

# **DYKE DIAGNOSTIC MANUAL**

**(DDM), Third Edition, Revised**



**Mickey Eliason**

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## **Third Edition Revised (DDM III-R)**

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### **PREFACE**

Lesbian communities across the United States are threatened by a growing epidemic of dyke drama. Although often discussed in the lesbian press and in informal gatherings of lesbians, the full impact of dyke drama has not been thoroughly studied until recently. This contemporary research has revealed the underlying etiology of the complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. Dyke drama is caused primarily by the presence and interaction of dyke diagnoses, pathological conditions unique to lesbian individuals and communities. This is the first book dedicated to exploring these dyke diagnoses and ultimately eradicating them, thus reducing the harmful effects of dyke drama.

This book answers important questions that most lesbians have pondered in their lives. For example, have you ever experienced a relationship with a woman you labeled in your mind (and perhaps even uttered out loud) as “crazy?” Have you had encounters with dykes who seemed odd in ways that your heterosexual women friends and acquaintances never exhibited? Do you know lesbian couples that seem to be totally ill suited for each other, but somehow their relationship works? Have you ever acted in ways that led a lover or ex-lover-now-best-friend to declare that you were “deranged?” This manual addresses these previously taboo topics and openly discusses lesbian bad behaviors. It will provide the insights you need to label

other dyke's inexplicable behaviors, or understand your own irrational thoughts, actions, and relationship dynamics. Perhaps this book might even serve as a new activity for lesbian game nights, whereby teams compete to "name that diagnosis" of all of the lesbians in the community who are not present at the event. This game may ultimately prove to be second in popularity only to the current favorite, "name that ex." Finally, the manual may be useful to women who are newly out lesbians and who are perplexed and overwhelmed by the puzzling dynamics in their new communities and relationships.

As the author began to approach her elder years, and looked back at her long life as a career lesbian, both personally and professionally, she was able to use her newly found elder dyke wisdom to identify the essential elements of a lesbian tool belt. This particular tool belt is not the same one as the literal tool belt that so many lesbians strap on to hold screwdrivers, pliers, or sex toys of any variety. This manual contains a set of psychological tools for leading a sane and healthy life. Actually, the tool belt may not be the best analogy; dykes need a much bigger container for all the items needed to safely and sanely navigate the world. They need the psychological version of jackhammers, wrenches, and sanders to survive in a homophobic, racist, classist, and sexist society and cope with dysfunctional families of origin. They need tools to deal with the beginnings and endings of intimate relationships and to learn the appropriate etiquette for behaving at lesbian potlucks. Dykes have to learn how to survive the dynamics of lesbian collectives, know the best way to gracefully extricate oneself from a lesbian priestess who tries to convert you to goddess worship at a dyke dance, and successfully navigate traffic snarls and parking stresses on the way to lesbian events. Perhaps a toolbox is a better metaphor: a really big toolbox, like the one found in the back of a butch lesbian's pickup truck. Lesbians have so much adversity to deal with that virtually all dykes suffer from some dysfunctions. In fact, the expert panel for this manual has not been able to find a single lesbian who

does not have at least one of the disorders described in this manual. Perhaps a dyke raised by wolves in the wilderness would be free of dyke dysfunction, but the rest of the population needs some assistance. In fact, no doubt wolves have their own brand of pathologies.

### **The Need for the Dyke Diagnostic Manual**

As the author began to approach her elder years, and looked back at her long life as a career lesbian, both personally and professionally, she was able to use her newly found elder dyke wisdom to identify the essential elements of a lesbian tool belt. Irrational behaviors sometimes emerge in unique fashion among lesbians. There are many potential reasons for this, but one critical factor is the lack of a lesbian rulebook. When dykes were children, they were socialized to be good little heterosexual girls, or boys in the case of trans and gender queer sisters, according to the heterosexual rulebook. Some lesbians already started to resist those heterosexist rules in childhood or adolescence, so gender and sexuality socialization often went awry in early developing lesbians who failed to see the relevance of the messages they got. They had to accommodate or tweak the bad advice received from parents, religion, peers, school, the media, on the playground, and from all the other sources of (mis) information. Some young lesbians hung on to tomboy ways for as long as possible and learned to keep quiet when friends talked incessantly about some boy. Other lesbians did not recognize their dyke-essence until they were late teens, young adults, or even older women, and they had even more years of heterosexual conditioning to overcome.

Many budding lesbians watched the straight romance movies and TV shows, but fell for the beautiful actress or the spunky “sidekick” (an early code word for dyke) rather than the handsome male lead, and created new endings for these stories in their heads. But all lesbians soaked up heterosexist culture like a sponge, even as they tried to resist it, so when they came out, had years of errant

and irrelevant socialization to overcome. Lesbians often had to enroll in crash courses on lesbian culture at the lesbian community center. In most locales, this is a local gay bar but sometimes it is a coffee house, bookstore, women's center, or the internet. In spite of having new lesbian friends and communities as guides, for most lesbians, first dyke relationships were trial and error learning experiences. Unfortunately, those courses in lesbian culture were fraught with idiosyncrasies and were full of contradictory information, because the unofficial lesbian rulebook is mostly based on stereotypes. So is the heterosexual rulebook, another reason why even heterosexual relationships are often flawed, but the schizophrenic nature of learning one set of arbitrary rules and then having to abandon them for another is one factor in lesbian coming out emotional breakdowns and relationship trials and tribulations. It is not easy being a lesbian. At present, dyke communities lack the necessary aptitude tests to determine who is ready for relationships and who needs more training before they take leadership roles in the community. The lesbian socialization course has not yet been standardized, and is not complete. To be a really healthy dyke, instead of a crash course, a whole degree program with a few years of graduate study as well is needed to debunk the myths and stereotypes and find new and healthier ways to live in the world.

Many lesbians never felt like they fit into the mysterious heterosexual society of girlhood, but did not have anyone to talk to about these things, and no role models for anything other than the heterosexual female life. The result of this alienation and this secretive re-adjusting of the messages dykes-to-be received in their youth, is that they made up their own rules, usually in relative isolation. When people are operating from very different sets of rules, the result is communities populated by rather odd or eccentric members. This makes for some entertaining communities and friendships, but when it comes to intimate relationships, most lesbians want to find a woman with some semblance of "sane." In this DDM, "sane" is defined

as having a low dyke drama co-efficient, a factor that consists of four components: 1) the ability to initiate and sustain relationships with other women, both as friends and lovers without making them crazy; 2) the ability to navigate the world successfully more than 80% of the time (everyone deserves a vacation from reality and sanity once in a while); 3) not causing unnecessary pathos and drama in relationships, friendships, lesbian collectives, softball teams, or communities; and 4) a sense of humor about the oddities and dysfunctions in lesbian communities. In fact, this manual proposes that lesbian communities reclaim the original definition of gay as carefree and happy and strive to be gay dykes.

### **The Development of the Manual**

Over the years, the author has been a participant observer of lesbian culture in two very different locations in the United States; one a rural Midwestern college town and the other a multicultural urban environment; a “gay mecca.” Although there are some differences by geography, she has been surprised to find many similarities in the types of dysfunctions that dykes displayed in both locations, and across many other differences such as age, race, ethnicity, national origin, education, income level and so on. These similarities suggest that many of these disorders appear to represent universal (or at least U.S.) dyke pathologies. The author used a highly scientific multi-method approach to gathering data for this manual. For example, she has over 30 years of copious field notes with details about the unique behaviors of lesbians collected in such diverse locations as lesbian brunches, a widespread lesbian social practice for building community, and dog parks, a sub-cultural phenomenon representing lesbian bonding with their canine friends.

Like the DSM, this classification system was built via careful review of the dyke scholarly literature, conducting original ethnographic research, designing and carrying out experimental studies, running focus groups,

and assembling expert panels. Funding for these studies came from the Dycology Academy Collective through years of vegan bake sales and begging for donations at lesbian music festivals. Colleagues and readers of the first version of the DDM, published in the Journal of Lesbian Studies in 2010, suggested new categories and/or helped to hone the existing diagnoses. The Dycology Academy Collective hopes that future readers will continue to add to these diagnostic categories for the benefit of lesbians everywhere who only want stable and drama-free relationships. Learning to identify these syndromes early on may help lesbians to avoid some of the relationship problems that stem from getting involved with an afflicted dyke or inflicting one's own pathologies on an unsuspecting girlfriend. Those affected lesbians may recognize themselves in these categories and seek help before initiating another disastrous relationship. Lesbians, as a whole, tend to be receptive to therapy (for one exception, see DDM18b), so there is no stigma associated with seeking the help of a professional or quasi-professional who is familiar with these uniquely lesbian conditions. On the other hand, counseling from a heterosexual professional who is not versed in these disorders may result in misdiagnoses with potentially disastrous consequences. For example, heterosexual male psychologists are ill prepared to deal with lesbian couples that come to therapy for the purpose of improving their relationships with their respective exes. Heterosexual therapists are generally uneducated about dyke dynamics, although metrosexual counselors are a somewhat more knowledgeable. The metrosexual and the professional counselor who watches at least one hour of television per day may know about some of these conditions, such as the U-Haul Syndrome (see DDM 7), but will be totally unaware of more subtle lesbian disorders. Consumers need to be warned to look for the lesbian seal of approval when they seek a therapist. Better yet, they should look for a copy of this book on the therapist's shelf.

This manual has several parts. The next section outlines the history of dykeology, a newly emerging academic discipline dedicated to the study of lesbian psychology. There are many cultural differences in how women are raised and are taught to think of themselves, so this book focuses on the U.S. experience and may not generalize to dykes from other parts of the world. Diagnostic systems are imperfect and are often based on generalizations. In reality, every dyke is different and unique. The author, for example, is biased by her own socialization in youth as a white, working class, rural, stoic Scandinavian from a country-music playing, gun rack on the pickup truck, passive-aggressive, don't ask, don't tell culture. As an adult, she lived in a slightly more diverse, liberal community with a strong lesbian feminist leaning subculture, and over the years, became a highly educated academic, softball-playing, theory-spouting, multiple-serial-monogamist soft butch dyke. She is now middle-aged, if she lives to be 116 as she intends. This manual is the product of her elder-dykehood wisdom years, but she has not yet observed all subsets of the lesbian community or witnessed every nuance of dyke drama. Keep this disclaimer in mind as you read the manual.

The DDM has been designed to be helpful to many different audiences, including lesbian therapists, lay advisers, ordinary lesbians, and new immigrants to dyke communities. Hopefully, this manual can serve as a useful introduction to U.S. lesbian behavior for newcomers to the states who need advice for overcoming the tremendous culture shock of immigrating to a U.S. dyke community. Think of it as the traveler's guide to U.S. dyke culture, including common language, customs, rituals, and food preferences. It contains maps of the lesbian emotional terrain, notes hazardous areas to avoid when visiting, and suggests the off-the-beaten path must-see locations. For example, everyone should witness a lesbian music or cultural festival at least once in the lifetime to be a well-rounded human being. Similarly, no one can truly understand dyke culture without viewing at least three

really bad lesbian-made romance films. To protect the author's safety, these films will not be named. For readers not born in the U.S., or new to the lesbian community, a glossary of terms has been provided at the back of the manual, as the idiom of dyke communities can be quite perplexing to a newcomer.

### **Cautionary Note**

There is one important similarity between the DSM and the DDM. DSM diagnostic categories are based on the premise that if the behavior does not cause significant distress to the individual or her relationships, or affect her ability to work and live independently, the behavior does not represent pathology. The same concept applies here. Do not send the author a threatening note about how "normal" your behavior is, if you find yourself reflected in one of these conditions. Also, remember not to shoot the messenger if you see a disturbing truth about yourself in this manual. This manual is not intended to judge, merely to educate, and perhaps, to entertain.

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