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# Impact of parental attachment on identity and self-acceptance in homosexual males

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IMPACT OF PARENTAL ATTACHMENT ON IDENTITY

AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE IN HOMOSEXUAL MALES

A Thesis

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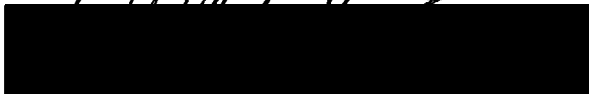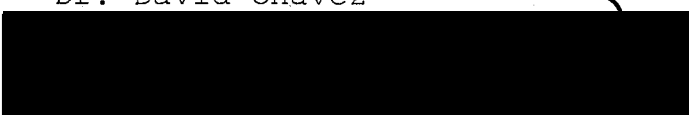
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by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of maternal attachment on identity and self-esteem in adult gay males. One hundred sixteen gay males between the ages of 20 to 62 years in the southern California area completed a questionnaire that included the Self-Esteem Rating Scale, two identity scales (Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status and Cass' Stage Allocation Measure) and the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (measuring level of maternal attachment). Items created for use in the study to assess self-disclosure and parental support before and after disclosure were also included.

Results showed that early maternal attachment was not a consistently significant factor in the development of a positive self-esteem or identity as has been found in the general population. However, results indicated that maternal attachment was significantly related to parents being supportive of their sons prior to and after the self-disclosure of his sexual identity. It is unclear whether the measures adequately assessed the factors under examination in this study, or if different developmental pathways characterize this population compared to the general population.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I dedicate this study to my two sons, Carl and Joel. Without their dedication and assistance, it would have been an impossible task.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION


Current research suggests that mothers are a significant influence on the development of a positive sense of self in homosexual males. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the quality of the relationship between gay males and their mothers on gay males' identity formation and self-acceptance.


Homosexuality: Past and Present

Woodman (1985) estimates that homosexuals and their parents constitute about a third of the population. Patterson (1995) estimates that six to ten percent, or between seven and 15 million Americans, identify themselves as homosexual. While this is a substantial number of people, it does not consider the network of other people who are potentially affected by an individual's sexual minority membership, including families. When these relationships are taken into account, Patterson (1995) postulates that at least 50 million Americans are gay or have a family member who is.

1

Homosexuality practices have been documented since the beginning of recorded history (Bozett & Sussman, 1989). In ancient Greece, for example, homosexuality almost invariably involved a youth and an older man, i.e., a junior and senior partner. Homosexuality was not only accepted, but it was expected that adolescent males would participate in homosexual acts until they completed their military training (Bullough, 1979). These relationships were thought, at least according to available historical reports, to be a crucial part of the younger man's maturation process (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1993). Regular intimacy with an older member of the citizen elite provided a boy with a model of appropriate attitudes and behaviors, and a source of wisdom. Involvement with a particularly well-connected or powerful partner proved socially and politically valuable, not only for the boy, but for his entire family (Bloch, 2001).

It has been in primarily Judeo-Christian monotheistic cultures that homosexuality has had the most negative connotations. Homophobia, i.e., the irrational fear of homosexuals and homosexuality, appears to be especially virulent in the United States (Herek, 1984). Laws forbidding homosexuality to varying degrees exist in all

states today, and in most of these states even private homosexual activity is illegal. The laws have widespread traditions that reflect the customs and attitudes of our society as a whole. These laws generally reveal little concerning people's deeper beliefs about homosexuality. The thinking behind these laws is that homosexuality is generally thought today to be "detestable," a sin, a horrible crime, "a detestable and abominable Vice of Buggery" (defined as sodomy between two men), according to Oaks (1980). Cox and Gallois (1996) also allege that homosexuality is generally conceptualized as being intrinsically immoral and a pathological set of learned behaviors.

In 1973, however, the American Psychiatric Association eliminated homosexuality from its list of disordered mental conditions, referring to it instead as a variation in sexual orientation (Strommen, 1989). The American Psychological Association (APA) followed suit by resolving that, "Homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, liability, or general societal capabilities" (American Psychological Association, 1975). The APA urged psychologists to take a lead role in

removing the stigma of mental illness long associated with
homosexual orientations.

There has been a great increase in public dialogue on
the issue of homosexuality in the last ten to fifteen
years (Feinstein, 1982). In the last decade, research on
homosexuality has taken on new directions, increasingly
moving away from the early emphasis on etiology,
treatment, and psychological adjustment to focusing
instead on the homosexual situation as experienced and
perceived by homosexuals themselves (Cass, 1984). These
studies have shown, for example, that one of the many
challenges faced by homosexual individuals is the
development of a sense of identity (Aleman, 1995).
Homosexual men, according to this research, often live in
worlds circumscribed by secrecy at a time in life when the
exploration and questioning of self-identity requires
expression and publicity. The silent lives of many
homosexual youth suggest that these are young men who
cannot test their emerging adult sensibilities truthfully
in a homophobic world. Instead they present identities
other than their own, attempting the public rendering of
teen or young adult sexuality that is not their own
(Aleman, 1995). The identity formation process, and the

unique challenges faced by homosexual men in this regard
are discussed in the following sections.

The Identity Formation Process and Implications for Gay

   Males

   Identity formation is viewed as a complex
psychosocial process that constitutes one of the major
developmental tasks of adolescence (Erikson, 1959, 1968).
Identity refers to attaining a clear definition of who we
are, where we are going, and how we fit into society. In
addition, identity gives us a sense of knowing what is
"me" and what is "not me" (Erikson, 1950). Identity
formation is thought to proceed developmentally through a
psychosocial moratorium, which is a period of time when
the adolescent is expected to explore life alternatives
and conclusively establish a clear definition of self
(Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson, identity is ideally
experienced as a sense of well-being, with those who have
a secure identity feeling of being "at home" with
themselves and confident about knowing their place and
direction in life.

   For homosexual individuals, however, working through
the awareness of one's identity is usually a tumultuous
personal process that is often kept hidden from family

members (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1981; Minton & McDonald, 1984). Aleman (1995) states that gay adolescents carry the heaviest burdens. Not only are homosexual adolescents dealing with everything that all adolescents go through, e.g., developing a sense of individuality, they also bear the additional burdens of dealing with the effects of having a socially stigmatized identity and the possible rejection from family and peers (Aleman, 1995; Hetrick & Martin, 1987).

Our society seems to value and encourage the individuation process that adolescents undertake while they are developing a sense of identity; however, society also delineates clear boundaries for what is considered a "normal" and "acceptable" identity. By and large, our society views homosexuality as a "lifestyle" outside of the boundaries of acceptability, which leaves gay youth feeling marginalized and without a support system (Blumenfeld, 1992).

As a result of our culture generally not accepting homosexuality as normal, gay adolescents and young adults are more vulnerable to depression and suicide than are heterosexual individuals (Kulkin, Chauvin, & Percle, 2000). According to much of the literature, one of the

greatest risk factors contributing to the suicide rates of young homosexual people in our society (Gibson, 1989; Ramfedi, Garrow, & Deisher, 1991; Rofes, 1983). Young people appear to be very strongly affected by the attitudes, ideologies, and norms of our society (Kulkin, Chauvin & Percle, 2000). The outcome of societal barriers along with negative responses to a homosexual orientation may facilitate a young gay person to exhibit low self-esteem and depression, which may result in a deteriorated and fragile identity (Gibson, 1989).

Stage Theories of Homosexual Identity Formation

Over the years, numerous developmental stage models of homosexual identity formation have been developed (e.g., Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1981; Fassinger & Miller, 1996; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Troiden, 1989; Weinberg, 1978). The common assumption in these models is that homosexual identities develop as individuals work through conflicts and stresses that are related to their sexual orientation (Elizur & Ziv, 2001). Resolving feelings of inner confusion, ambivalence, and fear of rejection, the gay male may gradually consolidate an affirmative sense of self that enables him to accept his same-gender feelings. It is hypothesized that this process is organized in a

developmental sequence of stages that is defined in a somewhat different way by each of the various models (Elizur & Ziv, 2001). Gonsiorek and Rudolph (1991) postulate that some individuals are able to move quickly through the various stages, while others may become stuck in a stage and never progress to the final stages.

Cass's (1979) Homosexual Identity Formation (HIF) Model is viewed by many as the most comprehensive of gay or lesbian identity models because it integrates psychological and social components, and, unlike most other models, it is based on both qualitative and quantitative research (Minton & McDonald, 1984). Cass based the HIF model on her observations of gay and lesbian clients and later developed the Homosexual Identity Questionnaire to establish the model's validity.

According to Cass (1984), "identity is perceived as a cognitive construct, the components of which are accompanied by unique affect. Identity is invariably translated into psychological activity (behavior), which in turn may result in changes occurring in identity" (p. 147). The formation of a gay or lesbian identity involves moving from what is defined by society and self as a heterosexual identity to a homosexual identity.

8

Cass's (1979) model of homosexual identity formation is based on two broad assumptions: 1) that identity is acquired through a developmental process, and 2) that the locus for stability of, and change in, behavior lies in the interaction process that occurs between individuals and their environments. Cass proposed a six-stage model to describe gay or lesbian identity development that involves a paradigm shift (possibly influenced by environmental factors) preceding each stage, leading to changes in affect and behavior (Blumenfeld, 1997).

Stage one is referred to as Identity Confusion. This is the "Who am I?" stage associated with the feeling that one is different from peers, accompanied by a growing sense of personal alienation. The individual begins to be conscious of same-sex feelings or behaviors - and labels them as such. At this stage it is rare for the person to disclose inner turmoil to others (Cass, 1979).

Stage two, Identity Comparison, is the rationalization or bargaining stage where the person thinks, "I may be a homosexual, but then again I may be bisexual," "Maybe this is just temporary," or "My feelings of attraction are simply for just one other person of my own sex and this is a special case." There is a heightened

sense of not belonging anywhere with the corresponding feeling that "I am the only one in the world like this" (Blumenfeld, 1997; Cass, 1979).

In stage three, Identity Tolerance, the individual may realize that, "I probably am a homosexual." They may begin to contact other homosexuals to counteract feelings of isolation and alienation, but they merely tolerate rather than fully accept a homosexual identity. Furthermore, the feeling of not belonging with heterosexuals becomes stronger (Cass, 1979).

There is continued and increased contact with other gay and/or lesbian people in stage four – Identity Acceptance. The individual evaluates homosexual people more positively and accepts rather than merely tolerates a homosexual self-image. Finally, the questions of "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" have been answered (Cass, 1979).

Identity Pride describes the fifth stage. This is the "These are my people" stage where the individual develops an awareness of the discrepancies that exist between the person's increasingly positive concept of self as homosexual and an awareness of society's rejection of this orientation. The individual might feel anger at

heterosexuals and devalue many of their traditional

institutions – marriage, gender-role structures, etc. The

person feels free to disclose his/her identity to more and

more people. At this stage, they want to be immersed in

the gay or lesbian subculture by immersing themselves in

homosexual literature, art, and other forms of culture

(Blumenfeld, 1997; Cass, 1979).

The intense anger at heterosexuals—the "them and us"

attitude that is evident in stage five—softens during the

sixth stage, Identity Synthesis. This stage reflects a

recognition that some heterosexuals are supportive and can

be trusted. On the other hand, those who are not

supportive are further devalued (Cass, 1979).

Although solidifying a stable sense of identity is

considered an inherent task of late adolescence and early

adulthood (Erikson, 1968), those who study homosexual

identity development indicate that this task appears to

rest, in a large part, on "coming out," that is, self-

disclosing one's sexual orientation (Cass, 1979; Groves &

Ventura, 1983; Lociano, 1989; Minton & McDonald, 1984;

Troiden, 1989). Studies suggest that the coming-out

journey takes many years, beginning with an early

awareness of feeling or being different, and ending with

11

the development of an integrated identity (Cass, 1979;

Coleman, 1981; Troiden, 1989). Savin-Williams (1989)

states that coming out to parents is recognized as one of

the most formidable tasks gay males face. Given the

historical condemnation of homosexuality as sin, sickness,

and crime, and the tendency for most parents to consider

their children to be extensions of themselves, "It is not

surprising that revealing one's sexual identity to parents

is one of the most significant problems for many

homosexuals" (Weinberg, 1972, p. 92). Furthermore, for

some individuals, telling their parents about their

homosexual identity is the final exit out of the closet

(Fairchild & Hayward, 1979).

Coming out to parents is often associated with an

intense fear that might prevent the child from disclosing

his sexual identity to them (Ben-Ari, 1995). The

irreversibility of the revelations seems to underlie this

fear. Fear of rejection, parents' potential sense of

guilt, parents' mental pain, the child's sense of guilt,

fear of being forced to get cured, protection of the

family from crises, and not being confident with one's

sexual identity are reported as the main reasons why

12

people do not disclose, or are hesitant to disclose their sexual preference to their parents (Ben-Ari, 1995).

## Familial Influences on Identity Development in Homosexual Male's

There are a number of familial influences on identity development that have been defined in the research literature. Some of these are related to identity development in general, e.g., *parental attachment* and *individuation*, while others are specific to identity development in homosexual individuals, e.g., *cultural norms*, *family themes and values*, and *parental shaming*. Each of these is discussed in turn below. While several other non-familial factors have been identified in research as influencing the developmental course of identity, e.g., peers, cognitive development, and gender, these influences are outside the scope of the current study.

### Parental Attachment

Many developmental theorists have concluded that no social relationship is more important to human development than the attachment between parent and child. Attachment theorists (e.g., Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall 1978;

Bowlby, 1969, 1980, 1988) maintain that the quality of parental attachment is a crucial variable for the development of a secure and stable sense of self.

According to Bowlby (1969), an attachment is a strong affectional tie that binds a person to an intimate companion, typically to a parent. Bowlby understood the nature of parental attachment as a significant determinant of how individuals function emotionally and relate to the world and to others. The available, supportive, responsive and reliable, yet non-interfering parent becomes the child's secure base from which the child can explore the environment and develop a sense of personal competence and environmental mastery (Bowlby, 1969). It also affords the child safety when threats are encountered (Tharinger & Wells, 2000). Ainsworth et al's, (1978) study revealed that infants develop secure attachments to mothers and fathers who are responsive to the child's needs and emotional signals, thus confirming Bowlby's emphasis on sensitive, warm, and responsive parenting as the key to secure attachment.

Kamptner's (1988) study revealed that a secure attachment to parents continues to be important during adolescence and that it appears to facilitate the identity

development process. Moreover, this and other research suggests that parenting styles characterized by warmth, feelings of closeness and security, support, acceptance, and frequent demonstrations of praise during the child's adolescent years also enhances identity formation (e.g., Adams & Jones, 1983; LaVoie, 1976; Marcia, 1983; Matteson, 1974).

Just as infants and young children must have a secure base if they are to explore, adolescents also seem to need the security provided by supportive parents in order to become more independent and autonomous individuals (Kenny & Rice, 1995; Kobak, Cole, Frenz-Gillies, & Fleming, 1993). More generally, adolescents who enjoy secure attachments with their parents seem to have a stronger sense of identity, higher self-esteem, greater social competence, and better emotional adjustment than their less securely attached peers (Kenny & Rice, 1995). Tharinger and Wells (2000) posit that adolescents with a history of insecure attachment will experience greater incompetence and increased difficulty transitioning into adulthood than those with a history of secure attachment.

Research has found a link between the quality of family interaction patterns that are characterized by both

connectedness and individuality that may enhance

opportunities for adolescents' exploration of identity

alternatives in several ways (Kamptner, 1988).

Connectedness provides the security and self-esteem that

is needed in order for adolescents to be able to take

risks and explore identity alternatives (Grotevant, 1983),

while individuality refers to the ability to function as

an individual within this supportive context to see how

one differs from others and to express one's own ideas

(Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). Marcia (1983) states that

without the support, security, and encouragement for

meaningful exploration and experimentation, a true sense

of identity may be difficult to achieve.

Individuation

As stated above, in addition to a supportive and

secure family environment, families who provide for

individuality (i.e., allowing expressions of the

distinctiveness of self) and autonomy, and who exert

minimal parental control within the family interaction

pattern, also appear to enhance adolescent identity

formation (Adam & Jones, 1983; Grotevant, 1983; Grotevant

& Cooper 1985; Marcia, 1983). Individuality and autonomy

within the family network provides adolescents with

opportunities to explore identity alternatives (Marcia, 1983; Matteson, 1974; Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973). It appears that individuals need to explore and experiment with the many social roles, belief systems, and other areas of choice available to them before they can knowingly decide upon and ultimately integrate those identity options into a self-chosen identity (Kamptner, 1988), which is consistent with Erikson's (1968) description of the identity formation process.

Cultural Norms

According to Feinstein (1982), the filters through which parents interpret and respond to the phenomenon of their child's homosexual identity include those that represent our cultural norms about the subject of homosexuality.  The power of cultural assumptions about parenthood is evidenced by the fact that there is a cultural assumption that parents are responsible and therefore can be blamed for any problems that emerge in, for, or about children.  Feinstein (1982) maintains that the notion of parental culpability fits quite well with the dominant cultural assumption about parenthood in general which asserts that all parents "make who their children are" (p. 299). According to Feinstein's (1982)

17

analysis, the culture expects that parents will produce children who abide by normative standards, and when deviation occurs, it is inevitably assumed that the family context is defective. Most parents hold the cultural assumption that successful socialization means producing a heterosexual individual who will presumably marry and have children. This is the measure by which most parents evaluate both their past performance and their future relationship with their children (Feinstein, 1982).

Family Values and Themes

Family values form the hidden structure of the family's initial reaction to their child's homosexual identity and they govern the severity of the family's reactions. For example, the more negative the family's values concerning homosexuality, the more severe the reaction (Strommen, 1989). The homosexual member is often endowed with an identity constructed from the family's own stereotypes of homosexuality.

Weinberg (1972) has suggested a broad interpretation of family issues in the adjustment to having a homosexual member that serves as a convenient basis for describing positive and negative family adjustment outcomes.

Describing the adaptation process with reference to parents, Weinberg characterized it as a conflict between two "parenting themes": A "*love*" theme and a "*conventionality*" theme. The love theme compels parents to accept their children as they are, regardless of social values. Parent-child love and loyalty takes precedence over societal mores in the love theme. If parents reject the negative stereotypes of homosexuality, it becomes possible to integrate the gay member's homosexual identity and family role together (Strommen, 1989). The conventionality theme, in contrast, compels parents to censure their children and line up in support of societal norms, therefore stressing parental adherence to community values of adopting a position against the homosexual member (Weinberg, 1972).

Parental Shaming

Lutwak and Ferrari (1997) state that parental shaming could be a significant influence on an individual's identity development and detrimental to a person's psychological well-being. Lutwak and Ferrari describe shame as a self-conscious emotion involving negative evaluations not of one's behavior, but of one's entire self. When faced with negative events, it is the entire

19

self that is painfully scrutinized and negatively evaluated. "Shame is so uncomfortable that it can cause a lingering sense of wariness, of unwillingness to trust positive affect quite so easily." Furthermore, the trust of self and others is seriously weakened (Nathanson, 1992, p. 210).

Low self-esteem is almost surely the surface manifestation of the combination of parental rejection and alienation, which is part of the shame-filled years of youth (Karen, 1998). It can be understood that the low self-esteem of many homosexual men is the result of the early years of differentness, inner conflict, rejection, and mockery by parents (Friedman, 1995). Shame makes the individual want to isolate oneself, hide from others, and seek anonymity. Behind the feeling of shame and the reluctance to be seen is a fear of the contempt by others as well as self-contempt. These fears are usually found in conjunction with the almost overwhelming terror of rejection and abandonment (Nathanson, 1992). Karen (1998) states that shame can be understood as a "wound in the self." It is frequently instilled at an early age as a result of the internalization of a contemptuous voice, usually parental. Rebukes, warnings, teasing, ridicule,

ostracism, and other forms of neglect or abuse can all play a part. Parents may fail to give the developing youngster the appreciation and respect he or she needs, or they may create a climate of periodic rejection or pervasive disrespect that may steadily erode the child's sense of self-worth, making the child susceptible to shame's ugly self-portrait, e.g., not feeling good enough and having painful thoughts about being defective (Karen, 1998). Furthermore, the results of Lutwak and Ferrari's (1997) study suggest that proneness to shame may lead to different way of experiencing and handling interpersonal events; for example, accepting one's homosexual identity. According to Karen (1998), nothing defends against the internal ravages of shame more than the security gained from *parental love*, especially the sort of sensitive love that sees and appreciates the child for what he or she is, and is respectful of the child's feelings, differences, and peculiarities.

## Summary and Purpose of Study

Most of the familial influences mentioned above support the importance of the quality of parent-child attachment on the development of a positive sense of self

in homosexual males. Although not yet empirically examined, attachment theorists e.g., Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth et al., (1978) make a case by stating that the quality of parental or primary caregiver attachment is vital for the development of a secure sense of self. A secure attachment within the family facilitates the individuation process, which in turn puts the individual in the best position to integrate identity options into a self-chosen identity (Kamptner, 1988; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Marcia 1983; Matteson, 1974; Orlofsky, et al., 1973). Finally, a securely attached parent-child relationship may also provide a cushion against the powerful cultural standards and may help alleviate the family's negative reaction to their child's homosexual identity.

In view of the reported number of gay males, it is surprising how little research has focused on the developmental concerns and family interaction patterns between gay males and their families (Patterson, 1995). According to Miller (1979), the most parsimonious explanation to account for the paucity of scholarship on gays and their families is that nobody ever thought about it until recently because research has been overshadowed

by society's heterosexual hegemonic position on homosexuality. Most studies have largely ignored the role that parents play in the development of their child's identity, shedding relatively little light on this issue. Therefore, examining the quality of the early relationship between homosexuals and their parents is an important issue for researchers, as it will hopefully generate a better understanding of the impact of early family interaction patterns and self-development in gay males.

The purpose of the current study is, in general, to empirically examine the impact of the quality of the early attachment relationship between gay males and their parents on gay males' subsequent sense of identity formation, and self-acceptance, and self-disclosure. The specific hypotheses are:

Hypothesis 1: A securely attached relationship between mothers and their gay sons will be positively and significantly correlated with the development of a positive self-esteem in their gay son, ( i.e., self-worth, social competence, problem-solving ability, intellectual ability, self-competence, and worth relative to other people).

Hypothesis 2: A secure attachment between mothers and their gay sons is more likely to result in a more "developed" sense of identity (i.e., higher scores on a measure of identity development) and a higher level in Cass' Stage Allocation Measure (compared to insecurely attached gay males).

Hypothesis 3: A securely attached gay male will be more likely to self-disclose to parents, and more likely to self-disclose at an earlier age (compared to those who are insecurely attached).

Hypothesis 4: Securely attached gay males will be more likely to have a supportive and accepting relationship with parents prior to and subsequent to self-disclosure (compared to gay males that are insecurely attached).

# CHAPTER TWO

## METHODS

### Participants

Participants were 116 gay adult males ranging in age from 20 to 62 years (M=36 years). They were predominately Caucasian (73%) and middle-to-upper class, with 65% having a bachelor's degree or higher.

Participants were recruited through support groups in the southern California area, e.g., Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), Gay Pride, and from a group of individuals who play the sport of beach volleyball.

Eight of the 116 questionnaires were eventually eliminated from the study due to incompleteness of responses, or the participant failed to follow the directions for completing the questionnaire.

### Measures

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that was comprised of attachment, self-esteem, and self-identity measures, and items created for use in the current study, which assessed self-disclosure and self-acceptance.

Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA)

The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Appendix
B) (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) utilizes attachment theory
as formulated by Bowlby and others as its theoretical
framework, and it assesses how well the mother serves as a
source of psychological security (Armsden & Greenberg,
1987). Formulated on college-aged samples, this 25-item
measure instructs respondents to indicate how true each
likert-type statement was true for them when they were a
child (1=almost never or never true; 5= almost always or
always true). The scale includes three subscales: Trust
(i.e., the degree of mutual trust between parent and
child); Communication (i.e., the quality and extent of
verbal communication between the parent and child,
including how easily the child could share problems with
the parent, how empathic and sensitive to the child the
parent was, and how easily the parent could read the
child's feelings), and Alienation (i.e., the extent of
feelings of anger, alienation, and isolation of the child
toward the parent, the inability of the child to talk over
problems with the parent, the extent to which the parent
was upset and inattentive and insensitive to the child).
Items can be summed to yield both a global attachment

26

score (with the Alienation scale reverse-scored such that higher scores indicate higher amounts of attachment) or three subscales scores (with higher scores indicating higher amounts of Trust, Communication, and Alienation). Test-retest reliability, based on a young adult sample, was .93; item-total correlations range from .53 to .80 (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

Self-Esteem Rating Scale (SERS)

The Self-Esteem Rating Scale (Appendix C) is a 40-item questionnaire developed to provide a clinical measure of self-esteem that can indicate not only problems with self-esteem, but also positive dimensions of self esteem (Nugent & Thomas, 1993). This scale assesses a broad range of self-evaluation including overall self-worth, social competence, problem-solving ability, intellectual ability, self-competence, and worth relative to other people. Items are responded to a 5-point likert-type scale (1= Never; 5= Always), and are summed to produce a total score. The SERS has excellent internal consistency, with an alpha of 0.97. The SERS is reported as having good content and factorial validity, as well as good construct validity, with significant correlations with the Index of

Self-Esteem and the Generalized Contentment Scale (a

measure of depression) (Nugent & Thomas, 1993).

Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status

The Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status

(Adams & Grotevant, 1984) (Appendix D) is based on

Erikson's theory and focuses upon the assessment of

ideological commitments (i.e., occupation, religion,

politics, and philosophy) and interpersonal commitments

(i.e., friendship, dating, sex roles, and recreation). The

questionnaire includes 64 items to which participants will

respond on a likert-type scale of one (strongly disagree)

to five (strongly agree). Only the 32 items for the

Identity Achieved and Diffused Scales were used in the

current study (with the Diffused items reversed-scored) so

as to obtain a linear score as opposed to a classification

status for each participant.

In various studies, the internal consistency

coefficients ranged from 0.37 to 0.77 for the Ideology and

Interpersonal subscales. For the Total Identity scales,

alphas ranged from 0.42 to 0.84. For the ideology and

interpersonal scales, test-retest correlations for a 4-

week interval ranged from 0.59 to 0.82; for the Total

Identity scales, from 0.63 to 0.83.

## Cass' Stage Allocation Measure

Cass' (1984) Stage Allocation Measure (Appendix E) was developed to place participants into one of six stages that measure phases of development of homosexual identity formation. These stages include: 1) Identity Confusion, 2) Identity Comparison, 3) Identity Tolerance, 4) Identity Acceptance, 5) Identity Pride, and 6) Identity Synthesis. As previously described, stage one (Identity Confusion) is the "Who am I?" stage associated with the feeling that one is different from peers, and is accompanied by a growing sense of personal alienation. During this stage the person becomes conscious of same-sex feelings. At this stage it is very unusual for the individual to disclose inner turmoil to others. Stage two (Identity Comparison) is the rationalization stage where the person feels a heightened sense of not belonging anywhere with the corresponding feeling that "I am the only one in the world like this." In stage three (Identity Tolerance), the individual may realize that "I probably am a homosexual," and begins to contact other homosexuals to counteract feelings of isolation and alienation; however, they merely tolerate rather than fully accept a homosexual identity. The feeling of not belonging with heterosexuals becomes

stronger. In stage four (Identity Acceptance), the individual evaluates homosexual people more positively and accepts rather than merely tolerating a homosexual self-image. The questions of who am I, and where do I belong have been answered. In stage five (Identity Pride), the individual develops an awareness of the differences that exist between the person's ever increasing positive concept of self as homosexual and an awareness of society's rejection of this orientation. The person may feel free to disclose his/her identity to others. During this stage, they want to be immersed in the gay or lesbian subculture. During the sixth stage (Identity Synthesis), the person reflects a recognition that some heterosexuals are supportive and can be trusted. Conversely, those who are not supportive are further devalued.

Cass developed single-paragraph descriptions for each stage of her model homosexual identity formation (reiterated below), which outlines the way that individuals might ideally be characterized at that phase of development. Participants were instructed to select the one that best fits the way they see themselves at the time of responding. Allocation is, therefore, made by self-definition (Cass, 1984).

<u>Self-Disclosure</u>

Items were created for use in the current study to assess items relating to the disclosure of the participant's sexual identity and acceptance of himself as a homosexual male (Appendix F). Questions included: 1) the participant's age when his parent(s) discovered his homosexual identity; 2) length of time since his parent(s) became aware of his homosexual identity; 3) whether his parent(s) eventually accept his sexual identity; 4) after his parent(s) became aware of his homosexual identity, was his parent(s) eventually willing to discuss his sexual identity with him; 5) does he accept his homosexual identity; and 6) approximate age of his parent(s) when they became aware of his sexual identity.

In addition, a short 12-item parental support scale was created for use in this study to assess the degree of closeness and support (i.e., acceptance, availability, sensitivity, responsiveness) as perceived by the participant regarding his parent(s) before and after self-disclosure. Items for this scale were derived from various studies that were done on parental responses to their child's homosexuality (i.e., Feinstein, 1982; Johnson,

1992). Only six of the 12 items from the original scale were used in the final analysis.

## Background Information

Participants responded to a variety of background questions, including ethnic identification, level of education, level of parent's education, participant's age, and the age of the respondent when his parents became aware of his homosexual identity (Appendix G).

## Procedure

The researcher distributed questionnaires anonymously to volunteers at a meeting of a PFLAG support group. Self-addressed stamped envelopes were also offered to participants, so that the surveys could be returned by mail to the researcher anonymously upon completion.

Additionally, participants that play the sport of beach volleyball were asked to participate. Upon their agreement to volunteer, the researcher and two volunteer assistants distributed and collected the surveys upon completion.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

The means and standard deviations for the parenting, self-esteem, and identity variables used in this study are shown in Appendix I, Table 1.

Hypothesis 1 stated that a securely attached relationship between mothers and their gay sons would be positively correlated with a positive self-esteem in their gay sons. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson correlation was computed. Results of this analysis did not show a significant positive correlation between maternal attachment and self-esteem (Table 2, top portion). A second analysis utilizing a t-test comparing high vs. low attachment groups (created by a tri-median split) by self-esteem was computed. Results were significant (Table 3, top portion).

Hypothesis 2 stated that a secure attachment between mothers and their gay sons would be likely to result in a more "developed" sense of identity (i.e., higher scores on the EOMEIS measure of identity development and a higher level in Cass' Stage Allocation Measure). To test this hypothesis, Pearson correlations were computed on

attachment and the two measures of identity development. Results of this analysis showed there were no significant, positive correlations between maternal attachment and either of the identity measures (Table 2, middle portion). T-tests were next computed utilizing high vs. low attachment groups by the two identity measures. Results were significant for both (Table 3, lower portion), supporting the hypothesis. Results of Cass' Stage Allocation Measure also indicated that 25% of participants reported being in stage four (Identity Acceptance), 16% in stage five (Identity Pride), and 54% reported to be in stage six (Identity Synthesis).

Hypothesis 3 stated that securely attached gay males would be more likely to self-disclose to parents, and more likely to self-disclose at an earlier age. The first part of the hypothesis (i.e., securely attached gay males would be more likely to self-disclose) could not be tested because only five out of the 108 participants had not yet disclosed their sexual identity to their parents. To test the second part of the hypothesis (i.e., that securely attached gay males would be more likely to disclose at an early age), a Pearson correlation was computed. Results of the analysis showed there was no significant positive

correlation between secure attachment and age of self-disclosure.

Hypothesis 4 stated that securely attached gay males would be more likely to have a supportive and accepting relationship with parents prior to and subsequent to self-disclosure. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson correlation was computed. Results of this analysis showed that there was a significant positive correlation between maternal attachment and supportive relationships with parents prior to and subsequent to self-disclosure (Table 2, lower portion).

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

In the current study, the impact of maternal
attachment on self-esteem, identity, and support before
and after self-disclosure in homosexual males was
explored.

The first hypothesis stated that a securely attached
relationship between mothers and their gay sons would be
positively associated with positive self-esteem in their
gay sons. The results of the study showed moderate support
for this hypothesis: while the correlation between
maternal attachment and self-esteem was weak and non-
significant, the t-test comparing the two "extreme"
attachment groups was significant (the mean for self-
esteem high attachment group was 168.9; for the low
attachment group it was 158.5). The lack of a strong,
significant relationship between maternal attachment and
self-esteem was somewhat surprising since these factors
tend to be correlated among the general population (Kenny
& Rice, 1995).

The measure of attachment used in this study, i.e.,
the IPPA, evaluates the positive and negative

affective/cognitive dimensions of adolescents and college students' relationships with their parents and how well these figures serve as a source of psychological security. The original sample for the development of the IPPA was 16 to 20 years of age. The participants in the current study ranged in age from 20 to 62 years, and conceivably because the participants in the current study were older and had disclosed, they may have been more confident about themselves. Perhaps, therefore, self-esteem was less contingent on the quality of their relationship with their parents as measured by the IPPA. It is reasonable to believe that a gay male's peers and his social group network rather than parents might be more influential in the development of self-esteem and a positive sense of self-worth. The individual may be more at ease discussing sexual orientation issues with those that have had similar experiences. Savin-Willliams (1989) study reported that the role of parents in the development of their sons' sexual orientation to be grossly exaggerated and suggested that peers are a more positive influence on the gay males. According to Savin-Williams, parental acceptance predicts high self-esteem in gay males only if parents are perceived as important components of the individual's

sense of self-worth. Likewise, Rosenberg (1979) states that the importance of individuals to the subject mediates the relationship between the self and self-evaluation: "…not all significant others are equally significant, and those who are more significant have greater influence on our self-concepts" (p.83). Although research studies may assume significance, especially of parents, significance is in the eye of the beholder, according to Rosenberg.

There are indeed conflicting opinions in the homosexual identity literature regarding parental roles, however. A major conclusion of Elizur and Ziv's (2001) study, for example, found that parental roles are paramount in the psychological well-being of homosexual males. Perhaps a different attachment measure would have yielded different results.

Hypothesis two stated that a secure attachment between mothers and their gay sons would result in a more developed sense of self and identity. The results of this analysis showed moderate support for this hypothesis. While there was not a positive significant correlation between a secure maternal attachment and identity, t-test comparing "extreme" high vs. low attachment groups was more significant for both the EOMEIS and Cass' identity

38

measures. However, there were not dramatic differences in the means between these two groups (for the EOMEIS the high attachment group mean was 123 vs. 116.9 for the low attachment group; for Cass' scale the mean for the high attachment group was 5.5 vs. 4.8 for the low attachment group). The EOMEIS measure focuses on ideological and interpersonal commitments, i.e., occupation, religion, politics, friendships, dating, sex roles and recreation. While these factors have proven to be of importance in developing a sense of identity, according to Erikson's theory (1959), they were designed for a younger population. The majority of the sample in the present study was middle-aged and seemingly more mature. It may be that because the current participants are older, they have already committed themselves to a selected occupation, are steadfast in their religious and political beliefs, and have domestic partners; therefore, the scale may be less relevant (and less likely to be influenced by maternal factors) than for a younger homosexual population. In addition, the EOMEIS measure may be relevant for the general population but not be as pertinent in the identity development of homosexual individuals. Confronting issues such as social and cultural stigma may be more significant

factors in the identity development of gay males. These issues are possibly not tied to the quality of their relationship with their parents, but more to their peer and professional relationships, as suggested by Savin-Williams (1989).

As previously mentioned, a secure attachment within the family has been found in the general population to facilitate the individuation process, thereby putting the individual in the best position to integrate identity options into a self-chosen identity (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Kamptner, 1988; Marcia 1983; Matteson, 1974; Orlofsky, et al., 1973). Even though an adolescent or young adult male may have a securely attached relationship, fear of rejection by his parents or a lack of confidence in his sexual identity may lead him to seek out others who may be a more significant influence on his self-concept. A number of empirical studies of homosexual identity formation have reported that friends and social group membership, i.e., gay subcultures, are perceived as providing greater general support of a more developed sense of homosexual identity formation than family members (Fassinger & Miller, 1996; Feinstein, 1982; Herek, 1984; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Troiden, 1989). In other words,

it may be that members of the gay community are a greater influence than family members by validating and supporting the gay males sexual identity. No doubt, the empathic understanding and guidance by members of the same minority group who have "walked the way" is a particularly relevant and available form of social support (Elizur & Ziv, 2001).

Results also showed little variation in scores on Cass' Allocation Measure. As discussed above, most participants were in stages five and six. Perhaps if the study would have had a broader range of ages, i.e., younger males who had not yet self-disclosed, the results might have been more in the anticipated direction.

In the present study, some individuals might have found it difficult to distinguish between stages two and three (Identity Comparison and Identity Tolerance), and between stages five and six (Identity Pride and Identity Synthesis), as there were responses on the questionnaire forms that had obviously been changed. This suggests that some respondents were either in transition to a higher stage, or they were unsure about how to classify their current identity status.

The third hypothesis was that securely attached gay males would be: a) more likely to self-disclose to parents, and

b) more likely to self-disclose at an earlier age compared to those who were insecurely attached. The results of this study did not lend themselves to addressing if they were more likely to disclose at an earlier age. Regarding the second part of this hypothesis, it is suggested that perhaps the reason the results did not show a significant correlation between parental attachment and self-disclosure at an early age was at least partly be due to the ages of the participants: the mean age was 36 years. Fifty-five of the 116 participants ranged in ages from 37 to 62 years. The older gay males in the current study were adolescents and young adults when homosexuality was still considered a maladjusted and deviant behavior. Perhaps societal attitudes about homosexuality were a disincentive to reveal their sexual identity at an early age, especially to parents, even though the early parent-child relationship might have been supportive.

Lastly, this study predicted that securely attached gay males would be more likely to have a supportive and accepting relationship with parents prior to and subsequent to self-disclosure (compared to gay males that are insecurely attached). The results showed a positive, significant correlation between a supportive relationship

prior to and subsequent to self-disclosure. The significant results may be in part due to the nature of the two scales, as the items in the parental support scale were analogous to the maternal attachment (IPPA) scale. It makes theoretical sense that parents who behave toward their sons in a securely attached manner would continue to be supportive and accepting toward their son after he disclosed his homosexual identity.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations have been identified in this study. First, the sample size was small. Although a significant effort was made to increase the number of participants by contacting several gay support groups in various communities, many group administrators failed to respond to the researcher's request for participants. This may have been a limiting factor because a broader range of age and education distribution, as well as a wider range in the stages of identity, might have made a significant difference in the findings.

Second, the majority of participants were Caucasian, middle-aged adults. They were also middle-to upper-middle class and highly educated. Additionally, all participants

were recruited from established gay support groups and they were self-selected. Being highly educated and middle-aged could be major factors in the sample's overwhelming report of a well-developed sense of identity and self-esteem. Given the aforementioned limitations, the results of this study may not be generalizable to the entire homosexual population.

Implications for Future Research

If this study were to be replicated some methodological revisions should be made. The first revision would be in terms of sample recruitment. In order to obtain more generalizable data, attempts should be made to recruit samples with wide-ranging ages and educational backgrounds, as well as individuals who have not yet self-disclosed their homosexual identity or do not belong to a gay support organization. These factors could produce an overall broader distribution and result in findings different from those obtained in the current study.

The other methodological revision revolves around the selection of identity measures used in this study. Other self-development and identity measures specifically designed for the homosexual population might be

considered. For example, while the EOMEIS identity scale primarily focuses on such things as occupation, religion, politics, friendship, dating, sex roles, and recreation, an identity measure that basically concentrates on issues such as social stigma, topics related to mental health, cultural issues, and social support might be more relevant to self-related concerns of this particular population.

Lastly, another revision would be to utilize a more widespread identity scale, since Cass' scale may have required participants to choose among too narrowly defined identity categories.

Future research should also include qualitative research and combinations of qualitative and quantitative research that include both the gay male and his parents. This combination might give researchers a better understanding of the impact of parental attachment with regards to their child's development of identity, self-esteem, and self-acceptance. In addition, longitudinal and cross-sectional studies of gay males and their families from pre-disclosure to increasing intervals of time post-disclosure may also be beneficial. This kind of research, although sometimes daunting, is crucial in order to

understand the phenomenon of being a gay male or the parent of a homosexual child.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the quality of the early attachment relationship between gay males and their mothers on gay males' subsequent sense of identity formation, self-esteem, and self-disclosure. The results of this study found moderate support for the expectation that parents were an important factor in their gay son's self-esteem, self-acceptance, and identity formation, as has been found in the general population. It remains unclear whether the measures adequately assessed the early parent-child relationship or the gay males' self-esteem and self-identity. It is also unclear whether these developmental processes are truly influenced more by factors outside the home, i.e., a same gender friendship and support network.

Additional research is needed to provide more useful data in gaining a better understanding about the issues gay males and their parents face. This study only addressed a minute portion of the picture; future research will hopefully clarify the nature of the relationship

between early parental influences and subsequent self-related factors in adult gay males.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. This study is being conducted by Sharie Colt, a master's degree candidate in Lifespan Developmental Psychology at California State University, San Bernardino, under the supervision of Dr. Laura Kamptner. This study has been approved by the Psychology Department Human Subjects Review Board.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and merely involves completing the attached questionnaire, which inquires about your early and current family relationship patterns and current feelings about yourself. This questionnaire will take you approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Your responses and participation in this study are completely confidential; no identifying information will be recorded. You are free to discontinue participation at any time. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to you as an individual for participating in this study; however, the information gleaned from this study will be very helpful, as we are especially interested in  better understanding more about self-developmental  processes among individuals with alternative lifestyles.

If you have any questions or concerns during or after participation, please feel free to contact Dr. Laura Kamptner at 909-880-5582. Again, thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

_____       _____

Sharie Colt                        Dr. Laura Kamptner
M.A. Candidate,                  Professor, Psychology/Human
Lifespan Developmental         Development
Psychology

By placing a mark in the space provided below, I
acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand
the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent
to participate. By this mark I further acknowledge that I
am at least 18 years of age.
Give your consent to participate by making a check or "X"
mark here:_____

APPENDIX B

INVENTORY OF ATTACHMENT

**A. Instructions:** Each of the statements below asks questions that pertain to your feelings about your parent or primary caregiver. Read each statement carefully. Then, using the scale shown below, decide which response most accurately reflects how true the statement was for you **WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD.** Mark only one response for each statement. It is important to respond to every statement.

| Almost Never or Never True | Not Very Often True | Sometimes True | Often True | Almost Always True |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

____ 1. My parents respected my feelings.

____ 2. I felt my parents did a good job as my parents.

____ 3. I wish I had had different parents.

____ 4. My parents accepted me as I was.

____ 5. I like to get my parents point of view on things I was concerned about.

____ 6. I felt it was no use letting my feelings show around my parents.

____ 7. My parents were able to tell when I was upset about something.

____ 8. Talking over my problems with my parents made me feel ashamed or foolish.

____ 9. My parents expected too much from me.

____ 10. I got upset easily around my parents.

____ 11. I got upset a lot more than my parents knew.

____ 12. When we discussed things, my parents cared about my point of view.

____ 13. My parents trusted my judgment.

| Almost Never or Never True | Not Very Often True | Sometimes True | Often True | Almost Always True |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |

____14. My parents their own problems, so I didn't bother them with mine.

____15. My parents helped me to understand myself better.

____16. I told my parents about my problems and troubles.

____17. I felt angry with my parents.

____18. I didn't get much attention from my parents.

____19. My parents helped me to talk about my difficulties.

____20. My parents understood me.

____21. When I got angry about something, my parents tried to understand.

____22. I trusted my parents.

____23. My parents didn't understand what I was going through.

____24. I could count on my parents when I needed to get something off my chest.

____25. If my parents knew something was bothering me, they asked me about it.

APPENDIX C

SELF-ESTEEM RATING SCALE

**B. Instructions:** These questions are designed to measure how you currently feel about yourself. Please answer each item as carefully and accurately as you can by placing a number by each response as follows:

| Never | Rarely | Some of | A good part | Most of the |
|-------|--------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | 2 | the time | of the time | time |
|   |   | 3 | 4 | 5 |

____ 1. I feel that people would NOT like me if they really knew me well.

____ 2. I feel that others do things much better than I do.

____ 3. I feel that I am an attractive person.

____ 4. I feel confident in my ability to deal with other people.

____ 5. I feel that I am likely to fail at things I do.

____ 6. I feel that people really like to talk with me.

____ 7. I feel that I am a very competent person.

____ 8. When I am with other people I feel that they are glad I am with them.

____ 9. I feel that I make a good impression on others.

____10. I feel confident that I can begin new relationships if I want to.

____11. I feel that I am ugly.

____12. I feel that I am a boring person.

____13. I feel very nervous when I am with strangers.

____14. I feel confident in my ability to learn new things.

| Never | Rarely | Some of the time | A good part of the time | Most of the time |
|:-----:|:------:|:----------------:|:-----------------------:|:----------------:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

____15. I feel good about myself.

____16. I feel ashamed about myself.

____17. I feel inferior to other people.

____18. I feel that my friends find me interesting.

____ 19. I feel that I have a good sense of humor.

____20. I get angry at myself over the way I am.

____21. I feel relaxed meeting new people.

____22. I feel that other people are smarter than I am.

____23.  I do NOT like myself.

____24. I feel confident in my ability to cope with difficult situations.

____25. I feel that I am NOT very likeable.

____26. My friends value me a lot.

____27. I am afraid I will appear stupid to others.

____28. I feel that I am an OKAY person.

____29. I feel that I can count on myself to manage things well.

____30. I wish I could just disappear when I am around other people.

____31. I feel embarrassed to let others hear my ideas.

____32. I feel that I am a nice person.

| Never | Rarely | Some of the time | A good part of the time | Most of the time |
|:-----:|:------:|:----------------:|:-----------------------:|:----------------:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

___33. I feel that if I could be more like other people then I would feel better about myself.

___34. I feel that I get pushed around more often than others.

___35. I feel that people like me.

___36. I feel that people have a good time when they are with me.

___37. I feel confident that I can do well in whatever I do.

___38. I trust the competence of others more than I trust my own abilities.

___39. I feel that I mess things up.

___40. I wish that I were someone else.

APPENDIX D

EXTENDED OBJECTIVE MEASURE OF

EGO IDENTITY STATUS

**C. Instructions:** Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your own thoughts and feelings. Please indicate your answer by putting the appropriate number by the statement that most appropriately indicates your feelings.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

____1. It took me a while to figure it out, but now I really know what I want for a career.

____2. I took me a long time to decide but now I know for sure what direction to move in for a career.

____3. A person's faith is unique to each individual. I've considered and reconsidered it myself and know what I can believe.

____4. I've gone though a period of serious questions about faith and can now say I understand what I believe in as an individual.

____5. Politics is something that I can never be too sure about because things change so fast. But, I do think it's important to know what I can politically stand for and believe in.

____6. I've thought about my political beliefs through and realize I can agree with some and not other aspects of what my parents believe.

____7. After considerable thought I've developed my own individual viewpoint of what is for me an ideal "life style" and don't believe anyone will be likely to change my perspective.

____8. After a lot of self-examination, I have established a very definite view on what my own life style will be.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

_____9. Even if my parents disapproved, I could be a friend to a person if I thought he/she was basically good.

_____10. I've had many different kinds of friends, but now I have a clear idea of what I look for in a friendship.

_____11. My dating standards are flexible, but in order to change, it must be something I really believe in.

_____12. I've dated different types of people and now know exactly what my own "unwritten rules" for dating are.

_____13. I know what my parents feel about men's and women's roles, but I pick and choose what I think is best for myself.

_____14. There are many ways that couples divide up responsibilities. I've thought about lots of ways, and now I know exactly how I want it to happen for me.

_____15. I have one recreational activity I love to engage in more than any other and doubt I'll find another I'd enjoy more.

_____16. I've tried numerous recreational activities and have found one I really love to do by myself or with friends.

_____17. I haven't chosen the occupation I really want to get into, and I'm just working at whatever is available until something better comes along.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

____18. I'm really not interested in finding the right job, any job will do. I just seem to flow with what is available.

____19. When it comes to religion I just haven't found anything that appeals and I don't really feel the need to look.

____20. I don't give religion much thought and it doesn't bother me one way or the other.

____21. I haven't really considered politics. It just doesn't excite me much.

____22. I really have never been involved in politics enough to make a firm stand one way or the other.

____23. There's no single "life style" which appeals to me more than another.

____24. I guess I just kind of enjoy life in general, and I don't see myself living by any particular viewpoint to life.

____25. I've never had any real close friends. It would take too much energy to keep a friendship going.

____26. I don't have any close friends. I just like to hang around with the crowd and have a good time.

____27. I haven't though much about what I look for in a date. We just go out to have a good time.

____28. When I'm on a date, I just like to "go with the flow."

____29. I'm not ready to start thinking about how couple should divide up responsibilities yet.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

___30. Men's and women's roles seem very confused these days, so I just play it by ear.

___31. I seem only to get involved in recreational activities when others ask me to join them.

___32. I join my friends in leisure activities, but really don't seem to have a particular activity I pursue systematically.

APPENDIX E

CASS' STAGE ALLOCATION MEASURE

**D. Instructions:** Please select the paragraph below which best fits the way you see yourself *NOW* as a gay man. Please be very honest.

\_\_\_ Stage 1.  You are not sure who you are. You are confused

about what sort of person you are and where

your life is going. You ask yourself the

questions "Who am I?," "Am I a homosexual?"

You sometimes feel think, or act in a

homosexual way, but would rarely, if ever,

tell anyone about this. You're fairly sure

that homosexuality has something to do with

your personality.

\_\_\_\_Stage 2.  You feel that you probably are a homosexual,

although you're not definitely sure. You

realize that this makes you different from

other people and you feel distant or cut off

from them. You may like being different or you

may dislike it and feel very alone. You feel

you would like to talk to someone about

"feeling different." You are beginning to

think that it might help to meet with other

homosexuals but you're not sure whether you

really want to or not. You don't want to tell

anyone about the fact that you might be a

homosexual, and prefer to put on a front of

being completely heterosexual.

_____Stage 3.  You feel sure you're a homosexual and you put

up with, or tolerate this. You see yourself as

a homosexual for now but are not sure about

how you will be in the future. You are not

happy about other people knowing about your

homosexuality and usually take care to put

across a heterosexual image. You worry about

other people's reactions to you. You sometimes

mix socially with homosexuals, or would like

to do this. You feel a need to meet others

like yourself.

_____Stage 4.  You are quite sure you are a homosexual and

you accept this fairly happily. You are

prepared to tell a few people about being a

homosexual (such as friends, family members

etc.), but you carefully select whom you will

tell. You feel that other people can be

influential in making trouble for homosexuals

and so you try to adopt an attitude of getting

on with you life like anyone else, and fitting
in where you live and work. You can't see any
point in confronting people with your
homosexuality if it's going to embarrass all
concerned. A lot of the time you mix socially
with homosexuals.

_____Stage 5. You feel proud to be a homosexual and enjoy
living as one. You like reading books and
magazines about homosexuals, particularly if
they portray them in a good light. You are
prepared to tell many people about being a
homosexual and make no attempt to hide this
fact. You prefer not to mix socially with
heterosexuals because they usually hold anti-
homosexual attitudes. You get angry at the way
heterosexuals talk about and treat homosexuals
and often openly stand up for homosexuals. You
are happy to wear badges that bear slogans
such as "How dare you presume I'm
heterosexual?" You believe it is more
important to listen to the opinions of
homosexuals than heterosexuals.

_____Stage 6.  You are prepared to tell anyone that you are a

homosexual. You are happy about the way you

are but feel that being a homosexual is not

the most important part of you. You mix

socially with fairly equal numbers of

homosexuals and heterosexuals and with all of

these you are open about your homosexuality.

You still get angry at the way homosexuals are

treated, but not as much as you once did. You

believe there are many heterosexuals who

happily accept homosexuals and whose opinions

are worth listening to. There are some things

about a heterosexual way of life that seem

worthwhile.

APPENDIX F

SELF-DISCLOSURE

**E. Instructions:** *These questions reflect your perception of your relationship with your parents as a child/adolescent BEFORE your parents became aware of your homosexual identity.* Please answer questions by putting a number next to each statement that most accurately reflects your answer.

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

____1. I was closely bonded with my parents.

____2. I felt accepted by my parents.

____3. My parents were always available to discuss any problems I may have had.

____4. My parents encouraged and supported my autonomy and independence.

____5. I missed my parents when I had to be away for long periods of time.

____6. I enjoyed being in close contact with my parents.

____7. When we discussed things, my parents cared about my points of view.

____8. My parents coped well under stressful situations.

____9. My parents were sensitive and responsive to my needs and emotions.

____10. My parents had high expectations of me.

____11. My parents accepted my friends and peers.

____12. My parents encouraged me to make my own decisions.

**Instructions:** *Your answers reflect your perception of your relationship with your parents __AFTER__ your parents became aware of your homosexual identity.* **Put the number next to each statement that most accurately reflects your answer.**

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

____1. I am closely bonded with my parents.

____2. I feel accepted by my parents.

____3. My parents were always available to discuss any problems I may have had.

____4. My parents encourage and support my autonomy and independence.

____5. I miss my parents when I have to be away for long periods of time.

____6. I enjoy being in close contact with my parents.

____7. When we discussed things, my parents cared about my points of view.

____8. My parents cope well under stressful situations.

____9. My parents are sensitive and responsive to my needs and emotions.

____10. My parents accept my friends and peers.

____11. My parents have high expectations of me.

____12. My parents encourage me to make my own decisions.

APPENDIX G

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**F. Instructions:** Please answer the statements below.

1. Your age at the time your parents became aware of your homosexual identity:_____

2. How long has it been since your parents became aware of your homosexual identity? _____years.

3. Did your parents eventually accept your sexual identity? (circle one):   Yes   No

4. Are your parents willing to discuss your sexual identity with you? (circle one):   Yes   No

5. I accept my homosexual identity. (circle one):   Yes   No

6. I believe my parents accept my homosexual identity. (circle one):   Yes   No

7. Age of my parents when they became aware of my homosexual identity:_____ .

8. My parents have strong religious beliefs. (circle one):   Yes   No

9. I have strong religious beliefs. (circle one):   Yes   No

10. Race/Ethnicity (check one): _____
_____Caucasian
_____Hispanic
_____African American
_____Asian/Pacific Islander
_____Native American
_____Other

11. Highest Level of your education:
_____Less than high school
_____High school diploma
_____Less than two years of college
_____Associate's Degree
_____Bachelor's Degree

_____Graduate or Professional Degree

12. Highest Level of your parent's education:
_____Less than high school
_____High school diploma
_____Less than two years of college
_____Associate's Degree
_____Bachelor's Degree
_____Graduate or Professional Degree

13. Who was your primary caregiver when you were growing
up?
_____Parent
_____Grandparent
_____Guardian
_____Other
please specify_____

14. Your age now _____

APPENDIX H

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. The purpose of this study is to better understand the impact of the quality of the early relationship between parents and gay sons on self-identity development. The findings will hopefully give us a better understanding about the quality of parent and child relationships and its impact on self-development, self-esteem, and self-acceptance in the adult years. It is anticipated that the group results of this study will be available after December, 2002. Please feel free to contact Dr. Laura Kamptner at (909) 880-5582 in the Psychology Department at California State University, San Bernardino if you are interested in the outcome of this study. Please do not reveal the nature of this study to other potential participants. Thank you again for your cooperation in this research study.

Sincerely,

_____                         _____

Sharie Colt                                      Dr. Laura Kamptner
M.A. Candidate,                                  Professor, Psychology/ Human
Lifespan Developmental                           Development
Psychology

APPENDIX I

TABLE ONE: MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

FOR PARENTING, SELF-ESTEEM, AND

IDENTITY MEASURES

TABLE ONE

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR PARENTING, SELF-ESTEEM, AND IDENTITY MEASURES (N=108)

|  | Means | SD |
|---|---|---|
| **Parenting:** | | |
| 1. Maternal attachment | 89.8 | 20.6 |
| 2. Parental support before disclosure | 17.3 | 4.7 |
| 3. Parental support after disclosure | 18.0 | 4.9 |
| **Self-esteem:** | 161.6 | 20.8 |
| **Identity:** | | |
| 1. EOMEIS | 118.2 | 14.0 |
| 2. Cass' Identity Scale | 5.1 | 1.0 |

APPENDIX J

TABLE TWO: PEARSON CORRELATIONS AMONG

ATTACHMENT, SELF-ESTEEM, AND

IDENTITY

TABLE TWO

PEARSON CORRELATIONS AMONG ATTACHMENT, SELF-ESTEEM, AND

IDENTITY

| | Maternal Attachment |
|---|---|
| Self-esteem: | .14 |
| EOMEIS Identity: | .02 |
| Cass' Identity Scale: | .09 |
| Parental Support Before Disclosure | .54*** |
| Parental Support After Disclosure | .49*** |

  * p ≤ .05
 ** p ≤ .01
*** p ≤ .001

APPENDIX K

TABLE THREE: T-TESTS COMPARING HIGH VS.

LOW GROUPS WITH SELF-ESTEEM AND

IDENTITY

TABLE THREE

## T-TESTS COMPARING HIGH vs. LOW ATTACHMENT GROUPS[a] WITH SELF-ESTEEM AND IDENTITY

| | High Attachment (n=36) | Low Attachment (n=36) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Mean | t | df | sig. |
| Self-Esteem | 168.9 | 158.5 | 2.29 | 70 | .025 |
| Identity EOMEIS | 123.0 | 116.9 | 2.30 | 70 | .024 |
| Cass' Identity Scale | 5.5 | 4.8 | 2.54 | 70 | .013 |

a. To create the groups for this analysis, participants were evenly divided in three groups (i.e., High, Medium, Low) based on their attachment score on the IPPA. For this analysis, the High group was compared to the Low group; the Medium group was omitted.

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