

# Understanding Female Homosexuality

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## I. Introduction

- A. Lesbianism is a complex condition
- B. Often common influencing factors, although each woman's experience is unique to her
- C. Women's sexuality can fluctuate (identities, attractions, behaviors)
- D. Variations of Lesbianism
  - 1. Same-Sex Experimentation: Women who have experimented in same-sex experience(s) but who have not embraced lesbianism as an identity
  - 2. Emotional Enmeshment: Women who would never act out sexually, but have relied on another woman to gain an identity and a sense of well-being
  - 3. The Millennial Generation: Younger women who think that bisexuality is "in vogue" (Dramatic increase in number of younger women crossing over gender/sexual boundaries.)
  - 4. Classic Lesbianism: Women who strive to fulfill emotional needs and sexual desires solely in relationships with other women. They embrace a lesbian identity. Entering into lesbianism, and the culture, brings a sense of freedom, relief, pleasure, power, sisterhood and intimacy. Usually not attracted to men.

*All variations to some degree, but classic lesbianism in particular, entail a type of yearning to find a sense of wholeness— completion of oneself—in a relationship with another woman. It is an inner driving need for acceptance, affirmation, nurture and love. It is not about sex; it is about connecting—specifically connecting emotionally.*

## II. Development of "Classic" Lesbianism

- A. Potentially Damaged Family Relationships (real or perceived)
  - 1. Types of Mother-Daughter Relationships
    - a. Dispassionate Relationship: Mother is emotionally distant and "numb," inability to communicate, talks "at" her daughter on a surface level instead of "with" her on a deeper, more emotionally connected level
    - b. Doormat Relationship: Although she may be kind, sincere, and ever-giving, mother is perceived as downtrodden, weak, and ineffective—subject to the whims of others, perhaps men in particular
    - c. Manipulative Relationship: Unable to express herself openly and honestly, mother may connive to get what she wants; often critical of others
    - d. Domineering Relationship: Mother is dogmatic, determined, and very opinionated, often to the exclusion of her daughter's individuality and own self expression

- e. My Best Friend Relationship: Mother may let her own needs control the relationship, looking to her daughter for nurture and care. She makes her daughter her confidant
- f. Self-Consumed Relationship: Often young and immature and still needing nurture herself, mother is incapable of caring for her daughter's emotional needs

*As a result, the daughter may not form an emotionally connected relationship with her mother. Over time the daughter may also further emotionally detach from her mother—what therapists refer to as defensive detachment. For further reading: Restoring Sexual Identity by Anne Paulk; Out of Egypt and Into the Promised Land by Jeanette Howard; The Heart of Female Same-Sex Attraction by Janelle Hallman.*

B. Father-Daughter Relationship: Needs to convey Protection, Attention, Adoration, Support

- 1. Unprotecting Relationship: Father is unable to foster for his daughter a sense of security and safekeeping
- 2. Inattentive Relationship: As a representative of the opposite sex, Father is unable to affirm his daughter in her feminine identity and may fail to instill within her a sense of confidence in this identity
- 3. Unadoring Relationship: A father may inadvertently wound his daughter if he fails to reflect her worth and value as a female. She may not discover, for example, that being a little girl is special and wonderful
- 4. Unsupportive Relationship: Father's opinion of his daughter provides either affirmation or disapproval in a way that a mother cannot; lack of support and validation may impact her self-worth

*As a result, the daughter may develop an insecurity in her sense of worth as a person; a devaluing in her gender identity as a female; and an inability to relate in a healthy way with the opposite sex. For further reading see the books mentioned previously as well as: Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters by Meg Meeker; Always Daddy's Girl by H. Norman Wright.*

C. Husband-Wife Relationship

- 1. Indifferent Couple: When together they fail to show love, affection, and appreciation for and toward one another; devalues marriage in daughter's eyes
- 2. Critical Wife: Wife disrespects and demeans her husband and in her daughter's eyes, devalues his roles as husband and father
- 3. Selfish Husband: If he places his needs before his wife's and is insensitive and uncaring toward her, this may devalue the roles of wife and mother from the daughter's perception
- 4. Minimizing Husband: Spoken or implied, he may communicate a message that degrades and devalues women or femininity

*As a result, the daughter may develop strongly negative attitudes, for example, toward men and women in general, the role of husbands and wives, sex, or marriage as an institution.*

#### D. Summary of Family Relationships

1. The family dynamics can be based on real situations such as in the case of divorce, death, physical or emotional absence or abuse. Or, in other cases, it is based on the daughter's misperceptions. (Results, regrettably, can be the same.)
2. The breakdown in the emotional bonding process between mother and daughter may create a same-sex love deficit in the daughter. Homoemotionality ⇒ Homosexuality
3. At puberty, this same-sex love deficit can become sexualized. Seeking out lesbian relationships, therefore, could be seen as an unconscious attempt to restore what was missing in the crucial relationship between the mother and daughter.
4. The breakdown in the affirmation process between father and daughter may create in her a lack of worth in her personhood and a lack of confidence in her feminine identity and may affect how she relates to men

### III. Abuse: Sexual, Physical, and/or Emotional

- A. Sexual violations among lesbian identified women is disproportionately high
  1. National estimates against U.S. women in general: 17 to 25%. Among lesbian women low figure 30%, conservative figure 60%, some cases even higher 80%
- B. Anne Paulk's Interviews
  1. 90% of the women experienced some form of abuse when growing up
    - a. Emotional Abuse: 69%; **Sexual Abuse: 66%**; Verbal Abuse: 53%
  2. 62% of the women witnessed some form of abuse against a family member
    - a. Verbal Abuse: 72%; Emotional Abuse: 72%; Physical Abuse: 57%
  3. Of those molested, 85% were sexually violated by a male
    - a. Male outside the family: 58%; family friend: 24%; other family member: 24% (which did not include father, brother or step-brother); brother: 23%; 24% were molested by a second male
  4. Of those molested, 17% were sexually violated (seduced) by a female
    - a. Babysitter: 18%; mother: 14%; other family member: 11% (which did not include mother or sister); family friend: 9%; sister: 5%; church leader: 5%

*Sexual abuse in particular can lead to guilt, shame, anxiety, lowered self-esteem, depression, vulnerability to drug and alcohol abuse, inability to judge trust-worthiness of others, confusion between care-getting/care-giving, confusion about sexual identity and sexual norms, inability to differentiate sex from love. May also result in a rejection of female identity, shunning of relationships with men and turning exclusively to other women for nurture, affection and love.*

### IV. Misperceptions of the Genders

- A. Anne Paulk's Interviews
  1. "Did you want to be like your mother when you were growing up?" 80% of the women responded "No."

2. "Which gender seemed to have more desirable characters to be like?" 75% of the women responded that men were more desirable role models. Why?
    - a. "Men are strong and in control, not easily pushed around." "They are less likely to be victimized." "Males are respected and valued more than women."
  3. 90% of the women identified themselves as tomboys in childhood; 60% were mistaken for a boy at some time as a child
- B. Men
1. "Men care only about themselves." "All that men want is sex." "Men cannot be trusted." "Men are womanizers." "A man can never love me like a woman can."

## V. Same-Sex Peer Relationships

- A. Peers exert a tremendous amount of influence over us during our formative years through acceptance or rejection
- B. In her childhood the girl often had this overwhelming sense of feeling "different"
- C. When a girl with lesbian tendencies compares herself to peers of the same sex, in her own estimation she does not measure up
- D. As other young women blossom into womanhood, she feels trapped in a "third sex" mentality—she knows she is not a man, but she does not feel like a woman either

## VI. Judgments and Inner Vows

- A. Judgments: as a result of life events happening to her and around her, a girl may make conclusions, or judgments, about herself and others
  1. For example, as a result of being sexually violated: "Being a woman is bad." "Women are weak." "Men only want sex." "Men are disgusting." "Men cannot be trusted."
- B. Inner Vows: as a result of life events happening to her and around her, a girl may make inflexible determinations, or vows, that restrict her to think, feel, and act only in agreement with the vow
  1. For example, as a result of being sexually violated: "I will never trust a man." "I will never let a man touch me." "I will never get married."

## VII. Additional Possible Influencing Factors

- A. Positive portrayal of lesbianism in culture
- B. Exposure to radical feminist ideologies
- C. Personality temperament
- D. Negative experiences with boys or within a marriage
- E. Loneliness
- F. Parents' hope for a son versus a daughter
- G. Exposure to pornography (degrades/devalues being a woman)
- H. Biblical view of humankind's fallen nature, negative spiritual influences