

Model of Lesbian Identity Formation

Individual Sexual Identity

Group Membership Identity

(Nonawareness)

1. Awareness

-of feeling or being different

-of existence of different sexual orientations in people

Self-Statement Examples:

“I feel pulled toward women in ways I don’t understand.” (I)

“I had no idea there were lesbian/gay people out there.” (G)

2. Exploration

-of strong/erotic feelings for women or a particular woman

-of one’s position regarding lesbians/gays as a group (both attitudes and membership)

Self-Statement Examples:

“The way I feel makes me think I’d like to be sexual with a woman.” (I)

“Getting to know lesbian/gay people is scary but exciting.” (G)

2. Deepening/Commitment

-to self-knowledge, self fulfillment and crystallization of choices about sexuality

-to personal involvement with reference group, with awareness of oppression and consequences of choices

Self-Statement Examples:

“I clearly feel more intimate sexually and emotionally with women than with men.” (I)

“Sometimes I have been mistreated because of my lesbianism.” (G)

3. Internalization/Synthesis

-of love for women, sexual choices, into overall identity

-of identity as a member of a minority group, across contexts

Self-Statement Examples:

“I am deeply fulfilled in my relationships with women.” (I)

“I feel comfortable with my lesbianism no matter where I am or who I am with.” (G)

McCarn, S.R., & Fassinger, R.E. (1996). Revisioning sexual minority identity formation: A new model of lesbian identity and its implications for counseling and research. *Counseling Psychologist*, 24(3), 508-534.