a greater sense of wholeness or completion. However, merger may be defensive or protracted, and extremes of merger may be experienced as a loss of self rather than enlargement of the self. When projections take over and cannot be contained and processed, the lover feels herself changed in unwanted ways by the relationship. It is as if she becomes an Other to herself, experiencing a loss of self beyond the transient possibility of transcendance. As Person (1988) says,

> [o]ne may seek merger, but one seeks it with an Other....The concrete fulfillment of fantasies of merger carries with it the threat of the symbolic annihilation of the self *and* of the Other. Love, by its nature

> committed to the preservation of the beloved as well as the self, cannot press through to its goal (p.137).

The woman in a relationship which is overly-fused may flee to the relative safety of dissolution of the relationship. Alternatively, a pattern of conflict may emerge as the partners attempt to differentiate themselves from each other. Thus destructive merger can propel individuals out of relationship rather than drawing them in.

Both of these experiences of merger are found in the literature on lesbian couples, and the distinction between them is not always clear. Perhaps such a distinction can be made, at least theoretically, by differentiating merger which is a means to an end from merger which is an end in itself. In the first instance, transitory merger is a means of enlarging the self by joining with the Other; in the second, it is a desired loss of both self and Other in which differences are obliterated and samness is all that remains. When complementary union is not defensive in origin but derives from a developmental thrust--in which the self is enlarged rather than defenses reinforced--the differences between the two partners are tolerated. These differences are ultimately desired; they may in fact serve to counter the pull toward prolonged merger.

The final chapter of this study addresses the value of this analysis in clinical work with issues related to these differences. As Chapter Five discusses, within lesbian relationships there is a delicate balance between the interplay of sameness and difference in lesbian relationships; both aspects are attractive and both hold distinct hazards. The sameness of gender development and gender-related experiences offer profound opportunities for intimacy and mutual identification. This is fertile ground for projective

exchange. At the same time, there is a need for the creative tension fostered by differences. The variations of lesbian orientation which exist in relationships between lesbians with different histories provide such tension in ways that hold significant potential for continuing development. Here the discussion is more positively weighted because these possibilities have been neglected in earlier studies.

In summary, the potential for these mutual experiences of projective identification between lesbians are a source of attraction for the partners and also serve to maintain a continuing bond between them. The point here is again that the relationship may be a means of expanding the self through affiliation with an Other who embodies a difference of particular significance to the self. The desire for a particular kind of Other is likely to be an unconscious one, but not necessarily inaccessible to awareness. Through these exchanges, differences which feel alien to the self become somewhat demystified. The particular dimensions considered here, unconscious oedipal configurations and one's acceptance of difference, represent an important developmental thrust which persists unconsciously in all of us throughout adulthood. This significance makes these dimensions especially fertile areas for attraction, exchange, bonding, and ultimately, growth.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

GENDER AND COMPLEMENTARITY

Liberation from gender stereotypes...requires more than the transcendence of gender; it requires the ability to transcend the self.

E. S. Person, Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters

Gendered Dimensions of Complementarity

Traditional conceptions of relationships rely upon heterosexuality as an implicitly universal model for romance and eroticism. From this perspective lesbian relationships, like male homosexual relationships, must then be patterned after heterosexual ones. They must somehow rest upon gender differences as well, but now the difference resides only in one partner's disturbed gender identification and the other's collusion in this impossible fantasy. In the terms of both psychoanalytic and popular literature, this fantasy is enacted through role-playing. There is the *butch*, the pseudo-masculine lesbian who takes the part of the husband or male lover in both behavior and dress, and the *femme*, who is not quite a true woman, being lesbian, but a caricature of femininity: helpless, narcissistic, hysterical, maternal, wifely. In psychoanalytic thinking, through their mimicry of heterosexual love, they may find some measure of satisfaction.

When the feminist movement challenged gender roles in heterosexual relationships, it simultaneously challenged this idea of lesbian couples. Many studies of lesbian relationships supported this challenge by demonstrating that actual role-playing is a rare phenomenon (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Jay &

Young, 1977; Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Tanner, 1978; Lewis, 1979; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Schneider, 1986; see Chapter Five for further discussion). Other studies likewise contradict this conception by finding that increased satisfaction in lesbian relationships occurs in direct correlation with equality between the partners in terms of power, decision-making, and absence of roles (Marecek, Finn, & Cardell, 1982; Peplau, Padesky, & Hamilton, 1982; Caldwell & Peplau, 1984; Lynch & Reilly, 1985/6). Some argue instead that heterosexual relationships are culturally determined by role-playing and perpetuate them in constrictive ways (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1978; Lynch & Reilly, 1985/6).

Still the concepts of *butch* and *femme* linger, often a matter of play and parody among lesbians as a shorthand way of addressing differences related to traditional gender conceptions, a kind of in-group joke that nevertheless sometimes carries serious meaning. For example, a couple in the pilot study for this project (see Chapter One) bantered about one of them being a "butchy femme" and the other being a "femmy butch." Lesbians cannot fail to be aware that in their choice of women as partners and in the nontraditional lifestyle which accompanies this choice, they defy the usual female role. In this sense there is always some interplay between masculinity and femininity in lesbianism. This is not the same thing of course as enacting gender roles in stereotypical ways.

Further, there is in everyone some degree of identification with both parents which allows the child to embody, to some extent, both genders within the self (what McDougall [1986a] discusses as our psychic bisexuality, our wish to *be* as well as to possess the opposite-sexed parent). These identifications do not alter one's core gender identity but do interact with

social experiences to form one's consciously felt gender identity as Money (1980) defines it. There is much variation among individuals in the extent to which one identifies with one's own sex (Money & Erhardt, 1972). Both lesbian and heterosexual women may experience themselves as masculine in important ways that do not have anything to do with confusion of core gender identity and may be either highly valued or felt as deviant.

Especially because of her adolescent experiences outside the mainstream of socialization processes, the primary lesbian may have a different experience of her gendered self than the girl who is involved with boys, who thinks of marrying, and who is typically "feminine." It is untenable, however, to argue that the primary lesbian necessarily experiences herself as masculine or even androgynous, or that the bisexual lesbian necessarily feels herself to be more feminine. Some research indicates that the majority of lesbians tend to be more androgynous than heterosexual women (Jones & De Cecco, 1982; LaTorre & Wendenburg, 1983). Others show a more highly developed sense of masculinity in lesbians than in heterosexual women, but simultaneously an equally developed sense of femininity in both groups (Oldham, Farnill & Ball, 1982).

These studies employ different scales but all derive from a social perspective than emphasizes sex roles over identity. None makes a distinction between these two groups of lesbians, so we cannot draw conclusions about whether some differences might be found in them. Nevertheless, the force of social experience, especially in adolescence, may leave the lesbian who emerges early in life outside of usual sex role socializing, a process that tends to affirm conventional gender stereotypes. Because the early-developing lesbian has not played the part of the adolescent female in tradi-

tional ways, her feelings about her gender identification may be more conflicted. Vargo (1987) writes:

> In the process of incorporating lesbianism into their self-image, lesbians may suffer from gender confusion and isolation as they experience themselves as having "male" traits, as being "exceptional" women, as being crazy, or at the very least as being different from other women in some fundamental way (p. 163).

This dimension is closely tied to that of sense of self as deviant, as discussed in Chapters Three and Seven.

The large question of what is masculinity and what is femininity is very much in flux culturally. Heterosexual women and men experience confusions about both role behavior and subjective sense of gendered self as these notions are rethought, and they challenge them in various ways. The studies which show lesbians to be more androgynously-identified, or put another way, embodying both traditionally masculine and feminine behaviors and attributes, suggest some flexibility in gender-related dimensions.

Nevertheless, the two partners in the kind of lesbian relationship under study here may themselves have different conceptions of what each other represents in gendered expression. As Marecek, Finn, and Cardell (1982) argue, "in same-sex couples...even small differences in the gender identities of the partners might lead them to play different gender roles" (p. 48). Perhaps it is more appropriate to speak of two differently-developed versions of femininity rather than of masculinity versus femininity.

The connection between these women may draw upon fantasies about what the partner, this "other" kind of lesbian, embodies. The primary lesbian has gone through her adolescence and early adulthood outside of the usual

feminine path. This may be felt as both a source of self-esteem and a sense of deprivation. For example, she has not had male partners to perform traditional male tasks for her but has had to depend upon herself more in the arena of instrumental behavior. In this sense she has suffered less from the cultural devaluation of women and from restrictions on feminine behavior. At the same time she may be intrigued by (and desirous of participating in) what is more clearly defined as the world of the feminine.

The bisexual lesbian has been a party to that world. She may have felt alienated within it as well as having embraced it in certain ways. Through her relationships with men, she has been shaped to some extent by male expectations of feminine behavior. She may be more accomplished in or at ease with the traditional female world of emotionality. Correspondingly she may have suffered from the cultural limitations imposed on her development because she is female. And she may have internalized more of the cultural assessment, both positive and negative, of what it means to be female.

The exchanges which take place in this dimension provide a further kind of complementarity. This gender-related complementarity may be founded on personal conceptions or even fantasies about gender rather than on actual gender-linked behavioral roles. Perhaps here neither woman is so different from the other as each imagines, yet the potential for imagining differences is itself ripe for projections of undeveloped parts of the self. There is so much constraint placed upon human development by the demands of gender conformity that unexpressed dimensions of the personality may find a new opportunity for appearance here.

A brief example illustrates the paradoxical way such expression may evolve. A woman in one of the couples in the pilot study for this project (see Chapter One) described how her expression of her femininity had changed in this, her first, lesbian relationship. She had been married for over ten years but felt herself always in resistance to expectations of herself to dress and behave in typically feminine ways. Now that she was with a woman she allowed herself to dress and act in these same ways with an ease and pleasure she did not have before. She would not be misunderstood here, she felt. She projected onto her a lover a familiarity with these dimensions (which in fact the lover did not corroborate). At the same time, she encouraged her partner to do the same, to be more traditionally feminine, by appreciating certain previously neglected aspects of her. For her, the surprise of the relationship was a new freedom to explore femininity. At the same time she no longer worried about displaying what she had always considered to be her more masculine qualities--her aggressiveness and ambition--because she assumed they too would be appreciated.

Her partner shifted in some ways as well. She dressed somewhat less androgynously (for example, she began wearing jewelry) and felt she was opening up more emotionally than she had prior to this relationship. As she described it, she had acquired a defensive emotional invulnerability in her early years as a lesbian, a kind of protective armor against a world which did not value her as she was. Her attachment to this more "masculine" attitude had given way to a reevaluation, a greater desire to be expressive and responsive. At the same time she felt highly appreciated for her lack of traditional female experience. She thought her lover tended to idealize her independence, but in fact was becoming more ambitious herself in terms of

her work. In other words, she accepted at least some of her lover's projections, incorporated them into her own sense of self, but also sent back some appreciation of these qualities which allowed the lover to reown them in a new, less conflicted, way.

In this example we find projections of masculinity and femininity (in the stereotypical sense) on both sides. Each woman found herself moving further in both directions through what she thought of as perceptions of her lover. These were sometimes projections of self rather than accurate perceptions of the lover. This dimension of their relationship was more or less conscious and sometimes mutually explored. Their differences in sexual experience, adolescent struggles, and sense of self as deviant were strongly felt by both of them. These were subject to discussion and accessible to consciousness in ways which other dimensions of complementary exchange (such as oedipal material) are not so conscious.

Differences between Lesbians: Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation?

This study suggests that the distinction drawn between the two groups of lesbians based on primary vs. bisexually-oriented lesbianism may be a more fundamental one than the distinction between lesbians based on gender identification. The distinction behind both of these dimensions is a theoretical construction in either case. Neither represents an entirely discrete category, but rather they express the ends of a continuum. As the Kinsey studies (1948 & 1953) showed, sexual orientation of women and men varies from the extremes of exclusive homosexual or heterosexual inclination to many in-between degrees of interest in both. Likewise, gender identification

is a relative matter, and a purely masculine or feminine identification is a theoretical construct rather than an actuality.

Complementarity found in sexual orientation is not always the basis of lesbian relationships, i.e., other forms of complementarity undoubtedly exist. In some relationships complementarity may be based on subjectively felt differences in gender identification (which is not necessarily translated into role behavior at all). However, the latter has historically been given much credit which may on closer examination belong to sexual orientation. Chapters One and Five both considered the influence of the early sexologists, especially Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis, on the traditionally-understood complementarity of homosexuality as gender-based. In particular, Ellis' (1928) detailed description of the two types of lesbians was found to be one of sexual orientation rather than of gender orientation (see Chapter Five). The enormous influence of these works on both psychoanalytic and popular depictions of lesbian couples was also noted.

The classic lesbian novel, The Well of Loneliness, published by Radclyffe Hall in 1928, is the best example of this influence on literature. The novel was a sensation in its time, receiving the ultimate recognition of being banned in England for many years (and for a short while in the United States). It continues to be reprinted and read sixty years after its initial publication. The Well is unlike any of the other pulp novels (which until the last two decades were the only popular literature on lesbianism) in that it was written by an author with serious artistic intentions as well as a desire to bring the subject of homosexuality before the public. Although it strikes the modern reader as mired in post-Victorian sentiment and style, it was widely praised in its time as an admirable literary work as well as being "daring and

heroic" (Dickson, 1975). Many prominent writers came to its defense during the various court cases against it: T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, Julian Huxley, Lytton Strachey, and Virginia Woolf.

The first edition of Havelock Ellis' Sexual Inversion had appeared thirty years before Hall's work. His influence on the book is acknowledged by the author; she had met Ellis and visited with him on several occasions (Dickson, 1975). Ellis even wrote a brief commentary which was included in the first and subsequent editions of the novel:

> I have read The Well of Loneliness with great interest because--apart from its fine qualities as a novel by a writer of accomplished art--it possesses a notable psychological and sociological significance. So far as I know, it is the first English novel which presents, in a completely faithful and uncompromising form, one particular aspect of sexual life as it exists among us today. The relation of certain people--who, while different from their fellow human beings, are sometimes of the highest character and the finest aptitudes--to the often hostile society in which they move, presents difficult and unsolved problems. The poignant situations which thus arise are here set forth so vividly, and yet with such complete absence of offence, that we must place Radclyffe Hall's book on a high level of distinction.

Nevertheless, unlike others, he refused to lend his name to its defense once it was under attack. (Dickson's (1975) revelation that Ellis' wife had affairs with other women, with Ellis' knowledge, suggest an explanation for both his interest and his ambivalent attitude toward the subject. He failed to defend even his own book in public.)

The book tells the story of lesbianism and lesbian relationships from the perspective of gender variation: the "true invert" is a trick of nature, an individual with the body of one sex and the soul of the other. An analysis of

this work reveals how interpretations based on gender may conceal the significance of sexual orientation. The heroine of The Well of Loneliness is Stephen Gordon, an upper-class British woman who began to discover her inversion (as Hall always refers to it) when she is repulsed by a marriage proposal from Martin, a man she likes and admires. Before this realization is fully achieved, she knows only how different she is from any other girl: she looks, dresses, and behaves like a boy and is utterly dismayed by the trappings of femininity. Her masculinity is overdetermined in the novel, as her name suggests. She is a born invert, masculine by nature, and boyish even as an infant ("a narrow-hipped, wide-shouldered little tadpole of a baby"). She resembles her father in every way. At the same time her father, determined to have a son, names her Stephen in spite of her sex. He encourages her masculine pursuits and protects her from her mother's efforts to feminize her.

The ultra-feminine mother is antagonized and repelled by the daughter's masculinity. In the face of maternal rejection, little Stephen turns toward the housemaid whom she pursues and courts in belated oedipal fashion at age seven. Her identification with her father is idealized throughout childhood and adolescence, and she wins his admiration through her skills in hunting and fencing. Thus Stephen's inversion is not only congenital, but reinforced through the family.

The father realizes Stephen's inversion while she is still an adolescent. He reads Krafft-Ebing and other sexologists and recognizes his daughter in their descriptions. After he is dead, however, his protection is gone. When the mother discovers the nature of her daughter's sexuality through a letter from the husband of a neighbor with whom Stephen has been having an un-

consummated affair, she sends her into exile from the family home. Stephen moves to London, becomes a well-known writer, and relinquishes hope of love and family. Eventually she moves to Paris but remains on the periphery of a lesbian circle of artists and writers.

When war is declared in 1914, Stephen goes to the front lines in service with a women's ambulance corps. There she meets Mary Llewellyn, a young, innocent, and thoroughly feminine woman who eventually becomes her lover and companion. They live together in Paris after the war and are happy for a number of years. Through their circle of friends we are introduced to other lesbians and their relationships. Invariably the couples include a masculine-identified woman and her feminine lover. For the most part they are described as freakish and disturbed, at the very least unhappy. Their suffering is a combination of nature (the "nerves of the invert") and social persecution. Although the novel intends to be a sympathetic portrayal of homosexuality, it is also careful to uphold the moral expectations of its era. The lives of her homosexual characters are at best ones of brave isolation and at worst destroyed by suicide, alcoholism or drug addiction. They are, as Wilson (1984) says, "the haunted, the tormented, and the damned," female Byronic figures (p. 213).

Ultimately Stephen realizes this life is taking a great toll on Mary, a woman who is herself "normal" except for her love of Stephen. When Stephen's early suitor Martin appears on the scene again, he falls in love with Mary. Stephen realizes Mary has the capacity to return his love. In order to spare her from the suffering of a life as a social exile, she sacrifices her own happiness and sends Mary into Martin's arms. The book closes with a plea to God and the world: "We have not denied You, then rise up and defend us.

Acknowledge us, oh God, before the whole world. Give us also the right to our existence!"

This book was a courageous effort to bring homosexuality out into the open and to establish it as a variation of nature which must be respected and allowed expression. At the same time it carefully refrains from challenging the stereotypes of lesbianism which were in vogue; in fact, in its world-wide attention it disseminated them far more widely than Ellis' work alone could do. It argues for lesbianism to be tolerated with all of its obvious pathology. Her plea for acceptance is ultimately founded upon pity more than respect. As Dunker (1987) writes: "Those of us who read Radclyffe Hall's The Well of Loneliness in the thirties were convinced that loving a woman meant taking on a man's role and would lead to misery and death" (p. 74). (A number of contemporary women in Stanley & Wolfe's [1980] collection of lesbian "coming out stories" also recall encounters with the novel as their introduction to lesbian life).

According to Dickson (1975), a quasi-sympathetic biographer of Radclyffe Hall, the novel is a semi-autobiographical account of her own life, with some romanticized additions to her family background. She was indeed a widely praised author in London in the 20's. An early novel, The Unlit Lamp, was critically acclaimed, and in 1926 another novel, Adam's Breed, received the two highest literary prizes that year. Only E. M. Forster's A Passage to India had achieved such a distinction. She was prominent in literary circles in both London and Paris, part of that Parisian group of lesbian artists and writers described in Chapter Three which defied social constriction by cross-dressing. Newton (1984) argues that this masculine expression was an effort to establish

their sexuality in public terms (see discussion of her perspective in Chapter Three).

Hall's understanding of lesbianism is dependent upon gender differentiation, paralleling Ellis' ideas. In this analysis, her inherent masculinity proves that her inversion is a product of nature. Being a man at heart she is inevitably attracted to women who are feminine, not to others like herself. Like Mary in the novel, these women are often themselves "normal" except for the accident of their attraction to an inverted woman. The attraction takes hold because of the invert's masculinity.

Hall's own identity as both masculine and lesbian had emerged as early as adolescence (Dickson, 1975). Although her given name was Marguerite Radclyffe Hall, she began calling herself John by her early 20's. She was often described as a very handsome, rather than beautiful, woman. The most important relationship of her life was her partnership with Una Troubridge, her lover and companion from 1915 until her death in 1943. Like most of the other women Hall was involved with, Troubridge was both beautiful and typically feminine (Dickson, 1975). But also like the others, she was previously heterosexual. She was married to Admiral Troubridge, well-known for his naval exploits, and had one child, a daughter, when she was first attracted to Hall. Soon afterwards they became involved and deeply bonded. From that point on, Troubridge refused to return to her husband's naval station and within a few years, they were legally separated.

Troubridge differed from Radclyffe Hall in her presumably bisexual inclinations perhaps more than simply in femininity. If Hall's manner and style of dress impute masculinity, then we must question Troubridge's as well. A portrait of her in the 20's, during that period of more public lesbian

declaration, shows Troubridge also wearing men's styles. Likewise when both were confirmed in the Catholic church, they chose male saints names, to the priest's dismay. These details suggest that a masculine posture was at least to some extent intended as a cultural statement. More importantly, all of Hall's lovers were women who also had heterosexual inclinations. Hall's most significant relationship before Troubridge was Mabel Batten, another married woman, a "well-known beauty of the time," and a patron of the arts who first took an interest in Hall's work. At the time of her death Hall and Troubridge became lovers. Hall also had an important love affair toward the end of her life with Evgenia Souline, a young woman who later married (Dickson, 1975). We can hypothesize that this difference between Hall, the primary lesbian, and her lovers, more bisexually-inclined, was as significant as their gender-related differences.

An analysis of the close of the novel also lends itself to reinterpretation. Stephen becomes aware of Martin's love for Mary and Mary's potential for returning his love. She is at first combative. She and Martin agree to fight for Mary without Mary's knowledge. After a period of time they both know that Mary will never leave Stephen for Martin, and Martin prepares to leave Paris. This is the turning point for Stephen, as she realizes Mary will no longer have the chance for marriage and family:

> And now she [Stephen] must pay very dearly indeed for that inherent respect of the normal which nothing had ever been able to destroy, not even the long years of persecution....She must pay for the instinct which, in earliest childhood, had made her feel something akin to worship for the perfect thing which she had divined in the love that existed between her parents. Never before had she seen so clearly all that was lacking to Mary Llewellyn, all that would pass from her

> faltering grasp, perhaps never to return, with the passing of Martin--children, a home that the world would respect, ties of affection that the world would hold sacred, the blessed security, and the peace of being released from the world's persecution....Only one gift could she offer to love, to Mary, and that was the gift of Martin (p. 430).

Stephen sacrifices her own happiness by impelling Mary to leave her for Martin: she professes not to love her any more. This act may be interpreted as a kind of unconscious identification with Mary in her heterosexuality. Similar to Anna Freud's description of altruistic surrender--a variety of projective identification described in Chapter Six--Stephen gives Mary the life of acceptance among family and friends which she herself abandons forever in this act. Through a profound love for and identification with Mary, Stephen sends her to a life with Martin.

The Significance of Gender in Lesbian Relationships

This analysis does not deny that gender-related dimensions of lesbian pairings may be important, but rather that they may easily be misinterpreted and that these interpretations obscure the equally-significant dimension of differences in orientation. It argues that cultural determinations of gender expression are usually overlooked. What may be meaningful for particular reasons at a particular historical period may be misunderstood at later periods.

As Katz (1976) pointed out in Gay American History, "all homosexuality is situational, influenced and given meaning and character by its location in time and social space" (p. 7). The shift in meaning of gender dichotomy in lesbian relationships from the 1920's to the1970's, for example, illustrates the necessity of this perspective. In Hall's time lesbians were first struggling for

public recognition of the nature of their relationships. They wished to establish that relationships between women included sexuality, not that there was something fundamentally distorted about gender conceptions (for heterosexual women as well as lesbians). The approach of the sexologists was useful to them; it represented an advance over previous notions of relationships between women (as asexual) and argued that homosexuality was an inborn deviation of nature which must be tolerated. Gay male homosexual identity was a fairly recent construct, less than a century old. Wilson (1984) points out that

> [t]he construction of lesbian identity appeared to be of even more recent origin, not gaining widespread recognition, in Britain at least, until The Well of Loneliness was prosecuted and banned in 1928. So it is not surprising that lesbians, emerging at the same time with a conscious identity, had, during these years, accepted the sexologists' definition of their "condition" as biologically determined and clinical, one to which masculinity was the key (pp. 215-6).

Identifying as male was then also, for these women, a statement denying Victorian beliefs in women's asexuality (Newton, 1984).

By the 1970's the feminist and gay liberation movements could build upon these earlier gains and press the advance in a different direction. They could address the distortions of gender requirements and argue that women incorporate supposedly masculine attributes as women, not as men. Now embracing a masculine identity was questionable; it suggested a devaluation of women:

> ...lesbianism now came to seem the escape route from the socially constructed gender roles imposed in a particularly rigid way on women. Paradoxically, the role-playing falsity of gender was, according to this scenario, the mark of heterosexuality, while lesbianism by

> contrast became the arena for the flowering of real womanhood (Wilson, 1984, p. 216).

A few writers have argued that feminism's antagonism to gender differences denies the potential of homosexuality--its room for psychic play, its capacity for transformation and transcendence of gender (Wilson, 1984; Grahn, 1984). Wilson suggests that this "normalizing" of lesbianism may itself be homophobic and that feminism has erred in the direction of a new "moralism" about sexual behavior which emphasizes relationship over sexuality, woman-identification and bonding over eroticized Otherness:

> I don't know, but I certainly never longed for "the power of woman-bonding." That suggested something too maternal, too suffocating; I always wanted my lover to be *other*, not like me. I did not want to be bathed, drowned in the great tide of womanliness (p. 219).

The cultural fear of gender variation may be the bedrock of homophobia (Wilson, 1984; Person, 1988). The point of homosexuality is that it moves beyond either an affirmation of gender differences or a denial of them. Instead, in Wilson's analysis, it "destabilizes" our conception of gender by questioning the construction of gender. This is the threat of homosexuality: "For to insist on lesbianism as a challenge to stereotypes of gender is ultimately...political" (p. 224).

Efforts to drain lesbian (or gay male) attractions of any gender-related meaning run the risk of denial of the reality that there are two different sexes which manifest themselves in some way (however culturally constructed) in gender differences. Psychoanalysis has sometimes argued that homosexuality is founded on such unconscious denial (Lewes, 1988). Instead lesbianism may be understood to incorporate awareness (both conscious and unconscious) of

gender in a different way. This*may* be through the medium of consciously expressed gender identifications, but this is not the only possibility.

In Chapter Six, the discussion of relational processes suggested that an important aspect of heterosexual relationships is the potential for projected and introjected elements of masculinity and femininity between the man and woman (Knight, 1940; Murstein, 1976; Bergmann, 1980). These strengthen one's gender identity: "feminine wishes in the man and masculine wishes in the woman are projected onto the partner, enhancing one's own gender identity and therefore the boundaries of the self" (Bergmann, 1980, p. 74). Between lesbians these exchanges may serve to expand one's sense of gender, not only to confirm one's sense of gender. This alternative is possible in heterosexual relationships too of course; it may be more threatening there however.

The analysis of lesbian relationships founded on differences in orientation of sexual desire also presents an unconscious medium for awareness of gender differences. In this analysis the male is present in absentia, not in denial. Each woman's different relationship to heterosexuality carries this meaning. In heterosexual love, homosexual expression may be found in absentia through projective identification, or vicarious experience of the other's role as partner to a man or woman. In a different way, through unconscious oedipal identifications, in lesbian relationships the male as potential, but not actualized, erotic partner, may also be "present in absentia."

This discussion suggests the complexity of gender dimensions in lesbian relationships. The initial conception of lesbian complementarity as role-playing is both inaccurate and far too simplistic. Most lesbian relationships, however, even while they are not founded on stereotyped expression of

gender differences nevertheless participate in gender-related dimensions of self and other on various levels of exchange and awareness, often beyond the reach of conscious knowledge.

CHAPTER NINE:

CONCLUSION

> *Love does more than restore; love catalyzes change in the self. Love may be regressive but it is also progressive, giving direction and content to the maturation of the self. Love does indeed have a developmental history, but, finally it is in its essence a mutative experience.*
>
> E. S. Person, Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters

The present study offers a theory of complementarity in certain lesbian relationships. Other questions are raised as well, which require attention and suggest further study. What can be said about lesbian relationships which do not conform to this pattern? What relevance does the theory hold for clinical work with lesbians and lesbian couples? Does it have a broader application to other kinds of relationships--those between gay men or heterosexual couples? This final chapter addresses these issues and points to related areas for future inquiry.

Historically there have been few in-depth studies of lesbian relationships. Psychoanalytic theory has not contributed to a meaningful discussion of relationships between lesbians because of its almost exclusive focus on the question of etiology, with an assumption of pathology inherent in the question. This attitude leads psychoanalysts to the inevitable conclusion that lesbian relationships are based on pathological dynamics. The number of psychoanalytic critiques of traditional theories of homosexuality which have appeared in recent years (Mitchell, 1978 & 1981; Leavy, 1985; Stoller, 1985; Friedman, 1986; Isay, 1986; Wolfson, 1987; Lewes, 1988) indicate that a new

direction is emerging, founded on less prejudicial attitudes and holding great potential for further theoretical developments. With a few exceptions, however, these critiques still concentrate on theories of male homosexuality. Further, there has been very little psychoanalytic literature that addresses the dynamics of homosexual relationships from any perspective. This thesis is a contribution to this theoretical frontier.

Other Kinds of Lesbian Relationships

If the theory presented here is accurate in its formulation of the kinds of exchanges of intrapsychic and interpersonal experience which serve as a source of attraction and bonding between lesbians, how may we understand the many lesbian relationships which do not seem to fit this pattern? There are several answers to this question. The theory is not intended to be an exhaustive exploration of complementarity between lesbians. It is offered both as a way of understanding the specifics of one variety of complementary relating in lesbian couples and also as a conceptual paradigm for mechanisms of attraction and bonding which, aside from the specific content of psychological exchanges, may apply to many relationships. For other relationships the nature of exchange will be different and in some cases, no doubt, highly idiosyncratic.

For some lesbians sexual identity consolidation may be paramount. From this position, finding a partner who shares a similar psychosexual history may be the overriding concern. The relationship functions to mirror the experience of each rather than expressing an alternative. For example, two women who have both been married for a lengthy period of time feel confirmed in making the change to lesbianism by each other's choice. Converse-

ly, two women who are both primary lesbians find affirmation of themselves most clearly in each other's history. At the same time, there may be other dimensions of difference between them which simultaneously have a compelling draw. Person (1988) argues:

> The longing in love is almost always across a perceived difference....Perhaps the need for difference as the inspiration for love is nowhere better illustrated than among some male homosexuals. No longer having easy recourse to a difference grounded in biological sex, it is quite extraordinary how many homosexual lovers choose the love object across striking differences in age, culture, background, and general abilities and interests.(p. 286).

Person's observation is a casual one; it would be useful to know to what extent male couples involve greater individual differences than heterosexual couples do and whether lesbian couples also show a higher incidence of "striking differences." This is one area where further research about gay relationships is needed.

Others contend however that differences are not necessarily the source of attraction between individuals. Money (1980) argues that the partner must match one's "idealized and highly idiosyncratic image," and further, that "it is irrelevant whether the two partners are replicas or polar opposites of one another in temperament, interests, achievements, or whatever. What counts it that they fulfill each the other's ideal in imagery and expectancy" (p. 67). Murstein (1976) writes, referring to heterosexual bonding, that narcissism may underlie object choice: "An older individual may love a younger person who seems to represent the qualities that the former possessed in his youth. A person may love another who represents what he would like to be" (p. 25).

To be complementary, a bond based on differences must be ripe with some dimension of personal significance to the self. Issues of sexual orientation may or may not reflect this kind of significance for an individual. For some women, diversity of gender identity is the essential attraction in their relationships. Even when differences in sexual orientation do represent a meaningful dimension, they may be more threatening than appealing. Most obviously, a bisexual history or orientation can indicate a continuing interest in men as potential partners; lesbians who come out after heterosexual relationships sometimes return to heterosexuality later. A primary lesbian may not wish to risk this possibility in her lover.

Lesbians who have a more bisexual orientation are aware that their bisexuality is often not welcomed by other lesbians. An underlying bisexual orientation often is not openly acknowledged; when it is acknowledged, it is frequently criticized by other lesbians (Golden, 1988; Shuster, 1988). Golden notes this pressure for homogeneity in her survey of college students:

> The women with whom I spoke were not personally distressed by the fact of discrepancies between sexual behavior and sexual identity. For example, women who identified as lesbians but found themselves to be occasionally sexually attracted to men were made more uncomfortable by the thought of what other lesbians might think than by their own fluid and changing attractions....Although very often they felt compelled to identify themselves publicly and unequivocally as lesbians whose sexuality was stable and enduring and exclusively focused on women, they privately experienced their sexuality in a more fluid and dynamic manner (p. 31).

Primary lesbians in Golden's survey sometimes implied that "elective" lesbians were "fake" lesbians. Clearly, tension between the two positions alienate as well as attract, both in an intimate relationship and within the

community of lesbians. Internal conflicts about sexual orientation easily become external conflicts. Differences here may be suppressed, especially when identity consolidation is a developmental priority. The lesbian liberation movement has gone through a period in which differences of many kinds--sexual orientation, politics, social values, appearance, etc.--were resisted. Krieger's (1982 &1983) work exploring lesbian communities during the 1970's described the pull for cultural merger, not unlike the pull for fusion between a couple. The struggle to create a haven for lesbians and a united front against an often hostile heterosexual culture overrode considerations of complex individual dissimilarities. Tolerance of diversity and affirmation of differences seem to be emerging as communal values now (Golden, 1988; Pearlman, 1988). We may think of this as a move toward differentiation after merger has reached its peak.

The present study is in some ways a consequence of this change. Because differences in sexual interests were often denied by women with lesbian identities, this territory was not really accessible to observation. With some regularity, women "rewrote" their own histories, declaring their former relationships with men meaningless (Ponse, 1978; Stanley & Wolfe, 1980; Golden, 1988). In many cases, this recasting of personal experience was no doubt authentic--certainly women are channeled into heterosexual relationships regardless of their inclinations--but it is difficult to know how much of this revision took place under the sway of subtle community pressures. Now that there is greater openness about diversity, real differences in orientation are more apparent. The past tendency to obscure these differences is doubtless a leading explanation of the scarcity of information about them in the literature.

Nevertheless, aside from defensive reactions to such differences, for other women differences in sexual orientation may simply not hold much personal significance. If developmental needs play a significant role in partner choice, surely these needs will vary from woman to woman. Just as some women's choices may be more determined by identity requirements, for others, conscious and unconscious concerns about sexual orientation may have played themselves out sufficiently in former relationships. Another kind of complementary bond would be more significant at this point. (Even in a relationship founded on dissimilarity of sexual experience, its meaning may have been integrated, and with the passage of time other dimensions of the relationship are now the significant ones. Relationships have their own developmental history. The vitality of a relationship is determined to some extent by its capacity to continue providing new territory for individual development.)

The conceptual paradigm of complementarity developed here is one of meaningful conscious and unconscious exchange through projective and introjective identification between the partners. Just as the terms of complementarity in this study have not been readily apparent from previous analyses of lesbian relating, surely other dimensions will emerge as well. As theory about lesbian development grows, the dynamics of lesbian relationships will also be seen in new ways. This is a pursuit long delayed, and a great deal of further empirical, theoretical, and clinical study is needed now.

Clinical Significance of the Thesis

This theory is founded upon the concept that projections and introjections serve as powerful bonds in intimate relationships. These bonds are not simply defensive ones, as they are often regarded in the literature, but are also transformative ones. A corollary of this theory is that individuals seek out relationships to continue their own development and that relationships often are able to provide a medium for that. Attractions between people reveal developmental motivations not unlike the same ones that bring people to therapy; in other words, relationships are akin to therapy in their power to transform. Even failed love has the capacity to do this. Person (1988) writes:

> When the outcome of love is unhappy, the lover may nonetheless have experienced the liberating effects of love and be able to preserve the fruits of that liberation, whether in expanded creativity, enlarged insight, or a subtle internal reordering of personality (p. 291).

Further, the lover's effect on the self does not end with the relationship. Past lovers are internalized and "continue to play a role in our emotional lives and self concepts" (p. 307).

The parallel between intimate relationships and therapy has already been suggested in Chapter Six through the common ground of transference-countertransference dynamics and private intimacy. Employing this parallel in the other direction, we can understand how some of the issues which are salient between partners in lesbian relationships may come into the therapy relationship as well. Opportunities exist for the patient (and for the therapist as well) to explore vicariously the varieties of sexual orientation, social sense of self (e.g., as deviant), and gender-related dimensions of her personality.

Here projections and introjections may be more heavily laden with fantasy than reality, since little of the therapist's experience will be revealed; nevertheless, the same kind of mutual participation in each other's psychological formations may take place even while the overt work of therapy, perhaps quite different in nature, is going on.

Using the analysis of this thesis, the therapist may be able to appreciate the patient's need for exploring the other side of lesbian experience, whichever it may be. Where the therapist is known to be (or once to have been) heterosexual, for example, the primary lesbian patient may unconsciously invite and participate in exchanges of a similar nature with her therapist. However, the therapist may incorrectly assume that the patient is struggling to change her sexual orientation, failing to appreciate the patient's need for a new integration of this part of her psychic world without necessarily changing her object choices (just as heterosexual patients in analytic therapy often discover homosexual aspects of themselves that do not get translated into a change in object choice). Likewise, when the therapist is known to be a lesbian, patients may utilize the therapist as an object of her projections, to explore "other" lesbian experience

The thesis also offers a contribution to work with lesbian couples. Because lesbian relationships have been seen as an unhealthy flight from healthy heterosexuality, the existing clinical literature on lesbian couples offers only a limited exploration of their dynamics. An atmosphere of mutual distrust has prevailed between traditional clinicians and those lesbians who might want help with their lives and relationships. In the past, lesbian couples did not commonly seek "marriage counseling." The social changes of the past two decades have paved the way for a new understanding of homosexuality, one

which allows for more helpful attitudes on the part of clinicians, attitudes not based on assumptions of pathology. In 1973 the APA eliminated homosexuality as a diagnosis per se. While this did not of course automatically transform prejudices in the professional community (cf. Bayer, 1981), it paved the way for more neutral approaches which could bridge the two communities. It is no longer uncommon for lesbians to seek couple therapy.

Social work as a profession has a history of more progressive social attitudes than the psychoanalytic profession. None other than Freud's granddaughter, Sophie Freud Lowenstein (1980), herself a social worker, wrote one of the first social work papers exploring a broad range of dimensions of lesbians' lives and advocating that therapists examine their own values about homosexuality:

> To work with lesbians, therapists must have freed themselves of the conviction that a homosexual orientation is pathological, regressive, or immature...It is just as important however, once this basic awareness has been secured, that lesbian clients be viewed as any other human being with a particular character structure who encounters problems in coping with life (pp. 37-38).

This means of course that we must develop a deeper understanding of both the pleasures and the pains of lesbians' lives and relationships.

Social work practice is grounded in an awareness of the complicated interplay of social, cultural, and psychological determinants of individuals' lives. It is not enough to view human development in strictly intrapsychic terms if we are to have a fully informed grasp of clinical issues. This study is a contribution to that approach by exploring how differing social histories come to bear on psychological dynamics and how these may be experienced between two women in a long-term relationship. The specific kind of pairing

under study here, in which one woman has a primary identification as lesbian and the other a previous identification as heterosexual and later identification as lesbian, highlights these differences. In other lesbian relationships the partners may not have such different sexual histories; nevertheless, more subtle differences in sexual history and identification may approximate the more obvious ones. The terms of complementarity in the more distinctly-different couple may apply in a diffused version to other less-different couples. Further research would be useful to determine whether and how such differences play a meaningful role in relational dynamics.

Because these individual differences carry great meaning on both social and intrapsychic levels, they do not simply attract or serve as a bond. They also contain the seeds of conflict and tension. Like all differences between couples, they may threaten to disrupt the bond and their attraction may fade. It is a commonplace in clinical work that individuals come to distrust and resent their partners for the very differences that drew them to each other in the first place. Understanding the source of the threat inherent in differences is often a primary part of working through such difficulties. Envy of a partner's more socially-valued attribute (or orientation) can be especially destructive if not explored and contained.

When the threat is a more unconscious one, it is especially important for the clinician to understand the dynamics involved. The kind of psycho–logical development possible in projective exchanges explored here is often periodically unsettling. A lesbian couple whose relationship involves this kind of complementarity is commonly not attuned to its full significance. Sometimes explicit exploration of differences in sexual orientation is desirable in clinical work, but it also stirs resistance. The clinician can easily

avoid it too, especially where she or he is relatively oblivious to its import and complexity.

A woman's painful sense of self as deviant may be heavily defended; her defenses may be misinterpreted by her partner (or therapist). Likewise, a woman's discomfort with moving into lesbian culture from the world of heterosexuality may be unacknowledged for long periods of time, even to herself; both partners can resist confronting this as a problem. Such defenses limit the couple's intimacy and counteract the potential of the relationship for psychological exchange. Exploring these issues allows both women to bring a fuller sense of themselves to each other. Differences in gendered sense of self are also weighted with meaning at various levels, for the therapist as well as for the patient. The sensitive therapist needs to be aware of her or his own internal responses to nontraditional gender behavior, roles, and identity. Not uncommonly, traditional therapists have confounded their own defenses or biases with theory about "appropriate" identity.

Because lesbian (and gay male) development has not received the kind of thoughtful, unprejudiced attention that would provide a helpful clinical framework, the therapist may draw upon her or his own defenses and biases perhaps more unconsciously than in other clinical work. While there is still much to understand about heterosexuality, the fear of homosexuality has actually encouraged ignorance of its potential for growth--which sometimes parallels heterosexuality and sometimes diverges from it greatly. Social prejudice creates enormous individual suffering which has often been discounted in assessments of patients' issues; paradoxically, this prejudice sometimes produces unusual psychological strengths which are also not recognized as remarkable achievements. The creative potential of lesbian

relationships for ameliorating this suffering and drawing upon these strengths exists along with the more usual psychological possibilities inherent in all relationships. The necessity of keeping in mind both intrapsychic and interpersonal dimensions of experience, especially in work with minority groups, is underscored by a theory which draws upon both perspectives.

Relevance of the Theory to Other Kinds of Relationships

The impact of differences in sexual history and identity may apply to relationships between gay men as well as lesbians. Certainly some of the developmental experiences described for lesbians are paralleled in early, adolescent, and adult experiences of gay men. A self-image as deviant, gender-identity concerns, and oedipal differences are equally salient in male homosexuality. It seems wise to be cautious about drawing simple parallels between the two however. The differences in male and female development impart distinct differences in relationships. Just as studies of male homosexuality are not always applicable to lesbianism, dynamics of lesbian relationships may not fit gay male couples very well. Separate explorations of the characteristics of each are needed.

All couples cope with differences of various kinds. This exploration of certain specific differences in lesbian relationships may strengthen our appreciation of the role of complementarity and difference in any relationship. Some authors have gone further, pointing in a direction similar to this thesis. Knight (1940), for example, writes that in heterosexual relationships, the man:

> projects onto [his lover] his own femininity and his own wishes and then tries to live up to them....Reintrojection of this new object then

> occurs. The growing together and becoming alike of a man and woman in love with each other involves considerable interaction of projection and introjection, with resulting identification with each other (p. 340).

In a similar vein, Murstein (1976) notes that a woman "may be drawn to a man for the boyish qualities she herself possessed before she had to abandon them for 'girl's' behavior" (p. 26).

These informal observations implicitly reinforce the idea that all individuals search for experiences that allow them even unconscious access to their own bisexuality (in the sense of gender identity) which they have not themselves fulfilled. In traditional formulations the man provides unconscious access to the external world of instrumentality while the woman provides access to the internal world of emotions (Person, 1988). This study suggests that another level of exchange may operate here as well. Each partner may experience his or her disowned homosexuality through a projection of self onto the partner. Through identification with the woman, the man is loving a man, and similarly the woman is loving a woman. As McDougall (1986a) says, "our ineluctable monosexuality," the problem of what to do with our psychic bisexuality (now in the sense of choice of love object), is one of the major dilemmas of development. This dissertation suggests that in these various ways, through the mechanisms of projective and introjective identifications, we do partake of our lost bisexuality in whatever relationships we form.

The point here is again that the relationship may be a means of expanding the self through affiliation with an Other who embodies a difference of particular significance to the self. The desire for a particular kind of Other is likely to be an unconscious one, but not necessarily inaccessible to awareness.

This study proposes a concept of complementarity achieved through projective and introjective identifications, non-defensive in nature, which allow people to find the unexpressed and undeveloped parts of themselves through intimate psychological exchanges. In this way it reaches beyond heterocentric thinking toward a more universal paradigm of attraction and bonding between partners of either sex.

Directions for Future Research

In this and previous chapters, the inadequacy of our understanding of lesbian development and relationships has been underscored by suggestions of areas where more attention is needed. As the social climate becomes more favorable to homosexuality, the opportunity exists for work which was not possible before. Prejudice has invaded empirical studies of homosexuality as much as it has theoretical ones (Morin, 1977). Further, as lesbians and gay men are more willing to be identified, we have greater opportunity to discover the diversity of experience which characterizes homosexuality. Until (if ever) homosexuality has an entirely accepted place within the culture, however, we will be dealing with complications of social repression which distort whatever clinical and research investigations are undertaken.

Lesbian and gay relationships seem to be in a period of flux. Many lesbian couples are choosing to have children or to adopt them. The toll of AIDS on the gay male community in particular has altered relational patterns enormously, shifting communal values away from casual sex toward monogamous relationships. B. Berzon (1988) writes: "It appears that the age of the couple has come to the gay and lesbian community" (p. 329). At the same time, the heterosexual culture seems also to be moving toward a

renewed emphasis on stability and longevity of relationships in reaction to rising divorce rates and disruption of families. It has often been argued that homosexual relationships do not endure as long as heterosexual ones largely because of their inherent pathology. Certainly, social forces and institutions have acted against homosexual couples in ways sufficient to undermine any kind of relationship. Nevertheless, we really know very little about the developmental course and longevity of gay relationships.

Research into lesbian relationships has much to offer in terms of understanding when and how they are most likely to be successful, fulfilling, and enduring. The question of complementarity is intrinsic to such a pursuit. The mutuality necessary for a relationship to be a positive experience can probably never be fully defined; always idiosyncratic needs and interests will defy categorization. Nevertheless, a broad picture may emerge which is at least suggestive of what factors support happiness and growth in coupling and what factors mediate against it, whether or not the relationship endures. As noted in Chapter One, there is little data in the literature to confirm or deny the role of differences in sexual orientation as an important dimension in lesbian relationships, only the intriguing evidence that many relationships of this type exist. Empirical research investigating this phenomenon would be a valuable exploration of the theory.

A study investigating longevity in lesbian relationships would augment the present study by comparing relationships with these differences in sexual history and identity with relationships not showing these differences. Does the complementarity engendered by these differences contribute to a relationship's endurance? Another route would be to study the role of sequential relationships. Can patterns or shifts in the kinds of partners

women choose from one relationship to the next be identified? The occurrence of repeating patterns or obvious shifts would be helpful in formulating ideas about this difference. Are they a developmental phenomenon, holding less psychological interest over time? Or do they represent an enduring source of complementarity?

A further question of research interest is whether clear differences in interpersonal experiences which reflect fundamental intrapsychic differences (such as differences in sexual orientation) interacts with the tendency toward merger often seen in lesbian relationships. Perhaps such differences are both desirable and threatening enough to give added thrust to the pull toward fusion--in an effort to embody the other's difference and/or to obliterate it. On the other hand, these differences may provide a firm distinction between self and other that allows the partners' engagement in merger as a transitory experience with a solid basis for differentiation afterwards. In other words, they may counteract such a pull so that the desired union may be more securely indulged without confusion of self and other.

Research in other areas would contribute to our understanding dynamic factors in lesbian relationships. One area is that of parenting. Does having children together affect lesbian couples' interactions in ways similar to or different from heterosexual couples? Because roles are usually not defined for lesbian couples, especially in parenting, children may be a source of both greater stress and greater bonding. A recent panel presentation of the American Psychoanalytic Association included a study by Kirkpatrick of lesbian mothers (who had previously been heterosexual) as well as informal observations by McDougall on lesbian non-mothers (who had been almost exclusively homosexual); their data indicated that women in both groups

wanted children (Wolfson, 1987). If we consider the desire to have children to be evidence of femininity (which is of course a somewhat culturally-determined assumption), these data suggest again that differences in sexual orientation among lesbians do not correlate with differences in gender identity. In this sense either primary or bisexual lesbians may have a strong feminine identification. Further exploration of correspondence between primary lesbian orientation and bisexual lesbian orientation vis à vis desire for children would be of interest. It also raises the intriguing question of how women in lesbian relationships decide who will bear children.

The scope of this study covers much theoretical ground. It began by providing some perspective on the difficulty of using traditional theory which relies upon heterosexually-oriented thinking in conceiving of complementary dimensions of lesbian relationships. Some fundamental reconception of this thinking is required which allows us to transcend, as far as possible, strongly-maintained and culturally-embedded notions that complementarity is inherently a matter of gender differences. No doubt the present study moves beyond conventional thinking only to a degree and also reflects culturally-limited thinking. Human sexuality (and theories about it) is, as many have acknowledged, always a manifestation of the culture in which it is expressed. We can see this influence most readily by analyzing the distortions which heterosexual prejudice brings to efforts at understanding homosexuality. What is more difficult to see are the underlying dynamics of heterosexuality, since heterosexuality is treated as a given, a natural expression that requires no analysis. As conventional thinking about homosexuality broadens, we will also be able to raise the unasked questions about

heterosexuality more freely. Ultimately we may find a multifaceted approach for understanding all sexuality in a more complete way.

APPENDIX

LETTER TO COLLEAGUES:

Dear _____,

I am contacting a small number of therapists who work with lesbian couples to get some information I need for my dissertation. I hope you might be able to help.

I am writing a theoretical dissertation on complementarity in lesbian relationships. That is, I am trying to develop an analysis of what attracts and bonds lesbians to each other aside from the traditional analysis of role-playing, butch-femme, etc. I am particularly interested in relationships between women where one partner is what has been called a "primary" lesbian--a woman who has been primarily with women rather than men--and lesbians who came out later after some serious involvement with a man or men. These are not absolutely discrete categories of course, but rather the two ends of a continuum. I am looking at women who would be toward opposite ends of this continuum who pair up with each other.

There is almost nothing in the literature on this type of lesbian couple. No studies have examined this variable, so I can't find any data to support the proposition that this type of connection may not be uncommon. Because the study is a theoretical one, I don't need rigorous empirical data, but an informal sampling would help. Aside from an early pilot study which has given me some information, I am seeking a bit more evidence of this phenomenon.

What I'm asking of you is that you think about the couples you have seen in your clinical practice in the past two years and try to identify how many were couples of this kind. I'd also be interested in your own impressions of whether this was a significant dimension in their relationship, i.e., whether it appeared to be a meaningful variable for the couple. If you do have any thoughts about this that you want to offer, I'd appreciate them.

The questionnaire is very brief and simple, just asking for whatever instances of this connection you may be aware of. I would greatly appreciate your returning the information to me as soon as you're able. Thanks very much. If you have any questions, please call me at 654-3809.

Sincerely,

Beverly Burch

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Think of lesbian orientation as a continuum, with one end representing a primary lesbian orientation, i.e., women who had little or no significant interest or involvement with men, and at the other end, women who did have signficant involvement with men and came out as lesbian later.

Consider couples you have seen in your clinical practice over the last two years where both partners were older than 26:

1. In how many couples would the two women involved be found somewhere toward opposite ends of this continuum? _____

2. In how many couples would both women be found somewhere toward the same end of this continuum? _____

3. How many couples about whom you do not have any information on this dimension? _____

Thinking of couples in the first group, do you have a sense of whether this difference represented a meaningful distinction?

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