

HOMOSEXUALITY (Female)

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Primary Disciplinary Field(s): Psychology, Sociology, Sexology, Gender Studies

1. Core Definition

Female homosexuality is defined as the characteristic pattern of enduring sexual and emotional attraction or interest directed exclusively toward other women. While this orientation is characterized by a strong inherent interest, it does not necessitate overt sexual behavior for its existence. Historically and culturally, female homosexuality has been documented across various societies, though its visibility and social acceptance have varied significantly over time, generally facing less active legal or social revulsion than male homosexuality in contemporary Western contexts, resulting in fewer arrests and convictions.

2. Etymology and Historical Context

Female homosexuality boasts a long and traceable history, comparable to that of male homosexuality. The practice was recognized and often accepted in major ancient societies, notably in later Greece and Rome, where evidence suggests the existence of prostitutes catering specifically to women. The most common modern term applied to female homosexuals, **Lesbian**, is directly derived from the Greek island of Lesbos, which was the home of the renowned Greek poetess **Sappho**. The less frequently used term, **Sapphism**, is a direct reference to Sappho, who authored vivid and celebrated accounts depicting this type of romantic and sexual relationship among women. Although accepted in these classical settings, in modern society, female homosexuality is often considered objectionable, though typically arousing less intense public censure than its male counterpart.

3. Prevalence and Behavioral Patterns (Kinsey Data)

Empirical studies conducted in the mid-twentieth century indicated that homosexual behavior was considerably less prevalent among women than among men. The highly influential **Kinsey studies** (1948, 1953) reported significant discrepancies in experiences between the sexes. According to these findings, approximately 28 per cent of women reported having had some type of homosexual experience, sharply contrasting with 50 per cent of men who reported similar experiences. Furthermore, the nature of these experiences often differed, with the majority of female homosexual relationships reported as experimental in nature; only about one-third of these experiences resulted in the achievement of **orgasm**.

Data concerning persistent, overt homosexual relationships also indicated a lower incidence among women. Among single individuals aged thirty-six to forty years, only 10 per cent of women

were currently involved in overt homosexual relationships, compared to 40 per cent of men in the same age bracket. Additional reports suggest discernible behavioral differences between female and male homosexual populations, noting that female homosexuals generally maintain far fewer sexual partners than their male counterparts and often do not persist in their activities for as long a duration.

4. Manifestation and Sexual Practices

When female homosexual interest progresses to overt sexual activity, the behaviors typically manifest in two primary forms: mutual **masturbation** or **oral-genital contact**, specifically **cunnilingus**. During cunnilingus, partners may adopt roles, with one playing the active role and the other the passive role, though these roles are rarely fixed and are frequently interchanged.

In some instances, sexual activity involves the use of an **artificial male organ** (a dildo) for the purposes of stimulation or penetration. A pervasive misconception surrounding female homosexual relationships is the assumption that the partners adhere strictly to fixed sexual and personality roles--the so-called "butch" and "femme" types. While this dynamic is sometimes present, it is by no means the standard. The vast majority of female homosexuals often strive to present themselves as conventionally attractive and feminine, making them largely indistinguishable from heterosexual women. Interestingly, some women involved in these relationships report feeling more feminine than ever before, despite their sexual orientation.

5. Psychological and Social Challenges

Based on mid-century psychological assessments, many female homosexuals exhibited considerable disturbances in attitude and emotion, often revolving around conflictual views regarding reproduction and gender roles. For example, many were described as actively repelled by **menstruation**, hypothesized to be a reaction against the reminder of the reproductive function that necessitates heterosexual relations. Similarly, a strong revulsion toward the male genital was frequently reported, often accompanied by stated disgust at the thought of intercourse with a male. Psychoanalytic interpretation of the era posited that this intense reaction was a defense mechanism intended to disguise a strong, unconscious desire for a penis.

A significant dilemma arises from the conflict between sexual orientation and social needs: despite their avoidance of heterosexual relations, many female homosexuals desire close social relationships with men. This creates a basic interpersonal problem, as many men are unwilling to accept a strictly Platonic friendship. When female homosexuals are married--a situation described as common--their conflicts concerning sexual intimacy and identity are often profoundly acute. Beyond personal dilemmas, female homosexuals face intense social pressures, including the necessity of remaining undetected in the workplace for fear of **dismissal**, and maintaining strict

secrecy from family members.

6. Isolation and Community Support

Perhaps the most disturbing emotional burden for these women is the constant sense of **isolation** and social rejection. Many report feeling profoundly lonely and outside the mainstream of society, resenting the implication that they are "peculiar" or "inhuman." They feel that an artificial wall separates them from the majority of humanity and are often perplexed that society refuses to accept their form of sexuality, which they perceive as inherently right and natural to them. Due to the relative lack of community infrastructure compared to male homosexuals (fewer "gay" bars or centers), female homosexuals often rely more heavily on individual relationships, resulting in close partnerships or "marriages."

To mitigate the pervasive sense of isolation, some women successfully obtain emotional support through informal cliques or more formal organizations. One such example is the **Daughters of Bilitis**, a national organization with chapters in many large cities, which took its name from a collection of poems by Pierre Louys focused on the women of Lesbos. However, these individual partnerships often prove unstable, as many female homosexuals were viewed as unhappy and conflicted individuals struggling to maintain lasting relationships of any kind, further exacerbating their sense of loneliness.

7. Professional and Critical Perspectives

While many homosexual women feel that societal recognition and acceptance would resolve their problems, the majority of psychiatrists during the period reflected in the source material regarded them as **sick people** in urgent need of **treatment**. This perspective framed the sexual orientation itself as a pathology requiring intervention.

Nonetheless, a degree of specialization emerged in therapeutic goals. Some psychiatric specialists suggested that the treatment process should be directed not toward fundamentally altering the patient's sexual orientation, but rather toward helping them become more emotionally stable and comfortable in their existing role, providing a measure of palliative care rather than curative conversion.

Further Reading

[Sexology](#) (Wikipedia)

[Lesbos](#) (Wikipedia)

[Sappho](#) (Wikipedia)

[Daughters of Bilitis](#) (Wikipedia)