

SATISFACTION IN LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT. A questionnaire study of **127** lesbians tested hypotheses from the social psychological literature about factors associated with relationship satisfaction. In general, lesbians in the sample reported fairly high levels of satisfaction and love in their current relationship. Results indicated that satisfaction was more strongly related to characteristics of the relationship itself than to the individual attitudes or background characteristics of individual partners. In particular, greater satisfaction was associated with equality of involvement and equality of power in the relationship. Some evidence was also found that similarity was associated with greater satisfaction.

Love relationships are a key ingredient in personal well-being. A recent survey of a cross-section of Americans (Freedman, 1978) found that most people, both homosexual and heterosexual, considered love to be extremely important to their overall happiness. Further evidence of the importance of intimate relationships comes from a study by Bell and Weinberg (1978) that asked a large sample of lesbians how important it was to them to have a permanent relationship with one partner. One quarter of the lesbians said that this was the "most important thing in life" and another 35% said it was "very important." Less than one woman in four said that a love relationship was not important to her.

Given the importance people attach to love relationships, it is not surprising that a vast literature has developed to assess and analyze relationship satisfaction (see review by Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Unfortunately, this literature has focused almost exclusively on heterosexuals; little is currently known about satisfaction in lesbian relationships. Freedman (1978) found that similar high proportions (56%) of homosexuals and heterosexuals said they were very or moderately happy in their love relationships, and only 30% of both groups said they were unhappy in love. Two small-scale studies also suggest that lesbian relationships can be quite successful. Cardell, Finn, and Marecek (1981) compared 10 lesbian couples, 5 gay male couples, and 10 heterosexual couples. They found that most couples were satisfied with their relationship and that

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lesbians did not differ in satisfaction from the other two groups. Another study (Ramsey, Latham, & Lindquist, 1978) compared 26 lesbian couples, 27 gay male couples, and 25 heterosexual couples on the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale. The lesbian couples scored in the "well-adjusted" range and did not differ significantly from couples in the other two groups. (For an investigation of satisfaction in male homosexual couples, see Jones and Bates, 1978.)

Existing research suggests that lesbian relationships can be satisfying, but provides little information about the factors that enhance relationship satisfaction among lesbians. The present study was designed to fill this gap by explicitly examining correlates of satisfaction in lesbian relationships. Research and theory on heterosexual relationships provided several hypotheses about possible factors affecting relationship satisfaction. These included characteristics of the relationship such as mutual involvement, the balance of power, and partner similarity, as well as characteristics of the individual partners, such as their attitudes and background.

Social exchange theory (e.g., Blau, 1964) predicts that the relative *balance of involvement* or commitment in a relationship affects satisfaction. "Only when two lovers' affection for and commitment to one another expand at roughly the same pace do they tend mutually to reinforce their love" (Blau, 1964, p. 84). When one partner is considerably more attracted to the relationship or shows much greater involvement, the dyad is expected to be less satisfying and less stable. Empirical studies of heterosexuals (e.g., Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976) have supported this principle. We expected that satisfaction in lesbian relationships would be higher among couples with equal rather than unequal involvement.

A second factor that may affect satisfaction is the *balance of power* in a relationship. Studies of heterosexuals (e.g., Centers, Raven, & Rodrigues, 1971; Peplau, 1979) have found similar, high levels of satisfaction among men and women in male-dominant and egalitarian relationships, but lower satisfaction among both sexes in female-dominant relationships. In understanding the impact of power on relationship satisfaction, it is important to consider the partners' preferences for power. Among heterosexuals, there is ideological support for both male dominance and power equality, but not for female dominance. Ethnographic studies of lesbian communities in California (Wolf, 1979) and Oregon (Barnhart, 1975) have found that many lesbians desire power equality and reject the idea of one partner being dominant. This emphasis on egalitarianism is often linked to a more general endorsement of feminist values. We predicted that most lesbians in our sample would want equal power, and that satisfaction would be higher in relationships that were perceived as achieving this equal-power goal.

A third relationship characteristic that can influence satisfaction is *partner similarity*. Probably the best documented finding in the research on interpersonal attraction and heterosexual mate selection is that people tend to be most attracted to one another if they are matched on various demographic character-

istics and attitudes (e.g., Berscheid & Walster, 1978). Some have suggested, however, that similarity is less important in lesbian relationships than in heterosexual ones because lesbian identity overrides other considerations. For example, Cotton (1975) speculated that lesbians might select partners who were different from themselves in social and economic characteristics. The results of Cotton's study of 30 lesbians indicated, however, that most women had relationships "with others who differ little from themselves in social position" (p. 147). We predicted that lesbians would tend to have partners similar in background to themselves, and that similarity would enhance relationship satisfaction.

In addition to characteristics of the dyad, we were also interested in characteristics of individual women that might influence relationship satisfaction. We investigated whether women's attitudes and values about relationships were associated with their degree of satisfaction. We also investigated possible links between satisfaction and women's own background characteristics (e.g., age, education, openness about being lesbian). No specific predictions were made about the impact of these individual variables on relationship satisfaction.

In summary, the present study was designed to examine factors associated with satisfaction in lesbian relationships. The study tested hypotheses drawn from existing literature about the impact of relative involvement, power, and partner similarity on satisfaction. The study also examined in a more exploratory way the effects of individual attitudes and background characteristics on satisfaction. Most analyses examined correlates of satisfaction among lesbians who were currently in a primary relationship. Additional information was provided by examining factors that contributed to the ending of a previous love relationship.

Method

Women were recruited for a study of "Lesbian Relationships." Leaflets describing the study were distributed at a university campus and at the Los Angeles Women's Building. Ads were placed in a university newspaper, a feminist student publication, and a community gay newsletter. Contacts were also made with a community feminist center, the Los Angeles Gay Community Services Center, and a church-sponsored lesbian rap group.

Participants spent approximately one hour completing a detailed questionnaire. Responses were anonymous. Most women completed the questionnaire in a group setting either at UCLA or at one of five meetings scheduled at community locations. Other participants were scheduled individually.

Participants

The 127 women who participated in the study ranged in age from 18 to 59 with a median of 26 years. All but two women were white. The majority of

women (88%) either held a bachelor's degree or were currently college students. The sample was fairly equally divided between women who worked **fulltime** for pay (46%) and women who were students in college or graduate school (41%). Participants had diverse religious backgrounds: 38% were raised as Protestants, 35% as Catholics, and 17% as Jews. Only 13% said they attended religious services weekly, and 63% said they went to religious services less than once a year.

At the time of our study, 61% of women reported being in an ongoing "**romantic/sexual relationship**" with a woman, and the remaining participants had previously had at least one "**romantic/sexual relationship**" with a woman. Most women reported having had several lesbian relationships. The length of women's longest lesbian relationship ranged from one month to 25 years, with a median of 2.5 years. Among women currently in a relationship, 62% lived with their partner; those who did not live together saw their partner an average of three or more times a week. The length of women's current relationship ranged from one month to 11 years, with a median of 13 months.

It is important to emphasize that our sample does not represent all lesbians either in Los Angeles or elsewhere. It is not possible to obtain a representative sample of members of a partially hidden population such as lesbians (Morin, 1977). While our sample is fairly diverse in religion, occupation, and education, it does not include a full spectrum of lesbians. Women in our sample were relatively well-educated, middle-class whites. Our sample probably overrepresents women involved in lesbian and/or feminist groups, and women who are relatively open about being lesbian. Women who volunteered for our study may have been more trusting of psychologists or more interested in psychological research than other lesbians.

The Questionnaire

Participants completed a 23-page questionnaire (see further descriptions in Caldwell & Peplau, in press; Peplau, Cochran, Rook, & Padesky, 1978). Development of the questionnaire was based on extensive interviews with lesbians about their relationships and on previous research with heterosexual couples (Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976; Peplau, 1979).

The first part of the questionnaire concerned participants' background and attitudes. Included were measures of participants' beliefs about romantic love, their values about intimate relationships, and their views on women's roles. The second part of the questionnaire focused on a specific "**romantic/sexual relationship**." For the 77 women who were currently in a relationship, questions assessed overall satisfaction, love, commitment, involvement, power, partner similarity, and problems in the relationship. The 50 women who were not currently in a relationship answered questions about factors contributing to the breakup of their most recent past relationship. More detailed information

about specific questionnaire items and scales will be presented as part of the description of the results of the study.

Results

Analyses first examined the general level of relationship satisfaction among the lesbians in our sample and compared various measures of satisfaction, closeness, love, and liking. Next, analyses examined the correlates of relationship satisfaction among women currently in a love relationship. Finally, analyses investigated women's explanations for the ending of a past love relationship.

Assessing Satisfaction in Lesbian Relationships

A first task of the research was to assess the general level of relationship satisfaction among the 77 lesbians currently in a relationship. Four measures of satisfaction were included in the questionnaire. A single question directly asked women "Overall, how satisfied are you in your relationship with (———)?" Respondents answered on a 9-point scale from "not at all satisfied" to "extremely satisfied." The mean satisfaction rating was 7.1; 55% of women checked the highest satisfaction categories of 8 or 9, and only 18% of women gave ratings of 5 or lower. Another single item asked women "How close would you say your relationship with (———) is right now?" Women reported considerable closeness (mean of 7.7 on a 9-point scale); 68% of women circled the highest categories of 8 or 9, and only 15% of women rated their closeness as 5 or lower.

Also included were Rubin's (1970) Love Scale and Liking Scale. The 9-item Love Scale assesses feelings of caring, intimacy, and attachment to one's partner. It includes such statements as "I feel I can confide in (———) about virtually everything" and "It would be hard for me to get along without (———)." The 9-item Liking Scale assesses feelings of respect and affection for the partner. Women reported generally high levels of love (mean 6.5 on 9-point scale) and liking (mean 7.0 on 9-point scale).

Taken together, these data indicate a high level of relationship satisfaction among the women we surveyed. It is clear that some lesbian relationships can be highly rewarding. Of course, we do not know how representative these findings are of most lesbian relationships. It is possible that women who are in an unhappy relationship are somewhat less likely to volunteer for research, and hence are underrepresented in our sample.

Not surprisingly, the four measures of satisfaction, closeness, love, and liking were highly intercorrelated (see Table 1). These measures appear to tap a common core of positive feelings toward the relationship and toward the partner. Subsequent sections of this paper examine various correlates of satisfaction in lesbian relationships. These analyses use the single general satis-

Table 1
Intercorrelations among Relationship Satisfaction, Love,
Liking and Closeness

	Love Scale	Liking Scale	Closeness
Satisfaction	.43	.59	.83
Love Scale		.65	.46
Liking Scale			.49

Note: All correlations are significant at $p < .001$. The N for correlations varies slightly from 72 to 76 due to missing data.

faction item. This item appears to be the most comprehensive measure of satisfaction included in our study, and it correlated highly with other related measures. (Indeed, analyses not reported here examining correlates of love, liking, and closeness produced results similar to those for the general satisfaction measure.)

To further demonstrate the validity of the satisfaction measure, we investigated the association of general satisfaction with commitment. Women were asked to estimate the likelihood that their current relationships would still exist in six months, one year, and five years. Most women expressed at least modest confidence that their present relationship would continue into the future. About 44% of the women were certain (7 on a 7-point scale) that their relationship would continue for six months, 37% were certain it would last a year, and 26% were certain it would exist in five years. Answers to these questions were strongly related to the general satisfaction measure ($r_s = .73, .74, \text{ and } .63$, respectively; all $p_s < .001$). As expected, high satisfaction was linked to predictions that the relationship would continue in the future.

Correlates of Satisfaction in Lesbian Relationships

To understand factors that contribute to the success of lesbian relationships, we next examined correlates of satisfaction among those women currently in a love relationship. Analyses investigated such characteristics of the relationship as equality of involvement, the balance of power, and partner similarity, and such individual characteristics of the woman as her attitudes and personal background.

Equality of involvement. Based on social exchange theory, we predicted that equality of involvement would be a significant factor in relationship satisfaction. Two questions assessed the relative balance of involvement in the relationship. One question asked women "Who do you think is more involved in your relationship — (——) or you?" A majority (57%) of women reported that they and their partner were involved to "exactly the same degree." As predicted, mean satisfaction scores were significantly higher among women in equally involved relationships than in unequal relationships, $t(75) = -5.12$, $p < .001$.

Another measure of relative involvement asked women whether one partner was more "committed to the relationship" than the other. Most women (62%) reported "exactly equal" commitment. As predicted, satisfaction was higher among women in equal-commitment relationships than in unequal relationships, $t(75) = -3.70$, $p < .001$. Thus, consistent with our prediction, satisfaction was significantly higher in relationships perceived to have equal rather than unequal involvement.

Equality of power. We predicted that lesbians would show a clear preference for power equality in love relationships, and that the balance of power would be a significant correlate of satisfaction. Both predictions were confirmed. Respondents' preferences for power in a relationship were assessed by the question "Who do you think should have more say in your relationship — (——) or you?" (For a detailed discussion of these power measures, see Caldwell & Peplau, in press.) Virtually all women (97%) said that ideally both partners should have "exactly equal say" in the relationship. Thus, an egalitarian ideology appeared strong among women in this sample.

Respondents' perception of the actual balance of power in their current relationship was assessed by asking "Who do you think has more of a say about what you and (——) do together — (——) or you?" Most women (61%) said that the partners had "exactly equal say." As predicted, satisfaction scores were significantly higher for women in equal-power relationships (mean 7.87) than for women in unequal-power relationships (mean 6.06), $t(75) = 3.60$, $p < .001$. A closer look at the data suggested that dissatisfaction was linked to an imbalance of power per se, not to which person (self or partner) had greater power. These data suggest that women who thought they had attained the equal-power ideal they sought were more satisfied with their relationship. However, since the data are correlational in nature, it is also possible that high levels of satisfaction facilitate power equality in lesbian relationships.

Partner similarity. One of the most consistent findings in studies of interpersonal attraction among heterosexuals has been that partner similarity enhances a relationship. We expected that similarity would also contribute to satisfaction in lesbian relationships. Because we had reports from only one member of a couple, we could not directly assess similarity of attitudes or values. But we did ask participants about several characteristics of their partner including age,

work and student status, religion, and identification as a lesbian. By comparing characteristics of the respondent to those of her partner, measures of background similarity were derived.

The lesbians in our sample tended to be fairly similar to their partners in background. There was a significant correlation between the age of the respondent and the age of her partner, $r = .60$, $p < .001$; 66% of women were within five years of the age of their partners. Women were also significantly matched in their level of education, $r = .23$, $p < .03$. The sample was fairly evenly divided between women who worked **fulltime** for pay (46%) and women who were **fulltime** students in college or graduate school (41%). The rest of participants were **parttime** workers, **parttime** students, or both. Most couples were matched on working status, $\chi^2(1) = 11.0$, $p < .001$. In 79% of couples, both partners or neither worked fulltime. Most couples were also matched on student status, $\chi^2(1) = 10.3$, $p < .01$. In 71% of couples, both partners or neither were **fulltime** students.

Less similarity was found in the religious background of women. Only 39% of respondents said that they and their partners were raised in the same religion (e.g., both Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or other) $\chi^2(12) = 22.2$, $p < .05$. This may be related to the fact that religion was not very important to most women in our sample. Most respondents indicated that they were not currently very religious (mean of **3.6** on a 9-point scale of religiousness). Women were also asked whether they and their partner had considered themselves to be lesbian when their current relationship began. Most women (81% reported that they and their partner had had a similar self-identification at the start of their relationship, with both or neither identified as lesbian, $\chi^2(1) = 10.7$, $p < .002$. Finally, respondents also indicated whether this was the first relationship that they and/or their partner had ever had with a woman; in 73% of couples, both women were equally experienced or inexperienced, $\chi^2(1) = 5.6$, $p < .05$.

We had expected that the degree of similarity between partners would be related to the degree of a woman's relationship satisfaction. This prediction was not confirmed. Several factors may be involved. First, the generally high levels of matching in our sample may have precluded a fair test of the importance of degree of similarity. Second, it may be that similarity plays a larger role in the initial stages of forming a relationship than it does once a relationship is established, as among the relationships we studied which had lasted a median of 2.5 years. Finally, it may be that similarity on the demographic characteristics we assessed is less important to satisfaction than is similarity of attitudes or values, which was not directly assessed in this study.

Some support for the possible importance of attitude similarity comes from women's answers to questions about problems in their current relationship. Participants were presented with a list of 17 common factors that can lead to problems in a relationship (Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976) and asked, "During the next year, how likely is each factor to lead to difficulties in your relationship

with (———)?" Four problems were significantly related to current satisfaction, using a high-low median split on satisfaction and chi square tests. These included "differences in interests" ($\chi^2(2) = 12.3, p < .01$), "conflicting attitudes about sex" ($\chi^2(2) = 6.9, p < .05$), "conflicting attitudes about exclusivity in our relationship" ($\chi^2(2) = 10.5, p < .01$) and "my desire to be independent" ($\chi^2(2) = 12.1, p < .01$). The first three of these problems clearly tap perceived attitude similarity. Future research might profitably examine the importance of attitude similarity in lesbian relationships in greater detail.

Individual attitudes. The questionnaire included several measures of women's personal attitudes and values about relationships. Analyses examined the possible association of relationship satisfaction with women's beliefs about romantic love, their relationship values, and their general sex-role attitudes.

A 6-item Romanticism Scale (adapted from Rubin, 1969) assessed women's views on love, including such beliefs as that true love lasts forever, or that love can overcome barriers of race, religion, and economics. The wording of items was modified slightly so as to be appropriate to same-sex relationships. Although one might expect starry-eyed romantics and hard-hearted cynics to differ in their satisfaction with love relationships, no significant association was found between satisfaction and romanticism scores, $r = .18, p = \text{n.s.}$

Two scales measured women's general values about love relationships (see description in Peplau et al., 1978). The 8-item Dyadic Attachment Scale assessed the importance women gave to having a close-knit, exclusive, and relatively permanent relationship. The 8-item Personal Autonomy Scale assessed women's concern with maintaining personal independence outside a love relationship and with having equal power in the relationship. Analyses found no significant association between satisfaction and scores on either the Dyadic Attachment Scale ($r = .20, p = \text{n.s.}$) or the Personal Autonomy Scale ($r = .01, p = \text{n.s.}$).

Finally no significant association was found between feminist attitudes, as measured by a 10-item Sex-Role Traditionalism Scale (Peplau, 1973) and relationship satisfaction ($r = -.17, p = \text{n.s.}$). Taken together, these results suggest that personal attitudes are not a crucial predictor of relationship satisfaction. Women with widely different attitudes can be equally satisfied in lesbian relationships. What may be more important than an individual's own personal attitudes is the match between the attitudes of the two partners. Unfortunately, we were not able to test this possibility directly in our study.

Personal background. Efforts to identify personal background characteristics associated with relationship satisfaction were largely unsuccessful. For example, relationship satisfaction was not significantly related to the woman's age ($r = -.12, p = \text{n.s.}$), nor to the number of previous lesbian relationships that she had had ($r = -.02, p = \text{n.s.}$). Among the women in our sample, greater lesbian experience was not associated with greater or lesser satisfaction. One might expect that women who conceal their lesbian identity would experience

greater difficulty in maintaining a satisfying relationship than women who are "open" about being lesbian. However, we found no support for this idea. The extent to which a woman had revealed her lesbian identity to friends, relatives, and co-workers was not related to relationship satisfaction ($r = .08, p = \text{n.s.}$). Finally, no association was found between relationship satisfaction and women's level of education ($r = .10, p = \text{n.s.}$), or degree of religiousness ($r = .04, p = \text{n.s.}$). In general, our results have suggested that features of a relationship such as equality of involvement, power, and partner similarity are more important factors in satisfaction than are individual characteristics of the partners. It is also possible, of course, that our sample did not include a sufficiently diverse group of women to test adequately the impact of personal attitudes and background on relationship satisfaction.

The Ending of a Past Relationship

Further information about factors contributing to the success of lesbian relationships was provided by women's explanations for the ending of a past love relationship. The 50 women in our sample who were not in a relationship at the time of our study were asked questions about their most recent previous relationship. In particular, women were given a list of 17 problems that may cause difficulty in close relationships (from Hill et al., 1976), and were asked how much each factor had contributed to the ending of their own relationship. Respondents indicated whether each problem had been a "major factor," a "minor factor," or not a factor in their breakup. These ratings are summarized in Table 2.

Several commonalities emerged between the problems women said led to breakups and the factors we had found were associated with satisfaction in ongoing relationships. Among the most important reasons cited for breakups were a woman's desire for independence and her dependency on a relationship (see Table 2). These problems are consistent with our earlier finding that imbalances of involvement in a relationship were associated with lower satisfaction. Other important reasons for breakups concerned differences in interests and conflicting attitudes about exclusivity and about sex. These results are also consistent with our earlier findings about problems affecting satisfaction in current relationships, and highlight the potential importance of attitude similarity for successful relationships.

Perhaps surprisingly, the effects of being lesbian were *not* commonly cited as reason for breakups. Only a minority of women considered societal attitudes toward lesbian relationships or their own personal feelings about being a lesbian as major causes of a breakup. Finally, it should be noted that the list of possible reasons for breakups used in this study was not exhaustive. For example, such factors as moving to another city or meeting someone new were not included.

Table 2
 Percentages of Women Citing Various Problems
 as a Factor in the Breakup of a Past Relationship

Problem	Minor Factor	Major Factor
1. My desire to be independent	11.9	47.6
2. Differences in interests	26.2	35.7
3. Conflicting attitudes about exclusivity in our relationship	23.8	28.6
4. ()'s desire to be independent	23.8	28.6
5. ()'s dependence on me	14.3	26.2
6. Conflicting attitudes about sex	21.4	23.8
7. My dependence on ()	28.6	19.0
8. Living too far apart	16.7	19.0
9. ()'s feelings about being a lesbian	11.9	19.0
10. Differences in background	31.0	16.7
11. Jealousy	28.6	16.7
12. Societal attitudes toward lesbian relationships	9.5	14.3
13. My feelings about being a lesbian	14.3	11.9
14. Differences in intelligence	11.9	9.5
15. Differences in political views	16.7	7.1
16. Pressure from ()'s parents	0	4.8
17. Pressure from my parents	4.8	2.4

Note: N for each item varies from 46 to 50 due to missing data.

We do not know how accurate women are in describing the reasons for the ending of their previous relationship. Retrospective reports may provide a better indicator of women's beliefs about their past relationships than about the factors that actually caused the relationship to end. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that women recognized as problems many of the same factors that we found were linked to satisfaction in current relationships.

Discussion

The lesbians in our sample reported high levels of love and satisfaction in their current relationships. We do not know how representative this pattern is of lesbians in general. Our sample was comprised primarily of white, middle-class women from southern California, and these sample characteristics may bias our results. In addition, it seems likely that women in very unhappy relationships may have been more reluctant to volunteer for our study, and so may be somewhat underrepresented. Nonetheless, our findings indicate that lesbian relationships can be personally rewarding. Our results also point to various factors that can enhance relationship satisfaction.

Theory-based predictions about the effects of dyadic characteristics on relationship satisfaction were largely confirmed. Clear evidence was found that higher satisfaction is associated with equal involvement and with equal power in lesbian relationships. Less strong evidence was found for the importance of partner similarity on satisfaction. There may be several explanations for the mixed results for similarity. First, there was a generally high degree of similarity in the background characteristics of women in our sample; an adequate test of the importance of similarity may require a more heterogeneous sample with greater variation in degree of matching. Second, since we had data from only one member of each couple, we were not able to assess attitude similarity directly. We found some evidence that women's perceptions of problems about differences in attitudes were linked to satisfaction and to breakups. But studies obtaining independent measures of both partners' attitudes and values might provide stronger support for the importance of these variables. Taken together, however, the general pattern of results suggests that existing theoretical analyses of relationship satisfaction derived from heterosexual samples may be applicable to lesbian relationships as well.

We found that satisfaction was more strongly related to characteristics of the relationship than to the individual attitudes or background characteristics of individual partners. Satisfaction was not related to women's attitudes about love, their values about relationships, or their attitudes about feminism. Nor was there a consistent association of satisfaction with age, education, religiousness, or openness about being lesbian. In our sample, women with diverse attitudes and backgrounds were equally likely to be in a gratifying relationship or in an unsatisfactory one. Of course, the generality of this finding is limited by the particular set of variables we included and by the nature of our sample. Nonetheless, these results highlight the potential importance of dyadic factors in determining satisfaction in lesbian relationships.

Our research provides a first step toward identifying factors that enhance satisfaction in lesbian relationships. Such research contributes to our theoretical understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships by assessing the generality of existing concepts and hypotheses. Research on satisfaction in

lesbian relationships is also of practical significance. Whereas heterosexual women can readily find information about the joys and problems of relationships with men in advice columns, scholarly books, and college courses on marriage and the family, lesbians have few comparable sources of accurate information (see review by Peplau & Amaro, in press). For those interested in understanding lesbian life-styles, information about factors that contribute to the success of love relationships is essential.

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