

# VALUE ORIENTATIONS IN THE INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS OF GAY MEN

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**ABSTRACT.** A questionnaire study investigated the intimate relationships of 128 gay men. Most men said their current relationship was extremely close and personally satisfying. An analysis of their values concerning these relationships identified two distinct dimensions: dyadic attachment and personal autonomy. Relationship values appeared to be part of more general patterns of conservatism versus liberalness in men's attitudes. The importance men gave to attachment values was consistently related to features of their relationships, including love and intimacy, future expectations, sexual behavior and exclusivity, and reactions to breakups. In contrast, autonomy values appeared to have little impact on intimate relationships. Results are discussed in terms of men's sex-role socialization.

In a recent critique of research on homosexuality, Morin (1977) urged psychologists to give greater attention to gay relationships and to the diversity of gay life-styles. This paper presents a new approach to understanding variations in gay men's intimate relationships, one which emphasizes individual differences in relationship values—in people's beliefs about what is important in intimate relationships. For example, whereas some people may consider it essential that a relationship be sexually monogamous, others may prefer sexually open relationships. This paper examines gay men's relationships values and explores **links** between these values and characteristics of the men's actual intimate relationships. Implicit in this approach is the assumption that individuals' values determine, in some measure, the sort of intimate relationships they seek and the nature of the relationships they **experience.** It should, of course, be recognized that other causal links also occur. For example, people's experiences of close relationships may change their values.

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In conceptualizing relationship values, it is important to look beyond specific values, such as sexual exclusivity, in order to identify more general themes or dimensions. Family theorists (e.g., Hess & Handel, 1959; Raush, 1977) have proposed that a fundamental issue in all close relationships is the balancing of intimacy and independence. Our research explored the extent to which these two themes, referred to as **dyadic** attachment and personal autonomy, are reflected in the relationship values of gay men.

The dimension of dyadic attachment concerns the value placed on having an emotionally close and relatively secure love relationship. A strong desire for intimate attachment is illustrated in the following statement by a gay man explaining why he wants to be in a love relationship:

The most important thing such a relationship would bring is the knowledge that someone loves and needs me as I would love and need him. It would be a stabilizing force in my life, and give me a sense of security.. .(quoted in Spada, 1979, p. 198)

An emphasis on dyadic attachment can be reflected in an individual's **placing** importance on security and permanence in relationships, on shared time and activities with the partner, and on sexual exclusivity. Whereas some may value such qualities in a relationship, others may prefer lesser degrees of "togetherness."

The second theme, personal autonomy, concerns the boundaries that exist between individuals and their close relationships. While **some** individuals wish to immerse themselves entirely in a relationship to the exclusion of outside interests and activities, others prefer to **maintain** greater personal independence. A strong emphasis on personal autonomy is expressed in the following account by a gay man of why he prefers not to live with a lover:

I have my own lifestyle and am sufficiently crotchety to be happy in my independence. I recognize the pleasures of living with another man from previous relationships—shared household duties, . . . having the other guy to lean on emotionally, sometimes financially, etc. However, the loss of my own freedom is too high a price to pay. (quoted in Spada, 1979, p. 200)

Personal autonomy values might include wanting to have separate interests and friendships apart from a primary relationship and preserving one's independence within a relationship by dividing finances and decision-making in an egalitarian manner. It is likely that gay men vary considerably in how much they value the maintenance of personal

autonomy in the context of intimate relationships.

The primary purpose of the present study was to investigate gay men's values concerning love relationships. If the themes of attachment and autonomy are as basic as theorists have suggested, they should be applicable to gay relationships. Indeed, they may provide a useful way to describe the variation among gay men's orientations toward close relationships. Support for this possibility comes from an earlier study of lesbian relationships (Peplau, Cochran, Rook, & Padesky, 1978). In that study, a sample of 127 lesbians rated the personal importance they gave to various features of relationships, including joint activities, sexual compatibility and exclusivity, self-disclosure, similarity of attitudes, permanence in the relationship, power, and having friends and interests outside the relationship. A factor analysis indicated that responses formed two independent sets of values corresponding closely to themes of attachment and autonomy. In the present study, it was predicted that gay men's responses to similar questions would also reflect dimensions of attachment and autonomy.

A second goal of the research was to examine the links between relationship values and characteristics of gay men's intimate relationships. It was expected that men's values would be related to such aspects of their love relationships as satisfaction, future expectations, sexual behavior, power, and reactions to breakups. Since the general orientation of this study was descriptive and exploratory rather than hypothesis-testing, no detailed predictions were made.

A final goal was to examine personal characteristics of gay men that might be associated with relationship values. In the earlier lesbian study clear evidence was found that relationship values were associated with general conservatism. Among lesbians, a strong emphasis on attachment was correlated with endorsement of traditional sex-role attitudes and with religiousness; a strong emphasis on autonomy was correlated with endorsement of feminist beliefs and with participation in lesbian-feminist activities. We expected that gay men would show a similar pattern, with attachment values linked to general conservatism and autonomy values associated with greater liberalism.

### Method

#### Recruitment

Men were recruited for a study of "Gay Men's Relationships" by ads placed in a university newspaper and a gay community newsletter. Contacts were also made through the Los Angeles Gay Community Services Center, church-related gay groups, and associations of gay university students in southern California.

Participants spent approximately one hour completing a detailed questionnaire. Most men completed the questionnaire in a group acting, either at UCLA or at various community locations. Other men participated individually. Questionnaires were administered in 1976 by two male students who assisted in the project. All responses were completely anonymous.

#### Participants

The 128 men in the sample ranged in age from 18 to 65, with a median of 25 years. The majority were white (84%), with 8% Chicano, 5% Asian American, and 3% Black. Half of the sample were students in college or graduate school. The majority of men (81%) either held a bachelor's degree or were currently students. One quarter of the participants had some graduate training. Among those men who were currently employed, the monthly salary ranged from \$76 to \$5,000, with a median income of \$800.

Participants had diverse religious backgrounds: 33% were raised as Protestants, 39% as Catholics, and 16% as Jews. Most indicated that currently they were not very religious (mean 3.7 on a 9-point scale of religiousness). Only 17% said they attended religious services weekly, and 64% said they went to religious services less than once a year.

At the time of the study, 41% of the men reported being in an ongoing "romantic/sexual relationship" with a man,<sup>1</sup> and the remaining respondents had previously had at least one "romantic/sexual relationship" with a man. Most reported having had several gay relationships. The median number of gay relationships was three; 21% had had six or more. The length of the men's longest gay relationship ranged from two months to 11 years, with a median of 15 months. The men's age when their first gay relationship began ranged from 12 to 38 years, with a median of 20 years.

Most of the men indicated that they had had heterosexual relationships at some point in their lives. Over 92% had "dated" a woman. Two-thirds had had sexual intercourse with a woman; among these, the median number of heterosexual partners was three. About 55% of the men said they had been in at least one "romantic/sexual relationship" with a woman, and 7% had been married. Only 14% of participants indicated that in the future they might have a "serious romantic relationship with a woman"; 67% were sure they would not become involved with a woman: the rest were uncertain.

<sup>1</sup>Men in the sample were never provided with an explicit definition of the term "romantic/sexual relationship." All of the men who indicated that they were currently in such a relationship had had genital sex with their partner, and 83% indicated that they and their partner were "in love." Thus it appears that most men interpreted this phrase as referring to a relationship that involved both affection and sexual relations.

The sample represents a fairly diverse group of self-identified gay men who have had at least one "**romantic/sexual** relationship" with a man. It is important to recognize, however, that our sample does not represent all gay men either in Los Angeles or elsewhere; representative sampling of members of a hidden population is not possible (Morin, 1977). The men in our sample tended to **be** relatively young, well-educated, and middle-class. The modal participant was a **25-year-old college-educated** white male who worked full-time. Since the men were recruited through social organizations and student associations, rather than through gay bars or gay political groups, they may be somewhat more conservative in their life-styles than other gay men. It also seems likely that men who volunteer for research are more open about their homosexuality and more trusting of psychologists than are other gay people. Thus, our results should not be taken as descriptive of all gay men.

### *The Questionnaire*

Participants completed a 24-page questionnaire composed of items based in part on previous questionnaires used in studies of lesbians (Peplau et al., 1978) and of heterosexual couples (Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976; Peplau, Rubin, & Hill, 1977; Peplau, 1979; Rubin, Peplau, & Hill, in press). The first part of the questionnaire concerned the respondent's background and involvement in gay activities. Questions probed attitudes toward gay relationships as well as more general beliefs about romantic relationships. The second part of the questionnaire focused on a specific "**romantic/sexual** relationship." For men who were currently in a relationship, questions assessed love and satisfaction, future expectations, sexual behavior, living arrangements, and the balance of power. Men who were not currently in a relationship answered similar questions about their most recent past relationship, with the addition of questions concerning their reaction to the breakup.

## *Results*

### *Relationship Values*

The questionnaire asked men to rate on a **9-point** scale the importance for them personally of 23 statements relevant to a **romantic/sexual** relationship. These included statements about self-disclosure, sexual compatibility and exclusivity, joint activities and finances, similarity of attitudes, **permanence** of the relationship, power, and interests and friends outside the relationship.

As a group, the men gave greatest importance to "Being able to talk about my most intimate feelings" (mean **8.1**). Each of us being able to have our own career" (**7.8**), "Sexual compatibility" (**7.5**), "Having a supportive group of friends as well as my **romantic/sexual** partner" (**7.4**), and "Having an egalitarian (**equal-power**) relationship" (**7.3**). Least important were "Both partners being equally involved in gay political activities" (mean **3.3**), "Having similar political attitudes" (**3.4**), and "Being able to have sexual relations with **people** other than my partner" (**4.0**). Nonetheless, there was considerable diversity among these gay men in the importance given to particular relationship characteristics.

The central goals of the research were to examine the **patterning** of men's relationship values and to learn whether these values correspond to separate factors of personal autonomy and dyadic attachment. A factor analysis of the 23 items was performed, and the best fit to the data was obtained by an orthogonal **three-factor** solution. Table 1 presents the items loading above .40 on each factor. Results clearly support the importance of factors of dyadic attachment and personal autonomy.

The first factor reflected attachment values of having a close-knit, sexually exclusive, and relatively permanent relationship. Emphasis was given to spending as much time together as possible and to sharing various activities. Two other items about emotional expressiveness did not load on this factor: "Being able to talk about my most intimate feelings" and "Being able to laugh easily with each other." Both of these statements were endorsed strongly by all the men in our sample and did not differentiate among the three factors.

The second factor included personal autonomy values of having a life apart from one's primary intimate relationship. Included were statements about the importance of having separate careers, interests, friends, and sexual partners outside the relationship. Within the primary relationship, emphasis was given to equal sharing in power and financial responsibilities. These later items concerning **equality** may seem less intrinsic to the abstract concept of autonomy but have appeared as part of this factor in both the gay men's sample and the earlier lesbian sample. In both samples individuals who valued independence outside their relationship also valued equality within their relationship. The emergence of two orthogonal factors corresponding to attachment and autonomy provides empirical support for the **theoretical** view (Hess & Handel, 1959; Raush, 1977) that attachment and autonomy are independent dimensions, not polar opposites.

An unexpected third factor also emerged. This factor concerned **political** similarity and included all three items about the importance of

Table 1

The Dyadic Attachment, Personal Autonomy, and Political Similarity Scales

Scale Items	Loadings
<b>Dyadic Attachment Scale (Factor 1)</b>	
1. Sexual fidelity in the relationship	.75
2. Living together	.73
3. Spending as much time together as possible	.70
4. Sharing as many activities with my partner as possible	.66
5. Knowing that the relationship will endure for a long time	.64
6. Being able to have sexual relations with people other than my partner	-.58
7. Knowing that my partner depends on me	.41
<b>Personal Autonomy Scale (Factor 2)</b>	
1. Each of us being able to have our own career	.73
2. Trying new sexual activities or techniques with my partner	.57
3. Having an egalitarian (equal-power) relationship	.47
4. Having major interests of my own outside of the relationship	.46
5. Sharing financial responsibilities equally in the relationship	.44
6. Having a supportive group of friends as well as my romantic/sexual partner	.43
7. Being able to have sexual relations with people other than my partner	.42
<b>Political Similarity Scale (Factor 3)</b>	
1. Both of us having similar political attitudes	.71
2. Having similar attitudes toward gay issues	.64
3. Both partners being equally involved in gay political activities	.55

Note: Based on a rotated orthogonal factor analysis of a set of 23 items. Items loading above .40 were used to define each scale.

having similar beliefs concerning gay issues and politics. The importance of attitudinal similarity within close relationships has long been recognized by social psychologists (e.g., Berscheid & Walster, 1978). In this study, such similarity was generally rated fairly low in importance but appeared nonetheless as a separate factor distinct from attachment and autonomy.

On the basis of the factor analysis, separate scales of Dyadic Attachment, Personal Autonomy, and Political Similarity were constructed. Each man was assigned scale scores based on the average of his responses to the items in each scale listed in Table 1. For the 128 men in our sample, there was no association between scores on the Attachment and Autonomy Scales ( $r = -.01$ ). Men who gave great importance to attachment were equally likely to value or to devalue autonomy. There were small but statistically significant correlations between scores on the Political Similarity Scale and scores on both Autonomy ( $r = .28, p < .001$ ) and Attachment ( $r = .21, p = .008$ ).

#### Values and Men's Intimate Relationships

A major objective of this research was to investigate links between men's relationship values and characteristics of their actual relationships. To simplify the presentation of results, only data concerning the Attachment and Autonomy Scales will be reported here.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of the study, 41% of the men were currently in a "romantic/sexual relationship;" the rest were not then in such a relationship but had been in the past. For men in ongoing relationships, analyses examined links between values and several aspects of the relationship, including love and intimacy, future expectations, sexual behavior, and power. For men who described a past relationship, analyses focused on reactions to the breakup.

**Love and intimacy.** When the men were asked how long they had known their current partner, their answers ranged from one month to 6.5 years, with a median of 16 months. About half (51%) the men were living with their partner; the median length of cohabitation was 12 months. Men who were not living with their partner reported seeing him frequently, with a median of about three times per week. Most men described their current relationship in highly favorable terms, rat-

<sup>2</sup>Scores on the Political Similarity Scale were significantly related to belonging to a gay political organization [ $\chi^2(1) = 8.7, p < .003$ ], to attending a greater number of political events [ $t(236) = 1.93, p < .06$ ], and to reporting greater personal involvement in gay political organization [ $\chi^2(1) = 8.7, p < .003$ ], to attending a greater number of political other measures of men's attitudes and background. No systematic relationship was found between political similarity Korea and features of men's current relationships or their reactions to the breakup of a past love relationship. Consequently, discussion of this scale has been omitted from the body of the article.

ing it as extremely satisfying (mean of 7.3 on a 9-point scale) and extremely close (mean of 7.7 on a 9-point scale). Most men (83%) said they and their current partner were "in love"; only 9% said they were not in love and 8% were undecided.

It was expected that men who valued dyadic attachment would report more frequent and intimate interaction with their partner. This would be consistent with the attachment emphasis on spending time together and sharing activities. Strong evidence in support of this prediction was found. Men who scored high on attachment reported seeing their partner significantly more often ( $r = .39, p < .01$ ), were more likely to live with their partner ( $\chi^2(1) = 4.5, p < .03$ ), and more often rated their relationship as close ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ), than did low-scorers. Also included in the questionnaire was Rubin's (1973) "Love Scale," an instrument assessing feelings of dependency, caring, and intimacy toward one's partner. Scores on this 9-item scale were strongly related to dyadic attachment values ( $r = .51, p < .001$ ). These results indicate that men who valued emotionally close and relatively secure relationships were likely to report greater intimacy in their current relationship. Since these data are correlational, the direction of causality is ambiguous. It is possible that men who value attachment tend to idealize their partner and the relationship; it is also possible that attachment values are fostered by being in a close, secure relationship or by wanting to justify spending considerable time with one's partner.

No clear relation was predicted between scores on the Autonomy Scale and measures of love or intimacy. The items on the Autonomy Scale have little to do with closeness in the relationship; instead they focus on the person's having separate interests outside the relationship. As might be expected, then, scores on the Autonomy Scale were not significantly related to any measures of love, closeness, or satisfaction. Men who strongly valued personal independence were no less likely than other men to find their current relationship intimate and personally rewarding. Autonomy values were, however, related to the length of the current relationship. Men who strongly valued autonomy reported being in relationships of shorter duration ( $r = -.41, p < .001$ ). There were also nonsignificant trends for high-autonomy men to see their partners less frequently and to live apart from them. We can only speculate about the reasons for the shorter duration of relationships among men who are strong proponents of autonomy values. Men who value autonomy may find shorter term relationships more comfortable and rewarding; this would be consistent with the finding that high-autonomy men are no less satisfied than low-autonomy men with their current relationship. It is also possible that the type of relationship preferred by high-autonomy men is harder to sustain over long periods of time.

**Future expectations.** The questionnaire asked men to estimate the likelihood that their current relationship would exist in the future. Most men expressed confidence that the relationship would continue, at least in the short run. About 60% of men were certain (7 on a 7-point scale) that their **relationship** would continue for six months. 49% were certain it would last for one year, and 28% were certain it would continue for five years. Additional questions assessed men's willingness to make major changes in their own lives in order to continue their relationship. One question asked men to imagine that their partner had decided to move to another city to pursue an attractive job or educational opportunity. How likely was it that the respondent would move with his partner? About half the men said they would definitely (25%) or probably (23%) move in order to preserve the relationship, 19% said they were uncertain what they would do, and 33% said they would probably or definitely not move. Responses to a parallel question gauging the probability that the partner would move to **follow** the respondent showed a similar pattern. In sum, the men exhibited considerable variation in their relative commitment to the relationship versus their own work or education.

Analyses examined whether measures of expectations and commitment were related to men's values. Since the Attachment Scale includes items concerning the importance of permanence (e.g., "Knowing that the relationship will endure for a long time"), it is reasonable to expect that attachment scores would be related to measures of commitment. Results indicated that men who scored high on attachment were more certain than low scorers that their relationship would continue for six months ( $r = .26, p < .05$ ), one year ( $r = .31, p < .05$ ), or five years ( $r = .24, p < .05$ ). Attachment was also related to men's willingness to move to follow their partner ( $\chi^2(4) = 12.1, p < .01$ ). Among **high-attachment** men, 38% said they would definitely move and only 4% were certain they would not move; among **low-attachment** men, the pattern was reversed, with only 11% being certain they would move and 31% sure they would not move.

In contrast, no relation was found between personal autonomy values and any measures of expectations and commitment. This may suggest that high-autonomy men value having outside interests in **addition** to an intimate relationship, not as a substitute for it. Autonomy values were not consistently associated with a willingness to sacrifice individual educational or work plans for the **sake** of a relationship, nor were they associated with a readiness to sacrifice a relationship for personal goals.

**Sexual behavior.** The questionnaire examined three aspects of sexual behavior: sexual satisfaction and frequency, the nature of the relationship **between** the respondent and his partner when they **first** had

sex. and sexual exclusivity. The men in this sample reported considerable satisfaction with the sexual aspects of their relationship (mean of 5.8 on a **7-point** scale of overall sexual satisfaction). When asked how often the man and his partner had "engaged in genital sex with each other" during the past month, the mean reported frequency was two to three times per week. About 27% of the men said they had sex two to three times per week, 43% reported having sex less than twice per week, and 30% reported having sex more than three times per week. Desired sexual frequency with the current partner was relatively similar: 42% of the men wanted sex about two to three times per week, 21% preferred to have sex less often, and 37% preferred to have sex more often. Consistent with earlier data suggesting that **high-attachment** men tend to perceive their relationship more positively than do low-attachment men, attachment scores were positively correlated with reported sexual satisfaction ( $r = .25, p < .05$ ) and with sexual frequency ( $r = .30, p < .02$ ). Scores on autonomy were unrelated to sexual satisfaction or frequency.

Other questions concerned how well the respondent and his partner knew each other at the time when they first had genital sex with each other. The most common response (46%) was that the men had been friends; 27% said they had been casual acquaintances and 27% reported being strangers. Among the men in our sample, 25% said they had been "in love" with their partner at the time when they first had sex with each other. Additional analyses examined the time interval between when partners first met and when they first had genital sex. About 60% of the men reported having sex within one month after their first meeting; the remaining 40% waited up to 18 months after the first meeting.

Scores on attachment, but not on autonomy, were related to the experience of first sex within the current relationship. Men scoring above the median on attachment were more likely than low-attachment men to have been friends when they first had sex (41% versus 8%) and not to have been strangers (16% versus **29%**,  $\chi^2(3) = 7.4, p < .06$ ). Attachment was also associated with a longer time interval between first meeting and first having sex with the partner ( $r = .37, p < .001$ ).

A final set of questions concerned sexual exclusivity versus openness. Most men (73%) reported that they had had sex with someone else at least one since their current relationship began; over half (54%) had had **sex** outside their primary relationship during the past two months. Scores on attachment were significantly related to sexual exclusivity. Men scoring above the median on attachment were significantly less likely than low scorers to have had sex outside the relationship during the preceding two months ( $\chi^2(1) = 4.1, p < .04$ ). Also during that two-month interval, 30% of high-attachment men had had sex

with another partner, as compared to 80% of low-attachment men. Men who scored high on the Attachment Scale strongly valued closeness and exclusivity, and these values were often reflected in their sexual behavior.

Surprisingly, no relation was found between scores on the Personal Autonomy Scale and any measure of sexual behavior, exclusivity, or satisfaction. Men who strongly valued personal independence outside the relationship were no more and no less likely than men who **devalued** autonomy to have sexually open relationships.

**The balance of power.** The research also examined gay men's perceptions of the balance of power in their current relationships. Respondents indicated which partner "has more of a say about what you and (—) do together." Responses were made on a 6-point scale from "I have much more to say" to "(—) has much more **say**." A later question asked which partner should have more say in the relationship. (For details about these measures and data from a heterosexual sample, see Peplau, 1979). Virtually **all** men (92%) in the sample said that ideally both partners should have "exactly equal say" in the relationship. Not all men achieved this ideal, however. Only 37% reported that their current relationship actually was "exactly equal." No association was found between the perceived balance of power and scores on either autonomy or attachment.

**Reactions to breakups.** For men in the sample who were not currently in a relationship, the questionnaire examined the respondent's most recent past relationship and his reactions to the ending of that relationship. Men were asked to indicate the extent to which they had experienced various emotions (in a **list** taken from Hill et al., 1976) immediately after the breakup. The most common responses were feeling depressed, lonely, and empty. One might expect that men scoring high on attachment, who strongly desire an intimate and **secure** relationship, would react more negatively to a breakup than would **men** scoring lower on attachment values. The data confirmed this prediction. Scores on the Dyadic Attachment Scale were **significantly** correlated with the total number of negative feelings the man reported ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ) and with the average severity of his negative feelings ( $r = .25, p < .02$ ). No relation was found between scores on the Personal Autonomy Scale and reactions to breakups.

### *Personal Correlates of Relationship Values*

Further analyses examined links between relationship values and personal characteristics of gay men, including their background, attitudes, and involvement in gay social and political activities.

**Background characteristics.** In general, relationships values were

not strongly associated with variations in the demographic characteristics assessed in this study. Both attachment and autonomy values cut across various social groups represented in the sample. Scores on the Attachment Scale were not significantly related to age, income, level of education, ethnic background, or parental education. Scores on the Autonomy Scale were significantly related to only two background factors. A comparison of high versus low scorers (medial split) on the Autonomy Scale indicated that men who strongly valued autonomy tended to have somewhat less educated parents [for mother,  $t(121) = 2.2, p = .03$ ; for father,  $t(120) = 1.9, p = .06$ ]. In addition, there was a small but significant negative correlation between autonomy and age ( $r = -.21, p < .01$ ); younger men tended to be stronger proponents of autonomy values. This latter trend may reflect life cycle changes associated with aging or represent a cohort effect in which younger men have been exposed to newer cultural values that encourage independence and autonomy.

*Attitudes.* It was predicted that an emphasis on dyadic attachment would characterize men with more conservative or traditional attitudes and that an emphasis on autonomy would be strongest among more liberal men. Three types of attitudes were examined. First, on a 9-point scale, men rated the degree of their own religiousness. They also indicated how frequently they attended religious services. Although many men indicated that they were not very religious, differences in religiousness were associated with relationship values. As predicted, self-ratings of religiousness were positively correlated with attachment scores ( $r = .21, p < .01$ ) and negatively correlated with autonomy scores ( $r = -.29, p < .001$ ). A similar pattern was found for church attendance. Those men who attended religious services regularly were most likely to endorse attachment values and to de-emphasize autonomy values.

Second, to examine the possibility that traditional beliefs about love might affect relationship values, a 6-item Romanticism Scale (adapted from Rubin, 1969) was included. Items assessed beliefs such as that true love lasts forever or that love can overcome barriers of race, religion, and economics. High scores on this scale reflect adherence to a romantic view that "love conquers all." As expected, romanticism scores were positively correlated with attachment ( $r = .24, p < .01$ ) and negatively correlated with autonomy ( $r = -.17, p < .05$ ).

A final measure of attitudinal conservatism concerned men's support for the goals of the women's movement. Most men reported being highly supportive of the women's movement (mean of 7.6 on a 9-point scale); pro-feminist attitudes were not related to either attachment or autonomy scores.

*Gay social activities.* The study also investigated possible links be-

tween men's participation in the gay community and their relationship values. Other researchers (e.g., Harry & Lovely, 1979) have used a single continuum (ranging from low to high) of involvement in the gay community. In contrast, we were interested in potentially important distinctions among various forms of participation in gay life. The questionnaire contained separate sections inquiring about the respondent's participation in "gay social activities" and in "political gay activities and gay liberation."

Three kinds of gay social activities were distinguished. *Community social activities* were described as including "events or activities sponsored by gay groups, such as the Gay Community Services Center, Gay Students' Union, organizations for gay professionals, gay churches/synagogues, etc." *Private social activities* were described as including "events or activities sponsored by individuals, such as parties, dinners, going to the movies, or camping, etc. Private social activities involve friends or acquaintances—most of whom are gay." *Anonymous socializing* was described as including "activities such as going to gay bars or baths to spend time with people you do not know." For each type of social activity, respondents answered several questions concerning the frequency, extent, and nature of their participation.

Analyses indicated that attachment values were related to participation in gay social activities. Specifically, men scoring above the median on attachment had engaged in anonymous socializing significantly less often during the past year than had men scoring below the median [ $t(124) = 3.7, p < .001$ ]. When this analysis was performed separately for men who were currently in a relationship and for those not in a relationship, a similar pattern emerged in both groups. Even if high-attachment men were not in a relationship, they were less likely to seek anonymous social contacts. This finding is consistent with the view that attachment values reflect a more conservative orientation. Attachment values were not related to participation in either community or private social activities. Finally, no significant relationships were found between scores on the Personal Autonomy Scale and any measure of gay socializing.

*Gay political activism.* A separate section of the questionnaire inquired about men's involvement in gay political activities. Respondents varied considerably in their participation in such activities. About a third (31%) of the men indicated that they currently belonged to or participated in "a gay political or gay activist group or organization." Men were also asked how often in the past year they had attended "political or gay activist events (lectures, workshops, conferences, demonstrations, etc.)." The median number of activities reported was two, with 39% of the men saying that they never attended any events and

11% saying they attended six or more events. On self-rated involvement in "gay political activities," most men reported being uninformed (mean 2.6 on a 9-point scale), and only 7% rated themselves above 6. (Note that these percentages reflect in large measure results of our recruitment procedures and should not be taken as representative of the political activism of gay men in general.)

Consistent with the view that proponents of dyadic attachment are more conservative, high-scorers were less actively involved in both gay politics and "gay liberation." Men scoring above the median on attachment reported less frequent attendance at gay political events [ $t(125) = 3.3$ ,  $p < .001$ ] and rated themselves as less politically involved [ $t(124) = 2.0$ ,  $p < .04$ ] than did low-scorers on attachment. Scores on attachment were not, however, related to merely belonging to a gay political organization, which suggests that high-attachment men may be joiners but are not active participants. Personal autonomy was not related to political gay activism.

Taken together, these results indicate that relationship values were related to men's self-reported personal characteristics. Men scoring high on the Dyadic Attachment Scale were more religious, believed more strongly in romantic conceptions of love, were less likely to socialize at gay bars or baths, and were less involved in gay political activities than were men scoring low on attachment. Men scoring high on the Personal Autonomy Scale tended to be younger, had somewhat less educated parents, and reported being less religious and less romantic.

### Discussion

The results of this study of gay men's intimate relationships support several general conclusions. First, the men in this sample reported that their current relationships were extremely close and personally rewarding. While this finding may not characterize the relationships of all gay men, it clearly indicates that gay men can and do establish intimate and satisfying relationships. In many respects, the descriptions gay men gave of their current love relationships were remarkably similar to those of lesbians and of heterosexual college students who have participated in similar studies. For example, gay men's reports of closeness, love and satisfaction, actual and desired sexual frequency, and the balance of power were highly similar to those of lesbians (Cochran & Peplau, Note 1) and of heterosexual dating couples (Peplau, 1979; Peplau et al., 1977; Rubin et al., in press) who have answered similar questions about their relationships. Since the participants in these various studies differed in many respects, precise comparisons are unwarranted. Nonetheless, it seems that there may be considerable com-

monality in the internal dynamics of love relationships, regardless of the sexual orientation of the participants.

Where gay men appeared to differ most from the lesbians and heterosexual individuals in these studies was in their behavior outside their primary relationship. For example, when asked if they had had sex with someone other than their primary partner during the past two months, 54% of the gay men said they had, compared to only 13% of the lesbians and 14% of the college-aged dating men and women. (These general findings are quite consistent with data from gay men and lesbians reported by Schafer, 1977 and reviewed by Omark, Note 2.) Thus, it is in the general area of autonomy, and more specifically in the area of sexual exclusivity, that the largest differences between gay men's relationships and those of others have been documented to date.

Second, the patterning of gay men's relationship values clearly reflected themes of personal autonomy and dyadic attachment. The results of a factor analysis of gay men's values indicated factors corresponding to autonomy and attachment; the content of these two factors was quite similar to that found in a comparable study of lesbians (Peplau et al., 1978). It appears, therefore, that theoretical analyses of the importance of attachment and autonomy (Hess & Handel, 1959; Raush, 1977) based on studies of heterosexual relationships would also apply to homosexual relationships. Results for gay men and lesbians also support the conceptualization of attachment and autonomy as independent value dimensions rather than as mutually exclusive opposites.

Third, although separate value dimensions of attachment and autonomy were identified, only the attachment dimension was consistently related to characteristics of gay men's relationships. Men who scored high on the Dyadic Attachment scale were relatively more conservative than low-scorers in their attitudes and behavior. Compared to men who de-emphasized attachment, high-attachment men believed more strongly in romantic conceptions of love and were less likely to frequent gay bars and baths. When high-attachment men first had sex with their current partner, they were more likely to have been friends and to have known each other longer than was true for low-attachment men. Men who strongly valued attachment saw their partner more frequently, reported greater closeness and love, and expressed greater certainty that their relationship would continue in the future. High-attachment men also reported greater sexual satisfaction than did low-attachment men and were more likely to have a sexually exclusive relationship. In reflecting on past relationships, high-attachment men reported greater distress following breakups than did low-attachment men. Thus it appears that variations in attachment values were related in a consistent and meaningful way to features of men's actual love relationships.



In contrast, few **links** were found between autonomy values and features of **men's** intimate relationships. High-autonomy men reported being in relationships of shorter duration than low-autonomy men, but scores on autonomy were not significantly related to men's frequency of seeing their partner, future expectations, sexual behavior, or reactions to breakups. These results stand in sharp contrast to those from the earlier study of lesbian relationships (Peplau et al., 1978). Among lesbians, personal autonomy values were significantly **related** to spending less time with the partner, **being** less willing to maintain the relationship at the expense of work or education, and being more likely to have a **sexually** open relationship. We can **only** speculate about the reasons for the limited association of autonomy values with features of gay **men's** relationships.

A possible explanation is that, due to sex-role differences in **socialization**, variations in autonomy values are less relevant to the relationship experiences of gay men than to those of lesbians. In this culture, men have **traditionally been** taught to divide their energies and commitment between a **primary** relationship (typically a family) and a career (Angrist & Almquist, 1975; Horner, 1970). Men may think of their love relationship as quite separate from the rest of their lives spent at work and with friends. Also, men may **learn** to separate sexual behavior from love and emotional intimacy (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Schafer, 1977; Omark, Note 2)—a tendency that may be reinforced by norms within the gay men's **community** (Harry, 1977; Warren, 1974). Thus, **all** gay men, regardless of individual differences in autonomy values, may learn the basic idea that they should maintain an independent life and identity apart from a **primary** intimate relationship. If men implicitly assume that a high degree of **personal** autonomy is to be expected in intimate relationships, then minor variations in autonomy values may have **little** impact.

In contrast, **women** have traditionally **been** taught to devote themselves to a primary relationship, **often** to the exclusion of a career or **major** outside interests. Thus, women more often experience difficulty in reconciling personal **goals concerning** work or **education** with love relationships (Angrist & Almquist, 1975; Horner, 1970). Because women also **learn** to integrate emotional intimacy and **sexual** expression, love is **traditionally** an important prerequisite for sex (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Omark, Note 2). As a **consequence**, variations in women's endorsement of autonomy values, including the importance of independent interests and the acceptance of sex outside a primary love **relationship**, may have considerable impact on women's **actual** love relationships.

Providing an **adequate** understanding of the **nature** and diversity of **intimate** relationships experienced by gay men and women should be a **high priority** for social science **researchers**. **Our** research provides one

approach to this important enterprise. Further research on attachment and autonomy, including studies of heterosexual relationships, is needed to clarify the **reasons** for the sex differences observed in comparing gay men and lesbians. The preceding interpretation suggests that because of sex differences in integrating intimate relationships and outside activities, individual variations in autonomy values may be relatively **unimportant** in understanding gay men's relationships. However, the alternative possibility, that the autonomy dimension has **been poorly operationalized** for men and that the lack of consistent findings in our data reflects a methodological or conceptual problem, should not be overlooked.

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