

## Adjustment of Homosexual and Heterosexual Women

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The traditional psychiatric belief that homosexual women are emotionally unstable (3, 10, 21) has been challenged by Armon (1), Freedman (11), and Hopkins (13). The contention that such women are neurotic has typically been voiced by clinicians reporting on their own therapy patients (3, 10, 19). One exception is the recent psychometric investigation by Kenyon (15) who studied a non-clinical group of English homosexual women, and concluded that they were higher in neuroticism than a comparison group of heterosexuals. In contrast to the 'illness' notion of homosexuality, the authors of three psychometric studies (1, 11, 13) dealing with non-clinical homosexuals and heterosexuals reported that heterosexual women were not better adjusted than homosexuals. The paucity of research in this area is exemplified by the fact that a total of only four studies, noted above, have been found to date by this author. Even the clinical literature, which is replete with case studies and therapeutic discussions concerning male homosexuality, is strikingly sparse in the area of lesbianism (19). The present study was therefore conducted to add to the small body of data we now have on the adjustment of homosexual versus heterosexual women.

### METHOD

#### *Subjects*

The 84 homosexual women in the present study were not a random or representative sample, but they did not represent a clearly clinical group, such as psychiatric patients. Forty-six homosexuals were members of the New York branch of the Daughters of Bilitis (D.O.B.) organization, formed by and for lesbians. The officers of D.O.B. sent out the author's questionnaire to the D.O.B. members, and they returned them anonymously to the author; of 75 questionnaires sent out, 46 were

returned. The remaining 38 homosexuals returned questionnaires they requested from the manager of a homophile bookstore in Greenwich Village, who assisted the author; a letter had been placed in the window of the bookstore asking for volunteers. Fifty subjects requested the forms, and 38 were returned. The percentage of return was 61.3 for the D.O.B. members, 76 for the Village bookstore, and 67.2 for both sources. The occupational status for the majority of the homosexuals could be classified as professional; in addition to 11 teachers from all educational levels, and 13 graduate and undergraduate college students, there were registered nurses, social workers, editors, a statistician, a librarian, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, etc. The combining of the D.O.B. and the bookstore subjects was justified in that *t* test comparisons between the two groups for all adjustment variables, to be reported on below, showed no significant differences. The 84 homosexuals described themselves as either exclusively homosexual (70.2 per cent) or predominantly homosexual with some heterosexual tendencies (29.8 per cent). Eighty-seven per cent of the homosexuals were not in therapy. Their mean age was 30.3 (S.D. = 9.15), and they had completed an average of 15.5 years of education (S.D. = 2.47). The mean education of their parents was 11.8 years (S.D. = 4.25) for fathers and 12.1 years (S.D. = 3.21) for mothers.

The 133 heterosexual subjects consisted of undergraduate (*N* = 49) and graduate (*N* = 84) students at The City College of New York, who described themselves as exclusively heterosexual. The graduates and undergraduates represented all areas of concentration. The authors administered the questionnaires to this group during a regular class period. Ninety-three per cent of the heterosexuals were not in therapy. The mean age was 25.0 (S.D. = 7.44),

and they had completed an average of 16.5 years of education (S.D. = 4.81). The average education of their parents was 12.0 years (S.D. = 4.01) for fathers, and 11.9 years (S.D. = 6.36) for mothers.

The homosexuals did not differ significantly from the heterosexuals on education ( $t = 1.66$ ), education of father ( $t = .48$ ), education of mother ( $t = .26$ ), and Schachter (17) sibling position code ( $t = .48$ ). The two groups were different in age ( $t = 4.68$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

#### Instruments

In order to avoid a too narrow conception of adjustment, several instruments were used, which measured 12 dimensions related to mental health. The Scheier and Cattell (18) Neuroticism Scale Questionnaire (NSQ) examined four factors, Tendermindedness (I), Depression (F), Submission (E), and Anxiety (Anx.), as well as overall Neuroticism (Total NSQ). Eight additional scales measured Alienation and Trust (20), Goal-Directedness, Self-Acceptance, and Sense of Self (7), Dependency (5), Nurturance (12), and Neuroticism (16). The Crowne and Marlow (6) Social Desirability Scale (SDS) was also included in order to measure the possible contamination of giving socially desirable responses on the various adjustment measures. The correlations between the SDS and the adjustment variables for the homosexuals (noted first) and the heterosexuals (noted second) were: Tendermindedness =  $-.06$ ,  $-.08$ ; Depressed =  $.23$ ,  $.15$ ; Submissive =  $.27$ ,  $.21$ ; Anxiety =  $-.27$ ,  $-.35$ ; Total NSQ =  $.10$ ,  $-.03$ ; Alienation =  $-.01$ ,  $-.14$ ; Trust =  $.19$ ,  $.20$ ; Goal-Directedness =  $.31$ ,  $.12$ ; Self-Accepting =  $.17$ ,  $-.01$ ; Sense of Self =  $.35$ ,  $-.07$ ; Dependence =  $-.33$ ,  $-.31$ ; Nurturance =  $.17$ ,  $-.07$ ; Neuroticism =  $-.28$ ,  $-.25$ . On the SDS the homosexuals indicated less of a tendency to give socially desirable responses than the heterosexuals (homosexual  $M = 12.3$ , S.D. =  $5.53$ ; heterosexual  $M = 14.2$ , S.D. =  $5.65$ ;  $t = 2.47$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Analysis of covariance was used to control for age and SDS responses. In addition, partial correlations, with age and SDS responses partialled out, were computed to indicate the

amount of association between the variables and the groups (4).

#### RESULTS

Table I indicates that the homosexuals, in contrast to the heterosexuals, scored lower on Depression and Total NSQ, and they were higher on Goal-Direction and Self-Acceptance. The analysis of covariance results were essentially the same as the  $t$  test findings. Dignan (7) included Goal-Directed and Self-Acceptance in her 'ego-Identity' dimension based on the construct devised by Erikson (8). The association between groups and adjustment variables, as reflected in the partial correlations, were not impressive, accounting at best for only 9 per cent of the variance.

In addition to controlling for age by partial correlation and covariance statistics, the possible influence of age was estimated by calculating product-moment correlations between age and each adjustment factor. For the homosexuals there was a positive correlation between age and Alienation ( $r = .22$ ) and Depression ( $r = .22$ ), and a negative correlation with Dependency ( $r = -.19$ ). There was a positive relationship, for heterosexuals, between age and Depression ( $r = .28$ ) and Total NSQ ( $r = .18$ ), and a negative association between age and Neuroticism ( $r = -.21$ ). Age thus accounted for at most about 9 per cent of the variance in any adjustment factor, which would probably not effect the results very much.

NSQ data for a group of 393 presumably heterosexual females, comparable in age ( $M = 31.0$ ) to the homosexual females reported in the present study ( $M = 30.3$ ), was presented by Scheier and Cattell (18). The NSQ data noted for these 393 females was Tendermindedness  $M = 12.2$ , S.D. =  $2.5$ ; Depressed  $M = 9.8$ , S.D. =  $2.8$ ; Submissive  $M = 13.3$ , S.D. =  $3.1$ ; Anxiety  $M = 9.8$ , S.D. =  $3.4$ ; Total NSQ  $M = 45.1$ , S.D. =  $7.1$ . The 84 homosexuals in the current research had higher scores on Tenderminded ( $t = 2.21$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Dominance ( $t = 5.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and lower scores on Depression ( $t = 2.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ), than the 393 heterosexuals in the Scheier and Cattell report. These groups were not different on Anxiety and Total NSQ. In comparison to the

TABLE I  
Comparisons of adjustment variable scores between homosexual and heterosexual females

| Variables      | N <sup>a</sup> |               | M           |               | S.D.        |               | t       | F <sup>b</sup> | r <sup>2</sup> .3 <sup>c</sup> |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|---------|----------------|--------------------------------|
|                | Homo-sexual    | Hetero-sexual | Homo-sexual | Hetero-sexual | Homo-sexual | Hetero-sexual |         |                |                                |
| NSQ            |                |               |             |               |             |               |         |                |                                |
| Tenderminded   | 82             | 133           | 13.07       | 13.71         | 2.78        | 2.59          | 1.72    | 2.10           | .11                            |
| Depressed      | 82             | 133           | 8.84        | 8.92          | 3.31        | 3.40          | .16     | .06            | .04                            |
| Submissive     | 82             | 133           | 10.62       | 12.62         | 3.57        | 3.25          | 4.21*** | 15.78***       | .24***                         |
| Anxious        | 82             | 133           | 10.80       | 11.43         | 3.74        | 3.53          | 1.23    | 1.33           | .08                            |
| Total NSQ      | 82             | 133           | 43.46       | 46.67         | 7.39        | 7.50          | 3.06**  | 7.48**         | .19**                          |
| Non-NSQ        |                |               |             |               |             |               |         |                |                                |
| Alienated      | 84             | 130           | 14.48       | 14.23         | 4.87        | 4.66          | .37     | .40            | .07                            |
| Trusting       | 84             | 130           | 15.46       | 15.65         | 4.90        | 4.75          | .28     | .14            | .00                            |
| Goal-directed  | 84             | 130           | 36.71       | 32.35         | 6.28        | 6.02          | 5.10*** | 25.78***       | .30***                         |
| Self-accepting | 84             | 130           | 23.29       | 20.80         | 4.19        | 4.63          | 3.98*** | 15.27***       | .23***                         |
| Sense of self  | 84             | 130           | 17.81       | 17.25         | 3.84        | 3.37          | 1.12    | .83            | .07                            |
| Dependent      | 84             | 130           | 15.70       | 16.49         | 5.61        | 5.95          | .97     | .12            | .05                            |
| Nurturant      | 84             | 130           | 18.19       | 17.88         | 3.74        | 3.49          | .62     | 2.26           | .09                            |
| Neurotic       | 84             | 133           | 15.39       | 16.61         | 4.98        | 5.33          | 1.68    | 2.92           | .11                            |

<sup>a</sup> N differed for some variables because a few Ss did not complete all scales.

<sup>b</sup> Analysis of covariance.

<sup>c</sup> Partial correlation.

\* .05, two-tailed.

\*\* .01, two-tailed.

\*\*\* .001, two-tailed.

NSQ scores reported by Scheier and Cattell (18) for 315 neurotics, the 84 homosexuals in the current study had higher scores on Tendermindedness, lower scores on Depression, Submission, and Anxiety, and they were not different on the Total NSQ factor.

#### DISCUSSION

When interpreting the results of the present study, one must of course recognize that both samples were select and clearly not representative of all heterosexual, or all homosexual, women. The data could be generalized, at best, only to women similar to those examined in the current research.

The failure to find female homosexuals more neurotic than female heterosexuals in the present study agrees with the reports of Armon (1), Freedman (11), and Hopkins (13). The NSQ findings in the current investigation were strikingly similar to the Cattell 16 PF data reported by Hopkins (13). The NSQ is part of the 16 PF and so the two can be directly compared. Hopkins noted, in agreement with the

present study, that her lesbian group was not different from her heterosexual sample on Tendermindedness, Depression, and two of the three factors comprising the Anxiety dimension, and that the lesbians were more dominant. On the Anxiety Factor differentiating the groups, the heterosexuals were more tense and excitable than the lesbians. Hopkins did not report a Total NSQ score. The willingness of the homosexuals to acknowledge deviation by joining a homophile organization (i.e. 23 of the 24 lesbians in the Hopkins study were members of the Minorities Research Group, and 46 of the 84 homosexuals in the present study belonged to the Daughters of Bilitis), and to volunteer information about themselves, may account in part for their high dominance and low anxiety scores.

The indications from the present data—weak in magnitude as they are—that the lesbians are better adjusted in some respects than the heterosexuals, has also been reported by Freedman (11) and by Hopkins (13). The psychoanalytic contention that female homosexuals have high

dependency needs (10) was not supported by Armon (1) nor by the present study, and strong independent tendencies have been found by Hopkins (13). Socarides (19) and Caprio (3) stated that female homosexuals had a deep sense of inferiority, but the results of the present study, as well as the findings of Freedman (11) and Hopkins (13) directly contradict this contention.

Both Freedman (11) in the United States and Kenyon (14) in England used the Eysenck Maudsley Personality Inventory (9), but their findings were conflicting. Although Kenyon found lesbians to score higher on Neuroticism ( $M = 23.15$ ,  $S.D. = 12.28$ ) than the heterosexual women ( $M = 17.41$ ,  $S.D. = 9.6$ ), his mean homosexual Neuroticism score was lower than the mean score of a mixed group of English university students ( $M = 26.78$ ,  $S.D. = 9.28$ ), and much lower than the average score of neurotics ( $M = 31.95$ ,  $S.D. = 9.15$ ), reported by Eysenck (9). Similarly, Kenyon did not indicate what average score was obtained by neurotics on the second test he used, the Cornell Medical Index Health Questionnaire (2) in contrast to his lesbian sample. Furthermore, the homosexual subjects in the Kenyon study included 43 women (34.9 per cent) who were either predominantly heterosexual (8.9 per cent), or bisexual (6.5 per cent) or more homosexual than heterosexual, but maintained a fair amount of heterosexual activity (19.5 per cent). These 43 women were rated between 1 and 4 on the Kinsey Scale by Kenyon (14). It was thus misleading to categorize the entire sample of 123 women as homosexual.

The need to sample a wider segment of the homosexual community is emphasized by the contradictory findings that emerge when contrasting samples are evaluated. An absence of differences in homosexual versus heterosexual adjustment is reported in most studies using non-clinical subjects. On the other hand, the writing of psychiatrists describing their patients, typically reflects the belief that homosexuals are seriously maladjusted. Although the findings of the present investigation refute the opinion that female homosexuals are more neurotic than female heterosexuals, additional studies with larger, more representative, samples, and diverse

methodologies must be conducted for a more adequate evaluation of this result.

#### SUMMARY

The adjustment of non-clinical homosexual women ( $N = 84$ ) compared to heterosexuals ( $N = 133$ ) was evaluated with the Scheier and Cattell Neuroticism Scale Questionnaire (NSQ) and eight additional factors selected from five scales. The NSQ results for homosexuals were also contrasted to the NSQ data from heterosexual women and neurotic women reported by Scheier and Cattell. The homosexuals were found to be as well adjusted as the heterosexuals. These findings were compared to four other psychometric studies involving non-clinical subjects.

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