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Becoming Gay and Lesbian: Identity Construction Among Seventh-day Adventist Homosexuals

Rene' D. Drumm

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BECOMING GAY AND LESBIAN:
IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST HOMOSEXUALS

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

BY
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DENTON, TEXAS

MAY 1998

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
DENTON, TEXAS

March 26, 1998

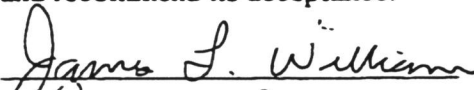
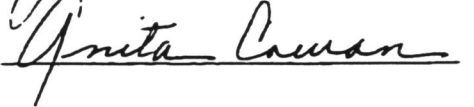
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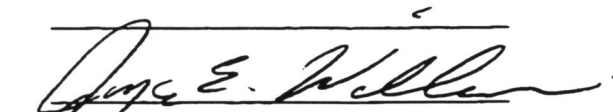
To the Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Rene' D. Drumm entitled "Becoming Gay and Lesbian: Identity Construction Among Seventh-day Adventist Homosexuals." I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D., with a major in Sociology.


Dr. Brenda Phillips, Major Professor

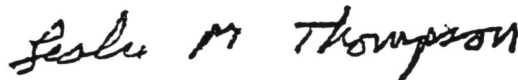
We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:


Department Chair

Dean of College

Accepted



Associate Vice President for Research
and Dean of the Graduate School

DEDICATION

To my family—your support made this possible. Thank you.

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The second study question was, “What are some typical life events that homosexual Seventh-day Adventist experience that may indicate common stages and strategies in the process of identity construction?” Lesbian and gay Adventists begin the identity construction process with a sense of difference and confusion concerning their sexual orientation and identity. From this sense of difference, participants experienced four stages of identity development before moving to the stage of commitment to homosexual identity: (1) identity exploration (2) resisting homosexual identity (3) acceptance of homosexual identity and (4) coming out.

The final study question asked, “What conditions facilitate or impede identity construction among homosexual Seventh-day Adventists?” There were three primary conditions that facilitated having an integrated openly gay or lesbian Adventist identity: (1) an accepting church congregation (2) an accepting family and (3) a job that was secure regardless of sexual orientation and identity.

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identities. One example of a group of people who experience conflicting identities are homosexuals whose religious beliefs prohibit homosexual behavior. This study investigates identity construction among a particular group of homosexuals whose religious beliefs prohibit homosexual behavior--lesbian and gay Seventh-day Adventists. The situation for gay and lesbian Adventists seems to be hopelessly paralyzing. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, as most mainstream religions, teaches that homosexual behavior is sinful, yet gay and lesbian Adventists must confront their emerging homosexual desires and identities. Understanding just how gay and lesbian Adventists forge and merge their religious and homosexual identities is the focus of this qualitative study.

Significance of the Study

The sociological significance of this study lies in its illumination of how gay and lesbian Seventh-day Adventists construct their identities in light of two competing, conflicting personal identities. The symbolic interactionist perspective was used as a guiding and sensitizing framework for this study (Blumer 1969; Mead 1934). Symbolic interaction emphasizes the importance of human action and social interaction. Therefore, this research explored the activities and social interactions that Adventist gays and

Overview of Chapter Contents

The Literature Review Chapter provides a context for the study by introducing the concept of identity construction. This chapter also discusses the notion of homosexual identity development and examines the ways other researchers have studied homosexual identity development.

The literature review addresses religion and homosexuality with some evaluation of the literature that notes change in sexual orientation. Finally, the literature review examines studies documenting the integration of religion and homosexuality and considers how the Seventh-day Adventist Church may be an important context in which to study this integration.

The Methods Chapter outlines the steps I took to conduct the research. The chapter discusses the study participants, sample selection, data collection, instrument development, the interview process, and ethical safeguards used to protect participants. The Methods Chapter also identifies the data analysis procedures of coding, memoing, and diagraming. In addition, the development of working hypotheses and how credibility and trustworthiness of the data were established are discussed.

The Findings Chapter examines the processes of identity construction among gay and lesbian Adventists. The chapter

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity Construction

This study seeks to understand the process of identity construction among Seventh-day Adventist homosexuals. Identity construction refers to a form of "identity work" conceived by Snow and Anderson as "the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities" (1987, p. 1346). Sociologists have demonstrated a long-standing interest in identity construction through research on how relationships and events shape people's lives (Edgerton 1967; Evans and Falk 1986; Goffman 1959; Goffman 1961; Goffman 1963; Haas and Shaffir 1987; Lofland and Lofland 1969; Schneider and Conrad 1983). "Sociologists' concern with self-identity led them to study the ways homosexual identities are constructed and maintained" (Greenberg 1988, p. 464).

This study moves beyond how homosexuals simply construct personal identities. This research examines how people merge and construct their identities when facing two competing, apparently conflicting identities as in the case of Christian homosexuals.

Identity Development Through Interaction

If it is not same-sex behavior that classifies homosexuals, how and why do people eventually identify themselves as gay or lesbian? Symbolic interactionism provides a unique vantage point in understanding this phenomenon. Symbolic interactionism holds that people come to understand who they are through social interaction. Sexual identities are formed in the same way.

Researchers note that "sexual identity is considered to be socially constructed and maintained through the process of social interaction. Therefore, it is important to look at the social context in which homosexual identities develop, and the individual meanings each person ascribes to these" (Hart and Richardson 1981, p. 35-36). Whether homosexuality occurs from genetics, biochemistry, the effects of parenting, the influence of friends, adult experiences, or the larger cultural milieu is not important in terms of seeing oneself as homosexual. The crucial element is the interactive processes individuals experience and how they are interpreted as part of a general sense of self (Hart and Richardson 1981). Researchers have studied homosexual identity development in a number of ways to try to explain how this development comes about.

Methods of Studying Homosexual Identity Development

Just as definitions of homosexual identity vary, researchers have used a number of ways to study identity development. Some studies look at differing social elements that contribute to homosexual identity development (Greenberg 1988; Warren 1974; Weinberg 1983). Other researchers focus on the developmental stages in the process of homosexual identity formation (Coleman 1982; Minton and McDonald 1984; Plummer 1975; Ponse 1978; Troiden 1988). Each researcher views the process through his or her own unique lens. For example, Cass (1979) proposes a theoretical model that rests within the framework of interpersonal congruency theory. Minton and McDonald (1984) associate developmental tasks at each stage with ego-integrative functions.

Participant selection

In evaluating these research findings, it is important to examine the researchers' process of selection of the research participants. In terms of gender, some researchers focused exclusively on men (Plummer 1975; Troiden 1979; Warren 1974) and some only on women (Gramick 1984; Ponse 1978; Sophie 1987). A few studies included both gay men and lesbians (Cass 1979; Troiden 1988). While most of the samples were convenience or snowball samples (Plummer 1975; Troiden 1988), some researchers used clinical observations (Cass 1979; Sophie 1987) as the basis for their findings.

Stages of identity development

In addition to acknowledging heterosexual bias, identity development models generally include a sequence of events that may occur during identity development. For example, most theorists see a number of progressive stages of growth that are fairly predictable (Cass 1984; Coleman 1982; Plummer 1975; Troiden 1988). These stages are generally believed to occur over a lengthy period of time rather than as one-time occurrences (Cass 1984; Gramick 1984).

Sense of difference and confusion

The stages of identity development may begin sometime in childhood and adolescence with a vague sense of feeling different from others (Coleman 1982; Plummer 1975; Troiden 1988). This sense of difference then may lead to identity confusion as awareness of homosexual feelings increase (Cass 1984; Troiden 1988). When individuals come to see themselves more and more as homosexual, identity confusion lessens, allowing them to acknowledge their homosexuality or "come out" (Dank 1971; Hencken and O'Dowd 1977).

Coming out

The step of seeing oneself as a homosexual person is one of the early phases in the identity process and is known as "coming out" to oneself (Dank 1971). Most developmental models focus heavily on coming out, not only to oneself, but to others as well (Hammersmith and Weinberg 1973). Richard-

Differences in the Identity Process

Gender

Gender is one factor that research asserts is important in developing a sense of self (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman 1997). How homosexual persons develop a homosexual identity in part depends on their gender. Researchers note several differences between gay men and lesbian women in the homosexual identity process. For example, gay men tend to act sexually on their homosexual feelings earlier than lesbian women (Riddle and Morin 1977). "Studies of lesbian relationships have typically emphasized the importance of emotional attachment over sexual behavior" (de Monteflores and Schultz 1978, p. 67). That is, lesbians tend to attach emotional or romantic meaning to a particular relationship prior to engaging in sexual relationships. In addition to sexual issues, the role of the larger homosexual community may not be as important in the identity process for lesbians as it is for gay men (Gramick 1984).

Multiple Identities

While gender may be the most researched aspect of difference in terms of identity development, a number of factors may impact the identity development process. For example, ethnic minorities at times perceive that they face a choice of having to identify with the homosexual community or their ethnic minority community (Gonsiorek and Rudolph

homosexuality is unequivocally condemned (LeVay and Nonas 1995).

The more serious homosexuals are about their religious experience, the more conflict they may have over their homosexuality (Bell and Weinberg 1978). One reason this may be true is that organized religion often encourages a self-concept centered around one's religious identity (Ammerman 1987; Peskin 1986). For homosexuals, this may be more problematic since individuals in stigmatized groups often organize their self-identity around the stigmatizing characteristic (Goffman 1963). Therefore, homosexuals who have a religious background that prohibits homosexual behavior may have two competing, conflicting identities. These conflicts may be especially evident in homosexual women. One study found that for lesbian adolescents, religion was one of two factors that significantly detracted from homosexual identity expression (Waldner-Haugrud and Magruder 1996).

From the perspective of many fundamentalist Christians, the term Christian homosexual is simply an oxymoron. According to often-cited religious writer Malloy, "the homosexual way of life . . . is irreconcilable with the Christian way of life" (1981, p. 328). In fact, researchers note an association between religiosity and homophobia (Berkman and Zinberg 1997). Individuals reared in families whose religious beliefs define homosexual behavior as sinful may internalize these convictions (Wagner et al. 1994). "Reli-

al. 1994). These findings may indicate important differences in the gay community between religiously affiliated and non-religiously affiliated gay and lesbians. This difference may call for research that examines religiously affiliated gay and lesbians separately from homosexuals not associated with any religion.

Religion's Influence on Homosexual Identity

In studying religiously affiliated gays and lesbians, researchers note the pervasiveness of the influence of religious socialization on the individual. "A particular view of the world becomes the sacred canopy which makes sense of all other experiences" (Thumma 1991, p. 335). Religious socialization frequently provides a world view with which all other competing forces must contend. In fact, researchers note that religion may exert such a profound influence on the identity formation process that it may determine the degree to which identity development is possible (Fassinger and Miller 1996). Several studies suggest that religion may be a factor impeding homosexual identity development (DeCecco and Elia 1993; Schneider and Tremble 1986; Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman 1997).

Just how religion impedes homosexual identity development is unclear. Traditionally, homosexuality has been studied under the auspices of deviance (Weitz and Bryant 1997). Sociological theories generated from these studies suggest that religion deters individual deviance such as

(Lawson 1987). In addition, in-depth interviews of the counselees revealed that "none of the interviewees reported that his sexual orientation had changed nor did any of them know anyone who had changed" (Lawson 1987, p. 9).

Some research suggests that a change in orientation is possible. A close examination of this type of research; however, often reveals the opposite finding, that the changes cited are minimal. For example, Pattison and Pattison conclude that "the phenomenon of substantiated change in sexual orientation without explicit treatment and/or long-term psychotherapy may be much more common than previously thought" (1980, p. 1553). The researchers highlighted a sample of 11 men who claimed to have changed in their sexual orientation. The change from exclusive homosexuality to exclusive heterosexuality occurred through participation in a church fellowship group. When the researchers described the sample information, they mentioned that there were 300 cases over a period of 5 years that came to the fellowship to "change." Of those 300 cases, only 30 claimed to have changed orientation and of those, only 11 agreed to participate in the study. Furthermore, of the 11 participants, "3 men were functionally heterosexual with some evidence of neurotic conflict" (Pattison and Pattison 1980, p. 1553). This leaves a total of 8 to support the hypothesis that change is "common." Ultimately, this demonstrates a less than 3% successful change rate. This appears

al and interpersonal functioning by acknowledging and helping them consolidate their sexual orientation identity" (Coleman 1988, p. xv). With the clinical emphasis on better functioning, researchers focused on the integration of various individual identities such as religion and homosexuality.

In reviewing the literature addressing religion and homosexuality, two predominant themes emerge. One theme is that the person may acknowledge his or her homosexual orientation, but must not act on it. Essentially this approach leaves the religious identity intact while ignoring or eliminating the homosexual identity. The following quote is taken from the book The Returns of Love: Letters of a Christian Homosexual and illustrates this theme. The author of this book chronicles his struggle to abolish his homosexual orientation and writes,

the struggle goes on, so that at times when emotion is uppermost I complain bitterly about the cruel Providence which is subjecting me to this incessant tension between law and lust. God has promised to heal my body. He hasn't told me if it'll be in this life or after the resurrection from the dead (Davidson 1970, p. 12).

For Davidson, integration of religion and homosexuality means to fight against one's sexual orientation with no real hope of change. People that support this position view homosexuality as a burden or condition they must control.

ipants except that of being gay or lesbian. Research using only one religious background would introduce a second common variable. In this way the effects of family, school, peers, or work environments on homosexual identity development may become more apparent.

In a study that used one religious background, the researcher examined a support group for gay Evangelicals and its effect on homosexual identity. Through a process of socialization these group members began to "renegotiate and reconstruct the boundaries and definitions of their religious identity to include a positive valuation of homosexuality" (Thumma 1991, p 333). While a support group may be one avenue for religiously affiliated lesbian and gays to renegotiate religious identity and homosexual identity, when a support group is not available, how can this be accomplished?

Few research efforts have been directed towards understanding how religiously affiliated homosexuals construct identities (Bell and Weinberg 1978). Thus, many questions remain: What types of social interactions with family members, groups, and organizations facilitate or impede identity construction? Under what conditions does the process of negotiated identity formation differ?

In addition to the unanswered questions, the samples in the studies mentioned above are limited in size (Thumma

such as a network of school systems ranging from elementary through graduate studies. The Adventist church also operates hospitals, evangelistic centers, industries, and social services, allowing church members continued opportunities for frequent interaction throughout adulthood (SDA Yearbook 1996).

It is through these interactions that Adventist homosexuals negotiate and develop an identity, a coherent sense of self. These interactions are of special interest to the sociologist since "these adaptations and identity negotiations typically take place in organized social contexts. The changes that individuals undergo as a result of social influences become sociologically relevant in the context of organized social relationships" (Gecas 1981, p. 166).

While Adventism may be an appropriate religion to use because of its normative stance regarding homosexuality and the opportunities for continued socialization, is the timing right for such a study? How might Seventh-day Adventists and other similar religious adherents view this research? Within the past year (1996 and 1997), two articles have been written in the Adventist publication, Adventist Review, addressing homosexuality. One notes the journey of a young man dying of AIDS and his "death-bed" conversion renouncing homosexuality (van Dieman 1996). The other is a mother's account of her journey of learning about homosexuality as a

this study represents one type. A distinguished sociologist writing on the connection of symbolic interaction and ethnographic research notes that "only through sustained involvement and attention to shared meanings and activities can we understand human experience" (Prus 1996, p. xiv). In-depth interviewing is one research method that supports efforts to understand the human experience as the "other" understands it. Through interviewing individuals about their life histories, this research traced the construction of identities within a religious context that prohibits homosexual behavior. The interviews revealed typical life events that Seventh-day Adventist homosexuals experienced that indicated common stages in identity construction and noted the conditions that facilitated or impeded identity construction.

Study Participants

I interviewed a total of 28 individuals for this study. In addition, 9 individuals submitted autobiographies that I included in the data analysis. Of these 37 individuals, there were 14 women and 23 men. The participants' ages ranged from 23 to 56. Five participants were in their twenties. The majority of participants were between the ages of 30 and 50. Thirteen were in their thirties and 15 were in their forties. Four participants were over 50. There was one participant from each of the following groups in the sample: Asian American, German American, African American, and Hispanic. One participant was a native of Australia. There were two Canadian participants. The interviewees grew up and lived in all parts of the United States and the world. The educational and income levels of the sample also varied. All participants graduated from high school and attended college. While 7 individuals did not finish college, 17 completed their college degrees. Eight people completed a master's degree, two graduated from medical school, and three achieved a doctoral degree. Their incomes range from \$23,000 to over \$100,000 annually.

Sample Selection

Purposive Sampling

This study used purposive sampling methods in accordance with the conventions of the naturalistic paradigm (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Purposive sampling maximizes the

would be kept confidential. They had a right at any time to tell me a part of their story off the record, and I would not use it in any way. Many participants did have at least one such request. I recorded much of the interviews as they were spoken to me, noting to myself when I had paraphrased.

Sample selection of current participants

Following that Kampmeeting in 1994, I have been a member of an Internet computer network developed by members of SDA Kinship International to offer each other support. Members of this support group are given as much or as little anonymity as they desire. Members may choose to use their own names on the network, pseudonyms, or a set of letters or numbers representing their presence on the network. Members of this support group are carefully screened. It is not an open-access group. All potential group members must apply to one person who screens applicants prior to connecting to the group. There are over 100 users represented on this forum with diversity in gender, age, race, geographic location, and socioeconomic status.

To secure additional participants for this study, I wrote a general announcement to the Internet group which explained my dissertation research and invited users to participate in the study. Members could participate by agreeing to an in-depth interview or by submitting an autobiography. To contain costs, only persons who lived within

I made an active attempt to enlist a balanced number of male and female participants from various racial, ethnic, age, geographic, and social class groups. To achieve this goal, I followed the "serial selection of sample units" method outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Following this method, the researcher selects a sampling unit after he or she has drawn and analyzed the previous unit. For example, the first several volunteers were white males in their 30's. After interviewing these men, I made a special appeal for female volunteers. Several women then volunteered to be interviewed.

As the data were collected and initially analyzed, I developed working hypotheses about identity construction among Adventist homosexuals. Working hypotheses are outcomes discovered in one context that may be transferable to another context (Lincoln and Guba 1985). At this stage the sample needed to be more refined to concentrate on the areas of the evolving hypotheses. For example, many participants expressed the importance of connecting with other Adventist homosexuals through Kinship. To answer questions about interaction with these groups, I solicited participants who had been members of Kinship for many years (10 or more).

Sampling to the Point of Redundancy

These methods of sample selection continued until the information I received from participants became redundant.

Data Collection

Since qualitative research requires understanding a phenomenon from the standpoint of the participant, in-depth interview was the research method of choice. I developed an interview guide based on the sensitizing concepts from the study and used it as a starting point to direct the discussion and assist in getting similar information from all participants (Lofland and Lofland 1995). In addition, I supplemented these interviews with autobiographical accounts from participants. Using multiple sources of data is known as triangulation and "improves the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible" (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p. 305).

Instrument Development

I developed the interview guide using key components from the study's theoretical and conceptual base (see Appendix B). The theoretical perspective underlying the questions posed in the interview guide is symbolic interactionism. Drawing primarily from the ideas of Mead and Blumer, this study sought further understanding of how a sense of self develops from interaction with significant others. Hence, the interview guide directs the inquiry toward the participant's interaction with others.

This study examines identity work among Seventh-day Adventist homosexuals. I conceptualize identity work as "a

Ethical Safeguards

Studies in homosexuality are often fraught with ethical dilemmas (Humphreys 1970). The primary issue when studying highly stigmatized groups, centers on researchers not adequately protecting participants from risks associated with social research (Goode 1996; Humphreys 1995). For this reason, extra care was taken to protect the research participants. I anticipated several risks to the participants and provided the following as measures to minimize these risks.

Discussing a topic of a sensitive nature

The participants in this study were under no pressure to address or answer any question that I asked in the interview. The participants were able to contribute as much or as little information about the questions as they wished. In addition, the participants were able to refuse any question or the entire interview without penalty.

Voluntary participation/informed consent

Participation in this study was strictly on a voluntary basis. All participants in this study were subject to informed consent procedures. I required the participants who offered interviews during the 1994 "Kampmeeting" to offer informed consent if they wanted their interviews to be included in the current work. For the new participants, I sent informed consent forms explaining in detail their rights prior to the interviews. In addition, sufficient time

a gathering of Adventist homosexuals. Since that time, I have had ongoing contact with the members through an Internet support group.

Appropriate crisis intervention plan

If participants experienced emotional pain or anxiety during the interview, I offered to stop the interview, to take a break, or reschedule the interview. Before meeting with participants, I made a list of mental health agencies and licensed therapists in case they experienced anxiety over discussing a sensitive topic.

Maintaining security during member checks

During the analysis phase of the project, the preliminary transcripts were reviewed by participants for verification. The drafts were handed to and received back from the participants by the researcher. The participants' reactions were generally favorable to these checks resulting in very few changes to the transcripts.

Data Analysis

The naturalistic paradigm calls for inductive data analysis (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Inductive data analysis resembles content analysis and is a way of "making sense" of the data by exposing material that is often hidden and making it understandable (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

tion, answer, or whatever" (Lofland and Lofland 1995, p. 186), permitting the researcher to organize, categorize, sort, and identify the data. Since coding is the primary connection between the data and its theoretical interpretation, coding is a crucial step in developing the analysis (Lofland and Lofland 1995).

To assist in the coding procedure, I used a computer program, The Ethnograph. The Ethnograph "is geared especially toward depth-exploration of data" (Tesch 1990, p. 250). The program helps the researcher to break down the data into manageable pieces, and to code and collate the data according to categories. I began coding by assigning codes to pieces of data on an intuitive basis. Lincoln and Guba support this approach by admonishing that, "the investigator should not fail to draw on his or her tacit knowledge in making these judgments" (1985, p. 340). If a piece of data seemed to stand alone, I assigned an initial label to it. To any subsequent pieces of data that appeared similar, I gave the same code.

The second step in coding was to move the coded data to the same location as other similarly coded data. Using the computer program, The Ethnograph, simplified this process by storing and retrieving all similarly coded information together.

Memoing assisted in the process of integrating categories and their properties which was the next step in analysis. Memo writing helps the researcher in defining the properties of a category. "Knowledge of properties makes it possible to write a rule for the assignment of incidents to categories ... with propositional rule-guided judgments" (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p. 342).

The next step in the analysis was to integrate categories by comparing incidents to the tentative rules or properties that described the categories. For example, initially I coded information pertaining to "church organizations" in one category. Closer examination of the data revealed that there were two categories of organizations within that code. One type of code was needed to note the organization itself. Another code was needed for the activities that church organizations sponsored. In this way, both the incidents and the categories were scrutinized repeatedly.

When the categories were unclear, needed fleshing out, or contained conflicts, I would go back to the data collection stage. This process involved initiating another interview or re-contacting interviewees to ask specifically about the category in question.

Diagramming

A diagram is "a succinct visual presentation of the relationships among parts of something" (Lofland and Lofland

religion and gay or lesbian identities by staying in the church. After several more interviews, however, it became apparent that there were several paths to integrating religious and homosexual identities. Another example of a working hypothesis was the idea that certain conditions facilitated movement towards fully integrating an openly gay or lesbian identity with an Adventist identity. One of the early conditions that emerged was having an accepting congregation. I hypothesized that having an accepting congregation was a condition for fully integrated identities. While this held true throughout the analysis, several other conditions emerged with further data gathering and analysis and are presented later.

Credibility and Trustworthiness of the Data

Quantitative researchers often discuss "internal validity," "external validity," and "reliability," when evaluating the research process. The naturalistic paradigm operates on different criteria which are more appropriate to the axioms of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba 1985).. Naturalistic studies examine the credibility and trustworthiness of the report by observing the activities of the researcher to ensure that credible findings and interpretations will be generated. This section discusses the activities the researcher engaged in to help increase the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings.

hypotheses as more information is available. Negative case analysis involves checking the data for any cases that do not fit the hypothesized analysis and revising the hypotheses until all "outliers" are accounted for. A typical procedure I used in this study was to seek out any contrary examples or cases where the data seemed to not fit the rule. In some cases, I revised the rule to include the contrary case. Where that procedure was not appropriate, I created a new category based on the qualities of the data.

Member Checking

In addition to negative case analysis, I used member checking as an analytical tool. Member checking consists of the participants reviewing the report for accuracy (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The purpose of member checking is to provide a direct test of the findings and analysis with the participants themselves. As I developed an integrated category, I would contact a participant to check my perceptions for correctness. I would hand-deliver the typewritten analysis to the participant and would either wait to get immediate feedback or would set up another appointment to retrieve the documents personally. Early in the process, I used member checking just to answer the question, "Am I on the right track?" Once I established a general sense of accuracy, I continued the analytical process. Later in the

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

These findings were generated through inductive data analysis. As the data were collected, I reviewed them for general themes and assigned codes to similar concepts. I then compared incidents among categories to discern the attributes of a category (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987). While some categories grew in scope and conceptual depth through the analytical process, other categories stagnated. The following diagram outlines the primary coding schemes that emerged from the data. These categories show the interaction of activities and agents of socialization in identity work.

- I. Religious identity development
 - A. Familial socialization
 - 1. Family worship
 - 2. Adventist lifestyle and traditions
 - 3. Family cohesiveness
 - B. Religious socialization
 - 1. Church as an agent of socialization
 - a. Church attendance
 - b. Church-related organizations
 - c. Church-sponsored activities
 - 2. Adventist education
- II. Homosexual identity development
 - A. Sense of difference and confusion
 - 1. Strategies to manage identity confusion
 - a. Avoidance
 - b. Professional help--to lessen confusion
 - B. Identity exploration
 - 1. Separating sexuality and religion

The findings presented in this chapter focus on the processes, stages, and steps in identity construction among lesbian and gay Adventists. While these processes appear to be presented linearly, it is important to note that they are not sequential with one step following the next. For example, some participants skipped steps, others repeated steps, or stopped sequences altogether. Participants forged their own unique paths of identity construction using the processes, stages, and steps described below. A taxonomy of religious socialization is depicted in Figure 1 of Appendix C. The processes and strategies of homosexual identity are illustrated in Figure 2 of Appendix C.

Religious Identity Development

Familial Socialization

For the majority of Seventh-day Adventist homosexuals in this study, religious identity was something that was an ascribed status. Nearly all of the participants were "born" into the Seventh-day Adventist religion. That is, the individuals' parents and/or grandparents were Seventh-day Adventist and were already actively practicing the religion.

"I was born and raised in a conservative, second-generation, Seventh-day Adventist family" (Joanne). "I was born in 1940 to a fairly prominent Adventist family. My mother had been a missionary in India for 10 years" (Richard). "My

A lesbian participant offered, "My best friend, Julie, and I were baptized together. I believe we were eight or nine years old. We were baptized after the Pastor had an evangelistic series" (Cindy).

I was baptized on March 2, 1967. There were two other people, women, that were baptized at the same time. One was my age, and the other was an older woman. I knew that being baptized made me a member of the church and now I officially belonged (Juan).

Parents of gay and lesbian Adventists quite often structured family life around church and religious events that reinforced their religious identity as Seventh-day Adventists. The primary strategies used in familial socialization included having family worship, abiding by the lifestyle norms and traditions of the Adventist church, and developing family cohesiveness.

Family worship

Having family worship was the norm among gay and lesbian Adventist families of origin.

My family was very conservative and had worship morning, noon, and night. The Adventist Church was too far to travel every Sabbath, so we would have our own [service]. It lasted about two hours (Hans).

We had a spiritual atmosphere at home and many times we would have worship in the evening when we could fit it in. There were times that Mama made sure that it would fit in; she would say this is what is happening. The TV would be turned off, the homework stopped and everything. You would come into the living room and we would have worship (Donald).

(Joanne). "I come from a very loving and caring family. We are very close to this day. I call them all the time and assure them that I love them. They do the same" (Donald).

In more than half of the cases in this sample, even extended family influenced religious identity through modeling.

I had a cousin who was eight years older than me. He was a ministry student at college and was a role model to me. One summer at campmeeting, I bought a little Bible and I wrote a dedication to him inside the front cover. I wanted to be just like him (Hans).

Religious Socialization

The church as an agent of socialization

In addition to familial socialization, institutions such as Adventist churches and schools played an important part in religious identity development among lesbian and gay Adventists. Participants recalled a variety of ways the church acted as an agent of socialization. Church attendance itself was a primary avenue for lesbian and gay Adventists to become socialized in the religion.

Church attendance

Gay and lesbian Adventists attended church regularly during childhood and adolescence. "As I grew up, I always remember going to Sabbath School and church" (Juan).

My family attended Sabbath School and church every Sabbath. We also went to every church social function or activity that occurred (Cindy).