



Gay and Lesbian Identity: A Sociological Analysis (Reynolds Series in Sociology)

Richard R. Troidon

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In the past twelve years, research into homosexuality has undergone a major shift in emphasis. A concern with documenting the etiology, treatment, and psychological adjustment of homosexuals has been replaced by an interest in understanding how people develop homosexual identities—that is, organized perceptions of themselves as homosexuals in relation to sexual and romantic settings.

People are not born with perceptions of themselves as homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual. Sexual identities evolve slowly, over a long period of time. This book develops an ideal-typical model of homosexual identity formation that represents a synthesis of, and elaboration on, previous theorizing and research on the subject. The model draws heavily upon accounts provided by homosexuals themselves.

The model developed is unique in four major ways: it is grounded in current research and theory; it describes identity formation in both lesbians and gay males; it notes similarities as well as differences between the sexes in homosexual identity development; and it explains differences between gay males and lesbians in terms of their experiences with gender-role socialization.

This is the first book to differentiate analytically the constructs of self, self-concept, identity, and homosexual identity within a unified theoretical framework. With one major exception, these conceptual distinctions have not been drawn in previous discussions of homosexual identity, and this lack has contributed to conceptual disarray. The theoretical approach adopted here is symbolic interactionism, a social-psychological perspective within the discipline of sociology.

There is a sharp disagreement among theorists about the nature and meaning of homosexual identities. Do homosexuals' identities represent a confusion of being with doing, the mistaken belief that one is what one does, the equation of the entire self with one type of behavior? Do homosexual identities represent one of several major interests that are constructed socially and d

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