To whomever—

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[Signature: T. Rust]
Paula Claire Rust
Honors Project, 1982
Soc-Anthro Dept.
Oberlin College
Advisors:
William Norris
Milton Yinger
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At some point during the early years of formal education in the United States every child is bound to hear America referred to as a "melting pot" (Zingwill, 1969). The melting pot analogy is supposed to convey the notion that many different peoples have converged in the United States, implying that they have freely intermixed and interbred, shared with each other their heritages and cultures, and produced a unique homogeneous blended culture. But if one scrapes away this thin surface of idealism, it quickly becomes apparent that America is not a melting pot society but a pluralistic society, containing many groups of people with differing norms and values, each of which are more or less integrated into what may be referred to as the mainstream or the dominant culture. To the extent to which they are not integrated into mainstream, dominant white culture, these groups possess subcultures, or:

Normative systems of groups smaller than society, [the term "subculture" giving] emphasis to the ways these groups differ in such things as language, values, religion, and style of life from the larger society of which they are a part. (Yinger, 1970:123)

Some of these groups, for example groups of new immigrants, possess subcultures which have been preserved in spite of contact with the surrounding, dominant culture. Others possess what Yinger terms a "contraculture," which is a subculture consisting of "norms that arise specifically from a frustrating situation or from conflict
between a group and the larger society."

During the past two decades the members of many disadvantaged groups have come to recognize their common interests and begun to band together in civil rights and liberation movements. In so doing, they become members of a "minority" (Nirth, 1945). As each new minority identifies itself and begins to speak out, both members and non-members of the minority become aware of the minority's existence, of its special problems, and of the flavor of the way of life of its members. As each minority gains societal acknowledgement, it becomes an increasingly legitimate and frequent subject of social science research. Thus, minorities such as blacks, women, the handicapped, alcoholics, Western European immigrants, and gay men are the subjects of a growing body of research literature. A recent addition to the list of minorities who are standing up to identify themselves is that of lesbians. Long hidden and invisible, until the late 1960's lesbians were virtually ignored by society and by social researchers. But in the past two decades, as lesbians have become more vocal, the public and the scientific community are becoming aware not only that lesbians exist but that they have developed a unique counterculture in response to the attitudes of society toward them.
PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Until recently, most writings which made mention of lesbianism were primarily about male homosexuality, and if based on samples of homosexuals, the samples were of male homosexuals. In these works, lesbianism was treated as a female form of male homosexuality, and the authors either generalized the theories they developed of male homosexuality to cover lesbians, substituting the word "lesbian" for "homosexual," or they took a sort of mirror image of their male homosexual theories and applied that to lesbianism. In addition, early studies of homosexuality were often based on studies of people who had either run into legal trouble as a result of their homosexuality or who had sought mental therapy and thereby come to the attention of those who would study them. Even in the psychiatric literature, studies of lesbianism are scarce. The neglect of the lesbian in psychiatric literature may be because the psychiatric profession is male-dominated and thus not as interested in specifically female issues as it is in issues involving men (Martin and Lyon, 1972). Or it may be part of the more widespread denial of female sexuality by our phallocentric society (Horney, 1926 and Jones, 1927 in Rosen, 1974:5), which prefers to think of women as asexual and in need of men for sexual gratification. On the other hand, it may be due to the greater leniency of society toward female than male homosexuality, which drives fewer lesbians than gay men to seek counselling, and thus come to the attention of researchers.
(Socrates, 1965 in Rosen, 1974:5).

The biases implicit in patient-centered and male homosexual studies are obvious. Lesbians are not represented by samples of psychiatric patients or of gay men. But few non-patient, non-condemnatory studies have been done of lesbians in their own right. Only fifteen years ago, Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love, in one of the first two books written by lesbians about lesbianism, saw fit to say about the state of knowledge on the subject of lesbianism that:

The lesbian is one of the least known members of our culture. Less is known about her -- and less accurately -- than about the Newfoundland dog. In the 1960's, two books on the Lesbian appeared [Cory, 1965 and Caprio, 1967]. Both were written by men, and both were liberal attempts to deal with the worst stereotype about Lesbians -- which says they are men trapped in women's bodies. Both failed to destroy the stereotype, since they only described behavior and since the authors were largely unable or unwilling to deal with the Lesbian's emotional life. Neither book was the product of any social scientific discipline. There may still not be a first-rate psychological or social-psychological study on Lesbians. (Abbott and Love, 1977:13)

Actually, one year before Abbott and Love wrote their book, Sappho was a Right-On Woman, and six years before it was finally published, Charlotte Wolf, M.D., a Fellow of the British Psychological Society, wrote a book based on a sample of lesbians recruited through British Lesbian organizations. In the same year in which Abbott and Love wrote Sappho was a Right-On Woman, two other lesbians also wrote a protest from the inside called Lesbian/Woman (Martin and Lyon, 1972). Then in 1974 David R. Rosen of the
University of California School of Medicine, Department of psychiatry, published *Lesbianism: A Study of Female Homosexuality*, based on a sample of twenty-six members of the lesbian organization Daughters of Bilitis. DDB was, incidentally, founded by Martin and Lyon in 1955 and was one of the first national lesbian organizations, the founding of which "ushered in a new era of lesbian consciousness and ultimately helped to pave the way for the more militant and far-reaching demands of the liberation movements in the following decade" (Wolf, 1979:48-49). Rosen includes in his book an excellent, exhaustive review of the contributions to the study of lesbianism up to that time. He reviews both those that focus exclusively on lesbianism and those that treat lesbianism as an appendage to the study of male homosexuality, those that are based on patient samples as well as those based on non-patient samples, those based on individual psychological case studies and those based on large samples or personal experience, and those that take a sympathetic view of lesbianism as well as those which come out firmly on the side of heterosexual superiority.

From Rosen's overview of the major contributions to the study of lesbianism, it is obvious that a large gap exists in this field. In particular, most of these works have either been books written by lesbians about more or less personal perspectives not based on scientific research, or they have been social scientific studies using data from psychological tests, questionnaires, and interviews without substantial information gathered from actual observation or
participation in the subculture itself. Tests and surveys are useful for the study of the characteristics and perceptions of lesbians, but are inadequate for a deeper analysis of lesbian subculture, which requires knowledge obtainable only through the observation of interaction between lesbians. Another shortcoming of most previous research is that the samples used were drawn from the ranks of lesbian organizations and sometimes from the friendship networks of the lesbians found in these organizations. Used alone, these techniques systematically fail to tap certain sectors of the lesbian community. That these methods have been used in pioneering studies of lesbianism is understandable, since these organizations are the only lesbian institutions which may be entered in a formal manner by an outside researcher. Less formal lesbian institutions, such as gay bars and private circles, often are inaccessible to outsiders, present less clear-cut paths of entry, and would provide a lower proportion of willing respondents.

However, this limited use of data-collection and sample-attainment techniques has left a large portion of the lesbian world unexplored. Although the authors do not often indicate what percentage of their respondents frequent gay or lesbian bars, how overt or covert the respondents were, nor what the age distribution of the sample is, it is likely that using these means alone to recruit respondents would yield a sample in which "bar dykes," closeted lesbians, and older lesbians are underrepresented. Little mention is made in most of these studies of the gay bars per se or
of older women per se. Since the gay bar is a central institution in the lesbian subculture, and since both the lesbian subculture and attitudes towards lesbians have been changing rapidly in the past two decades and therefore the experiences of older lesbians are radically different from those of younger lesbians, "bar dykes" and older lesbians are very important sources of knowledge about lesbian subculture.

In addition, most previous studies have either attempted to generalize about the entire lesbian subculture, or have emphasized the diversity among individual lesbians in an effort to combat the stereotype that all lesbians are alike. But both these perspectives shortchange the lesbian subculture by ignoring the very real divisions which do exist among lesbians. There is no one shared lesbian subculture, Instead, there are several lesbian sub-subcultures, e.g., there is bar culture, lesbian feminist culture, bisexual culture, and separatist culture.

Three recent works have begun to deal with these omissions. Ponee (1979) conducted field work as well as interviews and made a conscious effort to extend her fieldwork and sample beyond the organization with which she made her first contact, in particular toward older and more secretive lesbians and women with a variety of sexual identities from lesbian to male-identified. Wolf (1979) acknowledges the existence of sub-subcultures within the lesbian subculture and concentrates her attention on the lesbian-feminist subculture. Ettore (1980) also began by contacting a lesbian
organization, but soon began taking part in the life of the lesbian ghetto by going to bars, clubs, and discos.

Much more remains to be done. The stories of older lesbians and bar lesbians have not yet been listened to adequately. No study has seriously sought to describe the differences between the sub-subcultures nor the sentiments of one group of lesbians for another. Although no study of lesbian subculture can avoid mentioning the impact of prejudice upon lesbians, and some have closely analyzed the effects of societal attitudes on lesbian identity (notably Fonse), detailed analyses of the effects of societal attitudes upon many other areas of lesbian life have yet to be done. It is the aim of this paper to help fill in some of the gaping holes in the study of lesbians and lesbian subculture.
Lesbians and lesbian subculture cannot be studied independently of the profound effects of societal attitudes upon them. It is largely due to these attitudes that the lesbian subculture exists in the first place. Beyond that, societal attitudes have interacted with the characteristics of the lesbian minority itself to shape the subculture, thus making it a "contraculture." Because the characteristics of lesbians as a minority, and the attitudes of society toward them, differ from those of any other minority, the lesbian subculture which has resulted is unique among minority subcultures. Because of these differences, a study of the culture which has developed among lesbians would serve not only to increase public and scientific understanding of lesbianism, but to add to our understanding of the factors which shape the development of minority subcultures in general. With these two goals in mind, it is the purpose of this paper to explore the effect of societal attitudes in interaction with the characteristics of the lesbian minority on the development of the lesbian subculture in the United States.

To aid in the conceptualization of the forces shaping lesbian subculture, these differences can be organized into five salient variables on which lesbians differ from other minorities: 1) Societal attitudes, 2) Nature of the distinguishing characteristic of the minority, 3) Identifiability, 4) Familial background, and 5) Gender. These variables will be called upon throughout the paper to
help structure discussion and to facilitate the comparison of the process of lesbian subculture formation with that of other minorities.

1) The Nature of Societal Attitudes. These have varied with time and place. Thus, in studying the interaction of attitudes with the following independent variables, I will compare the societal attitudes and lesbian subcultures of different times and regions in order to reach a more complete understanding of the relationship between them. In general, the usual values of this variable regarding lesbians are: a) denial of its existence, b) discouragement of its practice, and c) hostility toward or rejection of it. These negative attitudes are accompanied by stereotypes and myths about lesbians which also influence lesbians and their subculture. Societal attitudes toward other minorities also differ from attitudes toward lesbians, and so I will also compare lesbians with other minorities. The most notable and useful minority for comparison is that of gay men.

2) The Nature of the Distinguishing Characteristic of the Minority. For lesbians, the distinguishing characteristic is sexual preference or sexual orientation. For other minorities, the nature of their distinction is different, e.g., for blacks it is race or color, for deaf people it is physical disability, for women it is gender, and for racists it is attitudes. The nature of that which makes a minority a minority influences the reactions of society to that minority and the responses of the minority to society's
attitudes. This is clearly seen in the types of stereotypes which develop around each minority, and the way the minority reacts to the stereotypes.

3) Identifiability, or whether a member of the minority is generally or necessarily physically identifiable as a member by non-members and members. Lesbians are not necessarily identifiable, though some lesbians may be identifiable in ways which will be discussed. Neither are gay men necessarily identifiable, however it appears that they are generally more identifiable than are lesbians. In contrast, blacks and women are necessarily identifiable as minority members. The fact of unidentifiability makes possible secrecy, which plays a very large part in the lesbian subculture. Unidentifiability and secrecy affect societal attitudes, lesbian values, relations between heterosexuals and homosexuals, relations between lesbians, and the lesbian political movement.

4) Family identity, or whether minority members are usually brought up by members of the same minority. Lesbians are rarely brought up by lesbians. Gay men likewise are rarely brought up by gay men, and 91.7% of deaf people have hearing parents (Schein and Bolk, 1974:19). On the other hand, blacks usually have black parents and women usually have mothers. Since lesbians are not brought up by lesbians, they are not socialized to the lesbian subculture during childhood. Thus they must undergo this socialization at a later age; a resocialization or acculturation, it may be called. In addition, being unidentifiable, they are not treated as lesbians nor
given an identity as children which includes the concept of self as lesbian. This identity must also be developed later in life. The process of taking on a lesbian identity to oneself and to others and of acculturating to lesbian subculture is called "coming out."

5) The Sex or Minority members. Because lesbians are by definition women, the position of women in society has necessary consequences for lesbians. Discrimination and prejudice against, and the socialization of, women not only have effects on lesbians as women, but affect lesbians in ways that are unique to lesbians. A great deal of the discussion to follow will refer to gay men in comparison to lesbians. This is partly of necessity, as many of the previous studies which have the greatest implications for the understanding or misunderstanding lesbianism have been studies of gay men. Because both lesbians and gay men have the same distinguishing characteristic, i.e., sexual orientation, they are solidly melded together in the public mind as a single minority and have often been treated as such in scientific writings as well. But for many reasons, lesbians' values, lifestyles, and experiences are quite different from those of homosexual men and this body of literature requires a close look to separate truth from false assumption. A consistent theme of this paper will be to show where the literature on male homosexuals, which has been assumed to apply to lesbians, is and is not applicable to lesbians, with the purpose of showing that lesbians and lesbian subculture are distinct as a research problem from gay men and their subculture.
homosexuality will be discussed also because it provides a valuable opportunity for comparative analysis; in important ways it is similar to lesbianism and in important ways it is different. Both are sexual orientation minorities, and neither lesbians nor gay men are usually born to homosexual parents. But societal attitudes towards gay men have been different than attitudes towards lesbians, gay men for many reasons have generally been more identifiable than have lesbians and, very importantly, gay men are men and lesbians are women. Because of the biological, psychological, and social differences between men and women, this difference in gender has many ramifications for the respective subcultures of these two minorities. By comparing their respective subcultures, the effects of each of these five variables on the minority subculture can be more clearly isolated.

A second comparison which will prove valuable is that between the lesbian subculture of the 1940's, 1950's, and into the 1960's, referred to as "old gay life" (Wolf, 1979:23), with that which exists today. Earlier lesbians and contemporary lesbians are both sexual orientation minorities, are both women, and were both usually raised by non-lesbian parents. Yet societal attitudes towards lesbians and women have changed in the past few decades, and there is also evidence in my data that the two groups of lesbians are not equally identifiable. Of course, my data concerning earlier lesbians is gathered from older women who used to be "earlier lesbians," as opposed to that gathered about contemporary lesbians which is
gathered from both older and younger women who are now "contemporary lesbians." These two factors may introduce some bias into the data which is difficult to spot and even more difficult to control for. On the whole, I have done little to identify the maturing effects of age or the distancing effects of the passage of time except where they are an obvious source of distortion.
TERMINOLOGY

LESBIAN COMMUNITY:

The term "lesbian community," used frequently herein, requires a discussion of the applicability and meaning with respect to lesbians of the word community. "Community" is a vague term which has been used with widely divergent and numerous meanings in social science writing. In fact, Hillyer (1955) isolated 94 different explicit definitions which had been used by theorists and analyzed the elements contained in each to find that the different definitions varied not only in conceptual emphasis but actually contradicted each other in some cases. He concludes that there is no complete agreement on any element except for the concept that people are involved in community. Of the sixteen elements he identifies, three were common to the most of the various definitions. In order of decreasing importance, they are: 1) Social interaction among members of the set or people under consideration, i.e., "networks of interpersonal ties which provide sociability and support to members" (Wellman and Leighton, 1975:305), 2) Common ties among the members such as common ethnicity or kinship which the members express in feelings of solidarity and group activity, and 3) Area, or geographical proximity of the members.

The first two criteria, social interaction and a common tie, are easily met by lesbians. There is a great deal of social interaction among lesbians. By the very nature of the minority,
Lesbians must interact if they are to establish romantic relationships because it is from among other lesbians that lesbians choose lovers and that many lesbians choose their friends. Of course, not all lesbians interact equally with other lesbians. Some will interact only with other lesbians and others avoid contact at all except with their lovers or even forego establishing a romance in order to keep the secret of their lesbianism hidden. These latter cannot rightly be considered part of the lesbian community if the definition of community includes this criterion. It appears that the proportion of lesbians who do belong to the community has increased over the past few decades as it has become easier to find the community and as changing social attitudes towards lesbianism allow more women to be open about their orientation. Thus, while the proportion of lesbians in the United States population has probably not greatly increased in recent decades*, the proportion of

*Kinsey, et. al, report that the incidence of homosexuality among neither men nor women appears to be increasing. As stated in Sexual Behavior_in_the_Human_Male, their comparison of two generations of men indicate that the incidence of male homosexual contact has not increased in recent decades:

An examination of the accumulative incidence curves will show that the number of persons ultimately involved, are almost exactly the same for the older and the younger generations [among college level men] ...and as for the homosexual, if a large number of the younger generation is becoming involved, we have failed to find any evidence of it. (Kinsey, 1948:396-397)

In Sexual Behavior_in_the_Human_Female, they state that:

In the available sample, the accumulative incidences of homosexual contacts to the point of orgasm had been very much the same for the females who were born in the four decades on which we have data. There is no evidence that there are any more females involved in homosexual contacts
women in the lesbian community probably has.

The common tie among lesbians is their lesbianism, a common orientation for which society ostracizes them and because of which they must look to each other for lovers. Because of this common tie, lesbians feel a sense of solidarity with each other and participate in activities together. Again, the solidarity felt by a given lesbian with others varies, and those who feel no connection or obligation towards lesbians as lesbians cannot be considered part of the community. Demonstrations of solidarity sometimes take the form of large public activities, such as parades for gay rights, conferences on lesbian or gay issues, or music festivals such as the annual Michigan Women's Music Festival; or solidarity can take the form of being friendly or loyal to another woman merely because she is a lesbian. Lesbians have also founded lesbian bookstores, bars, coffeehouses, and other places where lesbians can meet and promote the sense of solidarity.

But the third most important element in the concept of community, residential proximity, is rarely met by lesbians, who tend to live in scattered households. Arguments for using the term in the absence of geographical specificity have been made, however. Wellman and Leighton (1979), citing Hillery (1955), claim that the fundamental element for sociology is social structure and that geographical factors are not important in themselves but only insofar as they affect social structure, interpersonal networks and the flow of resources between network members. They urge that the concept of "community" be divorced from the "neighborhood." Past researchers have looked for community within geographic neighborhoods, with the development of urbanism, people's social and other needs are no longer necessarily met by those who live close to them. Indeed, one's neighbors may play little part at all in one's life. So researchers looking for community in the confines of neighborhood were unable to find it and declared community to be lost, a casualty of urbanization. Wellman and Leighton claim that rather than having disappeared, people's networks have evolved from broad, local contacts to functionally narrow, scattered and unconnected contacts. "Urbanites are now limited members of several social networks," instead of highly involved members of one local network. To keep sight of community as it changes forms, Wellman and Leighton advocate the replacing of the neighborhood perspective with a "network analytic perspective" which "takes as its starting point the search for social linkages and flows of resources" (1979:167). This perspective would liberate the community from the neighborhood. They assert that ties sufficient to qualify a set of people as a community can be maintained over long distances, in

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today than there were in the generation born before 1900 or in any intermediate decades. (Kinsey, 1953:461-462)
particular if people are bound together by kinship.

Under Wellman's and Leighton's terms, the active lesbians of the United States qualify as a community both at the national and the local levels. They make up a well-defined network through which flow resources in the form of psychological support, information, financial support for political action, goods and payment for goods. Informal connections make up a large part of the lesbian network, but some parts are also formalized, such as political action or magazine subscription mailing lists. Although lesbians are not bound together by legally recognized kinship, some are bound by current and former romantic commitments, and all are bound together by the fact of common oppression, which has been a powerful cohesive force in the lesbian world.

Precedence for considering non-geographically localized networks "communities" does exist. For example, Goode (1957) treats the members of a profession as a community, by virtue of their shared identity, values, role-definitions and language, the continuing nature of the professional status, the power of the community over the individual, and the ability of the profession to produce the next generation through a process of adult socialization.

Precedent is also set by the many researchers who have treated segments of the deaf population as a community. Higgins notes that the deaf form communities through endogamous friendships, clubs, and magazines, and that "though scattered throughout a metropolitan area, members of the deaf community primarily confine their social relations to other members" (Higgins, 1979:4). An often cited fact in support of this usage is that 85% or more of deaf who lost their hearing before age nineteen are married to hard of hearing people (Schein and Deaf, 1979:40), indicating that the personal networks of the deaf tend to include other deaf people. Lisch (1979:321) explains that this high frequency of deaf-to-deaf marriage is partly due to the increased chance the deaf have to meet each other through common schools, etc., but that it is at least partly due to their common handicap and language, which binds them together in personal networks. Care must be taken in comparing this observation directly to the lesbian situation. First, because by the very nature of their minority characteristic, lesbians must "marry" each other, it would be unfair to cite the proportion of lesbians who form "marriages" with other lesbians as evidence of community even if one could establish criteria for calling a lesbian relationship a marriage in the absence of legal criteria. On the other hand, unlike the deaf, lesbians are not educated together in special programs for lesbians, thus the extent to which lesbians do form networks with each other is even more attributable to their common lesbianism rather than to physical proximity than is the case for the deaf.
Simon and Gagnon (1967), Warren (1974), Ponse (1978), and Wolf (1979) have established precedent for applying the concept of community to the lesbian world by using the term themselves. Simon and Gagnon explain:

For both male and female homosexuals one can talk about the existence of a community, at least in most relatively large cities. As for many ethnic or occupational groups, which also can be said to have a community, this subcommunity does not require a formal character or even a specific geographical location. It is, rather, a continuing collectivity of individuals who share some significant activity and who, out of a history of continuing interaction based on that activity, begin to generate a sense of a bounded group possessing special norms and a particular argot. (1967:261)

Even Davelock Hills, in the early 1900's, referred to "the world of sexual inverts" as "a community distinctly organized with words, customs, traditions of its own; and every city has numerous meeting places" (in Hechler, 1970:130, quoted in Plummer, 1975).

The term "community" can have three possible meanings of significance in the study of lesbians. As used by lesbians, especially those who are active in and strongly identified with the lesbian political movement, the term frequently refers to a feeling of solidarity with other women, especially lesbian or woman-oriented women. This meaning sometimes takes on a spiritual cast, implying that all women, and especially all lesbians, are somehow united regardless of time or place by virtue of common feelings and experiences. In this sense, the term often has a political flavor as well, suggesting the duty of lesbians to stick together, to accept each other simply on the fact of their common lesbianism, and to fight oppression together. Except where explicitly stated,
"community" will not be used in this popular sense here. Terms such as "solidarity," and "cohesion" will be used instead to avoid confusion.

The other two uses of "community" differ in their scope. The first refers to that network of lesbians throughout the United States and abroad who are in contact with each other through letters, newspapers, music, books, and other long distance means of communication. Lesbians who are not connected to this network would not be members of a community by this definition. The last definition refers to a more localized group of lesbians who are in personal contact with each other. These women form a social group which meets frequently and provides its members with many types of support. They may live in a certain area or street of a city but are more likely to have residences scattered over a wider area. These latter two definitions will both be used in this paper. Where the meaning of the term as it is being used is not made clear by context, the usage will be clarified.

ATTITUDES, SOCIAI:

The term "societal attitudes" will be used herein to refer to any and all opinions, stereotypes, myths, beliefs and judgments, both positive and negative, by any significantly large, vocal, or influential sector of a given society, usually that of the middle and upper classes of the United States unless otherwise specified.
PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION:

Prejudice is a categorical like or dislike of a group of people because of characteristics such as race, religion, ethnic group, or sexual orientation. Prejudice is the attitude, and discrimination is the act which expresses that attitude (Light and Keller, 1975:137).

HOMOPHOBIA:

Literally meaning "fear of homosexuality," this term is used to refer to all fear or prejudice against homosexuals. The implication of the term that all prejudices against homosexuals is caused by fear of homosexuality is unfortunate, as the implication may offend some homophobes who do not believe they are afraid, and as the issue of the motivations behind homophobia is still open to debate. Although some theorists believe that prejudice against homosexuals is always or nearly always caused by a conscious or unconscious fear of homosexuality, the word as used herein is not necessarily meant to imply that all prejudice against homosexuals stems from fear.

QUEERS, DYKES AND FAGGOTS:

Perhaps the stickiest problem of terminology is that of how to refer to "homosexuals" themselves. Dozens of terms exist, each laden with connotations and stereotypical images, and objections to each one have been raised by one or another segment of the homosexual community. For example, the term "homosexual" has been
objected to because it sounds too clinical and focuses attention on sex, which is really only one aspect of being homosexual. The term "gay," though used by much of the community as a word which connotes pride and positive self-definition, is objected to by some because it is too flippant. Some writers have even objected to the term "gay" on the grounds that while it removes the shame from homosexuality, it does so by co-opting homosexuals into the establishment (Shively, 1976:2) and transferring the sick label to groups which are even more stigmatized by society, such as transsexuals and fetishists (Bottn, 1977:3). Words such as "dyke," "lezzi," "faqgot," and "fairy" have histories of being used as derogatory terms for those who love members of their own sex, and many homosexuals would prefer never to hear these words again. Yet some homosexuals advocate "taking back" these words -- using them to refer to each other in a positive way and by so doing robbing them of their power to hurt and insult (Hayes, 1979). When these terms are used in this paper, they will be used in accordance with this latter philosophy.

Reflecting lesbians' growing minority consciousness, there is increasing objection in the lesbian community against being referred to as gay or homosexual women. The sentiment is that homosexual men have received much more attention than have lesbians from society, including researchers and gay political activists; early homosexual activists were unconcerned with the special issues which face lesbians. Tired of being ignored, many women who love women prefer to be called lesbians to emphasize their independent identity.
Since the purpose of this paper is to explore the lesbian subculture as an entity unto itself, and especially not as a sub-subculture of the gay male subculture, and out of respect for the political integrity of the lesbian community, I will usually use the term "lesbian." However, the terms "homosexual woman," "gay woman," "dyke," "butch," and "femme" will not be compulsively avoided; because of their own special meanings and connotations, these terms are useful.

"Lesbian" itself is a problematic term. Usually one's sexual preference, behavior, emotions and identity cluster together*, and in these cases it is not difficult to determine whether one is or is not a lesbian or gay man (Hills, 1980:109). But in cases where they do not, e.g., the "peers" described by Reiss (1961) or the teacoom habitues studied by Humphreys (1970), one runs into a gray area and the question of whether a person is homosexual or not becomes problematic. Such gray areas seem to be much less common among lesbians than gay men, as the separation of sex from emotion appears to be less common in the lesbian world, but the problem of drawing a line between lesbianism and heterosexuality still exists. Lesbians themselves have various definitions of lesbianism, and society, homophobes, and sympathizers also have many different definitions of lesbianism. Definitions vary in the emphasis they place on specifically sexual as opposed to emotional attraction to the same sex, on acting out one's homosexual feelings, on one's own self-definition and on the presumed cause of homosexuality. The term as used herein will refer to women who would like to form their primary romantic attachments to other women. It shall not require that a woman has had sexual relations with another woman. Where a woman has identified herself as a lesbian or bisexual, or has refused to label herself, her opinion will be respected.

BABY DyKE:

A baby dyke is a woman who considers herself a lesbian or is wondering if she is a lesbian and has had little or no sexual

*Ponse refers to the assumption made in our society that one's sex, gender identity, gender role and sexual orientation are congruent as the "principle of consistency" (1978:27).
experience with other women.

SEX, GENDER IDENTITY, GENDER ROLE, SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

"Sex" refers strictly to the physical reality of being female or male, while gender identity is a broader term which includes the psychological and social experience of being either male or female. "Gender identity, the experienced sense of maleness or femaleness, is based on sex assignment at birth. It is the inner sense of being male or female -- corresponding with the body's form and structure" (Ponse, 1978:25), and "Gender identity is the private experience of the gender role, and the gender role is the public expression of gender identity" (Money and Erhardt, in Glaser and Strauss, 1967). "Gender role" refers to behavior; Money and Erhardt define "gender role" as "everything that a person says and does, to indicate to others or to the self the degree that one is either male or female, or ambivalent; it includes but is not restricted to sexual arousal and response" (Warren, 1972). To this, Ponse adds, "Gender role involves seeing oneself as a masculine or feminine being, learning those behaviors and acquiring those qualities that are considered masculine and feminine in a particular culture." Sexual orientation, sexual preference, or sexual object choice refer to the sex of the people with whom one prefers to form sexual attachments, e.g., homosexual, heterosexual, and bisexuality are sexual orientations.

DEVIANC:

In sociological literature, homosexual behavior has frequently been classified under the heading "deviant behavior." In popular usage, "deviant" is a judgmental term, connoting weirdness or delinquency. It is also associated with mental illness. But the sociological term "deviance" is distinct from the psychological term "mental illness" (Hoffman, 1968:118-119), and will be used in this paper to refer simply to behavior which is other than the statistical norm.

SUSPICION:

Usually I will use a phrase such as "suspicion that one is lesbian/gay," but where this would be bulky, the word "suspicion" alone implies suspicion of lesbianism or homosexuality. Unfortunately, the tendency among lesbians to speak about lesbianism without mentioning it, e.g., in the question, "Does she know about you?" reinforces the misconception that lesbianism equals the lesbian's total identity. The reader should be aware that I use the single word "suspicion" for the sake of brevity and not because I
wish to promote the idea that a woman's lesbianism determines her entire identity.

HER, HIM, THEM:

As Schneider and Hacker (1973) have demonstrated, the generic pronouns "he" and "him" are not sexually neutral words. In a paper on lesbianism it would be especially inappropriate to use "he," "him," and "his" when referring to a person of nonspecified gender. To avoid neglecting either half of the human race, I will use, respectively, the words "they," "them," and "theirs," even when the nonspecified party being referred to is a single person. At times this will result in awkward-sounding phrases such as, "If a person conceals their homosexuality by engaging in vague gender references themselves, they are more likely to notice others doing so." This initial awkwardness will probably fade as the reader becomes accustomed to this usage.
METHOD AND SAMPLE

The research conducted for this paper consisted of participant observation and formal interviews over a period of eleven months from March, 1981 to January, 1982. Political and social gatherings of lesbians, lesbian and gay bars, informal gay gatherings, picnics, parties, and lesbian households were the most frequent scenes of participant observation. In every case I was accepted into these groups and gatherings as a full and equal participant.

Interviews were unstructured. Respondents were encouraged to free associate, to talk at length, and to elaborate upon answers given to the questions. At the start of each interview, the respondent was assured of complete anonymity and promised time at the end of the interview to ask of me any of the questions which I had asked them during the interview or any other questions they might have. Each respondent is referred to by a pseudonym in this paper.

Several standard questions were asked of all or most respondents but with variation in ordering as appropriate so as not to frustrate trains of thought, and with some variation in wording so as to make the questions relevant to the particular situation of each respondent, where the particular wording of a question may have had a significant effect on a response quoted in this paper, the wording of the question will be given along with the response.

Questions also evolved as my research progressed. For example,
several questions were used to explore the possibility of tension, prejudice or distrust between lesbians and bisexual women. Not surprisingly, the direct question "Do you think there's any tension between gay women and bisexual women?" almost invariably met with flat denials. Suspecting that the denials were due to reluctance on the part of the women to admit to a prejudice within the lesbian community or within themselves, I quickly dropped this question from the interview schedule. It was replaced by more subtle questions which often elicited evidence of quite different feelings. The interview schedule, including the variations of questions most frequently used, is presented in Appendix A.

My usual method for locating respondents was to participate for a period of time in a given organization or social grouping before mentioning that I was doing a research project. Sometimes I was unable to use this strategy and had to ask a potential respondent for an interview without having had previous contact with them. This was especially true of older and more private lesbians who rarely socialize in public gatherings. But the former was my preferred method as it served two purposes. First, it allowed me to see how the group as a whole functioned; how members interacted and how individuals felt about certain issues. This gave me some groundwork upon which to build when I did interview them and helped me to interpret their statements in light of their outlook and social situation. It should be said that I did not ask only those women who belonged to the friendship groups I had joined to give me
interviews. I asked women from various social groupings so as to avoid the bias which would result from interviewing a group of women who spent a great amount of time together. Secondly, the strategy of getting to know a woman before asking for an interview allowed me to establish a sense of trust and familiarity between potential respondents and myself which is necessary if one expects to collect meaningful data on a topic as sensitive as lesbianism. As a result, I believe all of my respondents accepted me as a trustworthy, understanding person who would not distort, misunderstand or abuse the integrity of their words, and I have no reason to believe that any respondents were intentionally dishonest or that my role as researcher caused anyone to doubt my trustworthiness. In a few cases I did notice a defensive attitude on the part of the respondent which may have distorted the information offered, but this defensiveness seemed to be directed against either society or, occasionally, men, rather than against me. This defensiveness itself is an important result of the societal attitudes lesbians face and will be explored in its own right in the section on Stereotypes. The strategy of getting to know a woman socially before asking for an interview also appears to have been successful because no one whom I asked to grant me an interview refused the request, in spite of the fact that some of the women I asked were rather closeted. In fact, many women were surprisingly eager to talk, going out of their ways to meet me and provide me with extra help and connections; there seemed to be mutual agreement between us
that this is a subject that has been too long neglected and needs to be brought to people's attention, and they were more than willing to aid in an effort to do so.

Formal interviews were conducted with twenty-seven lesbians and bisexual women, one gay man and one heterosexual female therapist who counsels lesbians, gay men and heterosexuals. Both types of research were conducted in several places, including Oberlin College and a nearby town; Rochester, New York; Boston, Mass.; several towns in northern New Jersey; and the 1981 Michigan Women's Music Festival, which attracts lesbians from across the United States as well as from foreign countries. Twenty-five of the twenty-seven lesbians/bisexuals are residents of the United States and form what I will refer to as my sample of formal interviews. The other two lesbians, who are residents of South Africa, the gay man and the straight therapist were interviewed to help draw to my attention aspects which I may have otherwise overlooked, in the way that extreme cases often provide insight into a question.

A conscious attempt was made to obtain a sample of women who ranged widely on a number of dimensions. The distribution of the sample on relevant dimensions is as follows:

Age: Special care was taken to interview women of all ages, including older lesbians who are more difficult to find than younger. Seven of the women were in their late teens or early twenties, two were in their mid twenties, four in their late twenties or early thirties, three in their mid to late thirties,
four in their late forties, two in their fifties, two in their sixties, and one in her early seventies.

LENGTH OF TIME SINCE FIRST SELF-IDENTIFICATION as a lesbian or bisexual: A few of the women, having had a lesbian relationship or lesbian feelings, were still in the process of trying to decide what their sexual orientation was. For example, one woman had just ended a thirteen year relationship in which she was deeply involved with another woman and did not feel as though she could define herself as having any orientation at the time, while another woman had become aware of her lesbian feelings only six months previously. At the other end of the spectrum, four women spoke of having recognized their lesbian feelings by the early 1940's, and six more had done so during the 1950's or 1960's.

SELF-IDENTIFIED SEXUAL ORIENTATION: Two of the women refused to define themselves and four more were not asked or avoided the question of self-identification. Two women considered themselves bisexual, and the remaining seventeen either explicitly identified themselves as lesbians or made it clear that when looking for a romantic attachment, they look for a woman.

OCCUPATION, SES AND EDUCATION: Respondents included two therapists, a nurse, a graduate student, two shop-owning professional photographers, a jewelry maker and writer, a postal worker, two insurance firm employees, a mental health worker, a grade school physical education teacher, a shoe salesclerk, a cook in a pizzeria parlor with training as an X-ray technician, a supervisor.
of a team of engineers, an accountant, a housewife, and seven Oberlin College students. Of those women whose homes I saw, the homes ranged from a dilapidated apartment in a poor section of town, through college dormitories, a cabin in the woods, middle to high class apartments, to resident-owned homes. As a whole, the sample was biased towards the well-educated; most had had post secondary school education, usually college, sometimes technical school. At least four had been through some graduate school; probably more than four had been.

RACE: All but one respondent are white; the one is black. The two South African women, not included in the formal sample, are white.

AREA OF RESIDENCE: As stated above, women were interviewed in Oberlin, Ohio; Rochester, New York; Boston, Mass.; northern New Jersey; and at the Michigan Women's Music Festival. All of the women in the formal sample are now living in the northeast, though some are from other areas such as Kentucky and Germany. Place of birth was not asked in the interviews, so the geographical distribution of the respondents' birth places is not known. One woman had visited lesbian friends in Israel through whom she gained access to lesbian homes and functions in Tel Aviv and Haifa in 1974. The women resided in central cities, small towns, suburbs and semirural areas, with one respondent living in the woods.

ROMANTIC HISTORIES: Some of the women had never had a relationship with a woman. Most had, and of these some had had
numerous short or long term relationships while others had had one
special relationship, usually the one during which they came to
describe themselves as lesbian/bisexual. Both partners of four
current or former couples are among the respondents. At least four
women had had one night stands or brief, uninvolved relationships
while a few stated emphatically that they would never consider
having a casual relationship. Most respondents did not indicate
their feelings on this issue, but given the great emphasis placed by
them on the place of emotion and commitment in lesbian relationships
in general, it appears that most of them would prefer not to engage
in one-night stands. Six of the women had been married to men, one
of whom is still married, four of whom are divorced (one twice) and
one of whom is widowed. All of those who were ever married have
children whom they raised or are raising.

COMMON MEANS OF CONTACT WITH OTHER LESBIANS: The sample includes
women who spend up to three or four nights a week in gay bars, women
who have almost never been to a gay bar, women who attend political
or social gay gatherings, and women who prefer to socialize only
within a private circle of lesbian friends.

DEGREE OF OVERT/COVERTNESS: Totally closeted women who have

never discussed their feelings openly even with long time friends or
with other lesbians were impossible for me to reach. All of my
respondents were known as lesbians to someone else, though in a few
cases this knowledge was restricted to lesbian friends or family who
had guessed at the true situation. The women ranged through the
attitudes "it's none of their damn business!" "I guess I feel like I would need to be really committed to lesbianism, just want to be with women to tell my parents, and still I'm not sure if I could do it," and "it's important to me to let people know I'm gay sometimes because then if they know me and they think I'm OK then maybe that'll change some of their fucked up images about lesbians," to "I'd like to go into every store and say, "Hello! My name is ------- and I'm a lesbian! Either accept it or leave."

The sample is biased towards the young, the well-educated, and the white, although attempts were made to contact other sectors of the lesbian population. These attempts were most successful with older women, as do all researchers who choose to study lesbianism, and as stated above, I had trouble reaching the more secretive lesbians. Thus this paper of necessity deals only with lesbians and bisexual women who have made some effort to contact other lesbians or to acknowledge their lesbianism to someone other than themselves and their lover(s). The experiences of extremely closeted women are likely to be significantly different from those of the women I could contact, and so this limitation is a serious defect in all research on lesbianism and unfortunately will probably continue to be a problem for a long time to come. Until the closeted sisters can feel completely assured that society is ready to accept whom they are without judgements or assumptions, they will continue to guard their secrets.
SAMPLE_PROFILES_OF_SELECTED_RESPONDENTS

The following case profiles of some of the women whom I interviewed formally, while not representative of the entire sample, illustrate some of the diversity of the women with whom I spoke as well as some of the patterns which occurred repeatedly.

Wanda

Wanda is a white woman in her 60's. She lives with Linda, the woman who was her lover for 42 years before their relationship changed into a close friendship a few years ago. Both Wanda and Linda are professional photographers who belong to a lesbian professional organization, and they own a home and a photography studio together.

Wanda says she was always been attracted to women, but she didn't call herself a lesbian even when at age seventeen she fell into an "all-consuming" love affair with a woman. Finally the other woman went on and married the man that she had been dating and I just went on dating because it was the thing to do. After that I dated for several years. I can remember very well during World War II, women were desperate for sex. All the men were away, and they turned to women and a couple of them turned to me and somehow I wasn't interested and I still didn't think anything about it except that I wasn't interested. I wasn't turned off because they were interested in me as a woman, I just wasn't interested in them as a person other than as friends. And then I met Linda. She wasn't especially interested in me but I was chasing her and finally she became interested and we were together... and all of a sudden it's just as though a light dawned and I put a label on it. And I was so happy [to find a name for it]!! 'So this is what it's all about!' It's as though I'd finally found my niche."

I asked her to describe what it was like to be gay when she and
Linda first became lovers:

Well, it wasn't easy. The women were butches, key chains, and leather jackets. ...We [Linda and I] never played roles, but the bar types did role play. It's so different today. [back then] we had friends, we never went to bars, we met in each other's houses; we would get together every Saturday night. Now I love to go to bars, [because] the feeling is very different. Well, do you go to bars? (res.) Do you consider yourself a tough, leather jacket type? (No.) Absolutely, absolutely, the thing is today women are much freer and the people that you see in bars today are the [same type of] people that you have in your home. It's so much healthier now. The young women do not have the hang-ups that we had.

Asked if she can tell if another woman is gay, Wanda said that she can't tell today but that it used to be very clear, because of the roles the "bar types" played. She says she can also tell if a man is gay more easily than she can tell a woman.

Wanda is undemonstrative about her sexuality and has never discussed her lesbianism with her family, but she is "sure they're all aware and I'm sure the three of them have gotten together and talked about it." Now she would like to come out to them directly, but five or ten years ago it would have been impossible for her to do so. She believes that her mother probably wanted her to talk with her about it:

I'm sure she did [want me to talk to her about it]. I think she's very happy with it cuz she loves Linda. I said to Linda if my mother ever had to choose between you and me, she would choose me and then go out and shoot herself. She adored Linda.

Wanda doesn't actively do anything to keep people from knowing about her lesbianism; she "just doesn't tell anybody."

But Wanda is happy to be a lesbian; asked what the word "lesbian" means to her, she said:

The word "lesbian" has a very special meaning to me.
think it was when I first started to use the word "lesbian" that I became all freed up. It's very special because only certain people can use that word and it makes me feel special... I don't consider women who are bisexual [to be lesbians]. That's very normal, to be bisexual. I don't consider that woman a lesbian.

Regarding the causes of homosexuality, Wanda thinks it is probably a matter of predisposition, shaped by circumstances. She says she was not attractive to boys as a teenager, but doesn't think that that was a factor in her becoming a lesbian because she remembers being attracted to a woman at age five. She prefers women to men because "only a woman can understand what we feel as women" and because she simply feels "an attraction" to them.

Wanda feels that straight people are largely unaware of the existence of lesbians. When she came out to a straight friend a while ago, the friend said she'd never known another lesbian and Wanda's response was, "E----, you didn't even know I was a lesbian, you've probably known lots of them."

I asked Wanda how gay life would be different if there were no prejudice against gay people and she replied:

Oh, I don't have to think about that. In fact, we talked about that not too long ago. If there were no prejudice in this world, I think that you would find that there'd probably be more gay people than straight people. Because I have seen so many changes take place and I have seen how women in their 40's for instance, almost every woman I know in her 40's has been married and had children. And that's because she was at the marriageable age in the 50's when pressure was being put on women to get back out of the work force into the kitchen regardless of her situation. Regardless of her education and her background. The pressure was subtle. You were an old maid once you turned thirty. The pressure came from ads, commercials -- it was all over the place. I'm thinking of one woman who said, "We played around when we were fifteen or sixteen. Then we realized it was time to date." They were always attracted to women, [but] they went through the motions of getting married. [I went to an older women's rap at which] there were fifteen women. At least
twelve of them were married, some of them still. So that's why I think you would find that if people were free to choose, I think you would find it would be well over 50%. (Why over 50%) We're taught to conform and I think it's very natural to be attracted [to someone] because of a certain chemistry, not [because of] their sex.

Amelia

Amelia is a 36 year old black woman with a high school education, who is a mental health worker at a halfway house. She was born and has always lived in the northeastern United States, and she recently moved into a large house in a well-to-do suburban neighborhood which she is renting with two friends, also lesbians. Amelia occasionally attends meetings of a social gay organization and frequents several gay bars. During the time I knew her she was stopped on her way home from a gay bar, charged with drunken driving, and had her license suspended.

When I asked Amelia to trace the development of her feelings for women, she said that she had always preferred to be with girls, but didn't have anything in common with them because all they talked about was boys. She said she had a "special feeling" that something about her was different. Asked what gave her this "feeling," she replied that:

I just had a feeling that I was [gay] because I had girlfriends who were boy-crazy and I never wanted to go out with any boys or anything and I never dated. I dated a couple times, but I didn't like it. I got tired of boys' company. I preferred being in [the company of] one of my best girlfriends, who wasn't gay, but I just preferred being in her company.

She then mentioned that she had been a tomboy; she threw aside her dolls and preferred to play with her cousin's guns or with the boys
at baseball. She said proudly that she and one other girl were the only girls the boys would let play on their team. But having said this, she immediately denied assuming a connection between her tomboyism and her lesbianism:

But see, I think people put being a tomboy and put being gay together, when it's not. Because I know a lot of girls who were tomboys and they grew up and got married and had kids. It just so happens that I'd rather be with, as far as games and everything, I'd rather play with boys, because all the girls were interested in was boys. I didn't have anything in common with them.

Amelia first started realizing consciously that she was gay at age fifteen, when she had an affair

with a very good friend of the family. She was a teacher, and when she made some advances toward me, it didn't bother me, I liked it. [This affair lasted] for quite a while, off and on. It was mostly sexual, cuz we couldn't go out. If we went out, it was only because she was a friend of the family's.

One day her brother walked in on the two of them while they were making love. He became very angry and called both women names. Since then he has come to consider himself very tolerant of homosexuality, but Amelia doubts his sincerity.

After the affair with the teacher ended, Amelia was "still deciding whether this was what I wanted... I needed somebody to really bring me out." She then fell into a circle of lesbian friends at work and began socializing with them, which put her

right in the middle of the gay crowd, all the lesbians... They introduced me to this one girl who also worked at [the halfway house], and we got together. We did have a little affair going. Then I started going out. I think that's when I started going to New York, going to [a large, classy gay bar]. I think that was really the start of me really coming out.

At the time Amelia came out into the gay world, butch-femme
role playing was the norm among bar goers:

At the time it was a thing of either you were a femme or you were a butch. It was just like being straight, because [the femmes] usually had to wait until the butches came up and ask you to dance because you couldn’t really ask them to dance... [The dress of] a typical butch was all male, actually men’s clothes. She wore a tie, if she was going to a club or something like that. She was always, if you were living together, naturally she was always the head of the house, and if you were a femme, you wouldn’t make any decisions until you talked to her about it. And she psyched herself into believing that she was a man so much that she really did start believing that she was a man.

In those days, Amelia said, most women were in couples; there were very few "single" women as there are today. Amelia attended a couple of gay weddings and described one of them thus:

That was a role playing type thing. The girl had on a, well, "the girl!" I mean, both of them were girls. Wee, that's now mixed up [it was]! You get used to it, you know. The femme had on a wedding gown and the butch had on a tuxedo, stuff like that. [They had] the same ceremony that they have in a regular church.

She says she is glad that role playing has largely disappeared in the lesbian world, explaining that:

I have played both roles. So I know, and I definitely would not go back to role playing. I don't like it. I don't think I liked it then. I know women who were femmes and then they went to play what they call butches and go back to femme, I don't really think they knew what they wanted to do. And I think I was one of them. I really didn't know; all I knew was that I was a lesbian and that I loved women and that's all.

Amelia believes that what has made role playing fade away is:

Because women are now actually proud of being a woman, I don't really think that women really cared about themselves that much, and you really have to care about yourself. It's a new era now and even though you do find [role playing] in some cases, the majority of women [don't play roles] and I think that with all the women's lib and everything like that, I think that has a lot to do with it. A lot of women [now] say "If I wanted a man, I'd go
to get myself a real man."

Amelia is very open about and proud of the fact that she is a 
lesbian. She "wouldn't take anything for the gay life." Many of 
er her coworkers know she's gay because she has "never made any bones 
about it." She described how she went about letting a certain 
supervisor know; rather than coming out directly, she dropped clues 
and spoke of her lover casually, as a straight woman might speak of 
her husband, until the supervisor indicated that she had received 
the message:

If I'm feeling really super good about myself, then I 
would want [to let people know I'm gay], and I would let 
them know in a certain type of way. I might not come out 
and say I'm a lesbian. I think I'd say something like, 
"my girlfriend, we..." That's how my supervisor found 
out. She didn't know, but I let her know that I was by 
the taings that I said, I had been talking about M------ 
all the time. Everything that I did, I always included 
er, "well, we went to see a play," or "we did this." At 
one time we were thinking about getting an apartment and I 
said "Could you recommend some apartments to me?" And 
then [we were performing a skit and] I said, "a----'s 
gonna come over." She said, "Well, my husband's gonna 
come; she could sit with him if she wants to." And so she 
got the picture, I'm glad -- I didn't have to come out 
and tell her that I was.

In defining a lesbian, Amelia feels that sexual activity is not the 
sole determinant of whether one is a lesbian because there are other 
important aspects of a lesbian relationship, but feels that if a 
woman doesn't sleep with other women, she's not a lesbian.

She believes that she can tell if another woman is gay because 
she feels "vibrations:" "I don't think that anybody could tell you 
the reason that you see someone and you just pick it up that they 
are gay." She finds men easier to identify as gay than women 
because of their effeminate mannerisms.
In describing what she finds in women that she wouldn't find in men, Amelia says that women are more understanding, sensitive, and caring, and that they try to put themselves in other people's places. Women don't desert their friends in an hour of need, while men cheat on their wives and leave them when the going gets tough. She says, "There's a difference between having sex and making love. Women make love, men have sex." When relationships break up, Amelia believes that lesbians remain friends and help each other through the trauma of breaking up while when straight couples break up "They're ready to kill somebody."

Although Amelia flatly and emphatically denied that there is any "tension between women that are completely gay and bisexual women," she would definitely not go out with a bisexual woman because they are "mixed up," "don't exactly know which way they want to go," and are likely to "come to you one morning saying to you that 'I want to get married and have kids.'"

Amelia would rather go to a bar that was "all women" rather than a mixed gay bar because the men in a mixed bar:

Have a tendency to take over. Most of the time when you go to a mixed bar, there's always more men there than women. If you're going out there to meet [women], you're not going to have too much of a chance.

Edna

Edna is a 29 year old, well-groomed, white career woman who has a job in which she supervises a team of engineers. Several big changes had recently taken place in her life at the time of the interview. She had just bought a house and was working at
decorating and fixing it, and her woman lover of thirteen years had just left her. The lover left because she had never had a heterosexual relationship and felt she had never resolved the question of her sexual orientation. She needed to go back and have those questions answered.

Edna and this woman were each other's first loves. They fell in love at age seventeen in high school when their deepening friendship became a physical relationship. Although Edna says neither of them ever thought of themselves as lesbians nor of their relationship as a lesbian relationship, and although in the back of both of their minds they always thought that it was a temporary thing, this "temporary" arrangement lasted thirteen years.

During that time, the two saw little of the lesbian world. They did not go to lesbian bars or social functions, but kept to themselves. Now that the relationship has ended, Edna has begun to go to gay bars occasionally, where she sits quietly and has not gotten to know any of the other women in the bar although she sits with the same cliche every time. Speaking about going to the gay bars, she said that at first:

It was very strange. I had never really experienced women or men openly, obviously involved. It was not that strange, but it was just sort of different in the sense that you don't see in a straight bar two men dancing together or two women dancing together, and I guess it took a little bit of time to adjust. Even though my lifestyle for the past thirteen years has been that way, it's only been that way with us in the privacy of our own home. We went to straight bars, it was always as two straight girls.

Having had only one relationship, Edna doesn't know what her sexual orientation is. She is not even asking herself that question, as romance is not a salient issue in her life at the
moment. Fixing up her house, minding her career, and recovering from the breakup occupy her mind and her time.

Edna has a 27 year old gay brother who knew he was gay when he was thirteen, fourteen. He knew early on which I really didn't... I think that my mother had a real impact on both of us because she's extremely domineering and my father's very subservient. She is not only domineering, she's oppressive, she's opinionated. Very self-centered. And I just think that she, in growing up, had an impact on my leaning. I really didn't feel, at sixteen, seventeen, that I was getting a lot of affection and [my ex-lover] was available.

None of Edna's coworkers know of her feelings for women, but her secretary has dropped hints that she is suspicious. Edna prefers that people at work not know; she feels that as a supervisor of male engineers, being known as a lesbian would put her in a sensitive position. She is not bothered by any feeling of leading a double life, however, because "I don't really feel that I have such a strong orientation for women."
Defense Tactics of a Homophobic Society

THE THREAT OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Human beings live in a world of human-made order. The great diversity of human social orders in existence reveals the fundamental arbitrariness of these orders; they are not subject to determination by some higher power, but are largely shaped by human invention. Yet in order to function effectively in a given society, individuals behave as if this order were reality, and generally come to view it as absolute, unquestionable truth, backed by forces much more deterministic than arbitrary human design:

...for any individual member of a society, there is tremendous pressure upon him to apprehend his reality as if it were inevitable, absolute and unchanging. To fail to do so, is to live in a Kafkaesque nightmare of uncertainty, flux and diversity. He cannot constantly question the historical origins of each element of reality that he is confronted with; he cannot constantly question the validity of the legitimations provided to "explain" and "account" for the existing reality; he cannot constantly consider alternative paths of actions to those he is routinely given. What was once, and still is, a man-made order becomes mystified as a Natural Order...

Such a "natural order" is clearly deeply conservative and resistant to change. (Plummer, 1975:118)

Homosexuals do not fit into the traditional Western conception of order, which emphasizes heterosexual men and women, traditional gender roles, and the nuclear family. Homosexuals have no place in this classification scheme. By their very existence, they challenge the legitimacy and absolutism of this "Natural Order," threatening
to reveal its arbitrariness and thus to precipitate the actual disintegration of the society. As Plummer observes:

[The] very existence [of deviants who cause no physical damage] implicitly challenges the prevailing conceptions of order, normality, and reality. Anomalies and incongruities like lepers, transvestites, homosexuals, transsexuals, or schizophrenics may threaten in a deeply fundamental way our most basic beliefs about the nature of man and social reality -- beliefs that provide a basic sense of anchorage and certainty in our lives. As Robert Scott observes, "Anything that threatens to strip us of this protective cocoon will inevitably be seen as evil... the madman whose rantings challenge our system of meanings is in a sense just as dangerous as the madman who is a threat to our physical being" (Scott:30-31)... [Enemy deviants] expose the precarious nature of this absolutist conception of social reality, threatening the assumption of a widely shared, well-integrated consensus in which conventional behavior patterns and beliefs are the only viable, authentic, healthy ways of acting, feeling, and thinking. (Hills,1975:43-44)

Thus homosexuals' very existence threatens the established social order, in particular the social, familial, economic, and sexual relations between men and women, which are at the heart of the structure of American society.

In addition to threatening the larger social order, homosexuality presents a threat on the individual level. Fear is often a motivation for prejudice, and homosexuals constitute a threat to any person who is consciously or unconsciously afraid that they are homosexual themselves. The theory that repressed homosexual desire in an individual has the power to result in extreme homophobia is best known as a theory of Freud. Freud believed that all people are sexually attracted to members of their own sex, but that in our society the fear of intimacy, particularly among males, is learned early and such homosexual feelings are not allowed expression. But these homosexual desires remain present in
people's unconscious minds as "latent homosexuality," causing them to be insecure about their own sexual orientation and to experience "homosexual panic" (Marmor, 1980:15), or the fear that their latent homosexuality may emerge. Thus, latent homosexual desire results in a fear of homosexuality and a need to condemn the overt homosexuality in others (Hoffman, 1968:179; Marmor, 1980:14-15).

More recently, however, this thinking has been replaced by the concept of repressed, rather than latent, homosexuality. Whereas "latent homosexuality" refers to an unrecognized homosexual desire present in every heterosexual, "repressed homosexuality" does not presuppose that all people have homosexual desires and refers only to those who do have homosexual desires which they are not acknowledging. Gvesey (1955) takes this argument a step further by saying that homophobia is not caused by the repression of actual homosexual desires, but by "pseudohomosexual anxiety":

In cultures such as ours, where homosexuality is identified with weakness and effeminacy in men, many men who are insecure about their masculinity express this insecurity in the form of fears that they are really homosexual or will be so regarded by others. Most often it will be found that such anxieties are not related to repressed homoerotic tendencies but rather to profound feelings of masculine inadequacy. (Marmor, 1980:15)

Obviously, Gvesey and Marmor are referring here only to male homosexuals. While the same mechanism may apply to the prejudice against lesbians, it is unlikely that lesbians are as serious a threat to the female gender identity as male homosexuals are to the male gender identity. This difference will be discussed below, in the section "The Need for Individual Secrecy."

Homosexuality may also be perceived as a threat by people who harbor repressed envy of homosexuals (Weinberg, 1972). Because
homosexuals appear to flout gender roles, other people who find it difficult to achieve the prescribed gender images may envy this apparent freedom taken by homosexuals. Or, others who have succeeded in creating an appropriate gender image at some personal cost may resent homosexuals for belittling the importance of the images they are trying so hard to maintain. Put another way, repressed homosexuals may resent homosexuals who accept themselves because they threaten to blur the dichotomy implied in the choice, which was so hard for the repressed homosexual to make, between being a gay failure and a straight success. This resentment, however, can also be interpreted as a form of envy. Weinberg gives the relevant example of male prowess with women; men who feel pressured to be successful at courting women but who have difficulty doing so may be envious of the homosexual's obvious rejection of this as an important goal.

Weinberg also suggests that homosexuals threaten people by reminding them of their own mortality. He postulates that people have a desire for "vicarious immortality," i.e., to live on through their children. Since homosexuals have no children to carry on the family blood, and thus cannot live on through their children after their own deaths, they remind other people of the fragility of their own immortality.

To protect the integrity and deterministic quality of the social order, to define the boundaries of acceptable behavior, and to protect individuals from their own homosexual feelings, the threat of homosexuality must be dealt with. The reaction of society to the threat of homosexuality is an attitude which may be referred
to as homophobia, or prejudice against homosexuals. One way in which society responds to homophobia and protects itself against social chaos is through the construction of stereotypes and myths about homosexuals. Stereotypes both express the fears that homosexuality engenders and serve to protect society against the feeling of being threatened. Consistent with the fact that society has as a rule been more concerned with actively repressing male homosexuality than it has lesbianism, gay male stereotypes are much more well developed and clearly defined than are lesbian stereotypes, which are "more easily complicated by unmediated mixtures of anxiety and fantasy" (Simon and Gagnon, 1967:249). As Carrier observes:

Feminine male behavior, and the set of anxieties associated with its occurrence in the male part of the population, appears to have brought about more elaborate cultural responses temporally and spatially than has masculine female behavior. (Carrier, 1980:103)

Stereotypes express homophobia and protect society from the homosexual threat in many ways. For example, an invisible enemy is more threatening than a visible enemy, so some stereotypes of homosexuals serve to convince people that they can "spot a homo a mile away." These stereotypes describe how homosexuals dress and act and where they may be found, so that the moral person can identify the enemy and either fight or avoid them. Secondly, stereotypes exaggerate the threat of homosexuality to the social order. This emphasis on the dangerousness of homosexuality both stems from fear and functions to amplify public fear of homosexuality. This ensures that public opinion will not allow the threat to be realized. Stereotypes also serve to reduce the
homosexual threat by psychologically distancing the homosexual from the rest of society, by denying homosexuality's existence or by belittling its causes. These expressive and protective functions of stereotyping can be seen behind the twelve stereotypes and myths to be discussed: 1) That homosexuals are all alike and are likely to engage in other immoral sexual acts and to hold other deviant opinions, e.g., un-American political beliefs. 2) That sexuality is the core of a homosexual's identity. 3) That homosexuals have unusually strong sex drives over which they are not in control. 4) That homosexuals act and appear like members of the opposite sex. 5) That homosexuals give themselves away through symbolic acts and appearances. 6) That homosexuals recruit children. 7) That homosexuals are a threat to the family structure. 8) That homosexuality is due to certain symbolic, social, and biological causes. 9) That homosexuals are especially sensitive and artistic. 10) That homosexuality is just a phase. 11) That lesbians are heterosexual rejects. 12) That had heterosexual experiences or fear of the opposite sex causes homosexuality.

The nature of the stereotypes which develop around a given group of people is influenced by the nature of the group's original distinguishing characteristic. For lesbians and gay men, the original distinguishing characteristic is sexual orientation. Therefore it is not surprising that additional allegations of deviance spring up in the area of sex and that many of the traits attributed to lesbians and gay men have to do with their sexual practices. Straight society often fails to recognize the distinctions between transsexuals, homosexuals, transvestites,
exhibitionists, etc. Instead, it throws the practitioners of a number of deviant sexual behaviors, i.e., all categories of the "sexual fringe" together under the single heading "sexual deviant" or "non-normal." Thus lesbians and gay men are assumed to be different sexes of the same species, all lesbians and all gay men are assumed to be alike, and all homosexuals are pictured as having a range of deviant sexual behaviors not limited to loving those of their own sex but including pederasty, sadomasochism, rapist tendencies, and fetishism to a greater degree than is found among heterosexuals. The implication is that there are two kinds of sexual behavior: normal and abnormal. All people who do not practice heterosexual sex under the appropriate conditions and in the prescribed manner, i.e. "normal" sex, must therefore have released themselves to engage in all forms of deviant sex.

For example, Levitt and Klassen found that 6.9% of adult Americans strongly agreed and 10.9% somewhat agreed that "if homosexual men can't find men for partners, they try to force their attentions on women." They also found that 35.1% and 36.0%, respectively, strongly agreed and somewhat agreed that "homosexuals try to play sexually with children if they cannot get an adult partner" (1974:25). Caprio closely associates lesbianism and prostitution, apparently believing that homosexuality or homosexual experiences may lead to prostitution.

The sexually deprived [prison] inmate who may have never previously indulged in homosexual activities falls an easy prey to the experienced lesbian. She may upon her release from prison continue to seek out homosexual gratifications. Or she may decide to become a professional prostitute herself (Caprio, 1954:77)... In those instances where prostitutes do not engage in lesbian activities, it is not because, unconsciously, they would
not want to. The explanation lies in the fact that they have never been able to break through their homosexual repressions. They are unable to appreciate the fact that their pseudoheterosexuality (prostitution) is in itself evidence of their strong homosexual component. (Caprio, 1954:101)

It has been found that there may be a higher proportion of lesbians among prostitutes than among non-prostitutes (McCaghy and Skipper, 1969). This is not the same as saying, as Caprio does, that all prostitutes are lesbians. Neither does it imply that lesbians are more likely than heterosexual women to become prostitutes. Rather than prostitution being an outcome of lesbianism, lesbianism may be a result of being a prostitute. Prostitutes may be attracted to lesbianism because as prostitutes they do not meet desirable representatives of the male sex, they work under conditions which are not conducive to the formation of meaningful heterosexual relationships, they find lesbian bars a comfortable place to go after late shows, and they are sometimes approached by prostitutes who are lesbians (James, 1977 in Schur, 1980:113; McCaghy and Skipper, 1969).*

Having rejected one of society's norms, that of heterosexual sexual preference, homosexuals are sometimes assumed to have rejected other norms as well -- not only those pertaining to sexual morality, but even some which have nothing to do with sexual behavior. Radical deviants of any kind are often thought to be part of a conspiracy to undermine society, and homosexuals are no exception. For example, especially during the McCarthy Era,

*Although the McCaghy and Skipper study actually deals with strippers, not prostitutes, many of their arguments may be applied to prostitutes as well.
homosexuality implied atheism and Communism (Karien, 1971). The belief that homosexuals are likely not to share society's morals and values leads to a lack of trust in homosexuals and reluctance to permit them to hold positions where they would have a moral influence. Levitt and Klassen found that:

Substantial majorities agree that homosexual men should be allowed to work in the arts and in artistic occupations (e.g., 71.2% thought they should be allowed to be beauticians and 86.8%, florists)... three-quarters would deny to a homosexual the right to be a minister, a schoolteacher, or a judge, and two-thirds would bar the homosexual from medical practice and government service. An evident conclusion is that the public distrusts the homosexual in positions of public responsibility, particularly when this explicitly involves moral leadership. (Levitt and Klassen, 1974:22).

Because of the sexual nature of their deviance, the importance of homosexuals' sexuality is exaggerated. Simon and Gagnon make this point in comparing the image of a homosexual couple to that of a heterosexual couple:

In contrast to roles in which sexuality appears salient, it would appear that for most conventional roles -- even for those for which an assumption of sexual activity can safely be made -- the constraint is to view the role incumbents in largely nonsexual terms (e.g., husband and wife)... However, where sexual activity is identified with a role, our sense of the dimensions of this sexual component is often widely exaggerated. (Simon and Gagnon, 1967:247)

The exaggeration of the sexual component of the homosexual personality leads to the tendency to see the lesbian's or gay man's sexuality as the fundamental component of their identity, in which all other aspects of their personality are rooted. Kitsuse (1962) found that students who discovered or suspected that acquaintances were homosexual "typically reinterpreted such persons' earlier behavior in the light of this newly perceived deviant status" (in
showing that the deviant identity was strong enough to color even one's established perceptions of the deviant person. Other sexual deviants suffer from the same type of labelling, for example Millett et al. note that in the case of prostitutes, "It makes a kind of total state out of prostitution so that the whore is always a whore. It's as if -- you did it once, you become it" (in Schur, 1980:113-114). The term "homosexual" itself reinforces the tendency to see someone who engages in homosexual behavior as permeated by and defined by their sexuality, by referring to the entire person with a label denoting their sexual orientation. A joke occasionally heard in the gay community at Oberlin College mocks this tendency: "Did you know that Sally is a psychology major?" "Oh, I thought she was a lesbian!"

The tendency in America to see homosexual behavior as evidence of the "essential character and pivotal identity" of the homosexual is not found in societies where homosexuality is permitted. In those societies, there is much homosexual behavior, but there is not necessarily a clearly defined homosexual role (McIntosa, 1959). This finding supports the hypothesis that the exaggeration of the homosexual component of a homosexual's identity serves to protect a homophobic society against the threat of homosexuality by defining the homosexual as fundamentally different from heterosexuals and thereby psychologically and socially distancing the homosexual from the heterosexual world.

Two other stereotypes based on the exaggerated importance of sexuality to the homosexual are that male "homosexuals have unusually strong sex drives," which is believed by from 10%
(Simmons, 1965) to 58.5% (Levitt and Klassen, 1974:26) of the adult population of the United States, and that they are incapable of controlling their sexual desires (Simon and Gagnon, 1967:248; Marmor, 1968:263), which is believed by 12% of Simmons' (1965) respondents. Wollf herself adheres to this belief:

The marrying type of girl is frequently sexually inadequate or even frigid, while one who is homosexual has a better chance of being sexually alive... I have no doubt that... [the lesbian] is more often than not a more adequate and lively partner in bed than a "normal" woman. (C. Wollf, 1971:64-65)

The sexual nature of homosexuals' deviance also interacts with the classification system already present in the dominant societal world view in shaping the nature of homosexual stereotypes. In the arena of sex, society's classification system allows for two categories: female and male. Along with the reality of biological sex, these categories carry extensive stereotypes of their own. Females love males and they are feminine, i.e., sensitive, gentle, dependent, nurturing, physically weak, and frail in appearance. They have at different times been said to be nonsexual creatures or to be possessed or an insatiable sex drive capable of wreaking havoc on the world and destroying males if not repressed. Males love females and they are masculine, i.e., rational, unemotional, independent, physically strong, and endowed with a strong sex drive.

The possibility of a female who loves other females or of a male who loves other males does not fit neatly into this classificatory scheme. Such people occupy a liminal area. But society is not comfortable with liminal objects. Liminality challenges society's world view by defying its classification system, and thus engenders the suspicion and fear which lead to
prejudice. To resolve this conflict and save the world view, the liminal group must somehow be fit into the pre-existing classification system. To this end, the liminal groups must be assigned traits already associated with established relevant categories. Thus, since males are supposed to love females, females who love females must really be males. They must have other male traits as well such as physical strength, male psyches and attire, social and sexual aggressiveness, heightened libidos, and a lack of emotion. Like men, lesbians are thought to have a greater sexual need than straight women. Misunderstood in this way, lesbianism is a common theme in pornography made for heterosexual men (Weinberg, 1972). Likewise, men who love men must be like women; they must have effeminate mannerisms, gravitate toward female professions such as hairdressing and nursing, and they must be excessively attentive to their appearance. Homosexual men are sometimes presumed to have a weakened sex drive and sometimes to have a violent, unrestrained sex drive.

The existence of these cross-gender stereotypes has been documented. In an experiment by Weissbach and Zagor (1975), subjects rated people as more emotional, unconventional, weak, feminine and submissive if they were told they were homosexual than they rated the same people if they were not so labelled. Levitt and Klassen found that 68.8% of their sample agreed that homosexuals "act like the opposite sex" (1974:26), and 29% of Simmons' respondents characterized homosexuals as effeminate. Ward (1979) found that the "Sick Deviant" stereotype of homosexuals, which characterizes homosexuals as effeminate, maladjusted, sexually
perverted, and mentally ill, was one of three clusters of stereotypical traits often associated with homosexuality, the other two images being the "Sensitive Intellectual" and the "Sinful Lust." He found that those people adhering to the Sick Deviant stereotype were more rejecting of homosexuals at all levels of social contact than were those adhering to either of the other two common stereotypes. Men respondents described being confronted by people who held the belief that there are two kinds of lesbians, masculine and feminine. Nellie remembers that the reaction of the first straight person whom she told of her lesbianism was to tell her that she had to be the aggressive one because she has short hair.

The popular association of male homosexuality and femininity is the basis for the feminist assertion that homophobia and misogyny are forms of the same prejudice. Since gay men are supposedly feminine like women, the dislike they attract for being homosexual is the same dislike that is directed against women. For this assertion to be valid, it need not be true that gay men actually be effeminate, only that the homophobe-misogynist think that they are.

Cross-gender stereotyping found its way into "scientific" writings as well. For example, the German magistrate Ulrichs, who advanced the first theory of homosexuality in 1868, was "of the opinion that a homosexual had the body of one sex but the mind and soul of the opposite sex" (Caprio, 1954:105). Wolff believes that "Lesbians are particularly responsive to clitoral stimuli, and with them one finds not infrequently a habitually enlarged clitoris" (C. Wolff, 1971:55).

The notion that a lesbian is a pseudomale or a man trapped in a
woman's body was especially popular during the period before the development of psychoanalysis, when homosexuality was thought to be genetically caused. In the case of a lesbian couple, one partner was said to be the real homosexual, i.e., a member of the opposite sex trapped in the wrong body, while the other was a true woman whose sexual orientation was in fact normal, but who was being temporarily diverted from her natural path by the deviant homosexual. Eventually, the normal partner would find the right member of the opposite sex, realize her true nature, and unhesitatingly adopt a permanent, heterosexual lifestyle. During the homosexual relationship, the real lesbian supposedly took the role of the opposite sex in domestic and sexual matters while the misled normal partner took the role of her biological sex. For example, a belief still widely held claims that in lesbian love-making, one woman takes the male role, lying on top and using a dildo to satisfy her partner, who takes the female role. Dr. Antonio Gandin, cited by Caprio, saw a similar dichotomy in types of lesbians:

Dr. Antonio Gandin, author of *Amore Omosessuale... Maschile e Femminile* (Homosexual Love, Male and Female), differentiates between two forms of female inversion: 1) Sapphism 2) Tribadism. The former involves oral gratification and the latter involves friction of one clitoris against the other, brought about by one woman lying on top of the other. He observed that sapphists, as a rule are feminine in character while the tribades are mannish. (Caprio, 1954:16)

The scenario of the masculine lesbian-misled heterosexual woman is exemplified by Radclyffe Hall's classic lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness*. The protagonist Stephen, whose parents had wanted a son, is very much a man trapped in a woman's body. As a young
child, before sexuality is even an issue in her life, for no apparent reason she prefers to ride astride instead of side saddle and to wear boys' rather than girls' clothes. Her father sees this and recognizes her for what she is -- an invert. When her sexuality does develop, and Stephen herself realizes what she is, her sexuality is seen as merely one more, albeit a very important, manifestation of the real problem, which is that she is a male inside. The great love of Stephen's life is Mary, a feminine woman who looks up to Stephen for security and guidance. In the end, by Stephen's arrangement, Mary is released from their abnormal relationship into the arms of a man, with whom she presumably finds fulfillment as a natural woman and lives happily ever after.

The function of cross-gender stereotypes was explored in a revealing study done by Storms (1978). In this study, students were given one of four variations of a description of a man. Some of the descriptions were of a masculine gay man, some of an effeminate gay man, some of a masculine straight man and the remainder of an effeminate straight man. If homophobia were partly due to simple scorn for effeminacy in men, it would be expected that the effeminate men would be less well liked than their masculine counterparts in both cases. This is not what was found, however. While the gay men were less well liked than the straight men, and the effeminate straight men were less well liked than the masculine straight men, the masculine gay men were less well liked than the effeminate gay men. That is, those homosexuals who conformed to cross-gender stereotypes were more acceptable than those who didn't. This finding calls into doubt the assertion that homophobia and
mistrust are both forms of scorn for femininity, because this assertion assumes that the presumed effeminacy of gay men exacerbates the prejudice against them.

It appears from Storm's findings that the effeminate, cross-gender stereotype removes some of the threat homosexuals present to society. This may be because by fitting into the stereotype, they disturb the dominant classificatory system less than they would otherwise by preserving the "principle of consistency" (Foucault, 1978:27). Or, as Bobys and Lauer interpret Storms' findings, it is possible that "the attribution of virility and potency to homosexual men by the general public may be associated with an increase in the belief that homosexuals are dangerous" (Bobys and Lauer, 1979:259). That is, if homosexuals are effeminate, they at least are less likely to be aggressive or violent in the acting out of their various perversions.

With this understanding of some of the motivation behind homophobia, one is in a better position to interpret Ward's significant finding that the trait of effeminacy shows up in the Sick Deviant stereotype, which of the three stereotypes he identifies is the one most correlated with rejection of homosexuals. Since Storms' study showed that it is not the alleged effeminacy of gay men per se that engenders hostility, but rather that the allegation of effeminacy helps to lessen the threat of homosexuality, Ward's results could be interpreted to mean that those people who are most homophobic, i.e., those who imagine homosexuals as Sick Deviants, are the people who most need to protect themselves against the threat of homosexuality.
Homosexual heterosexuals like to believe they can "spot one a mile away." 11.8% of American adults strongly agree and 25.0% somewhat agree with the statement "It is easy to tell homosexuals by how they look" (Levitt and Klassen, 1974:26). Several lesbians to whom I spoke have had the experience of conversing with a heterosexual who, oblivious to their lesbianism, makes a remark to the effect of always being able to tell if someone else is gay. The lesbian women generally chuckled quietly to themselves and politely agreed. This supposed ability to recognize homosexuals is based on the belief that homosexuals reveal themselves through numerous symbolic characteristics of their behavior and appearance. High school students, among whom sex and the establishment of an appropriate gender identity are salient issues, possess a considerable body of directives on "how to tell a homo." For example, Thursday is "Fairy Day," and students who wear green or yellow on this day are said to be homosexual. Short hair or masculine clothes may earn the name for a female student, and if she carries her books at her side instead of in front of herself, or looks at her nails with her palms facing toward her instead of away from her, then she is also suspect. (Wolf, 1979:38-39)

Stereotypes regarding homosexual appearance and behavior, including both cross-gender and other symbolic trait stereotypes, may function to reduce the homosexual threat in two ways: first, by making the enemy visible, they make her/him easier to deal with by taking away her/his camouflage and unfair advantage of the element of surprise. Second, by describing in detail the outward signs of homosexuality, they allow a person who is insecure about their own sexuality to
reassure themself that they are not also homosexual. For example, if a man believes that all gay men have limp wrists and narrow shoulders, he can point to his own muscles to prove to himself and others that he is not homosexual. Earl and Michael give the same interpretation to a similar situation in an interview with the Adairs:

A: Earl, wasn't your being a jock and also being openly gay more threatening to straight jocks than if you had been more effeminate?
E: Definitely.
E: They [macho third world blacks] have to accept us or they have to question themselves. If two faggots can go out and beat them at an athletic game [football] which is supposed to be the hallmark of masculinity...
(Adair, 1978: 164)

Thus the stereotypes function to distance homosexuals from those who might otherwise identify too closely with them for their own comfort.

Related to the notion that one member of a homosexual union is the true homosexual while the other is being temporarily misled is the popular belief that homosexuals recruit lovers from the ranks of normal but impressionable young people. Since homosexuals supposedly don't ever have heterosexual sex, they are assumed never to have children. This is thought to put them in the position of having to gain new adherents by recruiting them from among other people's children. In fact, the stereotype that "Adult homosexuals are dangerous because they often try to seduce young boys," held by c9.1% of a sample of residents of San Francisco, was found by Rooney and Gibbons (1966) to be the second most widely held stereotype about homosexuals (Plummer, 1975). In addition, 42.5% of U.S. adults believe that over half of homosexuals became homosexual
because of older homosexuals (Levitt and Klassen, 1974:39). This idea shows up in early "scientific" writings as well:

Many of the naive and ill-informed are initiated into lesbian practices because of their complete ignorance, which enhances their susceptibility to the advances of the older and experienced invert. (Caprio, 1954:viii)

Caprio also states "She [the lesbian]...enjoys seducing weaker women," and accuses lesbians of wife-stealing (Caprio:43-44). He cites Dr. Biram Wolfe, author of A Woman's Best Years, who:

...differentiates between a woman whose sex life becomes her own business, harming no one with her sexual practices, and the predatory lesbian who seduces innocent young girls causing them to give up the thought of marriage and family life for a life of homosexual enslavement (Caprio:7-9).

The ideas that children can be "converted" to homosexuality by adult homosexuals and that adult homosexuals will try to do so lead to the hysteria surrounding the issue of homosexual teachers. In Levitt and Klassen's study, 44.7% strongly agreed and 23.3% somewhat agreed with the statement "Homosexuals are dangerous as teachers or youth leaders because they try to get sexually involved with children" (1974:24). Parents fear that homosexual teachers, in a position of authority, influence, and extensive contact with their susceptible children who are in the process of identity formation, will drag their children down into the strange dark world of abnormality. This was the fear which generated the 1973 Briggs initiative in California, which, had it not been defeated, would have allowed the firing of teachers who were homosexual or who presented homosexuality as a valid alternative lifestyle. It was also the central message of Anita Bryant's well-publicized 1977 crusade, "Save Our Children." As Bryant claims in an open letter of
December, 1981 to her supporters:

Our children are vulnerable to new dangers, as the homosexual community organizes to influence the youth of our nation... "Love, Sidney" is a seemingly innocent television program in which the much-loved actor Tony Randall plays the part of a pleasant homosexual who lives with a divorced mother and helps her raise her sweet little girl. It all looks so innocent -- but "Love, Sidney" is teaching our children that homosexuality is pleasant and harmless.

Or as Jerry Falwell writes in a letter from the Moral Majority:

Many practicing homosexuals are militant recruiters and allowing them to teach might be an open invitation for them to subvert our young and impressionable children into their lifestyle! ...What defense do our children have against this kind of vulgar teaching if they are not protected by laws? ...Just remember -- gays are recruiting new members every day. (Undated letter from the Moral Majority)

Such incendiary statements are meant to instill in people an exaggerated fear of homosexuals and cause them to repress homosexuality more strongly than they otherwise would. This tactic worked in Brevard County, Florida, where Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign was a major influence in the repeal of a gay civil rights ordinance. The success of propaganda which promotes the image of the homosexual as a danger to children is predictable in light of Borsys and Laner's (1979) finding that the attribution of dangerousness to homosexuals is highly correlated with prejudice against them. These tactics thus function to feed and serve society's homophobia by encouraging the continued repression of homosexuals.

A more rational, less sensationalist justification of this belief is given by Dr. James Lobson, author of The Strong-Willed Child, in a conversation with the Family Protection Report:

In the early stages of adolescence, the object of sexual
interest is not well-fixed in the minds of either sex. In fact, it is not unusual for boys and girls to experiment with members of their own gender at this time. Sigmund Freud referred to this phase as a latent "homosexual" period, although I see it more as an ambivalent stage at the beginning of adolescent sexuality. Nevertheless, children are sexually vulnerable during this time. It is my belief that these weak heterosexual urges can be "rechanneled" by exposure to homosexual experiences or extremely stressful sexual encounters. (Family Protection Report, June, 1981:16)

Gays are not only seen as a threat to the welfare of children, but as a threat to the entire nuclear family as well as the gender roles which are constructed so as to facilitate heterosexual union, merely by virtue of their living homosexual lives. Because homosexuals do not marry and have children, their lifestyle itself is an affront to the ideal of the traditional father/breadwinner/boss - mother/housewife - children family, denying by implication that the traditional family is the best or only valid family structure. Gender roles are similarly challenged by the rejection of the traditional family structure in which they are played out and by the presumed cross-gender behavior of homosexuals. Since the traditional family and gender roles are considered by the political right to be the very bases of the American way of life, by challenging them homosexuals are breaking down American society and undermining the entire American way of life. 48.8% of Levitt and Klassen's subjects strongly or somewhat agreed that "homosexuality is a social corruption that can cause the downfall of a civilization." As Sally says:

[Being a lesbian] flies in the face of all sexual stereotyping -- the nuclear family and all of these things this society wants a woman to be. I think that the women's movement and feminism and gay men are confronting the patriarchy and Capitalism. (Adair, 1978:253)
respondents characterized homosexuals as "sensitive," and Ward (1979) found that the "sensitive intellectual" is one of the three predominant homosexual stereotypes. C. Wolf presents this image of the homosexual as fact:

[Groddek] clarifies, however, the important connection between female homosexuality and cultural evolution. Indeed, the social reformer and the artist are unthinkable without marked homosexual tendencies. How could a woman artist, for example, create anything worthwhile without knowing the other half, the male side in herself? (Wolf, 1971: 57-58)

This characterization can be traced to the notion of the homosexual as being like someone of the opposite sex. Havelock Ellis promoted the idea of an association between homosexuality, sensitivity, and artistic ability. His logic was that creative people are especially sensitive, sensitivity is a feminine trait, and a feminine man is homosexual. Therefore, creative and sensitive people are homosexual. Of course, this line of "logic" assumes among other things that both the artist and the homosexual are male. A more recent and perhaps more sophisticated, less easily refuted rationalization of this association goes thus: because of their difference and their ostracization from society, gay people have to think seriously about whom they are. They must go through the process of identity formation more consciously than people who conform to straight society. Merely realizing that one is homosexual in a society which prefers not to admit of the possibility takes a degree of introspection and self-knowledge not required of straight people. This self-knowledge helps them to be more understanding of others' problems and more closely in touch with their own creative energies. Furthermore, having been hurt by
Referring again to those leaders of the crusade against homosexuality, Anita Bryant and Jerry Falwell, one finds ample evidence of genuine fear for the American way of life:

The continuing struggle to protect the children and families of America was never something I had to do by myself... Satan's attack on our families is not letting up. If anything, he is fighting harder to snatch our children and our homes from us. (Bryant letter, Dec. 1981)

America is losing the war against those who are attempting to normalize homosexuality... and believe me, if they are successful, the traditional family and basic morality and decency in America will be on their way to extinction! Homosexuality is considered an abomination in the eyes of both God and society while marriage is a sacred institution. Homosexuality tears at the very foundation of the home -- God's sacred family unit -- and the cornerstone of our American society. (Falwell, Moral Majority letter).

And Connaught Marquand, national Pro-Family Coalition Chairman, tells Congressman Weiss:

What we are advocating is that our right to privacy be respected: that the homosexual lifestyle not be flaunted in our neighborhood and shouted from the rooftops. The public has a right to be protected from the promotion of something that is by its nature antithetical to the social order. (Family Protection Report, Feb. 1982:3)

These fears of the disruption of social order reveal the fundamental motivation behind homophobia as it was discussed at the beginning of this section: the fear that the existence of homosexuality will reveal the arbitrariness of the social order, destroying the faith which prevents people from falling into Plummer's Kafkaesque nightmare, and eventually causing the breakup of that social order.

The stereotype that homosexuals are more sensitive and artistic than straight people is a flattering image held by many homosexuals as well as non-homosexuals. Simmons (1965) found that 10% of his
being ostracized, homosexuals become sensitized to others' hurt. John: we're no more neurotic than the rest of the population (according to recent studies), yet we've lived under this pressure. So doesn't that imply that we either came originally equipped with or have acquired certain powers to react to all this pressure and survive it? Now these are interesting questions -- what are the powers? How do they show up? Information like this can help explain why gay people are remarkably innovative, inventive in their own lifestyles and their relations with each other...

Interviewer: Doesn't that reek of supremacy?
John: Well, look. If you're gay, it means that life and nature, has pointed you in a direction toward consciousness and given you a good swift kick in that direction. (Adair, 1978:243-244)

Thus sensitivity and creativity are not claimed to be functions of homosexuality itself, but of the attitudes of society toward homosexuality. This line of logic avoids the snobbish implication of Wollf's and Havelock Ellis' rationales that homosexuals are inherently more sensitive and creative than heterosexuals. The association of homosexuality with creativity is in part responsible for the belief, widespread in both homosexual and heterosexual circles, that a high proportion of gays are to be found among artists, interior decorators, hairdressers and music composers. Whether gays do tend to be more sensitive or introspective than straights is a question on which there has been little research, and one which would be interesting to explore.

Homosexuals are also imagined to be mentally unstable or ill. The belief that homosexuality is a mental illness in and of itself, while officially rejected by the APA, is still held by much of the U.S. population. Levitt and Klassen found that 37.9% of American adults believe that for all or almost all homosexuals, "Homosexuality is a sickness that can be cured" while an additional
24% believed this is true for over half of all homosexuals (1974:29). Simmons (1965) also found that 40% of his respondents believed homosexuals to be mentally ill and 40% believed them to be maladjusted, and Rooney and Gibbons (1966, in Plummer,1975) found that the stereotype of homosexuals as psychologically disturbed was the most prevalent, being held by 66.7% of their sample. Citing Freud some argue that homosexuality is the result of a failure to mature psychosexually into a heterosexual. Caprio, who repeatedly likens lesbian relationships to mother-daughter relationships, states that lesbianism is the expression of a childish desire for mother-love:

We know that there are many lesbians who have been deprived of maternal affection in childhood and adolescence and make up for it in adult life by seeking the love of mother-substitutes. (1954:39)

Others, such as Groddele, see homosexuality as an expression of childish narcissism, in which the homosexual looks for a love object which resembles themselves (C. Wolff, 1971:58).

Another aspect of homosexuality which is clouded by stereotype and myth is the question of the "cause" of homosexuality (or, in "enlightened" terms, the "cause" of any sexual orientation). This is a subject debated by professionals, homophobes, and homosexuals alike. Although many studies have been done in an attempt to determine the cause of homosexuality, the results are contradictory and tend to confirm the dominant view of the time period in which they are done. Early researchers believed homosexuality was biological: in the 1860's Ulrichs stated that homosexuality was congenital (Caprio, 1954:105), and researchers in the beginning of this century such as Magnus Hirschfeld, Kraft-Ebbing, and Davelock
Ellis, also believed that homosexuality was physiological (C. Wolff, 1971: 44). Then with the coming of Freud and psychoanalytic theory, the biological explanations fell out of favor and were replaced by completely psychoanalytical and sociological explanations. Caprio, who wrote about lesbianism during the years immediately following the publication of Freud's ideas on homosexuality, criticizes the earlier belief that homosexuality is inborn. Listing "Lesbians are born that way" as a common misconception, Caprio believes that "homosexuality is acquired, not congenital nor inherited, and represents the behavioral symptom of a deep-seated and unresolved neurosis" and commends Dr. Biran Wolfe on his similar opinion:

"...It is gratifying to know that he agrees with modern psychiatrists that homosexuality is definitely not the product of prenatal influences, congenital predisposition or hereditary tainting. He is of the opinion that lesbianism is symptomatic of an underlying neurosis and as such represents a means of evading the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood. (Caprio, 1954: 7-8)

Later, studies reintroduced the possibility of a biological, if not genetic, component to homosexuality. Although no chromosomal differences have been found between homosexuals and heterosexuals (Pare, 1965; Money, in Darrow, 1980), studies by Dorner, et. al. have supported the hypothesis that sexual orientation may be influenced by intrauterine or early postnatal hormonal levels. Writing in 1971, C. Wolff believed that both constitutional and acquired factors cause homosexuality, which she says is the prevailing attitude as she writes. Current professional thinking favors the existence of a biological predisposition which is modified and even reversed by environmental factors. The
sociobiological theory, applied comparatively recently to the question of homosexuality, holds that homosexuality has been genetically bred into human beings through the process of natural selection, arguing that a certain degree of homosexual tendency contributes in various ways to the survival of a family line (Laniude, 1979).

Quite apart from the scientific truth of any of these causal theories is the question of what consequences each indicates for homosexuals. If society decides that homosexuality is psychological in origin and that therefore homosexuals are capable of conversion to heterosexuality if only they would recognize the wrong in their actions and seek treatment, then homosexuals become blameworthy for their orientation and may be condemned for it. Such a viewpoint allows Jerry Falwell to justify his condemnation of homosexuals by arguing that:

Being discriminated against because you are a homosexual is not the same as being discriminated against because of race or religion. One chooses a homosexual lifestyle -- one does not choose his race, color, or sex. (Undated letter from the Moral Majority)

Falwell argues that because homosexuals have chosen their lifestyle, they are not a legitimate minority and it is morally permissible, indeed a moral obligation, to discriminate against them. The belief that homosexuality is freely chosen in a conscious manner, or "caught" from an elder homosexual, implies that a homosexual could choose to give up homosexuality and take up heterosexuality. If it is thus within the power of homosexuals to do so, they have no moral excuse not to do so, are morally responsible for their homosexual actions, and may be blamed for their sins. The belief that
homosexuality is due to environmental factors also allows the opinion that the young can be encouraged into homosexuality by homosexual role models, homosexual teachers, and books about homosexuality.

Homosexual rights leaders believe that condemnation of homosexuals would lessen if society came to believe that one's sexual orientation is not under one's conscious control, e.g., if it were thought to be genetically or biologically based. For example, a Mattachine leader wrote that one does not see "The NAACP and CORE worrying about which chromosome and gene produces a black skin, or about the possibility of bleaching a Negro," nor is the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League interested "in the possibility of abolishing anti-semitism by converting Jews to Christians," because the characteristics of race and religion are considered to be outside the realm of practical human influence (Mattachine Newsletter, Aug. 1974:11, quoted in Saqarin, 1969:104-105). If one's homosexual tendency were similarly outside of one's own control, these leaders believe that it would no longer be considered permissible to discriminate against them, just as it has become wrong to discriminate against blacks and Jews. In addition, if homosexuality is not environmentally influenced, then the furor over homosexual teachers would quiet down and homosexuals would no longer have to fear being fired or discriminated against in "sensitive" occupations.

On the other hand, in a speech at Oberlin College in 1981, Martin Weinberg cautioned that if homosexuality is thought to be hereditary, a Nazi-like extermination of homosexuals or restriction
of their rights to bear children might come to be seen as an effective solution to the "Homosexual Question." He further suggested that if homosexuality is genetic, then the decreasing tendency of homosexuals to marry as a cover for their homosexuality will lead to a drop in the number of homosexuals. This assertion was termed "ridiculous" by one of my respondents.

Contrary to the hypothesized effects of various theories of homosexual causation on public attitudes toward homosexuals, studies indicate that the attribution of responsibility for sexual orientation has little correlation with the tendency to stigmatize homosexuals, being far outweighed by other factors. Bobys and Laner state that "The attitude that homosexuals are bad people who need to be punished is held not only by those who think homosexuals are made, but also by those who think gays are born gay." In studying the attitudes of people toward "cured" homosexuals, they found that "cured" homosexuals are still discredited, in spite of the fact that 61.9% of the adult population of the United States believe that for over half of homosexuals, "Homosexuality is a sickness that can be cured," 37.9% of them believing this to be true of all or almost all homosexuals (Levitt and Klassen, 1974:29).

Regardless of the effects of various causal theories on actual public behavior towards homosexuals, anticipation of these effects produce responses among homosexuals. Many of the lesbians I spoke to found themselves deciding what caused their homosexuality not on the basis of their own experience, nor on the basis of scientific evidence, but on the basis of the social consequences of that decision. Thus Phoebe describes her struggle to pinpoint the source
of her lesbianism:

I guess what I'm sort of trying to talk about is like, "Is it a choice?" I mean, I always talk to myself about this. Is it a choice, and if it's a choice, then what does that mean, and I don't know. First I felt like it's bad [that] it's a choice cuz then I had to make it, and if my parents said -- I couldn't just say to my parents, "Oh, well, I'm just born that way, I can't help it." I have to say to them, "Look, I chose this." But then I started thinking, well, it's a choice because it makes me feel best, and so it's like suddenly I see lesbianism as being like self-determination... because I'm a lesbian... cuz I made the choice to, it just opens up whole new avenues to me. (Phoebe, taped interview)

Three myths exist about lesbians and gay men which trivialize homosexuality and its causes. These are the beliefs that someone's homosexuality is "just a phase," that a woman has turned to women because she failed to find the right man, or that "all she needs is a good fuck." All three of these myths are based on the assumption that heterosexual sex is inherently more natural and satisfying than homosexual sex. The first, a frequent reaction of parents upon discovering that a son or daughter is gay, implies that homosexuality is not to be taken seriously; it is merely something one experiments with while young, curious, and unsettled. When the person matures, they will outgrow their youthful playfulness and settle down to a serious heterosexual lifestyle. As Phoebe said in an interview, "I told this woman that I was a lesbian, [and later] she asked me if I had a boyfriend. These things just go in and out of their... they think it's a phase or something." Amelia's brother also thought her lesbianism was just a phase, and the response of Colleen's mother upon learning of her daughter's lesbianism was that Colleen would probably grow out of it. The motivation behind this response to homosexuality may be, especially
in the case of a parent, the wish to deny a son or daughter's homosexuality. It may also be part of a general attitude of not taking lesbianism or young people seriously and not believing that the young are capable of making important decisions or of feeling true love.

The second myth casts homosexuality as a last resort, a substitute for heterosexuality when a heterosexual relationship has proven unattainable. For example, gay women are sometimes considered heterosexual rejects -- women who are so socially inept or homely that they have failed to attract a man and thus have had to turn to members of their own sex (Simon and Gagnon, 1967:259).

Caprio writes:

Psychiatrists know only too well that the basic need for affection is present in every human being. Deprived of heterosexual love, a woman either sublimates that longing... If she is unable to sublimate successfully this yearning for love, she is apt to accept faute de mieux the love advances of another woman. (Capric, 1954:12)

With whom, he says, she "settles for a life of mutual masturbation" (1954:12). This myth is refuted by Hills (1980:173), who writes:

Contrary to male mythology, studies reveal that, like Joan, nearly all self-admitted lesbians (90 to 95%) have dated males, and a substantial majority (50 to 80%) have had sexual intercourse with one or more men [Blumstein and Schwartz, 1974]. One study, in fact, found that not only were the homosexual women in the sample more likely to have had heterosexual intercourse than the heterosexual women (79 vs 50%) but the homosexual women also had received as many marriage proposals from men as did their heterosexual counterparts (79 vs 78%) [Safrir and Robins, 1973]. As two researchers point out:

Far from being rejected by men, lesbians tend to be unsatisfied by them. The fact that their erotic and emotional life is with women is the result of an active choice. They have chosen women over men; they prefer women to men. It is difficult for men to understand this, because
such a choice would represent a threat to their desirability. The only explanation most would find acceptable would be one that relegates such a choice to the twilight world of psychiatric pathology, an explanation which is ideological — based on a masculine fear — rather than scientific [Goode and Troiden, 1974:233].

The third myth, that "all she needs is a good man and she'll never want a woman again," assumes that heterosexual sex is naturally superior to homosexual sex and that homosexuality is probably the result of a bad heterosexual experience, or a lack of heterosexual experience. 56% of adults in the United States believe that homosexuals fear the opposite sex (Lavick and Klassen, 1974). Caprio quotes the "compassionate" opinion of Dr. Wolfe that:

We can hardly blame a woman who has suffered nothing but humiliation and ridicule and frustration at the hands of men for turning away from men when she seeks an object of the love she considers the most sacred gift she has to offer. (Caprio, 1954:7)

Caprio asserts that one of the four causes of female homosexuality is a fear of boys brought on by a fear of being seduced and made pregnant, and that "The lesbian who deliberately renounces marriage and motherhood is blind to the realization that her attitude represents a defensive rationalization for her inadequacy and flight from life's responsibilities" (Caprio, 1954:12). In other words, homosexuality is believed to be the result of a fearful turning away from heterosexuality rather than a positive turning toward homosexuality.

Amelia links this attitude to the stereotype that homosexuals' sexual orientation is the core of their entire identity: "That's... cuz I think that straight people think that, as far as being gay is concerned, that sex is all that we care about. But... there are a
lot of things we care about outside of sex." In other words, it's not the lack of a good fuck that makes women gay, it's something much more profound and extensive. The idea that women can only be homosexual if they don't know how good heterosexual sex can be is probably very reassuring to men who feel threatened by the possibility that women may actually prefer each other to what they have to offer. It is interesting to note that while 25.2% of adult Americans believe that over half of "homosexual men can be turned into heterosexuals by women who have enough sexual skills," 34.1% believe that "homosexual women can be turned into heterosexuals by men who have enough sexual skills." Levitt and Klassen interpret this to indicate a difference in the relative influence the two sexes are believed to have in sexual matters.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore the interactive relationships of societal images and gay reality in an effort to demonstrate the effects of these aspects of societal attitudes upon lesbians and lesbian subculture.
Cross-gender Stereotypes: The Relationship of Myth to Reality

One of the most prevalent stereotypes of homosexuals, and one which has a complicated relationship to gay reality, is that of cross-gender behavior. Is there any truth to the popular belief that lesbians are masculine and that in a lesbian relationship, one woman will take the male role and the other the female? One does not have to look far to realize that the institution of butch-femme role playing, especially as practiced prior to the 1960s, bears a striking resemblance to the stereotype that gays exhibit cross-gender role behavior and the belief that one partner is the real man-in-a-woman's-body lesbian while the other is a normal female.

In old lesbian life, butch-femme role playing was a prominent feature of that part of the subculture which centered around gay bars. The butch role was an exaggeratedly masculine role and the femme role was a very feminine role. Butches dressed in actual men's clothes, from ties and suit jackets down to men's underwear and breast bindings. They held doors open for their femmes, earned the bread while the femmes cooked and cleaned at home, and made all the important decisions:

As far as a typical butch, what she wore, she also wore a tie, if she was going out to a club or something like that. She was always the head of the house, and if you were a femme, you wouldn't make any decisions until you talked to her about it. And she... psyched herself into believing that she was a man so much that she really did
start believing that she was a man... I remember this one girl said to me [that this other] girl, who was a femme, ... came and asked her to dance. And she was just as feminine as this other girl was, and she said, "I guess she don't know what she is or what she's doing," ... Because it's a no-no for a femme to come up and ask another femme to dance. you usually had to wait until the butches come up and ask you to dance because you couldn't really ask them to dance. In a way you're really being straight in a gay sort of way. (Amelia, taped interview)

Butches were allowed to be promiscuous, but femmes were to be faithful and a promiscuous femme was looked down upon as a tramp. A promiscuous femme could switch to the butch role and start anew, but women who switched roles too often or those who refused to take roles were called "ki-ki" and looked down upon by the role playing community.

Given the similarity between the lesbian cross-gender stereotypes and the actual old gay role playing behavior, the question then becomes, first of all, is there a necessary connection between sex role behavior and sexual orientation, and secondly, what is the relationship between the stereotype and the reality? Are the stereotypes based on honest observation of lesbian behavior? Are they true reflections of the actual situation? Or might the relationship between the stereotypes and the reality be otherwise?

Some theorists, especially some of the earlier ones, have postulated a very close, even necessary, connection between same sex sexual object choice and cross-gender behavior. Whitam (1978) believes that gay role behavior shows up before a homosexual's introduction to gay subculture, i.e. that it is not learned, but
Lesbians are particularly responsive to clitoral stimuli, and with them one finds not infrequently a habitually enlarged clitoris. If this condition is extreme, the clitoris looks like a small penis and signals an endocrine syndrome: pseudo-hermaphroditism. Women of such make-up are often, but not always, homosexual. Whatever their sexual preference may be, they are highly aggressive. (Wolff, 1971:55) Miss Smith) is a woman with masculine gender identity. The cause of it could not be satisfactorily evaluated as I was, for obvious reasons, unable to examine her physically. Only through a physical examination could I have known whether she represented a case of pseudo-hermaphroditism or even hermaphroditism (Wolff:134).

More recently, among lesbians and those who study them, the belief that there is a necessary connection between sex role behavior and sexual orientation has fallen by the wayside. Today the general consensus is that there is no a priori connection between sex role behavior and sexual orientation. The strongest evidence for this statement is very straightforward: a number of lesbians exhibit no cross-gender behavior, or no more than would be acceptable in a heterosexual woman. As role playing among lesbians has become less pronounced and less common over the years, this number has increased and has undoubtedly aided the dissassociation of the concept of sexual orientation from that of gender role behavior. Also, as researchers begin to reach beyond psychiatrists' offices to contact diverse sectors of the lesbian community, they are becoming more aware of the existence of healthy lesbians who exhibit a range of feminine and masculine behaviors.

Among my own subjects, only a few women appeared masculine, and
a few were extremely feminine in appearance and manner. When asked if they could "spot a lesbian," many of the subjects indicated an awareness that gay women who were very feminine did exist, and that these women were often indistinguishable from straight women, even to their trained and sensitized perceptions. If these feminine women prove that there is no necessary connection between sex role behavior and sexual orientation, then the obvious existence of some lesbians who do exhibit extraordinary cross-gender behavior which resembles cross-gender stereotypes becomes the phenomenon in need of explanation. The dissassociation of sexual orientation from gender role behavior has allowed the earlier deterministic biological explanations to be replaced by more psychological and sociological explanations.

Most interpretations of butch-femme role playing have assumed that straight roles or homosexual cross-gender stereotypes are the source of butch-femme roles. The reasons which have been given to explain why a lesbian might adopt a straight role or stereotypically masculine role include a lack of alternative role models, the need for a lesbian identity, the need for a way to recognize other lesbians, the easing of cognitive dissonance for oneself and one's lover, the previous development of the lesbian's personality, and a desire to avoid uncomfortable situations.

The first reason claims that lesbians, having straight relationships as their only models, copy them because they know no other way of structuring a relationship. The butch takes on the traditional role of the man and the femme the role of the woman. D. G. Wolf offers this explanation of role playing:
Several reasons have been postulated for the kinds ofrole
playing especially prevalent in the bar culture in the
lesbian community. The major one is that lesbians, raised
in a heterosexually-oriented culture, where the
male-female paradigm is the appropriate pattern for love
relationships, have no other role models available... It
has been suggested, as well, that role playing is more
prevalent among working class lesbians, who are thought to
have experienced stronger role adherence in their own blue
collar families. As the majority of women who frequent
the bars are of working-class origin, this social pattern is
reinforced (Abbott and Love, 1977:94; Martin and

Fonse (1978) and Adair (1978) both received this explanation of role
playing from lesbians whom they interviewed:

Pam: We didn't have any ground rules. We didn't know how
to play this game. All we knew was we were in a different
place, and we had to find our way through it. (Adair:47).

My respondents also made similar comments:

Role playing seemed a necessary part because you related
it to straight life, male-female kind of thing, (Elaine,
taped interview)

We suffered a whole lot and hurt each other a lot cuz all
we knew was... the only models we had was the
heterosexual "She's my piece of property
forever" -- domination, submission, all that shit.
(Deeanna, taped interview)

Another explanation of role playing is that it is not a direct
imitation of straight roles, but an imitation of the cross-gender
stereotypes which exist. A woman who is in the process of realizing
that she is a lesbian but who has not yet met other lesbians must
somehow form a concept of what lesbians are like. She must do so in
order to develop her own identity as a lesbian and to identify clues
which she hopes will aid her in finding other lesbians. Since she
is a member of straight society and has never contacted other
lesbians, her concept of a lesbian is going to be drawn from her
experience with straight society. The lesbian image straight society offers her is that of the masculine lesbian.

In an emerging lesbian has been kept completely naive of anything homosexual, even the stereotypes, I propose that she may, given the male-female role dichotomy of straight society, develop the stereotype on her own by assuming that since men love women, women who love women must be analogous to men. Thus even in the absence of cross-gender homosexual stereotypes, the male and female stereotypes of straight society may function to recreate on an individual level a cross-gender conception of homosexuals. Among my subjects I cannot with certainty identify anyone who followed this pattern, and it may be that such a process never occurs. Whether it is possible for cross-gender stereotypes to be recreated on an individual level would be an interesting question for study. However, it may be difficult to answer today, as the increasing public discussion of homosexuality makes it rare that someone remains who has never been exposed to homosexual reality or stereotypes.

Having accepted the masculine stereotype, and deducing that if lesbians are masculine and she is a lesbian therefore she must be masculine, this newly emerging lesbian may take on a more or less masculine role in accordance with her new concept of herself. As Ponce states:

"Role playing is characteristic of a minority of women in the lesbian subculture today... However, role playing is a prevailing stereotype of lesbian behavior in the heterosexual world and as such has importance as a kind of negative standard in the perception of the lesbians I met. It remains an issue that women in the lesbian subculture may take into account in the formulation of their own
identities. (Pomse, 1973:115)

Gebhard, et. al., describe this process among gay males and imply that one may indeed derive a feminine image of male homosexuals on the basis of the gender dichotomy present in straight society, without the benefit of pre-existing gay cross-gender stereotypes:

Because of historical factors and a primitive basic concept that all sociosexual activity must have one partner in a "masculine" and the other in a "feminine" role, a substantial number of males who are predominantly homosexual feel impelled to adopt what they consider feminine characteristics [because of the traditional dichotomy between sex roles]*. In some cases wherein a male construes his homosexual interest as evidence of a feminine component within himself, these obvious mannerisms express his feeling that he is acting according to his "true nature." In other cases the behavior seems purely a matter of conforming to a stereotype. (Gebhard, et. al., 1965:348-349; Clinard:541)

Some of my respondents also expressed the belief that a cross-gender role provides an identity for gay people. In a taped interview, Rima said, "Some women that are gay, they need an identity so they adopt a dykey image," and Sheila thought that men were more obviously cross-gender in their behavior, "maybe because there's a greater need for men to identify themselves as gay."

The adoption of a cross-gender conception of lesbians as a means of recognizing other lesbians and the adoption of stereotypical cross-gender behavior as an expression of one's lesbian identity are exemplified by Jill. Having read in psychology

*Clinard has quoted Gebhard and inserted this phrase.
books that lesbians were masculine, she began looking for women who appeared masculine. She also began buying ties downtown, and wearing neckerchiefs outside the house in the hope that other lesbians would recognize her. For Jill, these efforts were fruitless, but the adoption by some lesbians of a masculine appearance did serve to facilitate communication between lesbians, especially in old gay life when the masculine affect was much stronger, according to many of my respondents.

In addition to filling the woman's need for a lesbian identity, taking a masculine role can help to ease the cognitive dissonance created upon the realization that one has the feelings of the opposite sex. For some, it provides an explanation for their attraction to women (Ponse:180). Simon and Gagnon (1967) postulate that many lesbians experiment with a masculine role for a short period, especially during the identity crisis that occurs at the outset, and believe that this may be because they are still imbued with heterosexual socialization, so that taking male roles reduces uncertainty and dissonance. Weinberg also states that "many homosexuals have, when they discovered their orientation, begun acting in ways they believed consistent and necessary for their identity as homosexuals" (Weinberg, 1972:71).

The idea that lesbians are more likely to exhibit cross-gender behavior during the identity crisis when they first come out is, significantly, not supported by my respondents. There is no tendency for the women who have recently come out to be more masculine than those who have been out for many years. My findings suggest that rather than the length of time since coming out being
the crucial variable in determining how strongly a lesbian identifies with the lesbian community, the degree to which she is experiencing an identity crisis at whatever stage of her lesbian career she may be is the important factor in predicting how strongly she will identify with the community. Identity crises do often occur upon coming out, but some women recover from them quickly, some never do, and some experience repeated crises. Further research is needed to isolate the factors contributing to the identity crises and the stronger lesbian identification of some women at certain times in their lives.

While taking a masculine role and appearance may ease the transition to homosexuality for ego herself, it may also ease the transition for her femme lover. Pam and Rusty, interviewed by the Adairs, fit the butch-femme stereotype exactly. Of the very masculine appearance of her lover, Pam says, "It made it easier for me to cope with my new-found life." If Rusty had appeared more like a woman, Pam may not have been able to accept their relationship. A woman quoted by Fonse, who had been a one-way butch (a woman who will make love to her sexual partner but will not allow her partner to make love to her), said that she did not permit sexual reciprocity in the past because she was afraid that if she

...tore down that particular barrier... they might be frightened... what would frighten them was that I wasn't really a man and we were putting up a beautiful illusion and that it wasn't real, it wasn't true. (Fonse: 119)

Masculine behavior among lesbians could also be due to the previous personality development of the lesbian. For example, it may be a reaction to having suppressed inappropriate gender behavior
before acknowledging one's lesbianism, perhaps as a defense against fear of being gay. Or it may be a continuation of childhood tomboyishness.

Many lesbians do believe that they can trace their masculine behavior back to their childhood, seeing their present behavior as a continuation of earlier tomboyish behavior. The tendency to make a connection between childhood behavior and later lesbianism showed up in my research, when asked to "trace the development of your feelings for women/lesbianism," five of my respondents mentioned that they were tomboys as children and one woman, speaking of a friend's child, said:

--- encouraged her three year old to go out every morning to the bakery and buy the morning bread. So she was a real expert at at -- crossing the street, everything. She had the amphe of an older child; confidence, she could do it. Her mother was giving her the confidence that she could do it. She was encouraged to explore her world so that she didn't have to be afraid of it... Now she will be a tomboy. Her mother already knows that. ---'s comment was "[The child] is going to have them all eating out of her hand -- Men and women, she's going to be dynamite." Now I have a feeling that she's going to be gay, myself. Or grow up and find her identity one way or the other. But she's not going to be afraid to explore. (Jill, taped interview)

Although two of the five women went on to say that they didn't feel that tomboyish behavior in girls and lesbian orientation in women are linked and the sixth woman quickly noticed and "corrected" her assumption that the confident girl would turn out to be gay, these statements are belied by the obvious assumption that there is some type of connection between tomboyish behavior and sexual orientation.

If there is indeed a connection between lesbianism and
childhood tomboyishness, what is the nature of this connection? Is tomboyish behavior a symptom of a developing lesbian orientation, the seeds of which are already planted, or does it lead to later lesbianism? Three of the five respondents who spoke of their own early tomboy behavior implied that this behavior was a symptom of a sexual orientation which was already present, or in other words, that tomboyish and lesbianism are different symptoms of the same fundamental condition.Ccileen thinks her hatred for dolls, frilly clothes and pigtails and her preference for playing softball with boys was a sign of the lesbianism she wasn't able to identify until later, and Nellie says that:

My girlfriend used to live up over that hill and you had to get up over to get over there. Now if I was truly straight I probably wouldn't have climbed over there. That's how I felt then. Looking back on it, I climbed over... That should have told my parents something. (Nellie, taped interview)

Amelia said that she preferred playing with boys as a child because she didn't have anything in common with the other girls, who always talked about boys, implying that her lack of interest in romantic involvements with boys was already established.

Other lesbians attribute their own early tomboyism to an envy of the social position of males (C. Wolff, 1971). Among my respondents, two women said they had envied boys or wished to be boys:

Conceivably from my childhood I emulated my brother, I don't know. He was a favorite in some ways. I remembered only recently that I asked my mother once, "Why does he get to dress up?" and she said, "Because he's a boy." That may have been the beginning although I've lost [track of] when that statement was made. ...(What is it that you see in women that you don't see in men?)...I feel as though here I have this beautiful opportunity to be the
rider on a white steed in a white hat coming out of the West. (Kelly, taped interview)

In Kelly's case, the envy of the male social position may have contributed to her lesbianism as well as to her tomboyism. Thus it is possible that tomboyish behavior is neither an early sign nor a cause of lesbianism, but that it may stem from the same social conditions which may encourage some women to become lesbians. Beatrice also felt her tomboyism was partly a result of her wish to be a boy, derived from her parents' wish for a son. Just what she believes is the connection between her tomboyism and her love for a woman which developed after many years of heterosexual orientation is not clear, but elsewhere she mentions her parents' liberal attitudes and implies that they may have influenced her ability to accept new ideas, including tomboyishness in childhood and lesbianism much later.*

Some theorists think it possible that a child's unusual behavior or physical appearance may stimulate certain responses from

*Beatrice went on to describe the imitation of feminine behavior by gay men as "an unconscious putting down of women because so many of the, what we used to call feminine characteristics, that the men adopt, are charicatures." Viewed this way, camp among men makes an interesting comparison with drag among women; lesbian drag is seen as an expression of envy of the male position while male camp is seen as an expression of scorn for the female position. Whether these are the actual conscious or unconscious intentions behind drag and camp probably varies from individual to individual, but the fact that they are seen in such different lights by observers reflects the unequal value of the two positions in society.
others and thus lead to homosexuality and reinforcement of already deviant gender role behavior, Rubinstein suggests that a feminine boy may be pressured by stigma to further develop feminine gestures. Or, having female instead of male friends as a boy may socialize the boy as a girl, including both feminine behavior and feminine sexual object choice. Harmer suggests that cross-gender behavior and homosexuality may both be influenced by the interaction of constitutional factors with one's environment:

Insofar as a particular kind of body appearance, build, or physical coordination may affect parental or sibling reactions to a child or his or her ability to participate in peer activities, it may play a significant part either in the gender role assigned to the child by others or in the child's ability to identify with his or her own sexual group. This may act as a facilitating factor for an ultimate homosexual object choice. (1980:9)

Based on a comparison of the statements of her lesbian respondents with those of heterosexual controls regarding their aggressive behavior and preference for feminine or masculine activities as children, Wolff concludes that "The lesbians had been, with few exceptions, tomboys." She also says that "Only 13 control subjects said they had wished to be male when they were children, while 81 lesbians had wanted to be boys" (Wolff, 1971:157). Although

*There is only one case in this study in which a subject's physical constitution seems likely to have had anything to do with her sexual orientation. Kelly is a very masculine appearing woman who says her masculine appearance is something she was born with, implying that she has not cultivated it. She reports that during WWII, when she was in the military, other women were attracted to her because of her appearance. Knowing the consequences of being discovered to be a lesbian in the military, she carefully avoided these approaches. But one night a drunken friend crawled into bed with her and both women were subsequently dismissed from their company. Although Kelly feels that she has been a lesbian all her life, it is conceivable that these experiences in the military reinforced her conception of herself as a lesbian and played a part in her continued lesbian self-identification.
there may be a link between tomboyish behavior and lesbianism, studies such as Wolff's which conclude on the basis of reports by adult lesbians that lesbians are more frequently tomboys as children than are heterosexual women have a serious methodological fault. Some of the tendency for lesbians to see themselves as tomboys in youth is probably due to selective remembrance and reinterpretation of past events to coincide with their present sense of themselves, rather than to an actual tendency toward masculine behavior in pre-lesbians. Given the association in the popular mind of cross-gender behavior with homosexual orientation, it is to be expected that in looking into their pasts for clues to the existence or cause of their lesbianism, lesbians will focus on acts and feelings which coincide with these popular beliefs and exaggerate them. Colleen herself, says her description of early tomboyish behavior is hindsight; if she had not turned out to be a lesbian she probably would have attached little significance to certain events in her past.

In addition to being an imitation of straight roles for lack of alternatives, a source of identity, a way to relieve cognitive dissonance, and a continuation of childhood masculine behavior, drag may have been used purposefully in old gay life as a defense against uncomfortable situations a lesbian would not want to find herself in. For example, Amelia suggested that women used to get into the butch role as a way of discouraging men from making unwanted sexual passes at them. Whitey, in an interview with the Adairs, says that some women used drag to avoid harrassment for being a lesbian:

Adair: So you wanted people to think you were a man?
Whitey: Yeah, most of the time, I can understand how people got into that because at the time you didn't really want to look like a dyke -- you wanted to look like a man so you wouldn't get beat up on the subway. You didn't want to look like a faggot, either, because then you would surely get beat up. So it was mostly to protect yourself. (Adair, 1978:9).

On the other hand, if a lesbian was masculine in appearance but not passing for a man, the masculine stereotype could make them more open to unwanted suspicion. Kelly expressed feeling oppressed by the stereotype; because of her masculine appearance, she felt vulnerable to exposure in the eyes of straights who might notice her masculine qualities and make the association with lesbianism. In her case, her reaction was to feel as though she had to suppress the masculine side of herself:

We had older women living next door to us and I was afraid to go outside and saw wood, [I am] a would-be carpenter and bricklayer and everything else. I love doing those things... [Then one of the older women yelled down], "You saw wood just like a man!" I nearly dissolved. I couldn't saw wood and I couldn't lay bricks. It's truly been frustrating, not being able to express the person that you are. Women are in construction today! I was born forty years late! (Kelly, taped interview)

The reaction of lesbians to cross-gender stereotypes is largely acceptance; there is a feeling among lesbians that for one reason or another, many lesbians do tend to be more masculine than the average woman. However, most are quick to take exception, explaining that not all lesbians are masculine, in fact that many are indistinguishable from the most feminine heterosexual women, and that masculinity is not a necessary part of being a lesbian.
In the past two decades, the position of role playing in lesbian subculture has changed dramatically. The most obvious change is that of a decrease in frequency; true butch lesbians are few and far between these days. I encountered only one in my own research, but was told that in redneck bars in the more conservative areas of the country these women can still be found. It is as if the whole lesbian community underwent a group identity crisis in the 1940s and 1950s which has largely been overcome today.

Most of my respondents were glad to see the passing away of role playing. A common sentiment among them was that if one is going to role play, one may as well be straight. When asked what they find in relationships with women that they didn't find in relationships with men, seven respondents replied that lesbian relationships are not constrained by prescribed roles as are straight relationships, and some mentioned that role playing was antithetical to this ideal.

Several explanations for the decrease in role playing among lesbians have been offered by previous theorists. Ponsé concisely sums up her explanations for the change:

In the past, more than is true today, the novice lesbian's avenue of access to the lesbian community was through lesbian bars, where role playing expectations frequently prevailed. The greater access to the community provided by political groups, the widespread questioning of the legitimacy of stereotyped sex roles in both straight and gay worlds, and the influence of feminism have served as forces toward diminishing and even proscribing role playing expectations. (Ponsé:121).

One of the reasons most often given by my informants was that the feminist movement has fostered a new pride in womanhood, so lesbians no longer feel a need to pretend they are something else through
role play, they can hold their heads high while developing an independent identity as women and as lesbians:

I always wanted to kill myself, I was so depressed, and it never did stop although I had about eight years of psychoanalysis. I stayed alive but I never felt good about myself until gay liberation when for the first time in my life I knew lesbians who felt good about themselves and we began to realize that we weren't sick, and that the laws against us were wrong. (Deeanna, taped interview)

One of my respondents agreed with Ponsa (1978), Wolf (1979:40) and Rosen (1974:69) that the decrease in role playing is not an isolated phenomenon but part of a greater trend toward the weakening of gender roles in the entire society, partly as a result of feminism:

I think it's just a question of in general, throughout our society, a lot of roles and stereotypes are melting away, so it's really hard to know where anybody is. (Yvonne, taped interview)

These explanations of the decrease in role playing are probably valid as far as they go. But role playing has not only decreased in frequency. It has decreased in intensity and changed in form as well. Whereas old gay butches took great care to look exactly like men, lesbians today who dress in drag do so more symbolically -- they may wear a tailored shirt, vest, and narrow tie, but not men's underwear and suit coats. If they don a man's hat, it may be decorated with a purple feather. Rather than dressing in a male fashion, they are dressing in a new lesbian style which borrows some elements from male dress, or old lesbian drag, but has been altered in important ways to create a style which is distinctly lesbian, not male.

But drag in old gay life, as Amelia describes it above, was more than a matter of dress. It became an integral part of the
butch's identity, and dictated the ways in which she could behave and the ways in which she was allowed to relate to other lesbians, depending on whether the others were butch or femme. It was a constant part of her self, even to the point of following her into bed with her lover: an old gay butch was a butch at all hours of the day. Today drag has all but lost this intensity. For far fewer women is the butch role an important aspect of their identity; instead, it is an image to be played with occasionally, perhaps on special occasions such as excursions to the bars, and to be taken on and off as the mood strikes. Today many lesbians are feminine one day and butch the next, and they receive no scorn, as did ki-kis in old gay life, nor feel any contradiction in the mixing of the roles. Drag has also generally ceased to have implications for the nature of relations between lesbians. Virtually any pairing of two women, regardless of their respective degrees of masculinity or femininity, is possible.

The spirit in which drag is undertaken has also changed. In old gay life, drag was taken very seriously; recall Whitey's opinion that drag was a means of preventing physical attack. But today among younger lesbians, drag is put on in a spirit of fun, like playing dress-up or make-believe. In fact, a woman who takes the butch role too seriously is sometimes ostracized (Ponse:117-121) and labelled "insecure." This was the case for the one real butch lesbian whom I did meet during my research; the talk behind her back labelled her an insecure show-off.

Overshadowed by the dramatic decrease in the old gay type of butch-femme role playing, these changes in intensity and form have
received little, if any, notice either from lesbians or those attempting to build theories concerning role playing. It is my contention that role playing is not merely dying out as an institution, as has heretofore been believed. Instead, as the needs of the lesbian community change due to changes in the attitudes of in the greater society, the institution of role playing is evolving into a new form designed to satisfy the changing needs of the lesbian community. Ogden (1922:150-154) has pointed out that cultural forms may persist while their functions change; as the need for a given function of a cultural form weakens, new functions may come into play. Conversely, as new needs develop, it is easier to adapt a preexisting cultural form to fill these new needs than it is to develop a new cultural form. I assert that this has been the case with the lesbian subcultural institution of role playing.

The changing function of role playing in the lesbian subculture is hinted at by the very recent appearance of a new type of reason given by lesbians as the motivation for participating in drag. The possible motivations for masculine behavior in lesbians given above all take that behavior more or less at face value, assuming that the male role in society is the source, in the form of a role model, of masculine behavior in lesbians. Previous studies of lesbianism have for the most part assumed this, and the terminology which has developed to describe it, e.g. referring to it as masculine behavior, reflects this point of view. It is possible however, to explain the "masculine" behavior in lesbians without assuming the male role model. What is thought to be "masculine" behavior today may really be "non-feminine" behavior. Monteflores and Schultz
provide the clue to such a point of view when they state:

Resistance to societal pressures towards heterosexual preference is often accompanied by a questioning of other arbitrary restrictions, such as rigid sex roles. To the extent that homosexual preference is associated with sex role violation, there will likely be an essential difference in the coming out process for lesbians and gay men, with gay men and women moving in opposite sex-typed dimensions. (Monteflores and Schultz, 1978:59)

From this perspective, "masculine" behavior is seen not as an imitation of men, but as a lack of conformance to feminine prescriptions. Since the prescribed roles for women and men tend to be complementary, whatever is not assigned to the female role is likely to be associated with the male role. Thus, as soon as a woman leaves the feminine role, she steps into territory which has been reserved for the male, not because she is acting like a man, but because she is not acting femininely and non-feminine behavior equals masculine behavior.

Non-feminine behavior may come not only from a conscious or unconscious questioning of traditional values and sex roles, but also from the necessities of a lesbian lifestyle. Lesbians are compelled, as heterosexual women are not, to depend upon themselves. A lesbian does not have the option that a straight woman has of marrying and being financially dependent upon a man. Lesbians, especially as fewer are marrying to conceal their lesbianism, must support themselves and each other financially and emotionally. To do so, they must develop those personality characteristics such as confidence, intellect and independence, usually associated with masculinity, which are helpful in today's world. Yvonne and many lesbians with whom I spoke informally feel that lesbians have to be
more independent than straight women because they do not have the
option of depending upon a man.

Phoebe, a college sophomore, suggested this interpretation in
an interview. She had recently cut her long hair quite short.
Knowing that short hair is a "masculine" characteristic often
associated with lesbianism in women, Phoebe didn't think, or was
unwilling to say, that she had cut her hair in conformance with the
stereotype and was looking for an alternate reason for having done
so. She was also attempting to give a logical reason, other than
unsubstantiated stereotype, to justify her apologetically stated
tendency to consider women who dressed or wore their hair like men,
lesbians. She came up with the idea that heterosexual style is very
much designed to make women sexually attractive to men and to make
them appear frail, young, and non-threatening in accordance with the
image of the female every man should want to marry. Since lesbians
do not buy into the heterosexual attraction game, they dress in a
manner which does not have these purposes. Hence the practical
clothes and hairstyles which have traditionally been found on men
are adopted by lesbians, again not because they are masculine but
because they are non-feminine:

I didn't cut my hair until much later [after I came out]. That was really good for me, because it wasn't just
because, "Oh, I'm a lesbian, I'm conforming to lesbian stereotypes." It's more like, there're certain ways that
people dress that are rejecting male values, cuz a lot of times that stuff [heterosexual dress] is real sexual, you
know, in trying to attract men... I think that the way lesbians dress is really un-buying into things. So I
think that whole thing... has a lot more to do with rejecting trying to get male approval than with conforming
to lesbian stereotypes. (Phoebe, taped interview)

Phoebe's explanation is not believable when applied to old gay
butches, who took great pains to wear the same clothes as did men, etc; those women were obviously concerned with much more than simply rejecting the female gender role. They were obviously copying the male role and appearance for any of a number of reasons. However, it is quite likely that in this age of feminism, improved opportunities for women, and re-evaluation of traditional relationships that "butch" behavior among lesbians is motivated by very different reasons, such as the one offered by Phoebe, than was the very different type of "butch" behavior practiced by lesbians two or three decades ago. Earlier lesbians had greater reason to envy their brothers, to fear being beaten up on the subway, or to need a lesbian identity, while today's lesbians are more concerned with feeling pride in their womanhood and developing new forms of egalitarian, individualistic relationships. Thus old gay cross-gender behavior was motivated by such reasons as envy of the male social position, the need to avoid unpleasant situations caused by the fear and hatred of lesbians, the lack of alternative role models, the need for a lesbian identity, and the need for some way to recognize each other. Today, lesbians have adopted the role playing behavior of their foresisters to serve the current needs of lesbians, which still include the need for a lesbian identity and the need for a way to recognize each other to some extent, but also include the need for a unique lesbian identity in demonstration of lesbian pride and the rejection of traditional gender roles which, in the wake of the feminist movement, have come to be seen as contrary to the very desire of women for other women.
**Sexual Identity and Practices: The Relationship of Myth to Reality**

As is the case with the cross-gender stereotype, other stereotypes and myths of homosexuals also have complicated relationships with the reality of homosexual life. Many of these gay images are true to some extent, but not because they are simply accurate reflections of the actual situation. On the contrary, often the stereotypes and myths act as self-fulfilling prophesies, creating feedback loops in which the societal images influence lesbian behavior and lesbian behavior then "proves" and strengthens the images. In other cases, the stereotypes and myths cause some homosexuals to repress behavior which would appear to fit the stereotype, in an effort to avoid stigma or to change people's images of lesbians. In one way or another, lesbian stereotypes and myths do affect lesbians and lesbian subculture. In this section, the relationships between several of the lesbian images presented earlier in this chapter and the reality of the lesbian world will be explored. The stereotypes and myths to be examined are the tendency to see the lesbian identity as comprising the lesbian's total identity, and the stereotypes that lesbians are oversexed, promiscuous, unstable in their relationships, and likely to engage in other deviant sexual practices such as the seduction of children.

Popular stereotypes exaggerate the importance of sex to the homosexual, considering her or his sexuality to be synonymous with her or his total identity. For many homosexuals, their sexual orientation is indeed a salient part of their self identity for the very reason that it is defined as a problem for them by society.
People develop a sense of themselves by looking at their reflection in other people, as first suggested by Charles Horton Cooley. If other people almost uniformly see a single aspect of one's self as overriding all others in importance, then one is likely to come to consider that aspect important as well. Because homosexuals are "responded to by straights almost entirely on the basis of their sexual orientation, gays too have become almost totally preoccupied by it" (Schur, 1980:216).

The power of others' preoccupation with a single aspect of one's personality to cause one to become likewise preoccupied with it was demonstrated by a study in which healthy research confederates entered a mental hospital as in-patients:

> Even the relatively secure research-confederate pseudopatients in the Rosenhaus study, in the wake of the uniform response to them as patients only, experienced strong feelings of powerlessness and depersonalization. It is hardly surprising, then, if other persons... suffer a severe loss of self-esteem as well as a restriction of their social options. Quite simply, it is very difficult to maintain a favorable view of yourself if other people see you in a negative light and treat you accordingly. As depersonalization increases and the response of others to you is primarily in terms of the deviantized status, it becomes difficult not to become convinced yourself that such status provides your main identity. At an extreme, the heavily deviantized person may come to see himself or herself as "nothing but" an instance of the stigmatized category -- be it a rapist, a corrupt official, an alcoholic, a homosexual, or a midget. (Schur, 1980:15)

Another way in which societal attitudes act to create homosexual preoccupation with sexuality is that societal disapproval leads to a compartmentalization of sex in the homosexual's life. Prevented from expressing their homosexuality in the many situations in which heterosexuals are allowed to express their heterosexuality, leads to a concentration of homosexual expression in situations
where it is allowed. In my experience, in groups of lesbians, conversations very frequently take a sexual turn and become punctuated by sexual insinuations and jokes. The tendency for conversations taking place among homosexuals to turn to sex has also been noted by Doffman (1968) and Karlen (1971). Hoffman refers to the preoccupation of gays with their sexuality as "sex fetishism" and writes that:

Sex fetishism in the gay world is the logical product of the oppression to which the homosexual is subject by the very fact of his homosexuality (Hoffman:158)

An Israeli woman complained to Jill that in Israel, where lesbianism is more severely repressed than in most areas of the United States, there is a marked emphasis on sex when lesbians do get together:

H--- lamented a lot of times about what she called the Big Sait. She said, until she met [three friends], it seemed that most of the women didn't take the time, at the [meeting place] as well as wherever they would meet each other, didn't take the time to get to know each other as people. That the first thing they did was have sex... But I can understand the reason why. It's like, you're isolated, in a country where there's a lot of oppression. There's only one place to go so there's only one place to look [for lovers]. So what can you do? It's not that you can't condemn what's there, you just have to look at all the factors. (Jill, taped interview)

But relations among lesbians are most emphatically not based solely on sex. Most of my respondents, when asked what is a lesbian, stressed the importance of an emotional as well as a physical attraction to other women, some saying that the emotional was even more important than the physical in defining the lesbian. Without doubting the truth of these statements, it should be observed that some of the women appeared to be stressing this point
in defense of themselves against the stereotype of the sexually preoccupied lesbian. That is, because of the stereotype, they felt obliged to emphasize the emotional aspect of lesbianism to project a more acceptable image. Kathy is one of the women who is influenced in her actions by the need to counteract stereotypes through projecting a certain image:

I don't have as many fears any more. I'd like to go into every store and say, "Hello! My name is Kathy and I'm a lesbian!"... But also it's kind of bad to be identified by your sexuality... it's a major part of my life... but I try to be a little bit more tolerant of people's intolerance... and I really try to let them know that I'm a real person and I'm a nice person, and if they're going to like or dislike me they should do it for other reasons, not for my sexuality. (Kathy, taped interview)

Society also sees lesbians as likely to engage in other deviant sexual practices such as the seduction of children, as oversexed and promiscuous, and as unstable in their relationships. There is no concrete evidence to support any of the first three of these contentions, while the last is not as clearly true or false.

The myth that lesbians and gay men attack or seduce children is decidedly false:

The battle cry of the antigay offensive is that homosexuals molest children. In describing gay fathers' parenting, Miller proves it a false accusation. Far from molesting their children, gay men are warm and loving parents. Two other research reports reinforce Miller's point. A massive study done by the staff of the Institute for Sex Research found that gay men are not typical offenders. A child molester is much more likely to be a heterosexual man who has relations with little girls (Hoffman). Another study reported similar findings: for every twelve incidents of child molesting in the United States, eleven are committed by heterosexual men against little girls (DeFrancis, 1976). (Levine, 1974:9)

Comparing these statistics with Kinsey's estimate that one in eight
of United States males between the ages of 16 and 55 have more homosexual than heterosexual contacts for a period of at least three years (Kinsey, 1948:650), it appears that homosexual men are actually less likely to molest children than are heterosexual men. Citing further statistics from Kinsey, Hoffman states in refutation of the myth of the homosexual child molester, "The younger the male partner of the sex offender, the more likely (the male offender) is to be bisexual rather than exclusively homosexual" (1968:92).

To allegations that adult lesbians and gay men are likely to seduce children, or that children are likely to become gay as a result of seduction by an older member of the same sex, homosexual rights activists react understandably with immediate denial. But a fairer appraisal might be that insofar as one's sexual orientation may be influenced by experience, it is undoubtedly true that older homosexuals can have a part in developing the homosexuality of some young people, just as straight role models undoubtedly encourage the young to live a straight lifestyle. However, as Mollie, in a taped interview, and Warren (1974) both observe, homosexual role models are so outnumbered by heterosexual role models during childhood that it is unlikely that homosexual role models play a critical part in the development of homosexuality.

Neither are lesbians and gay men the predatory creatures they are made out to be, nor is seduction by an older homosexual the usual manner in which one becomes a homosexual, as has been shown by previous research:

Previous research indicates that most homosexual careers, male and female, begun outside the total institutional setting involve enlistment rather than a system of
recruitment through peer group or subcultural pressures
(Gagnon and Simon, 1968:116,118 in Rubington:267)

One study is that cited by Clinard, a study of 127 homosexuals in
Great Britain which found that the first homosexual experience for
over two thirds of the subjects were as a child with another boy.
18% were first introduced to homosexuality as boys by adults, 11%
had no homosexual experience until they were adults, and then always
with adults. Clinard concludes that, "Contrary to the popular view,
seduction is not an important factor" (1957:551). Based on a small
number of in-depth interviews with lesbians, Simon and Gagnon
observe that the "older seductress" was missing from the women's
coming out stories, and suggest that this myth allows the lesbians' parents to alleviate their feelings of guilt by blaming their
daughters' lesbianism on the influence of older lesbians.

Among my respondents, too, there is little evidence of older
lesbians having enticed girls away from heterosexuality. The only
two women for whom an older lesbian may have been the critical
factor in their becoming gay are Amelia, who had an affair with an
adult woman at age fifteen, and Nora, who was "attacked" by her
cousin and "I enjoyed it! I enjoyed it. After that I tried to get
her drunk all the time." What I did find was that older lesbians
sometimes were a factor in some of the women's eventual recognition
and acceptance of their own lesbianism. For example, Phoebe's
sister came out a few years before she did, and by Phoebe's own
admission, her sister's lesbianism made it easier for her to
acknowledge her own lesbianism when it became apparent.

Cases in which younger women seduced or may have influenced
older women to enter into a lesbian affair are at least as common in
the interviews as the reverse. One case in which an older woman was brought out by a younger woman even provides evidence that lesbians are aware of the powerful stereotype of the evil seductress and seek to avoid deserving it. At approximately age fifty, Celia and a young friend developed a mutually acknowledged attraction for each other. Although the younger woman wanted to have a sexual relationship and felt that the difference in their ages wasn't an issue, Celia avoided such a relationship because the younger woman wanted children some day and had not yet had a lesbian experience. Celia was afraid of "screwing her up." Celia's statement:

[I] decided that it wasn't such a good idea... cuz she was too young. She also was not a lesbian. She was somebody who was at a stage where I really felt it might fuck her up in terms of her choice and she wanted to get married and have kids and I just thought it was better for her to do that experimentation with somebody her own age... If she'd been 28... and had been a lesbian, or if she'd been a lesbian, period, it would've been different... But I just thought [as a responsible adult, that] that might screw her up. (Celia, taped interview)

shows her concern over the fact that she might influence a woman who might otherwise be straight to be gay.

Other respondents also addressed themselves to the accusation that homosexuals are child molesters. In an attempt to refute the myth that homosexual teachers are a danger to children, a grade school teacher stated emphatically that she had no sexual interest whatsoever in her students:

I'm a physical education teacher. The old stereotype, I deal basically with seventh and eighth grade girls. I have to be extremely careful. I mean, I'm not going to sit here and tell you that I get crushes on eleven and twelve year old girls. That is my job, that is my profession, that is not my private life. That is entirely removed. (Colleen, taped interview)
Several women expressed an aversion to becoming involved with "baby dykes," or women who have not yet had a lesbian experience, believing that it would be better for the uninitiated to experiment with each other. The avoidance by some "veteran" lesbians of involvement with women who are "confused," or "experimenting," as will be discussed in the section on "Boundary heightening," is another factor contributing to many lesbians' reluctance to get involved with young women who may still go straight.

Related to the belief that children are converted to homosexuality by evangelizing homosexuals is the idea that they are led into deviance through the medium of books written by or about homosexuals. In their sample of lesbians, Simon and Gagnon found that the idea that reading about deviant sex in books can cause children to become homosexual was not supported; only two of their subjects had read of lesbianism before becoming lesbian, and it was unlikely that either of the women had been significantly influenced by this. Among my respondents, one woman had read The Well of Loneliness approximately fifty years before coming out, and another read Rainbow Trout Jungle when she was considering, but not acknowledging, her lesbianism. A very common pattern, especially among older lesbians, was for them to have known they were somehow "different," or that they felt attracted to their female friends, and then to suddenly identify the feeling when they ran across the word "lesbian" or "homosexual" in a book or a magazine. In these cases, reading about lesbianism certainly did not cause these women to be lesbian, but it did allow them to label and recognize feelings
which were already present, and may have led them to express these feelings which might otherwise have been repressed. Invariably, these women felt a liberating sense of relief upon finding a name for what they had been feeling; having no name for it had been a very frustrating experience.

Regarding accusations of oversexedness and promiscuity, Kinsey found that the sexual patterns of lesbians resemble those of straight women; they do not appear to be more sexually active or promiscuous than unmarried heterosexual women. From table 1a, it is seen that heterosexual and homosexual women of various ages have similar median and mean frequencies of orgasm. In contrast, table 1e shows the frequency of heterosexual and homosexual orgasm among men. The gradual increase in mean sexual activity with age among lesbians, not found among heterosexual women, is probably due to the inclusion in the sample of lesbians who have formed lesbian marriages in later years, while married heterosexual women have been excluded from the table. The same trend, probably largely for the same reason, shows up in the male homosexual and heterosexual data.

Table 2 shows that on number of sexual partners, or promiscuity, gay women again resemble straight women much more closely than they resemble gay men. Lesbians on the average are no more sexual or promiscuous than are straight women. In fact, there is a slight tendency for fewer homosexual women to have large numbers of partners. So, from these two sets of statistics, it appears that a lesbian's sex is a far more important factor in predicting the strength of her sex drive and level of promiscuity than is her sexual orientation.
Again, however, the existence of a stereotype, though untrue, influences some lesbians by causing them to feel obliged to try to disprove the stereotype. The stereotype of promiscuity led one respondent to defend herself against such accusations by emphasizing that she was not attracted to all women, and led others to stress the fact that they did not engage in one night stands.

Table 2 also shows that gay and straight men closely resemble each other on number of sexual partners, except that a greater proportion of the male homosexual population falls at the extremes (only one, or over 100 partners) than of the heterosexual male population. The larger percentage of gay than straight men who have had only one partner can be easily accounted for by realizing that "married" homosexual men are included in this table while married heterosexual men are not. The higher percentage of gay males who have had over 100 sexual partners, a pattern not found among lesbians, calls for a deeper look, which will be taken in a moment.

Comparing the male and female statistics in Table 2, leads to the observation that both gay and straight men on the average have
**Table 1.** Frequency of Homosexual and Heterosexual Contacts to Orgasm Among Single, Sexually Active Women and Men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Mean freq. per week</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median: 0.10</td>
<td>0.6±0.09</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0±0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean: 0.11</td>
<td>0.6±0.08</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0±0.06</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0±0.06</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0±0.06</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0±0.06</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0±0.06</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0±0.06</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from: Kinsey, 1953: 476, 128
Kinsey, 1948: 258, 248

**Table 2.** Number of Homosexual and Heterosexual Partners of Single Women & Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Partners</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Mean freq. per week</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0±0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-50</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8±0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from: Kinsey, 1953: 683
more sexual partners than have either straight or gay women. This reflects the difference in the position of anonymous or casual sex in the two subcultures. Kinsey found that 10-20% of male homosexuals often find sexual partners in public places (Karlen:521). In contrast, "[Female homosexuals] rarely pick up partners for one night stands but rather engage in a kind of courtship ritual which is very much like that of heterosexual couples." (Hoffman:165). Hills, comparing men and women, writes:

Unlike the more male tendency (regardless of sexual orientation) to want sex first and love (maybe) later, the conventional socialization of adolescent females (both straight and lesbian) encourages the desire for deep affection first. Young females are apt to prefer expressions of tenderness and physical closeness -- hugging and carressing -- cut to postpone orgasm-inducing sexual acts... The development of an intense affectionate relationship with another person is particularly common in the emergence of a lesbian identity. (Hills, 1980:177-178)

Kinsey also ultimately attributes some of the differences in promiscuity between gay men and women to psychological differences between the sexes:

Such long-time homosexual associations are rare among males. A steady association between two females is much more acceptable to our culture and it is, in consequence, a simple matter for females to continue relationships for some period of years. The extended female associations are, however, also a product of differences in the basic psychology of females and males. (Kinsey, 1953:458)

My findings agree with these statements; judging from my interview subjects and observations of lesbian social settings, there are very few women who seek anonymous sex and most lesbians place great importance on having a significant emotional or romantic component as part of every sexual relationship. This difference is particularly apparent in male gay and lesbian bars. The male gay bar has been described as a sexual market place (Hoffman) where
cruising, or the active seeking of sex partners from among strangers, is a frequent, sanctioned, and even institutionalized and expected form of behavior. In contrast, women rarely cruise in bars, more often sitting in small groups of friends and conversing. In one mixed bar I frequented during my research, there was one woman who habitually cruised. This woman's behavior, far from being usual, was a topic of critical conversation among the other women behind her back. Arlene, a therapist who counsels both lesbians and gay men, sees similar evidence in the modal coming out patterns of lesbians and gay men. In her experience, gay men's first homosexual experience is usually with a stranger picked up for the purpose, while women's first lesbian experiences are generally with a very close friend, and constitute an extension of the friendship.

Kinsey writes, "Among all peoples, everywhere in the world, it is understood that the male is more likely than the female to desire sexual relations with a variety of partners" (Kinsey:682), and offers several reasons, biological, psychological, and social, for the greater promiscuity among men than women. Human males are more easily aroused by visual stimuli than are human females. Since the males of "all infra-human species" become more aroused than females by watching others in sexual activity, this difference is partly biological at least (Hoffman:168). Males are conditioned by their previous experience to respond more readily to sexual stimuli, and are more easily aroused by the remembrance of past experiences, and associations that they make between everyday objects and their sexual experience. The average younger male is constantly being aroused. The average female is not so often aroused... Because of this constant arousal, most males, particularly younger males, may be nervously
disturbed unless they can regularly carry their responses through to the point of orgasm. Most females are not seriously disturbed if they do not have a regular sexual outlet, although some of them may be as disturbed as most males are without a regular outlet. (Kinsey:682)

Males also focus more on genitalia than do females (Hoffman:167), and so:

In most heterosexual and homosexual relationships, promiscuity may depend, in many instances, upon the male's anticipation of variation in the genital anatomy of the partner, in the techniques which may be used during the contacts, and in the physical responses of the new partner. None of these factors have such significance for the average female... Male promiscuity often depends upon the satisfactions that may be secured from the pursuit and successful attainment of a new partner. There are some heterosexual males, and a larger proportion of the homosexual males, who may limit themselves to a single contact with any single partner. Once having demonstrated their capacities to effect sexual relations with the particular individual, they prefer to turn to the pursuit of the next partner. (Kinsey:683)

Hoffman attempts to explain the high percentage of gay males who had very large numbers of sexual partners (Table 2) by distinguishing between promiscuity and the inability to form stable relationships (Hoffman,1968:169). He attributes the greater promiscuity of some gay men to a greater difficulty among homosexual males than homosexual females in the formation of stable relationships. The above psychological and social explanations for the greater promiscuity among males fail to account for some homosexuals' inabilitys to form stable relationships, because many heterosexual men with the same psychological and social motivations appear to have no difficulty forming stable relationships with females. It is unclear as to what proportion of male homosexuals suffer from above average inability to form stable relationships, or to what extent lesbians have the same difficulty, and it is probably
much smaller than popular stereotype would have us believe. Several interviewees, however, felt the need to defend themselves against the accusations of instability by explaining the forces which work to weaken homosexual commitment, and Hoffman and many other theorists apparently felt the same need. The arguments offered in defense include "heterosexual privilege," internalization of the homosexual taboo, the divorce of homosexuals' sex lives from the rest of their lives, and gender role socialization.

Heterosexual couples enjoy "heterosexual privilege." They may enter into unions institutionalized by church and state (Hoffman), recognized on tax forms, on employment applications, in inheritance laws and in insurance policies. They may take each other to social and business functions, and talk about each other to friends and relatives. The institution of marriage and the social expectation of permanent heterosexual coupling facilitates the formation and maintenance of long term heterosexual relationship in a way that homosexual relationships are not facilitated. In addition to a lack of positive sanctioning, homosexual couples receive negative sanctioning which can weaken homosexual commitment or tear apart a homosexual relationship. Male homosexual couples receive much more negative sanctioning than do lesbian couples. Hoffman attributes female homosexuals' greater ability to form stable relationships as compared to gay men partly to this relative lack of negative sanctioning of lesbianism. Both lesbians and gay men claim that heterosexual relationships would be no longer lived than homosexual ones if not artificially preserved by social and legal constraints and sometimes by the presence of children.
Some homosexuals are able to overcome the cultural prohibition of homosexual activity more than others. Some men may be able to overcome the prohibition enough to engage in impersonal sex, but not enough to participate in a long term relationship which implies greater commitment to a homosexual lifestyle (Hoffman). After anonymous sex, one can choose never to see the partner again, and the incident is easily divorced from one's present self. But a long term relationship entails constant reminders of one's homosexual lifestyle and requires a greater acceptance of one's homosexual feelings as part of one's self than some gay men may be able to attain. Hoffman does not discuss the effects of internalized prohibition on lesbian promiscuity and I suggest, based on the above statistics, the statements of my respondents, and my observations of lesbians' social lives, that the effects of internalized prohibitions upon lesbians' sex lives is very different. Of course, judging from the statistics alone, the lack of a significant proportion of lesbians with great numbers of sexual partners may reflect the relative lack of lesbian repression, and thus a weaker internalized prohibition, but I believe that in addition, repression affects lesbians qualitatively differently than it affects gay men. Specifically, among lesbians, internalization of the cultural prohibition against homosexuality may lead to fidelity or celibacy rather than promiscuity. This is because of the greater capacity of women for sexual abstention as explained by Kinsey, because of the emphasis placed by women on having an emotional ("love") commitment along with a sexual relationship (Hills, 1980:177), and because of the lack of opportunity in the lesbian subculture for anonymous sex,
among other reasons. Thus a lesbian faced with difficulty or an inability to achieve a stable love relationship would be more likely to choose not to engage in a sexual relationship either, while a gay man in a similar situation may more often choose to engage in a purely sexual relationship rather than remain celibate. The reactions of gay men and lesbians to internalized prohibitions of homosexuality would be an interesting area for further comparative study.

Another factor contributing to the inability of male homosexuals to form stable relationships, according to Hoffman, is the enforced segregation of the homosexual part of their lives from the rest of their lives. This segregation is a result of the disapproval of homosexual feelings by society, which forces the separation of sexual from work, social, and other aspects of homosexuals' lives, and leads to an inability to combine love and sex (Hoffman:179-180). That is, the enforced segregation of a homosexual's sexual interests from the rest of their lives results in a focus on sexuality to the exclusion of emotionality in relationships where expression of homosexual desires is permissible. Hoffman predicts that:

If homosexuals could meet as homosexuals in the kinds of social settings in which heterosexuals can (e.g. at school, at work) where the emphasis on finding sexual partners is not the controlling force behind all the social interaction which transpires, a great deal of the anonymous promiscuity which now characterizes homosexual encounters would be replace by a more "normal" kind of meeting between two persons. Perhaps, then, the sexual relationships which develop would become more stable. (Hoffman:57).

It has already been mentioned that Jill's Israeli friend saw this
isolation of and focus on sexuality in a group of Israeli lesbians. As mentioned above, a large share of energy is focused on sexuality in the United States lesbian groups observed in this study as well.

But moving down from the level of the group to that of interaction between two people and looking at lesbians instead of gay men, one sees a very different picture than that painted by Hoffman and others of male homosexuality. Instead of an isolation of the sexual from other aspects of a relationship, several of my respondents spoke of a greater "integration" of the various aspects of a lesbian as compared to a heterosexual relationship; they believed that heterosexual and gay male two-person sexual interactions rarely achieve a degree of integration equal to that possible in lesbian relationships.

Whether lesbian relationships are actually more integrated than any other type of sexual relationship is, at this point, an open question ready to be explored in further research. Statements to this effect among my lesbian respondents cannot be used to prove this idea, since when asking what the differences between lesbian and other types of relationships are, a group of lesbians is a highly biased sample. It is to be expected that these women find lesbian relationships superior, e.g., more integrated, than other types of relationships; that is why they are lesbians. However, it is significant that Jamie, a self-defined bisexual who "loves both sexes equally," also makes this claim:

It just seems like sex with a woman is just kind of an extension of the friendship, and it just makes it all more intense. It makes it a more complete relationship. With men it's harder to get that completeness from a relationship. It has something to do with not being like them. (Jamie, taped interview)
If Jamie is indeed truly bisexually in that she likes both sexes equally, then presumably she is unbiased in her assessments of the different merits of heterosexual and homosexual relationships. In any case, the idea having been raised, it is an interesting possibility that lesbians may be capable of achieving higher levels of integration in their relationships. Here it is important to note that although most of my respondents implied that heterosexuals and male homosexuals are as a rule generally incapable of achieving as high a degree of integration in their relationships as are lesbians, I am not asserting such a drastic hypothesis. Rather, I am asserting that given the higher level of promiscuity among gay men than lesbians, that gay male relationships are more often based on sex alone, isolated from the many other ways in which two people can relate to each other.

Of male homosexuals, Hoffman says that gender role socialization, which precludes men from taking the dependent role in a relationship, makes men psychologically incompatible in long term relationships with each other and may contribute to the difficulty men have in forming stable relations with each other. If indeed this is a factor in instability, psychological incompatibility is probably on the decrease as gender roles in society relax and more men are feeling comfortable taking nurturing, dependent roles, or equal roles. For lesbians, one might hypothesize that the reverse is true: since women are taught to be dependent, lesbian relationships may run into difficulty because neither woman takes the lead. I have not observed that this is a problem leading to the breakup of established relationships, but it may account for some of
the lack of promiscuity among women in general. Women, not being trained to take the sexual or social lead, are more likely to stand around and wait for someone else to take the lead. A group of women, each waiting for someone else to make the first pass, is not conducive to promiscuity. It is more likely to lead to the series of tentative steps we call courtship, which is what does usually happen among lesbians (Hoffman). Thus gender role socialization may lead to promiscuity among gay men and a lack of promiscuity among lesbians.

Feminine passivity was not mentioned as a problem by any of the interviewees, however, and it may be that because lesbians do tend to be more independent than straight women -- whether this is a cause, effect, or other type of correlate with lesbianism -- it could alleviate the difficulty which may otherwise occur in a relationship between two people who have been socialized to be passive.

Hoffman concludes his discussion of the instability of male homosexual relationships with a statement which, insofar as lesbian relationships also suffer from unstablizing forces, could also apply to lesbians:

There is thus, to say the least, a strange irony in homosexuals being accused of not forming stable relationships, when it is the social prohibitions they suffer which largely prevent them from becoming involved in such relationships. (Hoffman:177)
Many minorities suffer from prejudice and discrimination and must find ways to deal with them. Depending on the nature of the minority, the sources of prejudice and the methods available to the minority with which to cope vary. For the lesbian, prejudice exists in both her private and public worlds. The fact that she is not brought up by lesbian parents compounds the strength and impact of this prejudice and usually leaves her to fend for herself when she first realizes that she bears a stigma. But her invisibility opens up to her a method of dealing with this prejudice which is not available to many minorities -- individual secrecy.

Society at large is a common source of prejudice experienced by blacks, members of other racial groups, people with physical or mental disabilities, people with unaccepted religious or political ideologies, and many other stigmatized minorities. Lesbians also experience societal prejudice. But in addition to societal prejudice, lesbians experience prejudice from a much more immediate social group, that very group to which one is supposed to turn in times of trouble: The family. Most stigmatized minorities do not have to deal with prejudice on the level of family and friends. The

"Individual secrecy" as used here and as opposed to "group secrecy," means a secret kept by the individual from other people in general. The term "group secrecy" will be used later to refer to the secret as kept by a lesbian community wherein the members know of each other’s lesbianism but most non-members do not.)
fact that lesbians are subject to familial prejudice finds a
contributing cause, though not a necessary nor a sufficient cause,
in the fact that lesbians are not generally born into and raised by
families whose other members are lesbians. When a minority member
is born into a family in which other family members are a part of
the same minority, overt intrafamilial bigotry is unlikely to be
present, although it may be said that the teaching of black youths
by their parents to be submissive to whites is a form of acceptance
of white prejudice, it is not done in a spirit of rejection by the
family or the black youth themself. Indeed, it is a way in which
family members help the young black to learn to deal with prejudice.
This is not the case for lesbians. Rarely are lesbians born into
lesbian families. More often they are born into straight families
in which there is some degree of homophobia, where far from
receiving training in how to deal with prejudice, they are or fear
becoming the victims of manifestations of that very prejudice. Thus
lesbians must deal with prejudice beginning at the level of the
people who are closest to them, their family and friends, and
extending all the way up to the level of society, including its
legal institutions.

Fear of familial prejudice and instances of actual disapproval
or threatened rejection by family and friends surfaced frequently in
the interviews. One woman reported that when housemates found out
about her lesbianism, they actually tried to kill her, and Katay
said that she "had some real bad experiences with my summer job one
year from some people who were terribly intolerant. And not only
that, they started getting kind of violent about it." Amelia
described the time her brother found her at age fifteen in bed with a woman:

Oh, wow, what was that like! ... we [she and her lover] went upstairs and, you know, started making love, and next thing I knew he was standing at the door. We didn't even hear him come in. Then he called her all kinds of names, saying that she was queer 'n' everything. So the next day, we were eating dinner, my aunt and my brother and I, like we weren't saying anything to each other... Like we got into this fight that night. It was like really terrible. So he got mad at me or something like that and called me a queer. (Amelia, taped interview)

Several women, especially those of college age or still living at home, feared that they would be thrown out of their parents' homes or that their parents would cut off the money they needed to continue to go to college if their lesbianism were to be discovered.

In at least one case, financial support had already been cut off, and in two others it had been threatened. Bonnie described feeling apprehensive about telling her parents:

I mentioned something [in a letter home to her mother] about being in love with her, and she wrote me back something like, "What do you mean, in love with her?" And she asked me a couple of questions and immediately I felt really afraid of saying anything more to her. (Bonnie, taped interview)

Jill talked about a very painful period of hiding her orientation from her parents:

I had a nice collection of ties. The big problem was sneaking them into the house past my parents. So I got pretty good at stuffing them into the bottom of my purse, waiting until everyone was asleep, going downstairs and taking it out, taking it upstairs and putting it in the back of my closet. Some of the books were a little harder to sneak in... [I] felt like [I was] sneaking things in under the nose of the watching enemy so that I could have it for my own... I wrote to Ann Landers and I wrote to Dear Abby, nothing. I got a P.O. box so my parents wouldn't get the letter... The tension of...
what I've got, knowing my mother and father would never accept it, period. My father who is a bit of an over-emotional nut anyway, would kick me out of the house. Not having a job, not being able to find a decent job, working for piddly nothing, hardly having enough money to pay my car payment and my insurance, I was really in a bind... And the tension got to the point where I cracked a bit. I wouldn't call it a nervous breakdown... the pieces fell apart... Actually, the Devil was after me... So the minister of the church my mother [went to] got in touch with and arranged for me to see a psychiatrist. (Jill, taped interview)

Homophobia is also encountered at the societal level. Known homosexuals may not serve in the armed forces (Williams and Weinberg, cited in Warren, 1980) and experience discrimination in housing and employment (Pagelow, cited in Warren). In a study of the abridgement of homosexual civil liberties, Liljestrand, et. al. (1978) found that homosexuals' civil liberties are violated, the most frequently violated being equality and procedural due process, and that "Patterns of violations of civil liberties are similar whether sexual orientation is assumed or known." Slovenko states, and I have been told by European homosexuals who would like to emigrate to the United States, that homosexuals may be denied entry into the United States:

The entry of aliens into the United States is governed by the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952, as amended. Subsection (4) of section 212(a) of the act excludes aliens "afflicted with psychopathic personality or sexual deviation or mental defect." Such an alien may be deported if the condition is discovered after entry. The U.S. Supreme Court has stated its conclusion that the Congress used the phrase "psychopathic personality" not in the clinical sense but to effectuate its purpose to exclude from entry "all homosexuals and other sexual perverts." (Gouletier vs. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 367 US 116 (1967) cited in Slovenko, 1980:210-211).

The possibility of homophobia in the private and the public,
the personal and the impersonal spheres, makes the management of the
lesbian's relationship to others at all these levels problematic.
Even though an individual lesbian may not have experienced prejudice
or discrimination, the knowledge of the possibility that she may
requires her to deal with that possibility. As stated above, the
methods available to a minority with which to deal with prejudice
vary according to the nature of the minority. Because lesbianism,
unlike blackness or blindness, is an easily concealed attribute,
concealment of one's lesbianism is a choice available to lesbians
which is not available to blacks and many other stigmatized
minorities. It is the exercise of the option to conceal oneself, at
both the individual and the community level, that creates the strong
influences on the specific nature of the lesbian subculture which
will be explored in the following sections.

Two degrees of concealment are distinguishable in the gay
Covering refers to the suppression of potential secondary evidences
of homosexuality, such as the wearing of ties among women or extreme
effeminacy among men. Passing is a more active attempt at
concealment in which the person intentionally affects signs of
heterosexuality, such as attending parties with a member of the
opposite sex. Nellie mentioned a customer at the restaurant in
which she works who winked conspicuously at the cute waitress, and
whom she later saw in a gay bar. His behavior was an example of
passing. Sally (Adair, 1978) describes taking gay male friends to
picnics in the 1950's and of relating to straight men just enough to
appear heterosexual but not enough to invite advances from them.
She actively hid her lesbianism by doing such unlikely things as directing homecoming pageants and judging Miss Texas contests, activities which are firmly grounded in heterosexual culture. Jill's furtiveness in collecting ties and books was an effort at covering, as is the avoidance technique described by Nellie and Nora:

I try 'a' avoid, like if they ask what I did over the weekend, I tell 'em but I don't tell them; I'm very vague about it. They can know the gist of it, you know, like if I'm going to a dance I don't say that there's just women only. (Nellie, taped interview)

What I do in my private life, that is my own affair. It's just, I go in [to work] and they say, "Did you have a nice weekend?" I say "Very nice weekend," and that is it. I don't tell 'em nothing. (Nora, taped interview)

Passing can become a finely honed art, involving ambiguous speech patterns, vague references, the changing of personal pronouns, remaining silent in the face of detrimental remarks about gay people, the careful imitation of straight behavior and dress, and avoidance of situations or conversation topics which could be dangerous (Penne, 1978). Hayes (1979) also mentions avoiding specific gender references, as in "I went to the mountains with this person I know and they enjoyed the view," and switching names in public places so that Janet becomes Jerry. To pass successfully, the lesbian becomes an expert at impression management:

Often, passing requires the conscious management of oneself, others and situations. Thus, Lyman and Scott note that passers must develop a heightened awareness of ordinary events and everyday encounters [1970:78]. A covert lesbian who wishes to pass becomes concerned not only with obscuring the gay self but also with presenting a convincing straight front to straight audiences. A woman who wishes to pass must be alive to the subtleties and nuances of communication and relationships, to the
details of speech and other cues to identity in social interaction... The secret lesbian becomes a detached observer of the process of role construction by the fact or her reflective distance in role accomplishment. (Ponse, 1978:60-63)

Arlene, the heterosexual therapist whom I interviewed, described an extreme case of "passing" which she had encountered in her practice:

[Some of my gay clients have] a lot of problems with lying because... to be able to cover it up there have been lies on top of lies on top of lies [until] a lot of people don't know where the lies stop and the truth begins... I know one man who literally writes down all the lies he's told his family and some friends, so he can keep straight who does what and why he's friendly with this one. (Arlene, taped interview)

Homosexuals are aided in their efforts at passing and covering by the "Heterosexual Assumption" (Ponse, 1978). This is the assumption that a given person is heterosexual, in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

To secrecy, Ponse adds "counterfeit secrecy" as another possible descriptive label of a passing lesbian's relationships with non-lesbians. In Ponse's words, "...in the experience of some of these women, relationships with friends and family are more accurately characterized as patterned by the tacit negotiation of mutual pretense through which the gay self is not acknowledged. I call this pretense 'counterfeit secrecy'" (1978:69) That is, friends and family may suspect or know of the woman's lesbianism, but the subject has never been openly discussed. This allows for acceptance of the woman herself while denying her lesbianism which, if acknowledged, might cause rejection or pain. Several of my respondents had this sort of relationship with one or both parents. They expected that their parents knew of their lesbianism for
various reasons e.g., because they brought only women home or never spoke of boyfriends, or in the case of older women, because they had never married and had lived with other women for long periods of time. The older women felt no need to disturb this comfortable relationship, but many of the younger women, for whom the situation was newer and perhaps a violation of the current valuation of "openness," felt uncomfortable with the situation. They wanted to talk about it explicitly with their parents, but were unsure just how much their parents knew, or how they would react, and of how they should approach the subject. As Ponsé states, "This seeming knowledge and seeming acceptance cannot be tested for fear of rejection" (1978:70).

Although it is certain that the majority of gays of all types and in most situations pass very successfully (Voeller, 1960:234), it will be elucidating to compare lesbians with gay men on this score, as well as the lesbians of today with those of earlier years. The option of concealment is differentially available to lesbians and gay men. For reasons that will be explored in a moment, gay men choose this option or are able to utilize it successfully less often than do lesbians. Liljestrand, et al., in the above-mentioned study of the abridgement of homosexuals' civil liberties, found that "relatively more male than female homosexuals respondents were known to be [as opposed to suspected or being] homosexual." Likewise, as societal attitudes have changed over time, the frequency and success with which lesbians conceal their identity have changed. Thus comparisons of the effectiveness of methods of preserving individual secrecy among lesbians today with that of gay men and that of
Lesbians in the past will prove enlightening.

Sixteen of the respondents were asked first, "Can you tell if another woman is gay?" and then, "Can you tell if a man is gay?" in an effort to explore the degree of success in passing by comparing the rate of suspicion of women as opposed to that of men. Two of the respondents said that they could pick out neither lesbians nor gay men, one said she could tell women more easily than men, and four said they could tell "only the obvious" of both sexes, while nine said that they could tell men more easily than women. This finding that gay men are more identifiable to other gays than are lesbians is particularly significant since this sample is entirely made up of lesbians, whom one would expect to have had more experience with lesbian appearances and behavior than with gay male appearances and behavior.

There are many reasons why concealment may be more frequent and/or more successful among lesbians than among gay men. First of all, women living together aren't objects of suspicion in our society (Simon and Gagnon), because the image of the asexual woman is believable. The Adairs quote Betty, a lesbian who states, "We moved into this house together very easily, without raised eyebrows. Two women living together is OK in this culture. It stamps you as spinsters. So we had a very good shield" (Adair, 1978:209). Spinsters, old maid schoolteachers, unmarried aunts, frigid churchwomen, and similar figures are all institutionalized asexual positions available to women which do not necessitate any further explanation. Men, on the other hand, lack such established asexual positions. Men are thought to have an uncontrollable or at least
undeniable sex drive which precludes the acceptance of an image of asexual men. Thus men who are living apparently asexual lives are in need of some further explanation in society's eyes. They are more open to suspicions that they are homosexual than are women. Two men living together, neither of whom has a visible heterosexual life, are especially suspect.

Secondly, women in our culture are allowed to be more intimate with both men and women than are men. Public displays of intimacy among women are not usually interpreted as sexual intimacy. So women can hug, hold hands, and even kiss each other in public without generating suspicion that they are sexual lovers. Men are not allowed the same degree of freedom to express themselves, and two men who touch in public are out of the ordinary, more noticeable, and thus more subject to suspicion and disapproval:

Oh, I lie very honest with you, I'd rather see women be gay than guys. It's just because women always are close, period. ...for men to be gay is something I accept but I'm not crazy about it... because men never were friends, men never were close, you know what I mean? Even in Germany, they always take their distance. But women always close, they always have their heads together, and they always do things together but men don't. ...I mean, seeing them get involved and kissing just turns me off. (Darlene, taped interview)

This statement shows that Darlene thinks that gay male behavior differs sharply from normal male behavior and is therefore more repugnant and obvious to her than is gay female behavior, which is more in line with normal female behavior and therefore more tolerable. With this in mind, the greater ease with which Darlene believes she can tell gay men is probably due to the greater divergence of male intimacy from expected male behavior than of
female intimacy from expected female behavior. As gender roles in our society become more flexible and men begin to express affection more freely, this situation can be expected to lessen. Such a theory could be tested by comparing the rate of suspicion of male homosexuality in areas where men are allowed to be more expressive with those where men are expected to conform to traditional, non-expressive roles. For example, two such places may be a liberal college campus and a conservative small town of similar size.

Thirdly, the gap between stereotypical straight female behavior and stereotypical lesbian behavior is not as great as the gap between stereotypical straight male behavior and stereotypical gay male behavior. Thus, insofar as some lesbians and gay men conform to the stereotypes, the men will be more noticeably gay than the women. Even when lesbians and gay men do not conform to the stereotypes, the existence of a more deviant stereotype for men than for women creates the impression that gay men are more noticeable. In the occupational sphere, women are moving more and more into jobs that previously were held by men while there is little parallel movement of men into traditionally female jobs. A woman who takes a traditionally male job is thus seen as simply a liberated woman, not a lesbian, but a man in a traditionally woman's job is still an oddity and again, requires further explanation which opens him up to suspicion. For example, a woman doctor is becoming more or less unremarkable, but male hairstylists and dancers still tend to excite people's imaginations; this is reflected in media images such as the minor characters in Warren Beatty's movie "Shampoo," and in Ronald Reagan's defensive assertion that his son, a dancer, is "all man."
There is also the matter of dress. Straight women now wear pants and tailored suits and often have short hair. These trappings have come to mean a business woman or a self-directed woman. But the wearing of dresses and makeup among men has not come to have any meaning other than homosexuality as of yet outside of a few concentrations of convention-flauntingers such as are found on liberal college campuses. Behaviorally, it is likewise more commonplace now to encounter an aggressive woman than an effeminate man. The different degrees of divergence of stereotypical homosexual behavior from stereotypical heterosexual behavior for men and women was the explanation offered by Liljestrand, et. al. for their finding that male homosexuals are more likely to be known than female homosexuals:

Table 2 shows that relatively more male than female homosexual respondents were known to be homosexual. This result may be explained by the difference for men and women in the relationships of the homosexual orientation to departures from social sex-role stereotypes."
(Liljestrand, et. al.,1976:246)

It was also the reason most frequently given by my respondents for being able to spot a gay man more easily than they could spot a lesbian. Rima explained it this way:

There's a much greater stereotypical image of a gay man than a gay woman, and it seems that gay men are often very feminine in a way. That's a stereotype, but sometimes they seem to. And it doesn't seem, like you can't say that a woman is masculine, because a lot of women are anyways; it doesn't mean that they're gay. "Masculine" doesn't mean much when you're talking about a woman.
(Rima, taped interview)

Fourthly, nongay society tends to be more aware of the possibility of male homosexuality than it is of female
homosexuality. Witness the fact that under Queen Victoria of England laws were made against male homosexuality but not against female homosexuality because Victoria didn't believe that female homosexuality existed. Part of this is due to the simple fact that many people believe that sex between two women is mechanically impossible; two men have both halves of the necessary equipment in duplicate, penises and anuses, but women are missing half the necessary tools, so how can they possibly make love? It is also due to the lesser visibility of lesbians than gay men for the three reasons listed above, and to the lower incidence of female homosexuality insofar as it actually is less common (Kinsey, 1953). So people are less sensitized to the idea of lesbianism and are less likely to think of it when in need of an explanation for someone else's unusual behavior. In short, the heterosexual assumption is stronger in the case of women than in the case of men.

Fifthly, once suspected, male homosexuality is subject to greater disdain than is female homosexuality; the tomboy is admired and the sissy condemned. Throughout history, gay men have suffered stronger social and legal sanctions than have lesbians, as will be described in the section on "History." Though there are many reasons for greater attention having been paid to male homosexuality, the most fundamental reason may be the relative status of masculine and feminine identities in society. Typically a masculine identity is something men must achieve. Masculinity must be proven, while femininity for a woman is more a state of being, a passive attribute a woman possesses merely by being female. Masculinity is also more highly valued than femininity; because of
the male's higher status in society, he is seen as trading this privileged position for the inferior, degraded status of a woman by being homosexual, whereas a lesbian can be seen as trying to acquire some of the power held by men. The latter may be misguided, but it is understandable; the former is incomprehensible and self-debasining (Weinberg, 1972:20). Thus, a feminine man is an object of contempt while a masculine woman is an object of pity or amusement. Therefore, masculinity is at the same time more elusive and more important to attain than femininity, and so there is potential for male homosexuality to be a greater threat to masculinity than female homosexuality is to femininity. Therefore masculinity must be more jealously guarded, and the male homosexual threat to gender identity be more severely dealt with. As Greenson writes, "It is my clinical impression that the dread of homosexuality in the neurotic, which is at bottom the fear of losing one's gender identity, is stronger and more persistent in men than women" (Greenson, 1964:370-374, quoted in Stoller, 1975:150-151).

Caprio postulates that the neglect of lesbianism indicates not merely a failure to take lesbianism seriously because it presents a lack of threat, but an attempt to deny its existence because of the threat it does present to the male ego:

It is my opinion that a very important unconscious factor in the distinction between the legal treatment of male and female homosexuals lies in the fact that the male ego does not wish to recognize that women could possibly secure sexual satisfaction without the participation of the opposite sex. The tendency for judges not to prosecute female homosexuals, perhaps, is an unconscious expression of denying its existence. Psychoanalysts use this mechanism of denying that which they do not wish to accept as a fact as "psychic annulment." (Caprio, 1954:71)
For a more extensive listing of the historical reasons for the relative neglect of lesbianism, the reader may refer to Kinsey, et al. (1953:485-486). Because of this neglect and denial of lesbianism by society, a woman suspected of lesbianism is more likely to be left alone than a man suspected of homosexuality. This exacerbates the problem of concealment for gay men.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service refers to some of these reasons for women's greater success at concealment when describing the failure of immigration officials to detect lesbian immigrants:

...the Immigration and Naturalization Service at the Port of Detroit advises: "We do not recall even seeing a case involving female homosexuality. We are either overlooking or unwittingly missing the females. This may be attributed to many causes such as easier outward identification or suspicion of males and most probably sheer lack of numbers" (correspondence of 20 April 1977 from Immigration and Naturalization Service to Slovenko, in Slovenko, 1980:211)

Concealment for lesbians today is probably more problematic than it was for lesbians even ten years ago because the increasing outspokenness of lesbians has made nongay people more aware of the existence of lesbianism. In this way, lesbians now are having to confront some of the same forces that gay men have long had to face. This is one of the ways in which the lesbian community is to some extent following the same path that gay men tread earlier, an idea which will be expanded upon in the section on "History." While concealment is becoming more difficult due to greater outspokenness on the part of some lesbians, the other side of the coin is that lesbians in general are choosing concealment less frequently, and
are even purposefully making themselves known; therefore the frequency of concealment is decreasing along with the availability of concealment as an option for those who would choose to remain concealed. On the other hand, as more women move into traditional male spheres, women in those spheres will be less susceptible to suspicion. The effects of these trends on the ability of lesbians to identify each other will be examined in the section on the "Language of Recognition."
PART 2: THE LESBIAN COMMUNITY AS A SECRET SOCIETY

FROM INDIVIDUAL SECRECY TO GROUP SECRECY

As long as the existence, the activities, and the possessions of an individual are secret, the general sociological significance of the secret is isolation, contrast and egoistic individualization. The sociological significance of the secret is external, namely the relationship between the one who has the secret and another who does not. But, as soon as a whole group uses secrecy as its form of existence, the significance becomes internal; the secret determines the reciprocal relations among those who share it in common. Yet, since even here there is the exclusion of the non-initiates, the sociology of the secret society is confronted with the complicated problem of ascertaining how intra-group life is determined by the group's secretive behavior toward the outside. (Wolff on Simmel, 1950:345)

Rejected by the greater society, lesbians frequently turn to each other for acceptance. This is the beginning of the formation of a lesbian community, and as Simmel describes, the formation of such a group as a reaction to external forces opens the way for the formation of a lesbian subculture which is profoundly shaped by the fact of the secret its members keep from the outside world. The use of secrecy as a defense against prejudice by many lesbians dictates that the lesbian community be largely a "secret society" (Simmel). The fact of the secret affects the relations between members of the community and the values, beliefs and norms of the lesbian subculture.

Simmel distinguishes two types of secret societies: groups whose very existence is a secret to non-members, and groups whose existence is generally known but whose members are not known. Ponce
(1978:37) places the lesbian community in the latter category. Although her categorization of the lesbian secret society as a society whose existence is known but whose members are not is accurate in the cases of all the lesbian communities I studied directly, it may not be true for all. For example, as the Israeli community was described by one of my respondents, it may be more accurate to say in the case of Israel that the very existence of the lesbian community is not commonly known. In Israel then, keeping the secret is probably of more concern to the group as a whole than is the case in the U.S.A. As will be seen below, this leads to an intensified version of those characteristics which are found in the U.S. lesbian community.

The effects of individual secrecy on the structure and culture of the lesbian community are profound and numerous. In this section I will analyze four aspects of the lesbian subculture which demonstrate the effects of societal attitudes and the need for secrecy on lesbians and the lesbian world: (1) Lesbian language, in particular the "language of recognition" (2) Strong identification by lesbian members with the lesbian community (3) Solidarity among group members (4) Boundary heightening, a characteristic pattern of structuring the borders between the in-group and the out-group.

These aspects are not mutually exclusive. For example, Plummer describes three functions of homosexual language:

As with most minority languages, there is a heightening of group awareness and consciousness. One of the most widespread distinctions in the language, for example, is that between "straights" and "us" -- the "gays," and this may serve to heighten group identity... A second function of such language is that it may serve as a means of secret communication, a possible source for locating and
identifying other homosexuals in the company of "straights," or in conversations where one member is not sure of the other's identity. Through a casual inclusion of the word "gay" in a conversation, one member serves to sensitize the other if he too is a homosexual, while remaining immune if the other is not... Another function which the homosexual language serves is common to language generally: it serves to structure perception and experience. (Plummer, 1975:163)

Lesbian language as a means of secret communication is the primary subject of the first analysis below, while language as a promoter of community solidarity will be discussed in the third analysis, that dealing with cohesion among group members. Lesbian language and ideology also "provide each individual lesbian with already developed attitudes that help her resist the societal claim that she is diseased, depraved, or shameful" (Simon and Gagnon, 1967:252), and thus provide her with a sense of self-worth and offer her a positive lesbian identity, activating her to identify with the lesbian group. Taken a step further, lesbian ideology also fosters the belief that lesbianism is superior to heterosexuality, the process referred to by Simmel as "aristocratization." Conversely, cohesion is enhanced by the existence of a common language and by the use of techniques of boundary heightening. Boundary heightening techniques include the temporal, spatial, and psychological separation of the gay from the straight world, the exaggeration of intra-group similarities, and the exclusion of certain "marginal" group members such as gay men, bisexual women, and the practitioners of other deviant sexual practices.
When individual secrecy is at a height, it is difficult for the members of a minority to find each other. "An unintended consequence of secrecy is that it isolates members of the subculture from one another" (Ponse, 1976:74). To overcome this isolation, there must be developed "routes for contacting one another, of publicizing our very existence to one another and of developing a sense of self esteem and worth" (Voeller, 1980:236). Before the development of such routes of communication as national gay networks, organization, and publications in the 1950's and afterwards, it was extremely difficult for lesbians to find each other. A lesbian then lived her life alone, or with the knowledge of the one other lesbian who was her lover, unless some fortunate accident brought her into contact with a hidden lesbian group. During this time, the need for ways to contact each other and to know that each other existed was desperate:

At the early stages of the movement, in the late '50's, gay organizations received numerous suicide phone calls, especially from young lesbians and gay men because of their loneliness and despair. After almost a decade of intense publicity and activism in the gay movement, young gays are now at least aware that they are not the only ones in the world. Although they are still lonely, the sense of utter isolation that used to exist is tempered now by the knowledge that there are some 2000 gay groups around the nation. Consequently homophile organizations, including the NGTF, now quite rarely receive suicide calls. (Voeller, 1980:239)

To aid homosexuals in finding each other, or to create the illusion of being able to do so, a whole homosexual folklore (Karlen, 1980:518) of "how to spot a homo" exists in the gay world,
and many lesbians pride themselves on their ability to "pick out a lesbian." Approximately 60% of my respondents felt that they could sometimes or usually tell if another woman is a lesbian, and thirteen, or 50%, of the sixteen who were asked felt that they could tell a male homosexual. When asked how they could tell if a woman was a lesbian, some of the clues they listed may be considered "signs of recognition"; that is, conscious signals to other lesbians usually intended not to be understood by the "unwise" (Goffman, 1963:28). Other clues do not rely on conscious intent on the part of the lesbian, but constitute a more mystical signal given off by the lesbian in spite of herself. Whether or not the hunches made based on either of these types of signals are any more accurate than random guessing is a question of which most lesbians are aware, and which deserves further research. Signals mentioned by my respondents included hair and clothing styles, gay symbols, and "vibes," which the women attributed variously to the use of eye contact, an air of confidence, a tendency to touch other women, the use of passing techniques, and attractiveness. This language of recognition appears to be more manifest in some groups of homosexuals than others; my respondents indicated a differential ability to identify certain types of homosexuals. An analysis of the characteristics of those groups which are more identifiable as compared to those of groups which are less identifiable will provide insight into the functioning of homosexual languages of recognition.

Hair and clothing styles are frequently used as explicit, intended signs of recognition. Many lesbians cut their hair short. One woman explained that the difference between a "normal" woman's
short hair cut and a "dyke" cut is that the former is longish in the back while the dyke's is short all over. Some lesbians style their hair like a man's, and some radical lesbians and lesbian separatists leave a few long thin tendrils of hair at the nape of the neck into which they may tie feathers or beads. Since it is difficult for a woman to get a dykey or a male haircut in most commercial haircutting establishments, there are usually women known to a lesbian community who will give such hair cuts. At the annual Michigan Women's Music Festival, there usually are several women who offer their services as haircutters. In some circles, when a "baby dyke" decides to chop off her long hair, the event is treated as an act of liberation from heterosexual values or as a type of initiation into lesbian life.

Historical evidence shows that dress has long been a main means of nonverbally identifying oneself as gay. For example, in Rome gay men were said to wear yellow or green trim on their togas. They were called "calbanati" from the Latin word "calba," meaning "yellow." In 19th century Europe and early 20th century America, certain colored ties identified male homosexuals (Hayes, 1979). In old gay life, male clothes and "peg pants" identified a lesbian. Today, ties and vests are still worn occasionally, and different colored bandanas have specific meanings in leather bars. Practical, comfortable clothes such as jeans, flannel shirts, sleeveless T-shirts, sneakers and work boots rather than frilly, feminine, confining clothes and high heels are loosely associated with lesbianism by lesbians. Kathy referred to two types of lesbian uniforms:
There's the basic F.C. lesbian with the print skirt 'n' the hairy legs and all the political buttons, and then there's the bull dyke with the jeans 'n' the belt and the keys hanging out. (Kathy, taped interview)

Some lesbians identify themselves by wearing buttons with more or less explicit lesbian messages, from "Warm Fuzzy Dyke" which can be understood by many heterosexuals, to "I'm One, Too," "One in ten of You may Be One of Us," and "Don't Die Wondering," which are recognizable only to a few wise heterosexuals.

Many of these dress and hair styles, and even some of the buttons, can be worn by heterosexuals, sometimes for reasons having nothing to do with homosexuality. But a few symbols such as the pinky ring, the lambda, the pink triangle, and the double intertwined women's symbol, are uniquely homosexual or lesbian symbols. The pink triangle was used by the Nazis during WWII to mark homosexuals just as the yellow star of David was used to mark Jews, and has now been claimed by gay men and lesbians as a symbol of pride and liberation. Kathy, one of the more open lesbians whom I interviewed, wears a pinky ring on her left hand and a pink triangle on her knapsack.

"Dropping pins" is a way to test a guess that someone else is gay. This consists of mentioning the names of gay bars, organizations, historical events such as Stonewall, famous people such as Tennessee Williams, or other catch words in a conversation (Ponse, 1978:75-77; Hayes, 1979). If the other person "picks up the pins," for example by saying "Yes, I go to that bar, too," then both lesbians have identified each other and any other participants in the conversation are none the wiser. Kathy describes using such a
...like wearing a pink triangle or a lamba. A lot of people don't know about those things. Or a pinky ring, or, you know, they mention bars that they go to or organizations that they're in -- A lot of times it's things like that, that are just obvious to any gay person who knows anything or anybody -- Who knows anything about Caris Williamson? That's another thing I do is I leave records out if someone's going to come over. (Kathy, taped interview)

Most of the women declined to say, however, that they could spot a lesbian on the street, realizing that the "dyke image" can be misleading since heterosexual women often dress in a masculine manner and since many lesbians don't fit the dyke image. But several of the respondents felt they could tell a lesbian sometimes by talking to her and observing subtler clues. These women described being able to "sense" that another woman is a lesbian.

Amelia described the feeling as "vibes":

...There was this girl [at work]...Just something about her, I knew she was and she was just as feminine as... I just knew, I knew, I kept on saying, I didn't say to anybody else or I didn't say, even talking to myself, I didn't come out and say, "Amelia, I think she's gay"... But in the back of my mind... "I just have the feeling that she is." Well, about a couple months after that, I was at [a lesbian bar] and it was a Sunday afternoon and there wasn't anyone there and I was playing pool with this one girl, and all of a sudden I happened to look over at the bar and there she was sitting there... I don't know how I knew, it's just that, I don't know, the vibes you get between two people, two women. (Amelia, taped interview)

When pressed to describe exactly what they meant by a "sense" or "vibes," most of the women had difficulty pinpointing exactly what about a woman might lead them to think she was a lesbian. But they did come up with some quite varied responses. Most frequently mentioned as a subtle clue was eye contact, a feeling that lesbians
tend to look people straight in the eye, or with a different quality of attention than do heterosexual women. Sheila described it as a "knowing look." I once heard a baby dyke, who was expressing her wish to get involved with a woman, ask a group of lesbians how she could tell if a woman was lesbian. She received the reply, "Have you heard of 'lesbian eyes'?" Some lesbians do indeed consciously maintain eye contact with other women as a way of communicating their heightened interest in women, and as a test of the other woman's interest. Used in this way, eye contact is a sign of recognition. It may also be true that some lesbians, because of their attraction to women, or because of a lack of self-effacement, do unconsciously maintain a great deal of eye contact.

Some of the respondents feel that a woman who presents herself as assertive and open is likely to be a lesbian, or "maybe if they're not gay, they're woman-identified" (Sheila, taped interview):

I feel more of a flow, or somebody who's a lot more open and relaxed. Some gay people are real different than straight people because there's a different kind of sensitivity or awareness which maybe stems from being persecuted... I think it's a lot of times just purely a mental, spiritual flow. (Kathy, taped interview)

...and the way that they respond to you, really giving you some sort of energy. Not like, "You're a woman, you're slut, I don't care about you." I mean giving you energy instead of always giving men energy. (Phoebe, taped interview)

Voeller notices these qualities among famous women who are lesbians:

Yet even they [certain famous lesbians] provide subtle cues to other women with fine-tuned perceptions, through their strong independent-mindedness, their self-assurance around others, and their lack of deference to men: not arrogance or hostility, "merely" a healthy sense of
equality not common among other women. (Voeller, 1930:236)

Sheila and Alma think that lesbians are more apt to touch other women:

...then once you're talking to somebody, I think lesbians just like are closer physically, stand closer to each other. There's often times more touching, physical touching, although a lot of straight women touch each other. (Sheila, taped interview)

Other respondents feel they can spot women who are using the same covering techniques, such as changing pronouns or skipping questions about their private lives, that they themselves use. Ponse notes that lesbians are apt to notice if other women avoid specifying the sex of a friend (Ponse, 1978:75-77). Straight people would have no reason to be familiar with covering techniques and would not notice the clues a lesbian's sensitized perceptions pick up. Thus Ponse notes that:

A standard feature of gay lore is that "it takes one to know one." It seems to me that this is not due to any mystical sixth sense, but rather to a sensitivity -- honed by the experience of passing -- to the nuances of various cues. (Ponse, 1980:165)

For example, in an interview, Nellie said she might suspect someone who didn't want to "be real specific" about what they did over the weekend. Later, when asked how she avoids telling people she's gay, she gave the example of giving a vague answer when asked what she did over the weekend. As Jamie and Kathy point out:

Jamie: You're looking for clues in that person and they're looking for clues in you, you know, and so both of you are much more aware of like little details like, you don't normally notice if, you know, just anybody on the street's wearing a pinky ring. But you might notice, you know, if they're, like it takes a little bit to notice people changing pronouns.
Kathy: But if you do it, too... that's another thing. A lot of gay people have lots of things in common, and if somebody's doing something that you always do, I mean, that also clues you off.

Bellie had a different interpretation of the "sense" one gets that another woman is a lesbian. She thinks that this "sense" is actually an attraction; that when a lesbian is attracted to another woman, she hopes that the woman is also a lesbian because then there would be a chance of getting together with her. There may be more than a small element of truth to this idea; in my experience, the pointing out of someone as a likely lesbian is often accompanied by an expression or appreciation for her. It may also be the case that lesbians become conditioned to be attracted to women who "look like lesbians" because it is among these women that they will have the greatest success rate in finding confidants and romantic attachments. Amelia, however, disagrees, saying that she doesn't have to be attracted to someone to think they are gay.

Trying to tell if a certain woman is gay can take on the spirit of a game. In the Oberlin disco, gay women and men sit together and sometimes speculate on the probability that a particular person is gay. A couple of my respondents described times when they suspected a coworker or new acquaintance was gay and went about trying to find out if they were. The way in which they spoke of their efforts to discover the coworker's identity conveys the impression that this is an amusing pastime:

Now I have a project that I'm doing on my own because there's a social worker for the group and I believe that she's gay, but I'm going to find out on my own. I asked her a couple of questions, like, well, I know she's not married, and she lives alone and stuff like that. (Amelia, taped interview)
Judging from the literature produced by the gay community and my observations in gay bars, different segments of the homosexual population differ in the degree to which they have developed a language of recognition. For example, gay male subculture and lesbian sadomasochist sub-subculture appear to have significantly larger numbers of symbols than does "mainstream lesbian" subculture. Gay male and S-M symbols also appear to be more clearly defined and more strongly institutionalized than lesbian symbols, which are few, vague, and less widespread. For example, gay male symbols include keys hung from a belt loop and color-coded handkerchiefs. A (different) handkerchief color code is also used in "leather" or "S-M" bars, and leather garments such as neck collars, bracelets, and harnesses indicate whether the wearer is a "top" or a "bottom," and what scene she enjoys playing.

In contrast, the only lesbian symbols are such things as dress and hair style, the color lavender, the double intertwined women's symbol, the labrys, and the inverted pink triangle. These symbols are all broad, meaning lesbianism in general and often applying as well to male homosexuality; lesbians have few symbols of their own and those that exist are nonspecific in their meaning.

The greater development of gay male and sadomasochist symbolic systems may be due to the greater societal stigmatization of these groups as compared to lesbians, which would result in a greater need for a language of recognition and a greater need for the sense of solidarity promoted by a common argot.

The finding that languages of recognition are more manifest in certain groups of homosexuals than others, i.e., that some groups of
homosexuals are more identifiable as such than others, also showed up in many of the interviews. Older lesbians commented that they could spot a lesbian more easily before Gay Liberation than they can today, and today they can spot an older lesbian easier than a younger one. Kathy said she could tell lesbians at home more easily than she could at Oberlin, and nine out of the sixteen women who compared gay women and gay men said they could tell gay men easier than gay women. At first glance, this may seem to indicate that each of the former groups uses a more sophisticated language of recognition, perhaps because they have suffered greater repression and thus have needed to develop a more sophisticated language of recognition than the latter groups. But before drawing the conclusion that greater ease of recognition indicates conscious or even unconscious use on the part of the homosexuals of a clearer language of recognition, at least one other factor must be weeded out. Earlier lesbians, older lesbians, hometown lesbians, and gay men have two characteristics in common when compared respectively to today's lesbians, younger lesbians, Oberlin lesbians, and gay women which could account for this difference. In each case, in addition to living (having lived) in a more repressive environment, the former groups behave in a manner which is (was) more distinctive from that of surrounding heterosexuals than do (did) the latter groups.

Both of these factors may contribute to the apparently stronger manifestation of a language of recognition in some groups. Just as the repressiveness encountered by homosexuals in general has necessitated the formation of a language of recognition for purposes
of secret communication and a sense of belonging and recognition, so might a greater degree of repression toward certain groups of homosexuals lead to a more well-developed language. In this case, the greater visibility of some groups would be due to the response of the group itself to its needs. On the other hand, the greater identifiability of some groups may be an artifact of such things as the heterosexual norms members of the group are being compared to, or the lack of willingness by the observers to overlook deviant behavior by members of the group. (See the discussion of the greater visibility of gay men than lesbians in the section "The Need for Individual Secrecy.") In this case, the greater visibility of these groups is due to the norms followed by those outside the group (heterosexuals), and will change when heterosexual norms change even though homosexuals themselves and their needs may not change.

In the case of lesbians, both factors appear to have operated simultaneously. This is most easily seen in the comments of the older lesbians that they could both pick out a lesbian more easily during the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's than they can today and that they can pick out an older lesbian today more easily than they can a younger lesbian. Taken alone, their claims that they could pick out a lesbian more easily a few decades ago could be an artifact of the influence of the feminist movement in widening heterosexual women's spheres and bringing heterosexual women closer to lesbian styles of dress, and employment and behavior patterns. But that does not tell the entire story. A comparison of the dress and manner of butches in old gay life with that of dykes today reveals that lesbian dress and manner have become less exaggerated. The old gay butch is
disappearing, as was shown in the previous section on "Stereotypes and Myths of homosexuals." As was discussed in that section, the decline of the old gay hutch has been attributed to the new pride Gay Liberation and the feminist movement have given to lesbians. To the extent that lesbian drag has become less exaggerated because of an increasing pride among lesbians, the trend is the result not merely of changing heterosexual norms, but of a very real change in the needs and attitudes of lesbians. Lesbians' increasing acceptance of themselves has led to a decrease in the need to recognize each other without revealing their identity to nearby heterosexuals, and thus to a decreased need for secret signs of recognition. It has also led to a less desperate need for a feeling of belonging to a group as lesbians come to feel less as outsiders to the greater society, and so have less need to be reassured of their membership in the lesbian community through use of an exclusive language.

As changed heterosexual norms alone cannot entirely account for lesbians' greater ability to recognize each other during old gay life, neither can they account for three of my older respondents' greater ease at picking out older than younger lesbians today. Although it could be argued that older lesbians are still more distinguishable when compared to older heterosexual women than are younger lesbians as compared to younger straight women, because the older women often continue to conform to the norms of their younger years, this was not the explanation given by my respondents. To the question of why older lesbians are more visible than younger ones, the older respondents gave answers which were rooted in the changed
behavior of lesbians themselves. For example, Kelly says that older lesbians assume a role and look more masculine than younger lesbians.

Determining to what extent each of these factors, changed heterosexual norms or changed homosexual needs, contributes to differences in visibility in each case, so that the artifactual effects of changing heterosexual norms can be sorted out and the problem of the influence of repression on the development of homosexual language be studied, is an area open for further research.
IDENTIFICATION

You have to have some sort of identification, don't you? And you have to identify with a group. So you want to identify with a group. I mean, here you are, left out in space, all by yourself, so you need a group to identify with. (Tanya, taped interview)

Rejected by a society which tells her that she is sick and should repress her lesbian urges, the lesbian is encouraged to strongly identify with the lesbian community to fulfill two basic needs: the need for a self-identity which includes her lesbianism, and the need to be accepted by the group which will accept that part of her which society rejects. Societal hostility can be seen as the source of both these needs -- the rejection of the greater society pushes the lesbian toward dependence on the lesbian community both for an identity and for a sense of self-worth.

Societal hostility alone does not imply strong group identification by the members of a stigmatized group, however. The degree to which one identifies with a group, especially if one would prefer not to be a member of the group or is ostracized for being a member, is strongly influenced by one's perception of the chance of dissociating oneself from that group. If chances are good, the possibility that one will identify with the group are slight. But if one's whole person is seen as involved and chances for disinvolvement are slight, one is forced to maintain the deviant status and may turn to the deviant group for the fulfillment of the needs a hostile society will not meet. The lesbian is usually in the latter category; she is discouraged from fulfilling her needs for acceptance and identity outside the lesbian community by the
predominant view that homosexuality is not just simple erotic preference but defines a complete type of person (See the section on "Stereotypes and Myths of Homosexuals"). Thus many lesbians turn to the lesbian community for the fulfillment of their needs for acceptance and identity.

The first need is that of a positive self-identity. Negative societal attitudes make the development of a workable self-identity which includes a positive conception of the self as lesbian difficult. As are many stigmatized groups, lesbians are offered identities by society in the form of stereotypes, but stereotypes held by a misunderstanding society are not the ingredients of a workable identity for an individual. Also, although this is the identity given to members of the group by society, society ostracizes anyone who takes this identity and thus expresses its prohibition of the taking of a lesbian identity. Because society will not allow her to define herself in a way which recognizes her lesbianism, the lesbian looks to the lesbian community as a refuge in which she can create a self identity which does. In creating this new lesbian identity within the group, she most likely will do so in a manner consistent with the group's definition of a lesbian identity, and so will look to the group not only as a safe place in which to create and practice her lesbian identity, but as a source of the identity.

Secondly, since the lengths to which a closeted lesbian must go to protect her secret prevent her from forming very close relationships with straight acquaintances she must look to the lesbian group for close friends and acceptance. The desire for
acceptance into a group often causes one to shape oneself so as to fit into the group, to take on group values, norms and behaviors, and to identify oneself in the terms of the group. Thus the need for acceptance by the group makes the lesbian apt to conform to the identity and culture of the group. This is similar to the child who, noticing that its parents wield greater power than it does, will begin to imitate their behavior in expression of the desire for their position; i.e., for acceptance into the adult world in which the child would presumably receive equivalent power. Leznoff and Westley saw societal rejection as the impetus for identification with the group for this second reason. They wrote that since the homosexual group is the only place of collective support, social acceptance, and relief from anxiety of being found out, the "homosexual develops a deep emotional involvement with his group, tending toward a ready acceptance of its norms and dictates, and subjection to its behavior patterns." (1956:186).

In an interview, Oberlin student Katay saw a direct connection between the oppression she felt as a lesbian and her identification with gay culture:

"I'm very active in [a gay organization] and hardly ever set foot in [a women's organization] because I identify myself and I feel my gay oppression a lot more than my oppression as a woman... I was in the whole bar scene and softball scene 'n' everything, you know... I have a friend who got beat up by her parents, so I really identify with that whole culture. They have reasons to be paranoid where I come from, you know, so, the whole gay identity, gay culture, means a lot to me simply because I feel it very strongly 'n' I feel oppression very strongly.

(Katay, taped interview)

Comparing her home town to the Oberlin College community, Kathy attributed the difference she perceived in the strengths of the
subcultures in the two areas to differences in the degree of oppression:

I feel more like an Oberlin College student than a gay Oberlin College student. Because I don't think we have to be that much, I mean we don't have to be hidden here. So I don't feel like we have, uhm, a strong, you know, underlying [subculture]. (Kathy, taped interview)

If identification with the group is promoted by rejection of the lesbian by society, and by the tendency to see lesbianism as a permanent, pervasive part of oneself, then lesbians who suffer from greater societal rejection should be more strongly identified with the lesbian community, and women to whom their lesbian side is a less important aspect of themselves than to other lesbians will probably identify less strongly with the lesbian community. The interviews support these hypotheses. To test the hypotheses, each subject was roughly located on three scales: 1) Her definition of her own sexuality, i.e., whether she considered herself lesbian, bisexual, or undefined; 2) The degree of potential trauma associated with her recognition of herself as gay, taking into account the degree of oppressiveness in the environment at the time she first noticed her gay feelings, the amount of fear of punishment or rejection she experienced, whether or not she had internalized negative attitudes towards homosexuals, and how much actual negative feedback she received; 3) The degree to which she identifies with gay subculture, including to what extent she has adopted gay dress styles and symbols, depends upon the gay community for her social life and is conscious of being gay. These scales, with explanations for the placement of each respondent on each scale, are in Appendix B. The scales were then divided into three or four categories to
facilitate the construction of the tables below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Described Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Undefined</th>
<th>Bisexual</th>
<th>Lesbian</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bonnie</td>
<td>Darlene</td>
<td>Sheila</td>
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<td>Elaine</td>
<td>Nona</td>
<td>Phoebe</td>
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<td>Nellie.</td>
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<td>Kathy.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Degree of Repression Experienced</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
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<td>Little Name</td>
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<td>Pima</td>
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<td>Elaine</td>
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From the tables above, it can be seen that although the significance of both correlations is very questionable, due to the extremely small size of the sample, certain patterns do emerge. Table A shows that none of the women who were undefined or bisexual in their orientation were strongly identified with the lesbian community, while almost all of the lesbians are in the two categories most strongly identified with the lesbian community. In Table B the women cluster toward the left and bottom of the table, indicating that few women who had experienced strong environmental repression did not identify strongly with the lesbian community. Since, as was mentioned above, one's calculation of the chances of dissociating oneself from an unwanted status may affect the strength of one's identification with that status, in Table B the lesbians have been circled on the assumption that lesbians will calculate that their chances for dissociation are lower than would undefined or bisexual women. This procedure has left the two names which most violate the hypothesis under consideration, i.e., those who experienced some degree of repression yet do not identify at all with the lesbian community. This is as would be predicted from the theory that a greater perceived possibility of dissociation will discourage identification. A similar analysis, based upon a larger sample and using more detailed techniques of data analysis, is needed to verify these preliminary results.

A comparison of the lesbian community with the gay male community is also useful in illustrating the hypothesis that societal rejection is an impetus toward community identification.
Gay men, who have experienced greater societal rejection than lesbians, are more likely to become involved in the gay community than are lesbians (Gagnon and Simon). A few of the lesbians interviewed complained that the men tended to "take over" mixed gay bars and political meetings by virtue of their vastly and disproportionately greater number. Not only do more gay men become involved in the gay community, but the gay male community formed earlier than the lesbian community and is by now more structured and laden with symbols and common norms than is the lesbian community. The facts that gay men suffer from greater societal condemnation and have greater difficulty managing a straight front than do lesbians may be one cause of the comparative states of the two communities. Of course, the larger size, earlier formation and greater development of the gay male community may be due to several factors, only one of them being a greater need for a refuge in the face of a condemning society. (The possible reasons for these differences in the development of lesbian and gay male communities are explored in this paper in the section on "History.") Nevertheless, Gagnon and Simon hypothesize that the greater societal condemnation of gay men may have played some part in the formation of a larger gay male community:

A larger proportion of lesbians avoid such communities than is the case for male homosexuals. This possibly occurs because the lesbian has less need for the community, since her homosexuality is not as immediately alienating from the conventional society. (Gagnon and Simon:262)

This comparison with the male gay community, which is made up of members for whom secrecy is more problematic than it is for
lesbians, supports the idea that those who experience greater societal rejection will more closely identify with the group.
The tendency for a feeling of solidarity to develop in groups at odds with the greater society or with a common enemy is widely recognized in sociological and political literature. Nothing is so successful as the threat of another country to war at uniting a divided, factionalized country. Likewise, the threat of condemnation from the greater society produces in secret societies a cohesion among group members across factional lines that would otherwise not be there (Simmel, in Wolff, 1955). In the lesbian community there is a strong feeling of solidarity or cohesiveness, especially among those who identify strongly with the group.

Simmel writes of the need for secret societies to promote cohesion in order to ensure the safety of the secret. He explains that all associations are based upon confidence between members, whether it be confidence in each others' business ability, religious convictions, or any number of traits and abilities. The secret society adds to this a need for mutual confidence in the ability of members to keep the secret. While the former type of confidence can be demonstrated once and thereafter retained without further effort, the keeping of a secret requires constant vigilance -- a single lapse destroys the secret. Thus the prevention of such lapses becomes a constant concern for the secret society, and to accomplish this the secret society fosters solidarity within the society.

The Vestals of Venus, a lesbian society in 18th century France, beautifully illustrates Simmel's argument that secret societies must foster solidarity in their ranks. Among the Vestals of Venus, the
commitment of members to the group was ensured through a formalized initiation ritual. The potential member was first required to disrobe before the members, who then counted her physical virtues. If the applicant was judged to have not less than sixteen of the thirty charms of woman, which were such things as red lips and a small waist, she was admitted to the society. Upon admission, she must "repeat the following precepts as they were recited by the Lady President:

A lesbian is a young maiden who, having had no intercourse with men, is convinced of the excellence of her own sex, finds in it the true and pure kind of love, pledges herself to it completely and renounces the other sex as wicked and perfidious. It is also a woman of any age who, having complied with the laws of Nature and the State for the propagation of the human race, is now regretful of her mistake, and now despises and abjures those hateful pleasures and surrenders herself to become one of the pupils of the true Goddess of Love." (Caprio, 1954:23)

Most contemporary lesbian organizations do not require any such formal declaration of total renunciation of heterosexuality and commitment to lesbianism from their members. Instead, the cohesion among lesbians is rooted in individual motivation toward secrecy, rather than inspired by social sanctions of the group designed to protect the secret. To see this assertion clearly, a distinction must be made between the lesbian secret society and the types of secret societies Simmel discusses as primary examples of the second type of secret society. Both Simmel and Ponsé (1978) categorized homosexual societies as secret societies whose existence is known but whose members are not. But neither Ponsé nor Simmel recognized that the secrets guarded by groups like the Masons are of a different character than the secret guarded by lesbian groups, in
that they are group secrets while the lesbian secret is first and foremost an individual secret. That is, the lesbian possesses her secret before she comes into contact with the community. It is an individual secret before it is a shared secret, and by the time she meets other lesbians, she has already learned to keep the secret. If she gives away her secret she will, or fears that she will, suffer direct and personal negative consequences from those whom she has told. The revelation of an individual lesbian’s identity, although it threatens the secrecy of those with whom she may be observed to associate, does not in itself reveal the secret of any other lesbian or of the lesbian group. Thus the lesbian group has comparatively little interest in punishing her, though its members may avoid her to preserve their own secrecy. In contrast, members of societies such as the Masons do not possess their secret before joining the Masonic group. The Mason learns the secret as a result of joining the group whereas the lesbian joined the community as a result of possessing the secret. If a Mason gives away the formula for a secret ritual, he will probably not suffer reprobation from those whom he tells. His punishment would come from the Masonic group, since his giving away of the secret directly destroys the secret of the entire Masonic group. Since the lesbian thus has a greater personal stake in keeping her secret and has already taught herself to do so before joining the community, the lesbian community need not apply formal sanctions against information leaks as stringently as do secret societies of the type with which Simmel is primarily dealing. Nevertheless, cohesion in the lesbian community is promoted by other forces. The primary cohesive force is
identical to the primary force motivating many lesbians to join the lesbian secret society in the first place -- the need for individual secrecy. This cohesion is then intensified by the lesbian subculture through the use of common and unique symbol systems and the various methods of boundary heightening. It is further reinforced by subtle, informal pressure within the lesbian community.

Ponse (1980) states that secrecy promotes in-group cohesion and explains that Simmel (Koff, 1950:370) comments on the tendency of secret societies to "claim their members in a total sense... serving to bind the members... closely. Within the lesbian world, the bonding nature of secrecy is evidenced in the rapidity with which friendships, at least on a superficial level, are formed" (Ponse:160-165). The rapid formation of superficial friendships is indeed very characteristic of lesbian groups. For example, it is the pattern of the welcome received by a newcomer to a gay bar or to other gay gatherings. The tendency is for the newcomer to be welcomed unconditionally at first, on the basis of the fact that she is a lesbian. The author recalls her first visit to three of the four gay bars which served as some of my contacts with a gay community in northern New Jersey. In each case, upon entering, I knew one person. Within the space of a few minutes, I had been introduced to several other patrons and was quickly incorporated into a cliche before any substantial personal information had been exchanged.

Members of the lesbian community are very aware of their own feelings of solidarity:
I get really pissed that we're forced into having a subculture, and we're forced to go to these places or those places, and we can't "flaunt" our sexuality, we don't hold hands with somebody that we love, you know, show pictures, the whole deal, but by the same token it gives us some kind of solidarity and some kind of strength to be able to identify people by a pinky ring, or a necklace. (Kathy, taped interview)

Nellie unintentionally revealed her sense of a duty to be committed to other lesbians because of their lesbianism: "I later found out that she was gay. I didn't like her anyway, even though she was gay." The statement implies that the woman's lesbianism would have been a valid reason for liking the woman.

It has been suggested by some previous research, and is believed by many lesbians, that this solidarity serves to overcome class and other divisions between lesbians. Simmel wrote of the equality of members characteristic of secret societies, commenting that there is a levelling out of outside differences and the formation instead of a "brotherhood." On a less ideological level, lesbianism may overcome class and race barriers simply because women who would otherwise have had no interest in each other may find themselves in the same drinking group every weekend merely because they have lesbianism in common and they know few lesbians of their own race or class (Ponse). Tanya saw this as the reason that some of her professional lesbian friends socialize with redneck lesbians:

I said to them, "Let me ask you a question. If you were in a gay community with professional people, intellectual people, artists, writers, people that can talk more than jucky stuff and the weather, would you still associate with these people and call them your friends?"

Solidarity is promoted by the symbol system which lesbians have
developed to aid them in finding each other and to express their identification with the group. Sagarin (1969) states that "The in-group solidarity is further strengthened if the members have an argot of their own." Gay culture is rich in symbols, both physical and verbal, designed to identify gays to each other without alerting outsiders, i.e., that function as covert communication. That this is not their sole function is demonstrated by the fact that many of these symbols are used within groups composed solely of lesbians who are familiar with them, where they function to encourage feelings of solidarity and acceptance. For example, being able to identify other gay people by symbols such as the pinky ring has a cohesive force, as mentioned above by Kathy.

The adoption of common symbols, in dress, language, etc., reinforce solidarity by emphasizing and adding to the stock of intragroup similarities. They serve both as visible reminders of the one fundamental similarity which is invisible, that of sexual preference, and to increase the number of common attributes by being commonalities themselves. So a lesbian entering a gay coffeehouse and seeing several women in pants and dark vests or lavender clothes will immediately feel reassured that she is among "her own kind". She sits down and a stranger may comment on the 'strength' of the labrys on the necklace she's wearing. The labrys, as a symbol of women's strength, and closely associated with lestationism, is of interest to them both and serves as a commonality around which to start a conversation. As they talk, the use of words like "straight", "closet", and "bull-dyke", phrases like "know about you," and references to Michigan, the Village or Fire Island
strengthens the feeling of a common experience and bond between them.

Besides the feeling of solidarity resulting from the experience of a common stigma and enhanced by the use of common symbols and boundary heightening techniques, there is also maintained a front of solidarity where close feelings of friendship have ceased to exist or never existed. This is because lesbians are still so relatively hidden that if a lesbian falls into bad favor with her current friendship group, she will have a hard time finding a new group. So she is pressured to maintain at least the appearance of good relations. This results in a thick undercurrent of criss-crossing tensions within many lesbian groups which is a direct result of the isolation of lesbians, which is in turn a direct result of the secrecy they are forced to keep.

Several of my interviewees mentioned this underlying tension. Of the gay community in her favorite bar, Nora said that there were "too many personalities. And you clash and all this." She later continued in the same vein about the gay society in general:

I think there's more violence and there's more hatred in the gay community than there is in the straight world, really. I put it that way. It's like you're sitting at a bar and you're sitting there with your lover and a girl comes walking up and she likes your lover, tries talking to her. Too much jealousy. There's so much jealousy it's pathetic. (Nora, taped interview)

In Tel Aviv, Israel, where the lesbian community is much more underground than it is in the U.S., and where there is apparently only one regularly meeting lesbian group so that members have to either get along with the other members or become totally isolated, Jill describes the same problem:
I saw the group twice, in two different places. One, their monthly [dance, in the regular public meeting place], and then Jordana... had a party at her place and invited a bunch of them... people that she knew best of all. That was a much more relaxed atmosphere than the dance at the [regular meeting place]. More people know each other, that's probably why, you know. But I found, OK, the women at the meeting place, it's a small group still, so it was like people who had been in a relationship with other people, then it's broken up, then relationships with other people, so it was like too much inbreeding, you know what I mean? So it was a lot more tension there because it was Miss A. was, you know, uptight about, "Oh, my God," So at the party, the ones who were like the sources of problems weren't invited... So everyone was much more relaxed. (Jill, taped interview)

The group's need to preserve a sense of solidarity also places a demand on women who are not as strongly lesbian-identified to be more so. In Bonnie's case, the sense of solidarity, which

ironically stems originally from the need for lesbians to be with other lesbians, functioned to keep her away from the lesbian community:

(Are you very involved in the gay community here?) No. (Do you feel any pressure at all to say that you're lesbian or to be lesbian here?) I guess I feel like that's part of why, in a way, I've stayed away from the community, cuz I feel like I would need to have made some kind of declaration or commitment, I don't know if it's unfounded or not. I know that's strong, because one of the main ideas about having a woman's community is that women have been so separated from each other, it seems like one of the primary ideas is a unity and understanding of each other. But I've heard from a lot of people that are kind of afraid in a way to join different parts of it because I guess they're afraid that everyone else will be so committed and they won't know if they are or not. And, uh, I guess I feel some of that same way, but I feel like people won't desert me if I still didn't know. (Bonnie, taped interview)

Where solidarity is in this way not simply the result of each lesbian looking for security in a condemning world, but becomes an allegiance demanded of the individual by the group, this imposed
solidarity is identical to that which was discussed above as boundary heightening by lesbians against "marginal lesbians" such as bisexual women.

Although gay solidarity is comfortable for gays who find themselves accepted by the community simply because they are gay, some charge that the solidarity of the gay community has been exploited by commercial interests. Because of feelings of loyalty to other gays, gay people will choose to patronize grocery stores, book stores, and other establishments run by gays over establishments run by heterosexuals. This loyalty creates an exploitable market for "gay capitalism" (Adam, 1979:296 in Schur, 1980:221). This situation is analogous to "black capitalism" as described by E. Ofari. Ofari demonstrates that the belief of the black community that patronage of black businesses contributes to the welfare of the black community is a myth, and that black capitalism constitutes exploitation of the black community. Likewise, Altman charges:

In a sense, there is a "gay establishment," which, like the black establishment, benefits economically from the present state of (liberal) oppression -- even after paying for protection, gay bars/baths are profitable investments. (Altman, 1973:132)

Thus, for lesbians in the community, the feeling of solidarity is a welcome change from the hostility of the outside world. But this same solidarity is oppressive to some women who are not as committed to a gay identity, and it allows the exploitation of the gay community by gay capitalists.
One of the problems facing the lesbian community is the regulation of relations with the outside world. Controlling the movement of people and information across community boundaries is especially important for secret societies because of the necessity of guarding the secret, just as the regulation of relations with individual outsiders was seen to be important for secretive lesbian individuals. Relations of secretive lesbian groups with the outside world are characterized primarily by avoidance. While individual lesbians cannot usually practice complete avoidance of outsiders and hence must practice the counterfeiting of personal relationships with outsiders using the methods of "passing," "covering" and "counterfeit secrecy," lesbian groups can to a great extent isolate themselves from the out-group. To avoid confrontations with the out-group which would threaten the integrity of the secret, secretive lesbian groups practice various techniques of "boundary heightening" (Kanter, 1972). Boundary heightening takes place temporally, spatially, and psychologically, and serves to prevent contact between the in-group and the out-group.

As do secretive lesbian groups, separatist lesbian groups also avoid contact with outside groups and practice boundary heightening. Lesbian separatists may or may not also be secretive; the essential element in separatism is that it is the choice of the lesbian to remove herself from certain other segments of society rather than the rejection of her by those segments of society which is the immediate cause of her separatism. The type of boundary heightening
strategy engaged in by separatists is simply to avoid as completely as possible, at an individual as well as a community level, all contact with outsiders in all aspects of life. Separatist lesbian groups are not the issue at hand. The type of boundary heightening practiced by groups of non-separatist, secretive women for whom individual level contact with outsiders occurs frequently and must be carefully controlled, is the type under examination here.

It is important to note that just as not all lesbians are equally secretive, not all lesbian groups are equally covert. The gay groups I studied or which were described by my respondents in interviews ranged in covertness from the hidden community in Israel described by Jill, to the various semi-public groups of urban and suburban New Jersey, to the highly visible and active community at Oberlin College.

Temporal boundary heightening between the in-group and the out-group by lesbians consists of dividing one's time into time spent in the straight world and time spent in the gay world. Since people are relatively free to choose their friends but not their coworkers, coworkers present the most immediate, constant threat to the lesbian's secret (Adair, 1978), and for most lesbians the working day is the most significant segment of time which must be spent in the straight world. Thus participation in the gay world is relegated to the hours outside the working day, which are usually weekends and evenings. This division of one's life into gay time and straight time is a commonly experienced phenomenon, and many of my respondents gave indications that they considered the daytime to be the time during which they had to cope with the straight world
while the evenings and weekends were the times when they could live in the gay world. For example, Elaine commented on the depth of this temporal division: "We do lead double lives and it's not easy to go out in the world and play that straightforward thing and then all of a sudden at night become what you really are, or what you like to be." Elaine also said that she and her gay coworkers didn't hang out together at work, but instead saw each other outside of working hours at gay bars. When Nora and Mellie were asked how they kept people from knowing that they were lesbian, the example they both gave of a situation in which concealment could be a problem was that of a coworker asking how their weekend was or what they did over the weekend. Their solution was to avoid the question by offering no real information. Nora added, "what I do, as long as I perform my job between nine and five, what I do after five and what I do on weekends is my own business." Jill, speaking of the women in the lesbian group in Israel, said:

At d--'s party there was all blue jeans; I didn't see any dresses anywhere. They have to wear dresses to work during the day. You know, it was like this split at work you kill one image and as soon as you get home you change into another. So when they were out socializing they couldn't be bothered with that nonsense. (Jill, taped interview)

Jill says two relevant things in this statement. First, she points out the temporal division between conformity to the straight world during the day and escape to the gay world at night. Second, she describes a switch in dress as an expression of the division between the straight and gay worlds. Such expressions are examples of the means by which group identification and cohesion are expressed and encouraged and are discussed as such in the sections in this paper.
Avoidance also takes place spatially. Lesbians meet in specific places which are explicitly intended for their use, such as gay bars. Certain bars are established for or are taken over by a gay clientele. By being physically separate, this public space is made safer, threatening less of a risk of exposure to the gay patron. In large cities, gay people may take over a house which is rented out primarily or exclusively to gay people, or a whole street or section of the city may contain a high concentration of gay residences or businesses. Christopher Street in New York City is a well-known example, as are sections of Fire Island and other areas.

In the Christopher Street area of NYC, gay people, predominantly gay men, openly express their homosexuality on the street and otherwise treat the area as a gay refuge space. In many places, a women's community center will have special therapists, publications, community notice boards, ads for lesbian apartment-mates (especially important for lesbians, who are, as women, not as financially able to afford places alone as are men), rap groups, support groups, and other resources of interest to lesbians. These centers quickly become meeting places for lesbians. At Oberlin, the Women's Collective serves to some degree as such a spatially separated lesbian haven. This is more true in some years than others, depending on the results of the dorm's entrance lottery. However, the house tends to attract a very high proportion of lesbian applicants because of its status as a women's dorm and its reputation as a lesbian haven. A common house joke is that if a woman moves in with long hair, she may very likely have short hair
at the end of the semester; a joke which points out the lesbian influence in the house.

Some lesbian singers, poetesses, etc. create lesbian space by refusing to perform if men are present. Alix Dobkin is one such musician — her audiences are entirely women, and generally include a high proportion of lesbians because much of her music deals with lesbian themes. During her concerts, the theater or coffeehouse in which she performs is lesbian space, separated from the straight world without.

As well as engaging in physical boundary heightening through spacial and temporal separation of the gay group from the straight world, the lesbian subculture incorporates a good deal of psychological boundary heightening. The exaggeration of intergroup differences and intragroup similarities is a psychological boundary heightening technique which is well established in the lesbian community. For example, Ponse points out the frequency with which gay subjects come under discussion when gay people are together, and suggests that frequent references to gayness emphasize the importance of the division between the gay and the straight worlds.

The tendency of both straights and gays to view lesbians as types of persons of whom homosexuality is an integral part rather than as persons with the attribute of being lesbian at once both encourages this exaggeration and is an example of it. This view opens the way to claims that gays and straights are categorically different from each other in ways other than simple sexual preference. In the interviews, the questions "What do you see in women that you don't see in men?" and "Can you trace the
development of your lesbianism," though not directly asking for differences between gays and straights or men and women, drew out abundant evidence of this tendency to expand the differences between lesbians and non-lesbians. But this evidence was biased in the interviews; very few women made clear statements of categorical differences between gay and straight people directly, but most spoke easily and at length on the virtues of gay relationships as opposed to straight relationships. The few respondents who did refer to beliefs that gays as a type of people are more sensitive, more artistic, more like the opposite sex, and so on, than are straights, sometimes denied holding the belief themselves. For example, Kathy, in describing how she can sometimes recognize another woman as a lesbian, said:

Some gay people are real different than straight people because there's a different kind of sensitivity or different kind of awareness which maybe stems from being persecuted, you know. I think that changes a person a lot. (Do you mean more sensitive, or sensitive in a different way, or what?) Sensitive in a different way. I mean, I don't think that gay people are more sensitive, gay people are artists, I don't think that at all, but I think they're different.

Amelia, when asked to trace her development as a lesbian, said that she had a feeling when she was young that she was "different". Asked to explain what she meant, she responded by saying:

Well, like I was a tomboy when I was younger, too. I'd play with the boys 'n' everything, on their team, their baseball, as a matter of fact, I was the only girl, and another girl, that they would let play on their baseball team. As far as, I knew I was a tomboy, and so did all my friends, but they used to try to break me out of it, you know, like giving me dolls and stuff which I threw aside. I'd rather play with my cousin's guns. But see, I don't know, people, I think, put being a tomboy and put being gay together, when it's not. Because I know a lot of
girls were tomboys and they grew up and got married and had kids. (Amelia, taped interview)

Both of the women mentioned stereotypes which present gays as categorically different from heterosexuals, but both asserted that they didn't hold those views themselves.

Phoebe, as quoted in the section on stereotypes, expresses the belief that lesbians have a distinctive style of dress and hair which is "unbuying" into the heterosexual game. Other women felt that lesbians touch other people more or engage in greater eye contact.

Nora had a unique perception of the categorical differences between gays and straights:

I think there's more violence and more hatred in the gay community than there is in the straight world, really... Everybody has homosexual tendencies and somebody that says "not me" is full of crap... the only difference between us and them is that we're open about it and they're not. They're a bunch of hypocrits. (Nora, taped interview)

Some of the women described gay males in categorical terms:

...So maybe like a lot of gay men are these really sensitive, a lot of my friends only have gay male friends and they say that they're a lot nicer [than other men]. I don't know myself, though. (Phoebe, taped interview)

Heterosexual men often put a lot more energy into playing the right games and gay men don't do that... mostly it's just the [eye] contact that's missing... heterosexual men approach you with more of an appraising look.... I find, when I deal with gay men, some of them are a lot more openly friendly, I know several gay men with whom I've gotten to be good friends. They're just much more immediately open than heterosexual men. And then other gay men are more reserved, because they don't play these eye contact games, they don't let you know that they're appraising you, cuz they're not. (Erica, taped interview)

More frequently, the categorical stereotyping of gays and straights in the interviews took the form of categorization of gay
and straight relationships.

Nearly all the respondents categorized gay relationships. Of twenty-four lesbian and bisexual interviewees, all but four characterized lesbian relationships as qualitatively and categorically different from straight relationships. Furthermore, they did so in no uncertain terms. A look at two of the four exceptions demonstrates the universality of this characterization even further. One was Gabriela, who spent the entire interview talking about lesbianism in Israel and her own coming out; in that interview the topic of lesbian relationships as such was not broached at all, so it can't be said whether she would have categorized them or not. The other exception, Edna, felt that she looked for the same things in men and in women. Here it is important to remember that Edna doesn't identify herself as gay, or even as bisexual. She didn't define herself and at the time of the interview other aspects of her life were much more important to her than her love life or her social life.

Among the women who did categorize lesbian relationships, six themes emerged repeatedly in their answers. The lack of variability in the way the women expressed these themes, even women from different geographical areas with different levels of commitment to a lesbian lifestyle, was especially striking. It is impossible to say definitively what causes this high rate of agreement. Possible causes may be that these categorical differences do actually exist, either because of the nature of lesbianism itself or because of the unique interaction of lesbianism with our greater Western culture; or that lesbian culture has spread through the media of music,
books, newsletters, etc., a certain way of viewing lesbian relationships which has become the dominant perspective.

The six recurrent themes are: 1) Women have more in common with each other than they have with men, either directly because they are women or because of the position of women in society. Therefore two women begin a friendship with more common ground and can develop a closer relationship than can a woman and a man; 2) Women are more sensitive, so relationships between two women involve more caring and emotional bonding than do straight relationships, allowing each woman to feel more comfortable and to let go of pretenses; 3) Lesbian love is an extension of friendship, involving one's complete person including one's emotional self, while straight love is separate from friendship, and involves only certain aspects of one's person, primarily one's sexual self; 4) There are fewer societal guidelines for lesbian relationships than for straight relationships, so lesbians can develop more individual relationships without the burden of imposed expectations and stereotypes; 5) Some of the women saw a difference in the way they themselves felt with men and the way they felt with women. For example, with men they might feel themselves slipping into the stereotypically female passive role although they do not want to. They attributed this to male and female stereotypes and social training; 6) The lesbian sexual act itself is qualitatively different than the straight sexual act.

The following are selected quotes, arranged and numbered according to the themes they most strongly express, in the order in which the six themes are listed above:
It's easier to relate to a woman cuz she's gone through all the same things you have. Not necessarily every life experience, but just by the fact that you're both female, you know. (Nellie, taped interview)

I feel [women are] much more sensitive [than men] to their own feelings and other people's feelings. Women are more gentle, usually. I feel with women there's already something established, some sort of similarity or bond that you don't have to go through while we're getting to know each other, while with men you have to... I think a woman who is a lesbian, who gets involved with a man is, that relationship is not as close. A woman who knows how good a relationship can be with a woman can't have as good a relationship with a man. (Sheila, taped interview)

Is there a difference between what you find in women and in men?) Yeah, there definitely is... It just seems like sex with a woman is just kind of an extension of the friendship, and it just makes it all more intense. It makes it a more complete relationship. With men it's harder to get that completeness from a relationship. It's just, it was something to do with not being like them. (Kathy, taped interview)

There's a real gradation from between having very close women friends and having women friends that I'm attracted to... [Among lesbians], a lot of people who've been involved with each other stay friends, [whereas straights don't]. I think a lot of lesbian relationships start from friendships... I used to date a lot of men, it was easy then, cuz you can get away with very little attachment or involvement -- I can't do that, and I won't, with women.... Dealing with men I felt like I left the rest of my person at the door... and I don't feel that way with women (Erica, taped interview)

There's less guidelines between lesbians so you have to talk about it... I feel like the relationships with the women are much more on an individual basis. (Erica, taped interview)

(Asked to talk about role-playing ten years ago:) I don't particularly care for role-playing. I think the two of us were women first and this is what we love one another for. Because if I'm going to role-play, then I may as well stay straight. (Elaine, taped interview)

It's the way I feel when I'm with women than with how, like you say, what I find in them... It's the way that I interact with guys... That's something I've thought about a lot, [that] it could just be this person, but then
again it was with friends too. Like you can wake up and look really awful and feel awful and be in an awful mood and I wouldn't be as, with a woman I could be like that, I could say "Oh, I look gross and disgusting, I have to go take a shower because I feel awful." And with a guy it'd be like "I've to go take a shower," quick! Less open and a lot more afraid with men to just open up. I think it's also society's stereotypes, but I don't feel as equal with a guy, that's the way it is. I don't feel I'm any worse than them at all, but I don't feel that I'm in an equal relationship. I mean I know I should be and I hate feeling that in a way I'm not. There's a respect in there, something, it's got a lot to do with feeling accepted and feeling equal. (Rima, taped interview)

[5] I feel more comfortable around women. I also feel like even though I'm gay and establish myself as being gay and even around men who know I'm gay, I still play those flirtatious games. But I don't do that around women cuz I'd be really ashamed of myself. I take relationships, or any sort of interaction with women much more seriously than with men, like I don't really care. (Sheila, taped interview)

[6] As far as men are concerned, they get in bed 'n' that's it. 1, 2, 3. There's a difference between sex and making love. Women make love, men have sex. (Amelia, taped interview)

[6] She knew what might make me feel good... somehow. And didn't feel like I had to prove something to her like I'd felt with men. (Adair, 1978)

Spatial, temporal, and psychological boundaries are built by lesbians not only against the general non-lesbian population, but also against many specific groups of people. Gay men, bisexuals, overt lesbians, transsexuals and sadomasochistic lesbians each experience rejection for various reasons by some mainstream lesbians.

Several respondents engaged in boundary heightening against gay men, frequently as an expression of the resentment they felt at being lumped together with gay men in the public eye. Most politically active lesbian groups, in the experience of the author, feel that although lesbians and gay men are both oppressed for being
homosexual, the nature of their oppressions are different and they must work separately toward their different goals. They believe that lesbians and gay men have different interests. Phoebe gave statutory rape laws as an example of the conflict of interests between lesbians and gay men; some gay men would like the law repealed so that they are not prosecuted for man-boy love, while lesbians want protection for young women and girls who would be raped by men.

A common complaint among lesbian activists is that gay men tend to dominate mixed political groups and lesbians' interests are overlooked. The solution is seen to be the formation of exclusively lesbian groups. According to Wolf, this feeling has been expressed since a decade ago:

Even among the more traditional homophile groups, the impact of feminism was felt when lesbians who had been working with male homosexuals realized that many of them were as sexist as heterosexual men. The turning point in San Francisco came at the male-dominated North American Conference of Homophile Organisations (MACHO) in 1972 when representatives from lesbian organisations accused the men of sexism and called for separation. (Wolf, 1979:96)

To test the attitudes of lesbians towards gay men, respondents who frequented bars were asked whether they would prefer going to a strictly lesbian bar or a mixed gay bar with male and female patrons. Eight out of twelve women replied that they preferred bars with strictly lesbian clientele. In a typical response, Nellie said that she felt more comfortable in a women's bar and thinks that women need their own space. In the same breath, she said that mixed bars tend to have all-male nights and no all-female nights, indicating that she feels the men tend to take over.
Boundary heightening also occurs between secretive lesbians and bisexual women. Three interview questions were asked regarding the relations between lesbians and bisexual women, with an aim of exploring the boundaries between them. The first one, asked only of lesbians, had the general form of "If you had a woman lover and she started seeing a man how would you feel?" This question tended to draw responses comparing female-female versus female-male relationships rather than a judgement of women who would love both women and men. Therefore, to get at the issue of lesbian-bisexual relations more directly, a second question was added to the interview schedule used for lesbians: "Would you go out with a woman whom you knew was bisexual?" Bisexual women were asked the flip-side question of how they think a gay lover of theirs would react if they started going out with a man. The third interview question designed to explore lesbian-bisexual relations was in the direct form of "Do you think there's any tension between lesbians and bisexual women?" In addition, some bisexual women were asked if they felt pressure from the gay community to be gay. These latter questions were asked subsequent to the first two so as not to sensitise the interviewee to the purpose of the first questions.

The direct question met with flat denials of any tension between lesbians and bisexual women from all but one respondent. This woman, however, phrased her answer in a noncomittal manner:

(Do you think there's any tension between women who are gay and women who are bisexual?) It would depend on the person. I'm sure if you were dealing with a bisexual woman on one hand and you had the radical lesbian feminist, probably they wouldn't get along at all... It depends on where that person's head is coming from, what kind of experiences they've had dealing with bisexual
women, or vice versa with gay women. I'm sure if you were a gay woman and you went out with a bisexual woman, say you didn't know it and you got jilted for a guy, and you met another bisexual woman, who she was a really nice person, you just sort of had very hostile feelings. (Nellie, taped interview)

It is interesting to note that Nellie used the example of the bisexual woman leaving the female lover for a male lover as a possible source of tension. Her use of this example may have been prompted by the previous question of whether she would get involved with a bisexual woman, but to the extent that this answer is not merely a reflection of the earlier question, it serves to validate the earlier question as a measure of tension between bisexual and lesbian women. It also enlightens the question of the source of potential tension between bisexual and gay women by suggesting that the potential for transference of loyalty or affection to out-group members may be a cause of lesbian-bisexual tension.

The denial of lesbian-bisexual tension by the majority of respondents does not seem to be an accurate statement either of their feelings or of group relations in the community. Instead, they seem to be reflecting either the explicit value of the greater society that prejudice is wrong and therefore mustn't be admitted to whether or not it is felt, or the requisite solidarity between women who have lesbian leanings (See the section in this paper on "Solidarity"). Whatever their motivation, these responses to the direct question appear not to be reflective of the women's true attitudes toward bisexual women when compared to the very different responses given to the second question.

The second question, "Would you go out with a woman whom you knew was bisexual?" drew responses that emphatically revealed the
distancing of bisexual women by lesbian women. The reasons given by the respondents for refusing or hesitating to go out with a bisexual woman were that bisexuals are "mixed up" or that they are merely experimenting with their sexuality or making a political gesture and therefore are not serious lesbians; and that bisexual women might leave them for a man, for a heterosexual lifestyle, or for a family with children. Both types of answers point to a fear on the part of lesbians that bisexual women would not be as committed to a lesbian community, lifestyle, or relationship as a lesbian would be. This assumed lack of commitment also stimulates lesbians to avoid bisexual women partly because the uncommitted bisexual woman is seen as a danger to the safety of the secret (Warren, 1980). Just as the separation of the gay from the straight world is attributable to the need to guard the secret, so can the rejection of bisexuals be attributed to a lack of trust in the likelihood that they will keep the secret. The rejection of bisexuals also functions to define and preserve the boundaries of the lesbian community; by expelling bisexuals, the community defines itself as a group of lesbians, and promotes stronger commitment to the community among those who remain:

Bisexuals tend to be excluded from the secret gay world, because their presence is a threat to secrecy, and because it dilutes the significance of a committed gay identity. (Warren, 1980: 134)

Many of the respondents, as well as an overwhelming majority of other lesbians I have met, harbor to some degree the notion that bisexual women are half-lesbian and half-straight, and will eventually realize that they are really lesbians. The existence of
bisexuality as a valid, permanent sexual object choice in its own right is disbelieved. As Jamie, a bisexual, said, "I think most people can't quite understand the fact that people can be equally attracted to both sexes." Instead, bisexuality is seen as a stepping stone between heterosexuality and homosexuality, and the self-declared bisexual who does not admit that she is in the process of "coming out" as a lesbian is seen as confused on this point, or worse, self-deceptive or hypocritical. These women are given a period of grace in which they are allowed to be "bisexual" because the lesbian community knows only too well how difficult it is to come out as a lesbian in this society. But a woman who is bisexual for a long period of time without becoming a lesbian may engender hostility (Ponse, 1976). She is assumed to be a gutless lesbian who is trying to have her cake and eat it, too; by camouflaging her lesbianism in a heterosexist society, she is experiencing the joys of lesbianism while dodging her share of society's condemnation and letting the full weight of oppression fall on the shoulders of those who are not hypocrits. Amelia exemplifies the opinions that bisexuals are "mixed up" and that in fact they are all really lesbians who have not admitted it yet:

(would you go out with somebody if you knew she was bisexual, instead of gay?) No, I wouldn't... bisexual people, they're just really mixed up. They don't know which way they want to go. And to get involved with a bisexual person, that's asking for trouble. Because suppose you really get involved with that person, and really fall in love and then they decide "Oh, I want a man," after you put so much [energy] into the relationship... they don't exactly know which way they want to go. And I don't want to be a part of that. (Amelia, taped interview)

By using the phrase "mixed up," Amelia is pinpointing the fact that
bisexual women mix up the straight and the gay worlds, and indicating that this mixing up of two things which ought to be kept separate is the reason for the rejection. It is interesting to note that the accusation of being "mixed up" is the same charge that homophobic people make against homosexuals because they mix up the male and female realms, and that bar lesbians in old gay life made against ki-kis because they refused to conform to the butch-femme dichotomy. In each case, it is the relative liminality of one group with regard to the accepted categories of the other group, which is being pinpointed as the stimulus for their rejection.

A parallel to the belief of lesbians that bisexual women are confused or hypocritical lesbians is found in Higgins' analysis of the deaf community. Some deaf people, especially those who lost their hearing later in life, do not consider themselves deaf. Higgins quotes a hard of hearing man who said, "Still, I don't feel I'm deaf because I couldn't hear you or understand you." These people do not join the deaf community, and they are tolerated but not accepted by the deaf community. Among the deaf such people are a:

...source of amusement for trying to be what members of deaf communities feel they are not -- hearing... such.... hearing-impaired people help to define for the members the boundary of their community and their identity as deaf people. The members reject the feelings of these "misguided" hearing-impaired people, feeling which deny their deafness and in rejection, the members affirm who they are and what their community is. (Higgins, 1979:8)

Some lesbians refuse to become involved with bisexual women or "faby dykes" because they would feel used by these women. Since bisexual women and women in the process of coming out are seen as
confused in their identities and in a state of transition, the lesbian is afraid that for them a lesbian affair would be an experiment, entered into out of curiosity or a need to discover themselves rather than out of caring for the particular lesbian involved:

[Saying of bisexuality being trendy]...That a lot of people who are gay here [Oberlin College], aren't really when they get out and it's just experimentation... That causes some problems for people who, I think are more consistent about it. (Erica, taped interview)

Wolf (1979) has found that, for a similar reason, women who were lesbians before gay liberation sometimes resent or question the motives of politicized younger lesbians. Since it is much easier today, and even encouraged in some feminist circles, to come out as a lesbian, older lesbians who came out in much more difficult times question the sincerity and motivation behind the lesbianism of younger women. They suspect that some young women may be lesbians for political or selfish reasons only, rather than out of true lesbian love for (an)other woman(woman). As Wolf explains:

Some lesbians also resented heterosexual feminists who... would want to have a physical relationship with a lesbian as part of a social experiment and perhaps cause suffering to the lesbian who fell in love with her... While it is true that many young women who came out within the context of the movement would have been lesbians anyway, the practice of some heterosexually oriented women to identify themselves as lesbian as a political gesture of solidarity seemed somewhat oppressive and superficial to lesbians who had come out before the movement and had suffered real oppression. (Wolf, 1979:67)

There was no evidence of this feeling among my older respondents. Instead, the older women with whom I spoke often stated that they respected younger lesbians for having the courage to be so
public about their lesbianism. All of them also included younger adult lesbians in their own circles of friends, an indication that their words were not simply a cover-up for feelings of resentment. This evidence, however, does not in the least say that such feelings of resentment toward younger lesbians do not exist; there are many reasons I may have missed observing these feelings. First of all, the older women I interviewed were found through young people, usually lesbians, or through older lesbians whom I had already interviewed. Thus older lesbians who do associate with younger lesbians are undoubtedly overrepresented. Also, my own youth would probably discourage older lesbians from discussing such feelings if they did have them.

Several women felt that since the greater society is more accepting of straightness than gayness, bisexual women would tend to be pressured towards being straight. The women felt that this possibility was a threat to bisexuals' commitment to gay relationships or the gay community, and felt that bisexual women were likely to "desert" the gay community; members of the lesbian secret society are understandably less willing to become involved with those they think are likely to defect to the out-group:

Don't get involved with these people...It's a no-win situation... If I was seeing a woman and she started seeing a man I think she would probably get sucked up into the heterosexual network and orientation, (Erica, taped interview)

(Asked how she would feel if her woman lover took a male lover), I think in some sense it's a little more threatening because it's easier to be straight in this culture. You get more affirmation for it than being lesbian... If you're in a relationship where you get more societal affirmation, it's more likelihood maybe that you'll take an easier route than a harder one, (Phoebe,
Even if bisexual women do not defect completely to the out-group, as long as they sometimes relate on an intimate level with men, they are seen by some radical lesbians as aiding and abetting the enemy. Even worse, they are receiving support, nurturance and energy from lesbians, and then turning around and giving this energy to men. In this way, they are draining the lesbian community of a resource which some lesbians feel is scarce and should be recycled only through the lesbian community to keep the community strong. Other, more separatist, lesbians believe that not only do bisexual and heterosexual women take women’s positive energy away from women, but that they return to the women’s group to dump the shit they receive from the men they are involved with. For example, they may wish to talk about problems they are having in a heterosexual affair, and separatist lesbians do not wish to spend their time on anything involving men. Even if the man is never mentioned, by coming to the lesbian community after having had close contact with men, heterosexual and bisexual women bring the taint of the male to the group.

Some of the women came up with unique explanations for lesbian-bisexual tension. Phoebe, who used to be heterosexual and sees her adoption of homosexuality as a result of conscious choice, feels that the issue of whether sexual object preference is a choice creates tension between "born lesbians" and "lesbians by choice." As one who does see it as a choice, she described being "in conflict" with a friend who saw the situation otherwise:
There's a tension between people who just say, "Oh, I was born lesbian and I'm always going to be lesbian..." and women who have, or could be, ... [My lesbian friend] was freaking out, she was saying, "God, I've never been sexually involved with a man, I've never been able to, I've never could, and so if McCarthy came, I'd definitely get taken, and you, you could, you have been involved with them." (Phoebe, taped interview)

In other words, Phoebe's gay friend felt that bisexual women could appear to be straight and so would be less susceptible to persecution than would gay women. They can deny their gayness where lesbians can't. Bisexual women thus lack the need for the gay community that gay women have and can't be trusted to be loyal when the going gets rough.

Bonnie linked the degree of tension between gay women and women who spent time with men to the degree of hostility in the environment. She describes a school she went to before Oberlin College, where there was a bar patronized by both gay men and lesbians, and a diner down the street patronized mostly by lesbians. The feeling of tension wasn't as strong at the diner as at the bar, where "there was a real hostility on the part of gay people if you sat with men." She attributed the difference in tension to the difference in the degree of threat posed to the women by the presence or absence of outsiders, in this case gay men. In this situation, the discouragement of heterosocial activity served to define and protect the group's boundaries when the group was in an environment where these boundaries were threatened or in danger of being blurred. Bonnie went on to compare the bar and diner to the Oberlin community in the same light:

Oberlin [gay community] seems like a safe place, more nurturing [than other gay communities] and I think a lot
or it has to do with it being so isolated. Cuz all the places where I've seen gay communities, it's been [because] people feel that it's really necessary to come out and make a definite statement as a kind of a protection against hostile forces of the society... Here it seems more balanced. I know a lot of gay people [men] who feel very, very comfortable being friends with women even though they're not attracted to them at all. (Schlie, taped interview)

Nellie took a more individual level view of the situation. Rather than pointing out the bisexual woman's desertion into the straight world, she pointed out her own inability to fight back on equal terms in dealing with the "other lover" of a given woman:

I think it would be tougher to get involved [with a bisexual rather than a gay woman], especially if you then lost her to a man. There's no way you can fight back on the same level. With another woman, you'd know sort of, now better to deal with it. (Nellie, taped interview)

Warren contrasts overt with secret lesbian groups on the issue of toleration of bisexuality:

In some politicized gay groups there is less commitment to gay identity and more tolerance of bisexuality than in secret groups. Ponsie (1978) found that a bisexual identity was seen as a viable option, and even sometimes a preferable one, by activist lesbians... (Warren, 1980: 135)

But distrust of bisexuals is also common among activist lesbians. In my experience, politicized lesbians may be tolerant or intolerant of bisexuality, but perhaps for different reasons than less political lesbians. Politicized lesbians often think in terms of the catch word "energy," and are the ones who resent heterosexual and bisexual women who give women's energy to men. On the other hand, many political lesbians have been politicized to the bisexual point of view as well as the lesbian point of view:

One of the things that bugs me is when [gay women] talk about some other woman who "doesn't know she's gay yet,"

...
and I'm like "Give the kid a chance!" I think in one way, the networks put pressure on people to be gay, even if they don't want to be. (Erica, taped interview)

Bisexual women sense the boundary between themselves and lesbians and often feel it as pressure to become gay. In a discussion group at Oberlin College advertised as being for "women at all stages of coming out," a few bisexual women expressed the feeling that they weren't accepted by gays and other women appeared to agree with this. They felt that lesbians invalidated their bisexuality by considering it merely a mixed up phase or a stage on the way to full lesbianism. The very billing of the workshop expresses gay prejudice in that it implies that bisexual women are really gay women who are in the process of becoming gay, thus denying the possibility of bisexuality as an equally valid alternative unto itself. A later bisexual discussion group formed in October, 1981 at Oberlin College, initially declined to avail themselves of the advantages of sponsorship by the Oberlin Gay Union partly because the founders felt that sponsorship would imply that bisexuals were really pre-gays.

The boundary heightening effect of lesbian secrecy acts not only to distance lesbians from non-lesbians such as straights, gay men, and bisexual women, but also to divide more secretive lesbians from those who are more open about their lesbianism (Leznoff, 1956; Ponse, 1970). Ponse writes of antagonism between secret and overt groups and quotes a gay male lawyer as evidence:

A lot of the artists don't care [that other people know]. For that reason I have never cultivated the friendship of artists. I just don't get along with anybody who doesn't care... It's just that I can't afford to get to know them very well.
Kathy, a very outspoken and well-known lesbian on her college campus, feels pressure from more covert women not to be so obvious. She says it's important to her to let all kinds of other people know she's gay but "One of the things I'm really antsy about is being labelled an advertising faggot and the worst pressure in that comes from other gay people, not straight people." She then related an incident in which she was reprimanded for openly mentioning lesbianism, not by her straight friends who witnessed the incident, but by the one bisexual friend who was present.

Weinberg (1972) sees a similar situation in the relationship between repressed homosexuals and those who accept themselves. Whether true or not, and ignoring for the moment any examination of the functions such a belief fulfills for the gay community, it is common for gay people to say that someone who goes out of their way to denounce homosexuality is probably gay themselves and is afraid to recognize their own gayness. This has come to be the common meaning of the term "repressed" or "latent" homosexual, as described in the section on "Stereotypes." As mentioned in that section, among people who have succeeded in hiding their gayness from themselves or who fear that they are gay, this repression is a motivation for homophobia. Thus this type of homophobia can be seen as a form of boundary heightening by covert groups against more overt groups.
A BRIEF HISTORY OF ATTITUDES TOWARD HOMOSEXUALITY

Homosexuality has aroused a wide spectrum of reactions throughout history and continues to do so around the world today. Homosexuals have variously been executed, institutionalized, ignored, and revered as ones blessed with divine insight.

But reliable and extensive sources on the homosexual subculture and the popular attitudes towards homosexuality in past and non-Western societies are extremely scarce. Around what partial evidence remains from the past have been constructed elaborate stories of past glories, defeats and sufferings, making it difficult to separate fact from fiction. Concerning non-Western societies, little research has been done on homosexuality, and far less on lesbianism; however, what is known about past and foreign societies provides an interesting illustration of the variety of attitudinal climates in which homosexuals and lesbians have lived. In addition, current folklore circulating in the gay community about other societies, true or not, can shed light on the needs and values of the gay community here and now. For a more extensive examination of the accuracy and quantity of the evidence behind this folklore than will be given here, the reader may refer to Karlen (1971) and Katz (1976).

Gay folklore can be divided into four historical epochs of importance: 1) The Golden Age of Greece, matriarchal cultures and the worship of the Mother Goddess; 2) The replacing of ancient
Mother Goddess worship with a male godhead and the simultaneous subordination of women; 3) The burning of witches between 1300 and 1700 AD; and 4) The early part of the 20th century, in which "flaunting the end of Victorian repression, women of means or of artistic ability congregated -- many in liaison with other women -- and because of their privileged position were allowed to do so without censure" (Wolf, 1979:26). For example, Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas, Vita Sackville-West and Colette are well-known women who loved women in this period.

Because of its importance in gay folklore, homosexuality in ancient Greece deserves a closer look. There is evidence that male homosexuality, as we define the term here, was well known and even culturally institutionalized in ancient Greece. Karlen writes, "Among the Greeks it was not only accepted as a natural expression of the sexual instinct but praised as being even more genuine and tender than heterosexual love." In the Symposium, Plato recounts a myth which says that there were originally three hermaphroditic types: man-man, man-woman, and woman-woman. Then Zeus became angry and split each into two people. Thereafter, each half must search for his/her other half in order to become united again, and one is able to love only his/her original other half (C. Wolff, 1971:19). Aristotle also believed that homosexuality is a part of nature, as he reveals in his writings. Stories of the love of men for youths are abundant in Greek writings, for example the story of Zeus and the boy Ganymede and that of Poseidon and young Pelops (Karlen:23). Furthermore, it appears that this love of men for boys was condoned in actual Greek life by being institutionalized, at least among the upper classes:
The man declared his intentions to the boy's family, and with their consent went through the motions of abduction; he then brought the boy to his house, gave him a present, and took him away to the countryside for a two-month honeymoon. After they returned to the city, the man presented to him a drinking cup, a bull for sacrifice, and a military outfit. Now, if the relationship continued, it was the man's job to mold the boy into a good citizen and brave warrior. Here, as in Sparta, says Plutarch, it was considered shameful for a well-born boy of twelve or thirteen not to have a lover. (Karlen:26)

It is believed, however, that the Greek man who took such a boy into his care did not consider himself nor was he considered by his society to be a homosexual. Since homosexuality was defined to be the love of a man for a man, the love of a man for a boy was not homosexual.

Among the famous Greeks claimed to be bisexual or homosexual are Plato, Socrates, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Sappho (Karlen:3). Sappho is of particular importance to lesbians. She was a wealthy Greek woman poet born in 612 B.C. in the town of Mytilene on the island of Lesbos. It is known that she lived on Lesbos surrounded by women and wrote love poems which expressed her love for women. It is not clear whether the women around Sappho were "friends, a lesbian coterie, a circle of poetic disciples, or... students at a sort of finishing school she ran for upper class girls" (Karlen:18). Unfortunately, only a small fraction of her writings have been preserved. Many were burned because they spoke tenderly of the love she felt for other women. Among lesbians, Sappho has been given a position of honor as the first visible homosexual woman in history. Her name has become a synonym for the love of women for other women, and the name 'lesbian' was taken from the name of her island, Lesbos. Her rumored life of
unashamed, unhidden homosexual love serves as a model for gay women who are struggling to make such a life possible today.

Because of Sappho, famous Greek bisexuals and homosexuals, and man-boy love, ancient Greece is glorified as the heyday of homosexuality, when homosexuality was rampant and unscorned. But Greece was not the homosexual utopia it is reputed to have been. As stated above, man-boy love was not considered homosexual, and it was not a permanent lifestyle; when the boy reached puberty he was expected to pursue a heterosexual lifestyle. Neither is Sappho the evidence of common acceptance of lesbianism that she is proudly declared to be. She was an upper class woman who probably enjoyed much more freedom and independence than the vast majority of Greek women. In both ancient and modern Greece, women were and are very much subordinate to men and have little physical or social freedom. Women find it difficult even to leave their husbands' homes in order to meet other women (Karlen:20). It is unlikely that many women in ancient Greece could have lived the lifestyle attributed to Sappho, but it is likely that male homosexual behavior, using a modern definition, was a much more common occurrence in ancient Greece than was lesbian behavior. It may even be relatively common in modern Greece; one gay American man who has been living in Greece for the past several years told the author that homosexuality is very common among Greek men because the women are so protected that until marriage there is little chance for heterosexual sex. So the men turn to each other. But despite gay folklore to the contrary, even in ancient Greece, homosexuality was secondary to heterosexuality, which was the preferred behavior.

While exclusive homosexuality was not approved -- all
males were expected to marry and raise a family — romantic feelings toward "beardless, tender and beautiful youth" were the social norm. (Hills, 1980: 175)

The name 'great mother' is a collective name with which Karlen refers to the fertility goddesses of the Near East and ancient Mediterranean regions. Her existence led to the theory, first advanced by the Swiss scholar Bachofen, that all modern patriarchal societies originally worshipped a female god and were matriarchal. This early phase was characterized by heterosexual and homosexual promiscuity and ignorance of the part played by the male in reproduction. Thus women were revered as those endowed with the power of creating life, the god was a female, the society was a matriarchy, and property was commonly owned. The evidence upon which this evolutionary theory was based is scant, and so it can never be conclusively proven or disproven. Yet it enjoyed a period of wide popularity among historians, anthropologists, and social reformers. Today it has generally fallen out of favor, but it retains some adherents (Karlen:8).

The idea that a golden matriarchal age preceded this patriarchal, oppressive age is appealing to women identified women and turns up frequently in radical lesbian or feminist literature. The favored example of an early matriarchal society is that of the Amazons, who were supposed to be fierce women warriors living along the Nile. They are said to have used a two headed axe as a weapon. Today the labrys, a two headed axe, is used as a symbol of Amazonian, women's, or lesbian, strength. Strong-minded, muscular, or radical lesbian women are sometimes referred to as Amazons.

The matriarchal-patriarchal theory claims that in time, men realized their role in procreation. Man then took over woman's
exalted position and began to oppress her. The concept of paternal
descent led to private property inherited through the male and the
use of woman as an instrument of man. The rise of patriarchal
Judeo-Christian religions in the latter half of the first millennium
A.D. replaced the female goddess with a male god. With the
arrival of monotheism and the Great Father, homosexuality became
associated with paganism and was condemned as a sin along with
paganism.

By the Middle Ages sodomy had become associated with heresy and
witchcraft because "Anyone who would practice pagan love is a
heretic, all heretics and witches attempt to subvert authority of
both Church and State and are therefore traitors" (Churchill, 1967:206). Many lesbians today believe that the women
who were burned as witches in the United States and elsewhere were
really put to death for being lesbians, the accusation of witchcraft
being a convenient excuse for their execution. At the 1981 Women's
Pentagon Action, women expressed this belief during the ceremony of
planting tombstones for women who have died under male oppression;
among the women mourned were those lesbian sisters burned as witches.

In time, the view of homosexuality as a sin was replaced by the
view of homosexuality as a crime. When discussing the legal
treatment of homosexuals, one is primarily discussing male
homosexuals. Throughout history, societies have consistently paid
more attention to male than female homosexuality, for reasons which
have been explored in the section, "The Need for Individual
Secrecy." Lesbians have for the most part been ignored or not taken
seriously. Thus the difficulties experienced by lesbians have been
different than those experienced by gay men. While gay men have suffered more overt social condemnation, legal repression and police harassment, lesbians' problems have stemmed more from their social position as women.

For example, male homosexuality was outlawed in England's 1885 Criminal Amendment Act, but there did not exist a law against lesbianism in Queen Victoria's England. This happy situation is due ironically to dear prudish Victoria herself, who, according to lesbian legend, declined to include women in the new laws against male homosexuality because she didn't believe two ladies would or could do such a thing (Martin and Lyon, 1972:40). Coulson attributes this neglectful attitude to the denial in Victorian morality of women's sexuality. As she describes Victorian thinking on the subject of female homosexuality:

Women without men were sexless... two women together, both "utterly ignorant of and averse to any sensual indulgence", could not make any sexual connection; their passivities could lie side by side in perfect spirituality and innocence. (Coulson:28)

Other Western countries also had laws against male homosexuality on the books, but lesbianism was rarely mentioned. In 1971, C. Wolff wrote that there existed at that time no law against lesbianism in all of Europe with the exceptions of Austria and Spain, where the Carolingian law of 1532 included prohibitions of lesbianism which were no longer applied. Since American laws were heavily influenced by English common laws, this legal neglect of lesbianism was carried over to the U. S.

In the wake of the social and political reforms in France in the 19th century, the Napoleonic Code was adopted in 1804 which did away with the laws against male homosexual behavior between
consenting adults in private. As the Napoleonic Wars spread French control, the Napoleonic Code was introduced to other areas of Europe and with the exceptions of England, Germany, and America, all Western countries soon thereafter adopted similar reforms (Kamen). For example, in a letter to Walt Whitman dated September 5, 1890, John Addington Symonds writes that

In 1889 the penal code of Italy was altered by the erasure of their (male beings... whose sexual instincts are what the Germans call 'inverted') eccentricities from the list of crimes. (Katz:529)

Then in 1929 the German Reichstag Committee, in revising the German Penal Code, voted to repeal paragraph 175 which punished male, but not female, homosexual acts (Katz:595). However, in Nazi Germany, homosexuals as well as Jews were persecuted. Almost a quarter of a million homosexuals were executed in concentration camps during World War II (Glasser, cited in Hills:175).

The assertion that gay males have suffered greater legal oppression than lesbians requires clarification. There has never actually been a law in America prohibiting either male or female homosexuality or homosexual behavior per se, but while lesbians have been comparatively ignored by the forces of law, there have been and are laws which are used against male homosexuals. Hoffman writes:

...nowhere is it against the law to be homosexual, to be sexually attracted to members of one's own sex. What is illegal are certain acts, which are illegal in both a homosexual and a heterosexual context. (1968:77)

For example, laws were made to prohibit sodomy, fellatio and "infamous crimes against nature," acts which are practiced by many heterosexuals as well as homosexuals. Yet these laws are used against only homosexuals, read male homosexuals. Besides those
against specific sexual acts, laws against "lewd and lascivious behavior" or vagrancy are used to harass homosexuals. The staff of the U.C.L.A. Law Review published an article entitled "The Consenting Adult Homosexual and the Law: An Empirical Study of Enforcement and Administration in Los Angeles County" (March 1966) in which they reported that:

The most widely used provisions for punishing homosexuals are in the disorderly conduct statute, which is Section 647 of the California Penal Code: "Every person who commits any of the following acts shall be guilty of disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor: (a) Who solicits anyone to engage in or who in any public place or in any place open to the public or exposed to public view engages in lewd or dissolute conduct... (d) Who loiters in or about any toilet open to the public for the purpose of engaging in or soliciting any lewd or lascivious or any unlawful act." (Hoffman, 1968:82)

Treatment of homosexuals by the forces of law has improved in recent years. In 1962, Illinois was the first state to make homosexual relations between consenting adults legal. Then by 1980, nineteen states had decriminalized private sex acts. Eighteen of those, however, did so only as part of a larger law reform dealing with acts performed by both heterosexuals and homosexuals; only California explicitly dealt with homosexuality (Hills, 1980). But repeated setbacks have occurred in the legal progress of gay rights. For example, "In 1976, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of state laws that can lead to imprisonment of men and women who engage in homosexual acts" (Hills:168). Perhaps one of the most publicized setbacks was the 1977 defeat in Dade County, Florida, of an ordinance protecting gay rights, largely attributed to the crusading of Anita Bryant.

First considered a sin, then a crime, in modern 'compassionate' society homosexuality has come to be seen as a sickness. Mental
health therapists' ideas of what constitutes mental illness tend to closely parallel what society thinks is immoral or wrong, and so it is not surprising that homosexuality came to be treated as an illness by mental health professionals. In turn, when mental health authorities pronounce homosexuality a disease, the public opinion is reinforced. Some respondents described having been sent to psychiatrists by their parents when their lesbianism was discovered. At the time, few protested because they had accepted society's judgment of them and wished to be cured. If any homosexual had protested that he or she was not sick, the mental health professions had a watertight reply: while the "ordinary phobic patient knows he's suffering from specific fears, the homosexual (doesn't)" (Rubenstein, cited in Weinberg, 1972:37).

On the subject of homosexuality, Freud demonstrated a degree of acceptance seldom achieved by his contemporaries. He actually believed that all humans are bisexual by nature, a theory which he saw supported by embryology, as all fetusses are initially undifferentiated sexually, and by the fact that humans always retain rudiments of the opposite sex (C. Wolff:26). Freud thought that heterosexuality is not based on chemical nature but is a puzzle in need of explanation by psychiatry just as much as homosexuality is. He also felt that complete heterosexuality as well as complete homosexuality could be a symptom of emotional illness:

On the contrary, psycho-analysis considers that the choice of an object independently of his sex -- freedom to range equally over male and female objects -- as it is found in childhood, in primitive states of society and early periods of history, is the original basis from which as a result of restriction in one direction or the other, both the normal and the invert types develop. Thus from the point of view of psycho-analysis the exclusive interest felt by men for women is a problem that needs elucidation
and is not a self-evident fact based upon an attraction that is ultimately of a chemical nature. (Freud, 1915:11, quoted in Wolff, 1971:22)

Freud's theories of homosexuality all dealt with male homosexuality, and not lesbianism; however, he himself recognized and noted this deficiency, and attributed it to the difficulty he had in developing a theory of female sexuality rather than to neglect.

In a unanimous vote with two members abstaining, the Board of trustees of the American Psychiatric Association voted in 1973 to delete 'sexual orientation disturbance' from the list of mental illnesses. In 1974 APA members ratified the trustee's decision by a small margin, with 42% of the 18,000 members voting against the deletion. As a result of this decision, today only homosexuals who are themselves troubled by their orientation are officially defined as in need of help (Slovenko: 158). But many homosexuals and lesbians are still very wary of the mental health profession. Women's centers and counselling services as well as individual therapists offer explicitly non-heterosexual counselling, often by gay therapists, and some lesbians feel comfortable only with such therapists.
THE LESBIAN MOVEMENT IN CONTEXT

Over the past three decades dramatic changes have taken place in the world as seen through lesbian and gay eyes. Not only have society's attitudes and treatment of lesbians and gays changed, but homosexuals themselves and their subculture have changed. The changes in the lesbian world, as well as the gay male world, were to a large extent precipitated by certain events and trends taking place in the greater society. In turn, lesbians' and gays' changing perspectives and lifestyles have caused a continuing shift in attitudes by society. The development of the lesbian rights and lesbian liberation movements show the influences of external happenings and also, as the most visible part of lesbian life, have probably had the most widespread effect on society's attitudes.

There is a distinction to be made between civil rights movements and liberation movements of minorities. The object of civil rights movements is to gain for the minority equality of specific legal rights. A liberation movement is founded on the idea that oppression stems not only from formal and legal inequality, but from such things as societal prejudice, institutional discrimination, and the social structure. Liberation movements thus aim to change society itself. Many minority movements are alike in development in that they go through a civil rights phase and then pass into a more militant and radical liberation phase. This transition is usually neither smooth and continuous, nor marked by one or a few clearly pinpointable events or people. Rather, it is uneven and nonlinear. For example, a few people may be ahead of their time by holding militant or revolutionary views several years
before any significant fraction of the minority starts becoming disillusioned with reformism. Also, the values and goals of the two movements are not exclusive of each other. This makes it difficult to divide a movement into reformist and radical phases. The lesbian movement is no exception among minority movements in having neither a clear beginning, unilinear development, nor a locatable division between reformism and liberationism. Therefore, the terms "movement" or "political movement" will be used in this section to refer to both the civil rights and the liberation movements of lesbians and other minorities.

The lesbian movement is one of the latest of the many minority movements which began or gained momentum during the 1960s and 1970s, and it is useful to examine the lesbian movement in the context of the earlier movements. From the earlier movements one can recognize patterns which are now present in the lesbian movement and can to some extent predict the course the lesbian movement may take in the future. Three earlier movements are of particular significance for comparison purposes: The black movement, the women's movement, and the gay male movement. Of these social minorities, black people were the first to draw together, recognize their oppression as a group, and begin to fight it. The women's and gay men's movements were next, and the lesbian movement is the most recent to develop.

According to Wolf (1979), both the women's movement and then the Gay Liberation Front were modelled after the Black Power Movement. For example, faced with the threat of Anita Bryant's anti-homosexuality campaign in 1977, gay rights activists organized marches and demonstrations and threatened boycotts of Florida citrus fruits, civil rights tactics they had borrowed from the civil rights
movements of the 1960's (Bills, 1980:167). The lesbian movement in turn split off simultaneously from both the women's movement and the male homosexual movement. The women's, gay, and lesbian movements are intricately intertwined theoretically and historically. For a detailed recount of the related histories of these three movements, see Wolf.

In reference to the development of the lesbian movement, Wolf identifies three stages in the history of the lesbian community: 1) Old gay life, prior to the 1950s, 2) The norm-oriented self-help organizations of the 1950s, and 3) The developing lesbian community built on lesbian feminist principles and a positive definition of lesbianism (Wolf:23). Sweet, who distinguished the "norm-oriented" organizations of the second phase from the "value-oriented" liberation movements of the third phase, defines norm-oriented organizations as ones which "are reacting to already existing norms within the context of a value system in which they themselves believe," while the more recent value-oriented liberation movements demand "a basic reconstitution of self and society and of the relationships between members of society" (Sweet:183-184, cited in Wolf:49).

Prior to the 1950s, there were no publically gay organizations for men or women. Because homosexuality was not discussed and there were few publicly visible homosexuals, many homosexual men and women grew up in this period knowing that something was amiss but not being able to identify or name it. Each was convinced that they were the only such person because they had never or rarely met other homosexuals. In The Well of Loneliness, Radclyffe Hall captures both the despair of those who could not identify their difference,
and the shame and fear felt by those who knew what they were but had to hide this knowledge from even their closest family and friends.

Old gay life was lived out in isolation, with a lover or in small groups of friends who by happy accident discovered each other. Recall Amelia's statement that the women in old gay life were all coupled, while today many women remain "single," socializing with an entire community. The search for other homosexuals was, and still often is, problematic for both gay men and lesbians. On the one hand, gay men had more reason to fear legal and social sanctions, as described above. On the other hand, while gay men could find other gay men for anonymous sex in public places, even this impersonal means of contacting other lesbians was not available to women, as such places as tearooms and baths have never been a significant part of lesbian subculture.

Prior to the 1950s, there were only two main ways that lesbians could find each other. The first was by pure coincidence or accident, and the second was through the gay bars. Not surprisingly, given the women's fear of disclosure, the chance of two lesbians meeting and discovering their common orientation by accident in that period of time was not great. It might happen that two long time friends, neither having considered lesbianism before, found their relationship developing into a sexual one, as happened to Edna. In that case, each woman would know one other lesbian — her lover. Occasionally, however, lesbians did meet by chance and recognize each other. A respondent in her 50s told of a photographic shop that she used to walk by frequently, about which she had the uncanny feeling that some day it would come to figure in her life. Curious, once when she had a roll of film to be
developed, she went to the shop and found that she had walked into a "nest of lesbians," as she put it. Asked how she could tell that they were lesbians, she said that they all wore men's clothes. Once such a chance meeting occurred in old gay life, a woman's new acquaintances might be able to introduce her to other lesbians known to them, slowly enlarging her circle of lesbian friends.

But relying on such chance meetings is a precarious way to build a social life. For a woman just acknowledging her lesbianism, who had no lesbian friends yet, the only doorway into this private gay world or small friendship groups was the gay bar. So the bar was the focal point of the gay world. It was the place to go to meet people, the connection between the individual small friendship groups, and the pathway between the public world and the inner private circles. Once a lesbian found lesbian friends, she usually preferred to confine her socializing to their private homes. But for a woman who had no small group of friends or who had fallen out with her group, the gay bar offered the only opportunity for meeting others.

Old gay bars appear to have been rather dismal places. They were populated by men and women whom society rejected and who were there because only there could they show a side of themselves which they usually hid out of fear and shame. The consumption of alcohol and the jealousies which arose in a place which must serve as both social and sexual clearinghouse sometimes erupted in violence.

The mood in the old gay bar was pessimistic and the possibility of a police raid ever present. Until recently, police harassment, especially of male homosexuals, occurred regularly at gay bars. Police sometimes parked their cars near gay bars and took down the
names and license plate numbers of the men who entered the bar. Gay bar owners did, and still do, have to be especially vigilant to be sure no liquor or indecent behavior laws were broken because police would frequently look for reasons to close a gay bar. Gay bars were short-lived because they were often closed by the police. All the lesbians I interviewed who had been involved in old gay life expressed distaste for it and most said that they left the bar life and began socializing in private parties as soon as they had established a circle of friends.

But many women fell victim to the bar scene. Being in a bar, the gay bars' patrons drank. As the bar was the central point of their social life, many lesbians drank too much. Several of my respondents talked about friends of theirs who had been alcoholics or drug addicts, and a couple had had friends who committed suicide.

The old gay bar was a rigorous training ground. It socialized new lesbians into extremely dichotomized roles under conditions that encouraged strong identification of the new lesbian with the community (See the section on "Identification"). Isolated, shame-ridden women coming to the bar were desperate to find other lesbians with whom they would not have to hide the lesbian part of themselves, among whom they could find friends and lovers, and from whom they could learn more about being a lesbian. They came to the bar rarely having known any lesbians before and so lacked role models in the heterosexual world; they needed role models from which to piece together an identity for themselves which included their lesbianism. They knew that the lesbian bar was their last chance for acceptance and were ready to make large compromises in return for that acceptance. Their identities were incomplete and
malleable. The compromise the old gay bar culture demanded from these women was compliance with rigidly defined roles, and the role identities it offered were "butch" and "femme," as described in "Stereotypes, Myths, and Reality."

The division between butch and femme and the force with which that division was enforced exceeded that of the masculine and feminine roles in the straight world. A lesbian was either a butch or she was a femme. A woman who refused to take one or the other role was called ki-ki and shunned. In explaining the ostracization of ki-kis by the role playing community, Wolf made an analogy between a butch or femme conversing with a ki-ki woman and a heterosexual person talking to someone whose physical sex was unknown. The heterosexual would not know how to relate to this ambiguous person. Likewise, lesbians in the old gay life could relate to a ki-ki woman as neither a butch nor a femme, and so avoided her. Ki-kis were seen as mixed up, or confused, and other lesbians were not interested in such women:

There were a lot of butches and a lot of femmes, and then they'd come up to me and they'd say, "What're you, butch or femme?" and I'd say, "I'm ki-ki," and that meant both, and everybody would look at you in great disgust.

(Deanna, taped interview)

Several factors combined prior to 1950 to produce the conditions under which homosexuals were at last able to break out of the repressive situation of old gay life with its isolation and dismal gay bars. WWII, by breaking up families, encouraging marriage at young ages, and generally disrupting the fabric of American social life, created a much more permissive social environment. The sexual revolution which took root in this new permissiveness led to discussion of long buried issues like
homosexuality. By concentrating men with men in the military and women with women in the military and at home, large numbers of same sex people were put into close contact with each other for long periods without opportunity for heterosexual outlet. As some men and women turned to others of their own sex for comfort, close friendships and sexual gratification, the subject of homosexuality became more visible and immediate. The frequency of homosexual behavior in the military during that period and since then is legendary, despite efforts by the military to eliminate homosexuals from its ranks. Three of my respondents said that they first became consciously aware of their lesbian feelings while in the military. The war also greatly increased American mobility and urbanization, landing many people in new, anonymous environments where they were free of the disapproving eyes of relatives and friends.

In the post-war years the repression of homosexuals in the United States increased. The U. S. government was looking for scapegoats; they couldn't use blacks who were by then organized, and they couldn't use Jews, who had gained popular sympathy, so they used homosexuals. Homosexuality became nearly synonymous with Communism, as the derogatory term "Commie pinko fag" suggests. During the McCarthy Era 150 gays were dismissed from the State Department, and additional people were dismissed because of guilt by association and rumor. Henry Hay, also known as Harry or Bann MacDonald, founder of the early homosexual groups Bachelors for Wallace and the Mattachine Society, describes the situation and credits the repression of the McCarthy Era with motivating him to organize gay people:

Katz: Can you say why you conceived of a Gay organization
at the time [1948] you did?
May: The anti-Communist witch-hunts were very much in operation; the House Un-American Activities Committee had investigated Communist "subversion" in Hollywood. The purge of homosexuals from the State Department took place. The country, it seemed to me, was beginning to move toward fascism and McCarthyism; the Jews wouldn't be used as a scapegoat this time -- the painful example of Germany was still too clear to us. The Black organizations were already pretty successfully looking out for their interests. It was obvious McCarthy was setting up the pattern for a new scapegoat, and it was going to be us -- Gays. We had to organize, we had to move, we had to get started. (Katz, 1978: 614)

Then Kinsey dropped a bombshell on the sexual world in 1948.

Suddenly everyone was faced with the amazing statistics which showed that homosexuality was not the rare, unusual phenomenon they had thought. Male homosexuals realized that far from being alone in a hostile world, there were many more like them, each shamefully living his own closeted life. Maybe some of their coworkers were gay, and every tenth man they saw on the street had probably had extensive homosexual experience. Homosexuals had been coming into contact with each other every day without knowing it because each was shrouded in secrecy. Now, beginning to realize their numbers and their potential strength, male homosexuals began to seek each other out and make connections. In urban areas discussion groups quickly sprang up (Saarinen:84). Since 1945, the homosexual Veterans Benevolent Association had been sponsoring parties, picnics and discussions in New York. Now in 1949, Bachelors for Wallace, a homosexual presidential campaign organization, was conceived by Henry May in California. Next was founded the interracial Knights of the Clock in 1950 and finally in 1952, the well-known Mattachine Society became incorporated. The League, another early homosexual organization founded in June, 1954 in New York City, was a
short-lived but well-organized group with a library, officers, mailing list and lectures. These early male homosexual organizations have been followed by a multitude of organizations founded for widely divergent reasons, including social clubs, music bands, and political activist, legal reform, and public education groups. These early groups, whether social or instrumental (Sagarin), worked within the framework of the greater social climate, struggling for acceptance rather than demanding full freedom and identity:

Hay: In 1953, Joe McCarthy was still around, and we would have to become respectable. "All we want to do is to have a little law changed, and otherwise we are exactly the same as everybody else, except in bed." That position -- "we're exactly the same" -- characterized the whole Mattachine Society from 1953 to 1969. (Katz:627)

Applying Wolf's three stage historical scheme to these male homosexual organizations, these would be considered as belonging to the norm-oriented phase.

The Daughters of Bilitis, or DOB, founded in 1955 in San Francisco, three years after its male equivalent the Mattachine Society, was the first large, successful lesbian organization. Beginning in October 1956 DOB published the lesbian monthly journal, the "Ladder", for the first time isolated lesbians were able to read about and contact other lesbians. DOB was also a norm-oriented organization.

Gays fired themselves into the third phase of the movement, the liberation phase, with the Stonewall riot in June of 1969. The Stonewall riot occurred when gays, tired of being repeatedly harrassed by police in gay bars, finally fought back. Although the riot is celebrated in the gay community as a turning point in the
movement, there were actually many gays who had arrived at a liberationist point of view long before the riots, and there were also many gays who remained norm-oriented after the riots. For example, Deeanna said:

Stonewall happened and I was two blocks away and I didn't know what it was about so I stayed home. The gays met in Washington Square the next week and I didn't want to go to a gay meeting even though I was a lesbian. (Deeanna, taped interview)

But gradually gays did come to see themselves in a different light. Schur describes this transition in the movement:

The earliest groups tended to act as multi-support groups for homosexuals who half-believed the stereotypes about themselves; during the 60's there was a development toward more open demands, even confrontation of and protest against social discrimination. But gay liberation represents a new self-affirmation and a determination that if anyone will be "cured," it is those who oppress rather than those oppressed. (Altman, 1973:119, quoted in Schur, 1980:219)

The lesbian movement took longer to appear than the gay male movement. The climb out of old gay life for lesbians began not with a lesbian movement itself, but within the already organized women's and gay male movements. Among the first members of the early women's movement were many lesbians (Wolf:62) looking for a solution to their problems. Lesbians had a special interest in equal job opportunities and equal pay for women because they rejected the option of being financially dependent upon a man. Neither were lesbians inhibited by emotional dependency on men as were heterosexual feminists who felt they were betraying or turning against the men they loved.

But the early women's movement refused to take up the cause of lesbianism and persecuted the lesbians within its own ranks. It was feared that the issue of lesbianism would drain the energy that they
wanted to focus on the struggle for women's rights (Abbott and Love, 1972:117-134) and also that having visible lesbians in the movement would damage the movement's credibility and respectability. The young national Organization of Women rejected the lesbian issue.

Lesbians also looked to the gay movement. But lesbians were underrepresented in the gay liberation movement, which was run by men and failed to recognize unique lesbian grievances along with male homosexual issues. As lesbians in the gay movement realized that gay men were not necessarily concerned with lesbian interests, lesbians in the feminist movement were feeling the same way about heterosexual feminists. These women banded together to form their own movement, the lesbian feminist movement. Numerous lesbian feminist groups began forming around the early 1970s.

By the time the lesbian feminist movement was beginning to stand on its own feet, in 1970, NOW's leaders had begun to alter their position. At the National Women's Conference in Houston, a resolution to support lesbian rights passed by an eight to one margin (Wolf:10). Since that historic event, the women's movement has undergone a complete about-face on the issue of lesbianism. Now many feminists, both heterosexual and lesbian, consider lesbians to be the purest kind of feminists because they don't live with or give love and energy to the enemy, men. Also, lesbians have to be self-supporting and self-defining, thus refusing the traditional dependent, male-defined role of women, which is anathema to the feminist point of view.

Of these four movements, why did the black movement begin first, followed by the women's and male homosexual movements? Why did the lesbian movement take so long to draw together? Much of the
answer to these questions probably lies in a certain critical change in a minority's perception of their problem which must be undergone before a group movement can begin; that is, the development of a group consciousness. Without a group consciousness, members of the group continue to see themselves as individually unlucky or inadequate, and will not think of banding together to fight as a group. They do not see the problem as being a group problem, but as an individual problem, and so people continue to struggle individually and blame themselves for their failures.

The development of a group consciousness requires that members of the minority come to realize that other members of the same minority suffer hardships similar to their own yet different than those suffered by nonmembers. For this to occur, members of the same minority must be able to recognize and contact each other in order to learn of each others' lives and compare them to their own. Minority members must then begin to attribute these hardships to their status as a member of the minority, to learn to feel that the inequality is undeserved, and to place the blame for the inequality on an external source such as nonmembers, the social structure, or social prejudice. Then they can remove the blame for their sufferings from themselves and pinpoint society as the villain. They can then begin working as a group to change this external villain.

The nature of each minority effects the success that minority has at each stage of this process. For example, the distinguishing characteristic of the black people, who of the four minorities being discussed developed a group consciousness first, is racial. The nature of a racial minority is that it is physically noticeable and
that the young are born into families of the same minority. These factors both serve to afford blacks a great deal of contact with each other. First of all, because black children are born into black families a black person's closest significant others are members of the black race. Unrelated blacks are also likely to come into contact with each other because of segregationist patterns in housing, schooling, and friendship circles which are made possible by the identifiability of racial color. For example, as slaves, black people lived together, apart from the white owners. The division between black and white and the connection between being black and being a slave was apparent and acknowledged by both races. Since the time of outright slavery, black people have found themselves crowded into ghettos with other blacks. Segregated neighborhoods meant that blacks had ample opportunity to see how each other lived and to develop a feeling of being a group. The black subculture, preserved by segregation, also served to unite blacks as blacks to the exclusion of whites, and to further the development of a black consciousness. In addition, continual in-group contact and relatively rare out-group contact undoubtedly facilitated the development of a minority ideology which removed the blame from the minority and placed it on an external factor, society. Thus, of the four minorities, blacks have had the best chance to come into contact with each other and interact as minority members.

In contrast, women have never been geographically ghettoized in our society. Each woman has traditionally lived first with her father and then with her husband. Since her role was centered in the home, she had much less of a chance than did blacks to come into
contact with other members of her "minority" or to observe the
intimate details of their lives. She could not, therefore, as
easily compare them to her own. She was capable of saying that she
cooked and raised children because she was a woman, and thus did
consciously associate her role with her membership in the female
half of the species. But rather than living most closely with other
women, with whom she might develop a sense of unfairness and
oppression, she lived with a man in whose interest it was to have
her believe that her role was appropriate to her sex and that any
problem she had in happily filling that role was due to her own
inadequacy as a woman.

Gay men are less able than blacks and women to compare their
lives with other gays' lives. Again, this is due to the nature of
the minority, being that gays are neither generally nor necessarily
identifiable, and also that gays are very rarely born to gay
families. Where blacks have black parents and neighbors and women
have mothers and girlfriends, gay men must actively search if they
are to find another homosexual. Where blacks and women can
recognize other blacks and women, male homosexuals have no
necessarily typical characteristics to distinguish them from other
men and they may come into contact with each other day after day
without either suspecting the other's gayness. Under such
circumstances, it is very difficult to identify other members of
one's minority, to relate to them as minority members, and to
compare their lives as members with one's own. It is not surprising
then that it took gay men a long time to develop a group
consciousness, nor that the Kinsey report, from which they learned
of each other's existence, was an important catalyst in that
Lesbians were even slower to develop a group consciousness because, like gay men, they are not born into lesbian families and are not geographically ghettoized. Furthermore, they are even less recognizable than are gay men, as has been discussed, and are therefore less able to identify other lesbians when they do come into contact with them.

Compounding their relative inability to identify each other is the fact that lesbians are less likely to come into contact with other lesbians than gay men are to come into contact with other gay men. This is because, tautologous as it sounds, gay men are men and lesbians are women. Men spend a greater part of their lives outside the home; they more often leave the home to work, play golf, and go out with the boys. This not only puts them into contact with more potentially gay men, but gives them a stronger alibi for time spent away from the home. For example, in old gay life, most homosexual men and women got married along with everyone else, either to hide or deny their orientation, or because they had not yet figured out what they were, but once married, it was easier for the husband to leave home in the evenings than it was for the wife.

Secondly, men have more money than women, so they are financially able to go out more often and be in places like bars or baths where they can meet other gay men. It is common knowledge in the gay world that male bars are more lucrative than female bars; they are flashier, rigger, and proportionately more numerous because their patrons can afford the expense. While there are many large, sleek male gay or mixed male gay/lesbian discos, the overwhelming majority of strictly lesbian bars are small neighborhood type bars.
Thirdly, whether because of biological or cultural factors, gay men are much more promiscuous than lesbians. Impersonal sex in public places is common in gay male culture and institutions such as baths, tearooms, and cruising bars function to a large extent for this very purpose. In contrast, lesbians much more rarely participate in one night stands and the lesbian community generally cannot support institutions whose primary purpose is to facilitate impersonal sex. Even lesbian bars have a much less cruising atmosphere.

These patterns mean that many more gay men come into knowing contact with each other than do lesbians, and have thus been able to develop a group consciousness and minority ideology sooner than have lesbians. Until this group consciousness was developed, the lesbian split from the gay male and the women's movements could not occur and the lesbian feminist liberation movement could not get under way.
The purpose of this paper has been to explore a few of the areas in which the lesbian subculture has been shaped by societal attitudes towards lesbianism interacting with the characteristics of the lesbian minority. It has been shown that:

The nature of the distinguishing characteristic of the lesbian minority, sexual orientation, has influenced the nature of the myths and stereotypes believed by society about lesbians. For example, the sexual nature of the distinguishing characteristic has led to additional allegations of sexual deviance in areas other than sexual preference. Also, the violation by lesbians of the heterosexual component of the traditional gender roles has led to cross-gender stereotyping and the violation of traditional gender roles in general has led to the fear that homosexuality is capable of destroying the relations between men and women, the nuclear family, and the entire social order.

These stereotypes and myths have served to express and to deal with the homophobia which society feels as a result of the threat of homosexuality. In turn, the stereotypes and myths have influenced lesbians and lesbian subculture. For example, the institution of role playing exists in a complicated cybernetic relationship with cross-gender stereotypes. Many of the stereotypes and myths influence lesbians by causing them to alter their behaviors and statements, either in compliance with the stereotypes in an effort to contact other lesbians, to develop an identity, or to reassure
each other of the acceptance of lesbianism within the lesbian group; or in defiance of the stereotypes in an effort to hide their lesbianism or to educate straight people by showing them that the stereotypes are false.

The fact that lesbians are unidentifiable allows them a strategy for coping with negative societal attitudes which is not available to many minorities -- concealment. Concealment at the individual level leads to secrecy at the community level, where the fact of secrecy has profound ramifications on the subculture of the lesbian community. These ramifications were explored in four areas: The language of recognition, the identification of individual lesbians with the lesbian community, the feeling of solidarity among members of the community, and the temporal, spatial, and psychological boundary heightening which is characteristic of inter- and intra-group relations.

Unidentifiability combined with the fact that lesbians are not born to lesbian parents means that lesbians are not raised as lesbians during childhood, but must go through a process of coming out as adults. This process includes the recognition that one is a lesbian; the attempt to find other lesbians, facilitated by the language of recognition; a resocialization to the lesbian subculture; and the development of a lesbian self-identity, motivated by the condemnation of society and the attitude that a lesbian's total self is permeated by her sexual orientation.

As women, lesbians have had a different experience at the hands of society than have gay men. Because of the lower position of women in society, the relative lack of threat which lesbianism poses
to female gender identity, the content of the traditional female role and its relationship to both actual and stereotypical lesbian behavior, lesbianism has been neglected and unacknowledged by society. Meanwhile, gay men have experienced severe legal and social sanctions. This difference has had effects on the relative development of languages of recognition in the two subcultures, and the relative rates at which the two minorities achieved group consciousness and began political movements.

The position of women in society, the traditional socialization of women, and the biological reality of female gender have also influenced lesbians as women in many other ways. For example, as women in general are less promiscuous and less actively sexual than men, so lesbians are less promiscuous and less actively sexual than gay men. Combined with the lack of financial resources available to women and the traditional isolation of women in the home, this difference has led to differences in courtship behavior and differences in the rapidity of group consciousness and political movement formation between lesbians and gay men.

In short, the subculture of the lesbian community, as it is today and as it has changed over the past few decades, has been influenced by a complicated interaction of the characteristics of the lesbian minority with each other and with the nature of societal attitudes.
The following is a list of the questions most frequently used in the interviews. Questions were reworded, added, and deleted, and their order was changed as appropriate for each respondent.

1) Can you trace the development of your lesbianism/feelings for women? (Probes: What is the earliest thing you can remember which you feel points to the fact that you turned out to be gay/to love women? When did you begin to call yourself/acknowledge that you were gay/lesbian/bisexual/could love women? When did you start noticing it and how?)

2) Do you have a family? Do they know that you are gay? (NOTE: For the remainder of this schedule, the word "gay" will be used whenever any of the terms "lesbian," "gay," "loving women," or "bisexual" were used as appropriate to each respondent.) How did they find out? Do most of your friends know you're gay?

3) Where do you work? Do people there know that you are gay? If so, how did they find out? If not, do you make any effort to keep them from finding out? If so, how do you keep them from finding out?

4) Is it important for you to let people know that you are gay/to keep people from knowing that you are gay? How do you go about letting them know when you want them to?

5) Can you tell if another woman is gay? On the street? By talking to her? How do you tell?

6) Can you tell if a man is gay? How?

7) Do you go to the bars? To gay political or social groups? How did you meet the lesbians and gay men that you know?

8) (If R goes to bars/parties) Would you prefer to go to a bar/party that was strictly lesbian or that was mixed lesbian and gay men? How do you feel about the gay men at mixed bars? (If R expresses a preference) What is different about the two types of bars? Do you think your reception would be different if you walked into a gay bar that you'd never been to versus a straight bar that you've never been to?

9) Would you get involved with a woman/date/go out with a woman whom you knew was bisexual rather than gay? (If R expresses hesitation or refusal to do so) Why not?

10) Would you feel differently if a woman left you for a man than if she left you for a woman? How would it be different?
11) How do you define the word lesbian? How do you describe/define yourself?

12) Do you think that a lesbian is something you were born as or something you developed into?

13) What do you see in women that you don’t see in men? (Or if R is bisexual) what is the difference between what you see in women and what you see in men?

14) (If R has been involved in more than one lesbian community) Are the communities different? How? What is the difference in the way lesbians interact with each other and view outsiders in the different communities? How does the straight community view lesbianism in these different places?

15) If R had been in gay life for longer than five years, several questions regarding differences in societal opinions, lesbian behavior, community size and activities, lesbian self-concept and self-image between the time R came out and now, as well as changes and trends R has noticed over the years, were asked.

16) If there were no prejudice against gays, how would your life have been different? How would gay life in general be different?
Edna -- Underlined. "I'm really not sure at this point as to what my real orientation is."

Bonnie -- Underlined. "For me woman-oriented seems to say it better... I don't see myself as a lesbian."

Darlene -- Bisexual.

Jamie -- Bisexual. "I'm a little bit more bisexual than..."

Nora -- Bisexual

Yvonne -- Recently put to rest the question of her orientation and decided she's lesbian.

Kathy -- Lesbian

Phoebe -- Lesbian

Erica -- Lesbian

Nellie -- Lesbian

Jill -- Lesbian

Ocanna -- Lesbian

Flaine -- Lesbian

Aelia -- Lesbian

Sheila -- Lesbian

Tanya -- Lesbian

Janice -- Lesbian

Wanda -- Lesbian

Colleen -- Lesbian

Celia -- Lesbian

Beatrice -- Lesbian

Thea -- Lesbian
** SCALE 2: Environmental Repressiveness 

**Little Repression**

Rima -- "...coming from a very open and liberal family, I've never been taught that being gay is awful... I never would have said, "No, I don't want to be gay... So when something happened that would be defined as gay or homosexual, if this is what I fit into, it's fine."

Beatrice -- Became a lesbian late in life, while surrounded by other lesbians and very accepting people.

Elaine -- "As far as hard knocks and things like that, it just wasn't there for me."

Yvonne -- Coming out didn't seem to involve any trauma.

Kathy -- "They have reasons to be paranoid where I come from," But her mother knows of her lesbianism and has come to accept it quite well.

Darlene -- "I think my parents would drop me completely, they would never accept me as their daughter if I would turn gay," But her parents are in Germany and she denies having had any feelings for women until recently, well after moving away from home.

Celia -- Comes from a very homophobic background, but didn't recognize her lesbian feelings until many years of living far away from her family of origin.

Phoebe -- My sister came out to me. She's a lesbian... Then I went home and my father found out and just freaked out... It was horrible. So I got really upset, that sort of freaked me out for a while."

Nellie -- "Unfortunately I tried to talk about them, but I found the climate unacceptable. Being still 16, not even finished high school, "You wanna go to college? 'n' stuff like that. (Who'd you talk to about it?) My father... more recently when I talked to him, he didn't talk about it but when I mentioned it I could see [he was] like more acceptable."

Jamie -- There was no mention of the topic in the interview, but since the interview, her mother has withdrawn financial support so that she had to transfer colleges in an effort to separate her from her lesbian lover.

Amelia -- Describes her brother's anger at finding her in bed with a woman at age 15: "Oh, wow, what was that like!
...Then he called her all kinds of names... called me a queer..."

Janice -- Feared discovery by neighbors and the military, and was dismissed from her company during WWII under suspicion of lesbianism.

Jill -- Describes sneaking ties up to her room at night, afraid of being found out, feeling that she was the only one in the world, wanting to leave home desperately but not having the financial independence to do so, and finally having a mental breakdown.

Deanna -- Was thrown out of college for being a lesbian.

Erica -- "Some other people in the house found out about [my relationship with a woman] and tried to kill me. So, that was a negative experience. A real bummer, you know." She describes trying to come out three times and each time being pushed back into the closet by such reactions.

**Strong Repression**
**Weak Identification**

Darlene -- Very feminine dresser, asserts her independence from the gay lifestyle.

Edna -- Describes other areas of her life, such as her job and the house she just bought as being much more important to her than her sexuality, feels divorced from the gay world.

Sheila -- Dresses like a student, not dykey at all, long hair, is neither a member of the Oberlin gay community nor known as gay to the community.

Bonnie -- Slightly feminine style of dress, long hair, is neither a member of the Oberlin gay community nor known as gay to the community.

Jamie -- "I feel more like an Oberlin College student than a gay Oberlin College student, because we don't have to be hidden here." She dislikes the word 'lesbian' and is only marginally involved in the politically active Oberlin gay community, and even that involvement appears to be because of the involvement of her woman lover. Doesn't really consider herself a part of the gay community.

Thea -- Has a circle of lesbian friends but doesn't go to gay bars or organisations. Relatively feminine in appearance.

Yvonne -- "I tend not to be somebody who is trying to connect with other lesbians and get involved... I find that need is really filled by the circle of friends that I have." Relatively feminine in appearance.

Rima -- Acknowledges and is interested in gay culture but it doesn't seem to be a central aspect of her life.

Celia -- Appears not to have a high ratio of lesbian/straight friends, but attends gay conferences.

Wanda -- Has circle of gay friends, belongs to a lesbian organisation.

Elaine -- Calls herself a lesbian willingly though not spontaneously. Gay contacts appear to be a large element of her social life, but being gay is not a conscious preoccupation. Goes to gay bars one or two times weekly.

Amelia -- Lives in a 'gay' house (both other occupants are lesbians), and spends a good deal of time in gay bars (several times weekly).
Nora -- Dresses comfortably, not dykey though definitely not femininely. Very short hair. Her social life revolves around a particular gay bar where she can be found for several hours at least three nights a week. She divorces herself from her job where people don't know she's gay.

Phoebe -- Is well known in the lesbian social life at Oberlin, her friends are mostly lesbians, and her principle interest revolve around women's politics and lives. She had just cut her hair short.

Nellie -- Social life revolves around gay social and political groups and an occasional visit to a gay bar. Dresses relatively masculinely, very short hair.

Janice -- Very masculine in appearance and manner.

Kathy -- Self-stated identification with the gay community. She is a central figure in the Oberlin political and social gay community. Short hair.

Beatrice -- Repeatedly comes out publically in an effort to change societal attitudes, very aware of being lesbian.

Colleen -- Spent ten years deeply involved in the lesbian ghetto.

Deanna -- Lifestyle appears to be lesbian separatist and her speech is in the spiritual, 'goddess-mother' style.

Erica -- Loves being, dressing, and talking about being 'dykey'. Takes pride in her physical strength, wears masculine clothes frequently and has short hair. A central figure in the gay Oberlin community, she is well acquainted with lesbian political theory and 'correctness'.

Strong Identification
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